

CAREER SHAPING OF A TALENTED EMPLOYEE

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Abstract

Contemporary career is perceived more like an individual's property, as opposed to the traditional understanding of an organization property or profession. The principal responsibility for its shape and conduct is taken over by an employee. It is interpreted primarily in a personal, subjective way. Career paths are created in time, space, which will be recognized by an individual as beneficial. Also, the career direction and the interpretation of its success have an individual dimension. This observation is particularly relevant for talented individuals who have a disproportionate impact on the organization performance. If they leave the organization, it poses a serious threat to its functioning and development. Talent management is interpreted primarily taking into account the organizational aspect. It is, therefore, important to build employees' relationships with the organization, which requires both strategic and individual perspective.

Keywords: *talented individual, career shaping, protean career, boundaryless career, talented employee career.*

1. Introduction

Socio-cultural, political and economic changes that are a consequence of “qualitatively new transformations in relations between globalization and locality, state and society, society and individuals” (Cybal-Michalska, 2012, p. 193), affect the style and quality of life, both private and professional, including career development. Contemporary career models, such as the protean career or the boundaryless career enable self-fulfillment, especially for talented individuals, to satisfy their aspirations. Talented employees are perceived today as a source of competitive advantage – they have all the assets attributed to strategically valuable resources: value, rarity and difficulty in imitation, and they do not even have substitutes (Barney, 1991). Their strategic character is reflected in influencing the performance of the organization (Pauwe & Richardson, 1997), and the loss of talent is a threat to its development (see

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Stec, Filip, Grzebyk & Pierścieniak, 2014). Hence, the strategic perspective is also adopted for the management of talented employees (Cheese, Thomas & Craig, 2008; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Silzer & Dowell, 2010).

Career is now interpreted primarily from the perspective of an individual (Table 1); it is perceived more like a property of its own – a counter-position to traditional interpretation as a structural property of an organization or profession (Bańka, 2007). An employee plays the key role and takes the primary responsibility for its shape and progress. The attention is paid to the activity of which an individual can benefit and develop their potential in the context of individual career goals. Career takes into account transitions between organizations, and often the change of a profession (specialty) or a form of employment. At the same time, it is managed in the organization (Baruch, 2004), which means planning and execution, monitoring individual goals and strategies, harmonizing the needs of organizations and employees. Career management is a formal process. In contrast, in shaping the career an employee plays the main role - the actions that he takes, considering individual goals and values, are decisive. He manages both the organization and the individual, so it is a matter of a broader meaning than a career.

From the organizational perspective, the career management issue, as a process of human resources management, is operational. This means that the importance of a career for an organization falls to a level below the strategic one (Ingram, 2014).

Table 1. Career management versus talent management in the literature of the subject

Criterion	Career management	Talent management
Continuity importance	Low	High
Focus on career management	Individual (psychology)	Organizational(strategy)
Accountability for career management	Self (protean)	Organization (paternalistic)
Mobility preference	Inter-organizational (boundaryless)	Intra-organizational (bounded)
Number of formalized career management practices	Low (focus on career self-management)	High (focus on organizational career management)

Source: De Vos & Dries (2013, p. 1817).

Career and talent issues, despite contradictory assumptions in the core areas of interest, are not competitive but complement each other. Hence, the purpose of the theoretical elaboration was to identify the complementary nature of the

issue of career and talent. The goal was to present the essence of talent and show its importance to the organization. In the next part, the attention was paid to the characteristics of selected contemporary career models, referring to the activity of talented individuals. These reflections were made on the basis of critical analysis of domestic and foreign literature, especially in the field of management sciences. An important contribution to the research was the insights formulated in the literature on psychology. In the final part of the article, the conclusions were drawn from the investigations.

