



CASE STUDY

ALIGNING TALENT TO SUPPORT GROWTH

ALFRED MCALPINE NEEDED TO POSITION ITS TOP TALENT IN AREAS OF THE BUSINESS THAT WOULD SEE IT THROUGH A MAJOR SHIFT IN BUSINESS EMPHASIS. THE CHALLENGE FOR THE COMPANY WAS HOW TO RETAIN, RECRUIT AND USE THE KEY PEOPLE IT NEEDED NOT ONLY TO FULFIL ITS BUSINESS OBJECTIVES DURING THIS TRANSITIONAL PERIOD, BUT ALSO GOING FORWARD.

Alfred McAlpine, like other major businesses, operates within a competitive market where top talent is highly sought after. As



Tor Farquhar, group director for HR at Alfred McAlpine, explains: *"People are the only sustainable business advantage a company can have. In the facilities management side of our business we are seeing year-on-year growth rates of 25%. Talent is critical to delivering this speed of growth and we needed to ensure that our senior management pool was equipped to carry the company through this incredible growth phase."*

Talent management is about keeping your best people and placing them into areas of the business where they will have the greatest impact. Alfred McAlpine aligned its business objectives with succession planning and talent management.

Ali Gill, managing director of Getfeedback, the talent management consultancy used by Alfred McAlpine, notes:



"Ineffective career management is increasingly cited as the key reason for losing top talent. When this is combined with figures that suggest that one-third of companies are lacking the skilled job applicants they need and, according to IIP, nine out of 10 employers are citing recruitment as their key issue, companies cannot afford to lose the talent they have."

Alfred McAlpine worked with Getfeedback to map its 50 senior leaders' personalities, capabilities, performance, potential and intrinsic motivations. The process deliberately sought to capture not only what the talent pool *could* deliver, but also *would* deliver.

A number of measures were used to create the talent report, but one, 'intrinsic', which measures motivation, highlighted some significant information. When applied to employees with high potential, the report highlighted significant differences in the speed at which individuals were

motivated to develop. Additionally it uncovered whether individuals were more motivated by a general management role, a role in which they would manage others working in the same discipline, or a change management role; critical information for a business growing at 25% per year.

This was also an important tool in managing expectations with a talent pool considerably larger in number than places on the board. Tor states: *"The challenge is how you retain these key people who are looking for promotions when there simply aren't enough places on the board to facilitate this. To deliver the new business focus and manage the growth we need our talented people to stay with us and remain motivated."*

"The mapping technique allowed us to tie our business objectives to the needs of our top talent. We were able to move people into new areas, which couldn't always be upwards, but into positions that aligned with their skills, intrinsic motivations and at a pace they were comfortable with."

"Truly understanding our key people meant we could fulfil their goals and, critically for the business, keep them with us. It also gave us an insight into areas where we needed to recruit."

Marlene Boyd, organisational development director for Alfred McAlpine, says: *"Traditionally we promoted on technical ability but today's more complex clients mean that leadership skills and behaviour are more important. Our people have identified career development as a key driver."*



In 2001 Alfred McAlpine had reshaped its business away from traditional construction projects where customers were only present at the completion stage, to a business where its employees would be embedded with customers every day in a facilities management context.

The skills, motivations and discretionary effort needed to provide services in this sector are very different from the process orientated requirements of building a highway. People would need to engage with clients on a daily basis; they would become the visible face of Alfred McAlpine.

The organisation understood that values needed to underpin its business; that these would inform its leadership framework to create a culture where talented people with the motivation to provide discretionary effort and solve customers' needs would thrive and deliver the new business focus.

"It is leaders that embed values and it is crucial that talent is aligned to the right parts of the business where they can have the greatest impact, as this will then roll-out across the network they manage," Tor believes. *"An organisation's philosophy comes from its leaders."*

The Alfred McAlpine approach has produced annual sales in excess of £1bn and a talent base of 8, 500 employees.

For further information:



www.alfredmcalpineplc.com



www.getfeedback.net