

Aligning Staffing Strategies

Departmental goals should mesh with those at the top

By Tom Kosnik

I recently received a call from an executive who identified himself as a VP of purchasing at a Fortune 2000 company. He said the CIO is not at all happy with purchasing's handling of IT resources. Project managers are all up in arms, saying the quality of IT resources has dropped dramatically.

While HR remained involved with helping project managers select contingent candidates, purchasing had overall responsibility because the overall cost had to be more tightly managed. What purchasing was doing simply wasn't working.

Soon after this initial call, the company hired me to assist with an internal audit. I discovered that the purchasing department was looking solely at financial metrics because its goal was reducing costs in order to increase shareholder value. The HR department knew how to onboard newly hired employees but lacked the expertise in qualifying IT talent. The project managers felt completely disenfranchised and frustrated. The staffing vendors said, "We are so glad you are here. There seems to be no standardized process in which to succeed."

This scenario, however, is more often the norm rather than the exception. The reason: Aligning staffing strategies and practices to department and corporate

strategies is an extremely difficult task to achieve.

The Big Picture

Regardless of the size of your organization, there exists an overall corporate strategy. Then, typically, there exists an IT strategy, and a purchasing strategy, and an HR strategy, etc. The staffing strategy comes last and, in an ideal world, should support the departmental and overall corporate strategies.

The accompanying chart illustrates how these various strategies fit together. What you will notice is that the staffing strategies and practices feed all the departmental strategies, which in turn support the corporate strategy. The staffing strategies and practices plus the departmental strategies and the overall corporate strategies are interdependent. Changing one, whether for good or bad, affects all other strategic variables.

Human capital management and acquisition is rapidly becoming a major concern for all corporate depart-

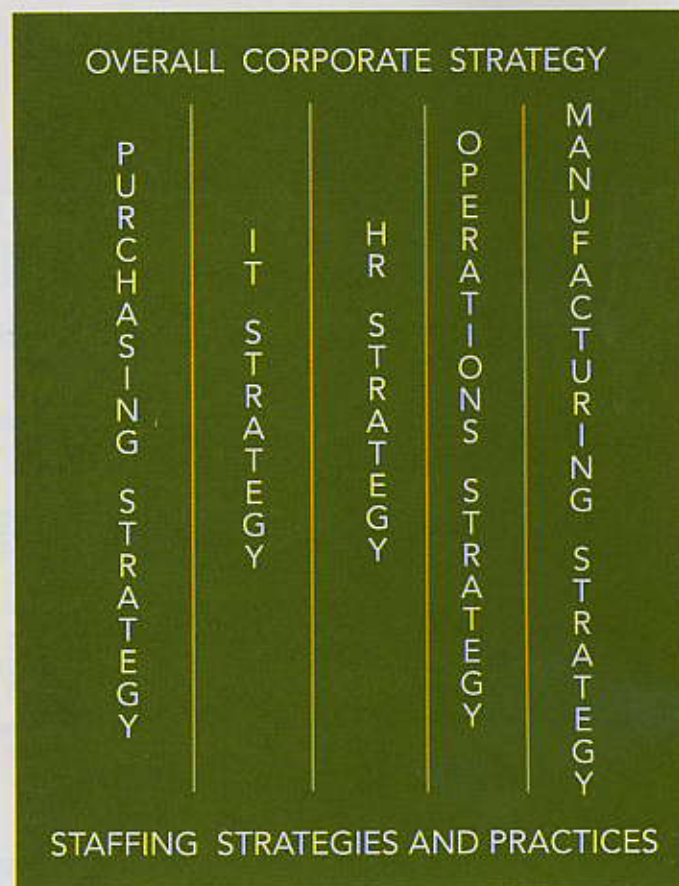
ments. Internal resources are a critical factor to future success and a competitive advantage. Working on staffing strategy and practice alignment will have an extremely positive effect in your company. How to go about it?

Create a Team

The first step in ensuring staffing alignment is to bring together a project team. It is best that the team consists of

people from all the departments within the organization. Also, make sure to include a small number of hiring managers. The idea is to get employees who can think strategically as well as those who will be directly affected as a result of any changes or decisions the team makes and implements.

The guiding question to ask is, "What are we attempting to accomplish?" From a human capital man-



agement or human capital acquisition perspective, all the departments will vary in what they are trying to accomplish. These variations need to get on the table so the members of the project team will start to see things

companies, every functional area is using a number of staffing vendors to bring them talent. These staffing vendors can also provide your company with critical information from the perspective of the candidates in

acquiring new talent. The IT department will have an interest in setting project completion metrics and will want a way to keep an eye on turnover metrics.

Metrics shine a spotlight on the issues and dynamics that are important for all the departments. Your organization wants to avoid the scenario where the financial metrics becomes the most important or the only real metric that is reviewed and revered.

Another part of the transition plan will be to determine how future discrepancies will be resolved. No one staffing vendor will be able to fulfill all your company's requirements. Some new staffing vendors will have to go due to lack of performance or trust. Some staffing vendors will need to be engaged to fulfill a very specific need within a certain department. To maintain the dignity of the alignment and the deployment of a human capital strategy, these issues need to be addressed on the front end. By doing so, no one is working behind anyone and departments are working together to insure success.

Execute and Evaluate

At this point, the project team may come to a close while an implementation team emerges. With the key initiatives, action plans and metrics for success determined, the implementation team, which should include representatives from all corporate departments, moves forward to put the plan into effect.

All change initiatives start slowly and employee education is a must. Start with small changes, resolve discrepancies quickly, and build on successes. Be sure to communicate each success to all employees within the organization.

The team may choose to conduct regular meetings to evaluate the progress of the implementation. Nothing is implemented flawlessly. Shifts in staffing strategies and practices need to be made collaboratively. Autocratic decision making rarely works in situations where a support function affects the entire organization. Prior to making any new decisions, be sure to gather data or obtain feedback from departments and/or employees that will be affected. With a strong evaluation process in place, execution and implementation can go smoothly.

Aligning staffing strategies and practices is no easy task. However, doing so offers a wide variety of benefits. For most organizations, getting the staffing vendors and departmental staffing needs focused on assisting departmental and corporate strategies will enable your company to spend less time on unproductive internal issues so as to concentrate on very productive customer and competitive advantage issues. ●

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from different perspectives. Inefficiencies as well as ideas for improvement will quickly emerge. Such notions and ideas need to be recorded. In the end, the group will need to articulate a clear and focused response to the question of "what are we attempting to accomplish".

Meet with Vendors

The second step in moving forward in this process is to meet with your best staffing vendors. An organization can painstakingly try to determine, in some reliable method, which are the best staffing vendors. However, I have yet to encounter an organization that does not intuitively know what staffing vendors are working in their best interest and, more important, can be trusted.

Staffing vendors are not only an extension of your company's HR department. They are an extension of every department within your organization. In most

the market place. Get this information.

The Transition

This phase might include a gap analysis: Here is where we currently are, here is where we want to get to, and here is how we are going to get there. Such a transition plan will include key initiatives that need to be accomplished and detailed action plans with specific and realistic goals, as well as who is going to get the work completed.

Part of the transition plan will be to set realistic metrics. The purchasing department will have an interest in setting financial metrics. For example, pay rate ranges around various skill sets that the company is acquiring. HR will have an interest in setting operational success measures, such as number of candidate submittals to actual hires, to insure the hiring managers' time is used efficiently in