The article is of a theoretical nature. Its aim is to identify the complementary nature of the career and talent issue. To achieve this goal, it was necessary to present the essence of talent and to show its importance to the success of the organization. The next part focused on the characteristics of selected contemporary career models, referring to the activities of talented individuals. These considerations were made by critical analysis of domestic and foreign literature, especially in the field of management sciences. An important supplement to the investigations carried out were observations formulated in the literature on psychology. In the final part of the study, the conclusions from the investigations were drawn. Traditional organizational career is not a thing of the past - career continues to be a means of achieving the organization's strategic intentions, especially during the ongoing "talent war." Temporary employment relationships and the high mobility of talented individuals mean that for this group of employees, organizations should strive to build long-term relationships as a result of managing their careers within the organization.

Therefore, careers that are individual and subjective should be determined to take into account the situational context. This approach stresses the active role in shaping the careers of both organizations and individuals. At the same time, career insights can make a valuable contribution to formulating recommendations on how an organization can succeed using specific careers for talented individuals.

2. The concept of talent

The concept of talent has been a subject of interest for a long time, but so far none of its definitions have had successful results. As a property of relevance to the effectiveness and of human activity, it is of interest in all areas of human life. Talent, reflecting on human activity and the results of its action, is one of the categories that are constantly explored in many disciplines of science, including economics, management, psychology, philosophy, and sociology. The ambiguity of the notion of talent is also because it may vary between

organizations or change over time in a given entity. For this reason, talent is a blurred concept, difficult to define and measure.

The fundamental basis for differentiating the consideration of talent in the literature of the subject is to perceive it as an attribute of an individual or entity in which these characteristics are embodied, which is identical to the objective and subjective approach (Table 2).

Talent refers primarily to an individual, but its definition also has consequences at the organizational level. In the organization, it is identified with impressive, outstanding achievements (Simonton, 2011), with great potential for further development (Głowacka-Stewart & Majcherczyk, 2006), and thus exceeds the current organization's expectations and is expected to be in the future too (Berger & Berger, 2011).

Table 2. Talent interpretation

Objective approach	Subjective approach
An ability to do something High degree of aptitude in a field of human activity An above average ability for a specific skill	A man endowed with the qualities of talent

Source: own study based on Sillamy (1994, p. 291); Szewczuk (1985, p. 311); Reber & Reber (2008, p. 778).

Following Poczowski and Miś (2008) it can be stated that talented employees are characterized by:

- an orientation to the realization of an internal goal, which remains unchanged within a long time;
- strong internal motivation;
- internal control location;
- interest in development opportunities, self-fulfillment at work, to a lesser extent – external reinforcements (it is important within our standards of excellence, experience, and knowledge of personal interests).

The attributes presented refer to a talented employee as a pattern, which means that they represent the extreme position. Talent is an individual that does not necessarily represent the highest level of these qualities, but – when interpreted in the context of talent identification criteria (Table 3) – meets expectations in a superior way.

Table 3. Criteria of talent identification

Criterion	Criterion description
excellence	superiority to the peers in some dimension or set of dimensions
rarity	high level of an attribute that is rare amongst the peers
productivity	dimensions, which lead to or potentially lead to productivity
demonstrability	an individual's superiority demonstrable through one or more tests that are valid assessments
value	superior performance in a dimension that is valued by the society

Source: Sternberg (1993).

The interpretation presented shows that - having regard to the organizational aspect - talent is useful for an organization. In this context, talents that are irrelevant or unnecessary are not taken into account. Critical and distinctive talents are of fundamental importance (Tannenbaum, 1986, after Chełpa, 2005).

3. The importance of talent in an organization

The above definitions show that talents have distinctive characteristics that determine outstanding performance. As talented and creative individuals, they show more internal motivation than others, which makes them more resistant to hardship and more predisposed to cope with difficult situations. They are more diligent and persistent, they engage in the field of the preferred field and devote a lot of time to it. They are characterized by curiosity, and the pursuit of personal development (Sękowski & Jurko, 2010). These attributes contribute to the positive results of the actions taken. The focusing talent on reflection, the consciousness of own abilities, sense of inner distance (towards oneself and active activity) ensure the effectiveness of action. Adequate and high self-esteem allows ambitious tasks (challenges are motivating factors for talented individuals) and their satisfactory performance. Successes lead to high self-esteem and consequently to positive self-esteem, which strengthens perseverance in pursuit of goals. Talented individuals are also resistant to stress, which makes them capable of performing tasks in difficult situations (Chełpa, 2005).

The presented talent profile shows that one cannot overestimate its importance in an organization. It is characterized by great efficiency in the performance of job functions. In addition, it supports the achievement of organizational goals and contributes to meeting competitive pressure (Jabłoński, 2015).

The efficiency and tactile aspect of talent activity distinguish it from other employees. Talented individuals have a significant impact on the functioning of the organization, its current and future performance. The loss or absence of talent poses a serious threat to quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in human capital, significantly slowing the organization's development (Berger & Berger, 2011). According to Boudreau and Ramstad (2005), the talent market is as important to the success of the organization as finance or marketing. At the same time, it should be kept in mind that the talent is independent of the organization and remains at its disposal only temporarily. Hence, in order to benefit from the work of talented individuals, the organization should provide conditions for the use of their talents and development. Talent can be managed in its developmental. This means that one can raise the value of talent and influence its activity in the desired direction and it can only happen if employees are willing to stay in the organization (Paauwe & Boselie, 2005). Priority should be given to the creation of a work environment conducive to their high involvement, as capacities emerge in favorable conditions, while the need arises (Shevchuk, 1998). In order to meet the individual needs and expectations of talented individuals, it is important to create opportunities to pursue a career within the organization, which will also prevent them from leaving.

4. Career of a talented individual

Contemporary career models differ greatly from the traditional career characteristic of organizations operating in relatively stable conditions (Strykowska, 2002), where the course of the career was relatively predictable (Bohdziewicz, 2010). The main determinant of success was the promotion, which was realized mainly in the vertical structures. Career was accomplished in a few organizations (one, two), and the organization was responsible for the management (Sullivan, 1999).

Contemporary career, due to changes in employment relations – between an individual and an organization, is perceived more like the property of the individual as its implementer (Bohdziewicz, 2008). It is interpreted personally, objectively, it refers to a particular person. In addition, it is not limited to vertical promotions or high-profile occupations. It focuses on the experience of broadly interpreted employment, including leisure activities but relates to employment (Bańka, 2005; Hall, 1976; Greenhaus & Callanan, 1994). Career paths are created at time, space that an individual will recognize as beneficial. Also, the direction of career and the interpretation of success have an individual dimension.

This observation is particularly relevant for talented individuals who are aware of their strengths and are willing to leave the organization if they cannot afford an opportunity to pursue their individual goals and aspirations. In the

context presented, the importance of the boundaryless career and the protean career is emphasized. These models represent a complementary perspective of contemporary careers (Figure 1).

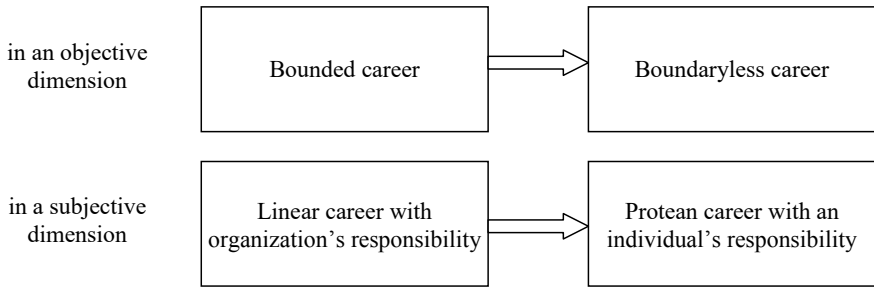


Figure 1. Contemporary career transformations

Source: Bohdziewicz (2010).

The protean career is defined as the one that is managed by a person, and is based on individually defined goals, covering the entire living space, directed by psychological success, instead of objective, such as remuneration or authority (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). It is identified by frequent change, own invention and independent work (Hall, 2002). It reflects freedom, self-direction of careers, and choices based on personal values (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). This model provides the freedom and independence of action and the variety of experience that is the basis for further professional development. It emphasizes the importance of the potential of an employee, relevant for their career, which is of particular importance for talented individuals. Due to the increased permeability of the organization's borders, the importance of a boundaryless career is also growing and it is characterized by being unrelated to one organization, uninteresting in sequence, marked to a small degree by vertical coordination and stability (Briscoe & Hall, 2006). Boundaryless career employees have greater independence from the employer than traditional careers. This model is suitable for talented individuals for whom finding a job with another employer is not problematic because of their high value in the labor market and at the same time high mobility. On the contrary, the boundaryless career creates many opportunities for professional development, but on the other hand, it is associated with negative consequences, including the loss of valuable resources for organizations. Organizations should, therefore, provide conditions for a career within their structures to prevent talents leaving.

This means that in the case of talented individuals, the focus should be put on the issues that are characteristic for the protean career. The issues addressed in the subject matter of the boundaryless are, on the other hand, to be pertinent to the organization and to shape it by creating conditions for internal mobility.

Such an approach will help meet the needs of talented individuals while shaping their careers will contribute to the strategic intentions of the organization.

5. Conclusions

The considerations conducted show that talent and career issues are based on mutually contradictory assumptions – the career is perceived primarily in terms of goal setting and responsibility, and a large role is attributed to employee’s mobility between organizations. The importance of the individual’s personal potential in career development is emphasized. Its interpretation does not refer exclusively to working life. On the contrary to the issue of talent, which is interpreted especially in relation to its activity in the organizational aspect, taking into account the results achieved. The adoption of this approach means focusing on talent management from a strategic perspective.

Both issues, despite contradictions in the core areas of interest, complement each other. Career management for talented employees should contribute to the strategic goals of the organization. The characteristics of a talented individual (especially the pursuit of personal development), and especially their actions, show that they have a significant part in shaping their career, personal and organizational achievements. Careers are determined by taking into account the situational context that affects the individual’s adaptation and social and emotional functioning (positive or negative), reflected in the level of achievement (Sękowski & Jurko 2010).

At the same time, in organizations with a high share of talent, the issue of high fluctuation is of key importance. This implies the need to strengthen the organizational commitment of talented individuals in order to prevent their departure and use their potential. Hence, shaping the career of talented workers should be strategic. At the same time, due to their specific characteristics, it is necessary to perceive a career as a unit, which requires the fulfillment of the requirements of talented individuals - related to self-development, personal fulfillment, and interpersonal development. The organization should also bear responsibility for the careers of a talented employee.

For this purpose, the followings are important (De Vos & Dries, 2013):

- allowance for intra-organizational movements;
- offering of multiple career management practices (such as succession planning, coaching, mentoring, rotation, individual development plans, career development information, and more);
- focus on individual achievement and individual responsibility.

The solutions developed in the field of career management, including traditional ones, can be applied to talent management - especially in leadership, which is related to succession planning and leadership development (Conger

& Fulmer, 2003). In addition, career-related observations on, among others, subjective career success or career orientation, or individual issues, can make a valuable contribution to formulate recommendations on how an organization can succeed using specific career management practices for talented individuals.

The solutions presented also create favorable conditions for a high involvement of talents, which enables them to be more closely associated with the organization. Involvement is favored by activity, risk taking, transgression and creativity (Mazurkiewicz & Moczulska, 2013). In addition, it allows the individual self-fulfillment and satisfaction (Glińska-Noweś, 2010). Degradation of a talented individual into the role of a productive factor, that is, offering their contribution to work, without the possibility of its development, self-fulfillment, results in dissatisfaction, frustration, and intellectual inactivity thereby deprives the organization of the benefits of free thinking and creative action (Morawski, 2009).

The modern approach, thus, stresses an active role in shaping the careers of both organizations and individuals. Career continues to be a means of achieving strategic goals of the organization, especially during the ongoing “talent war.” In many cases, careers are determined by the organizational context, which is a matter of organizational concern. This means that issues in literature, career management, and talent management are complementary to one other.

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