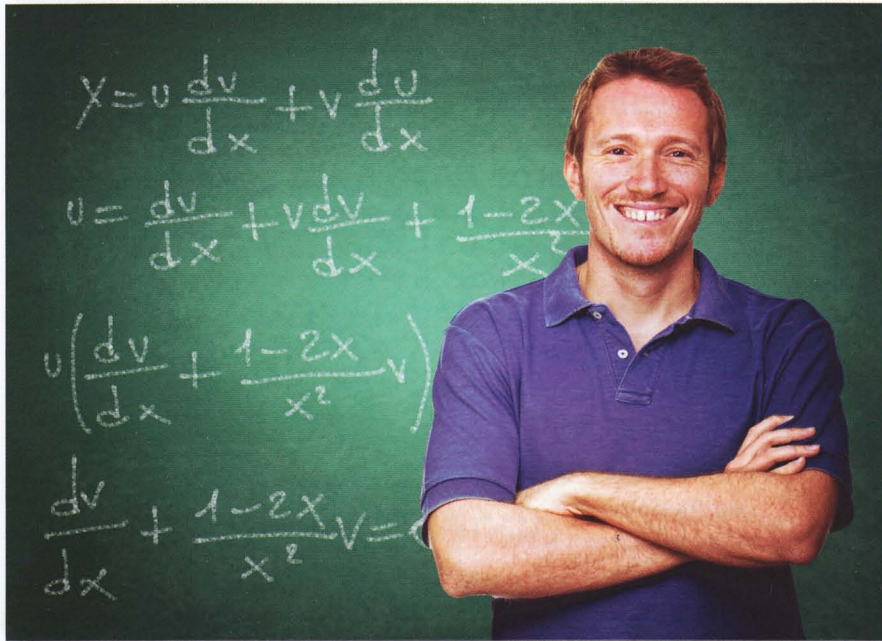


Transforming Education with Talent Management

By Julie Brandt



Talent management can be a key tool for promoting high performance among teachers and administrators.

Attracting, developing, and retaining employees, ensuring a pipeline of qualified people, and building a culture of engagement and productivity are important to the success of any organization. We call this “talent management.”

With the right technology support, talent management’s real value is that it allows organizations to identify high performers and future leaders, track and evaluate employee performance, and identify and address skill gaps with targeted training and

development—all though a centralized system.

Talent management’s best practices, such as learning and development, performance management, and succession planning, have relevance and applicability across all sectors, including education. According to analyst firm Bersin & Associates, companies with intermediate to advanced levels of talent management performed better financially during the recession and generated higher employee performance and lower overall voluntary

turnover (Levensaler and Laurano 2009).

If K–12 public schools have access to the same kinds of comprehensive workforce management tools and best practices available to corporate America, including software, support, and expertise, they can improve teacher performance and, by extension, empower teachers to help students succeed in the classroom.

Research shows there is a significant need for talent management. Fifty-nine percent of teachers and 63% of administrators say their district is not doing enough to identify, compensate, promote, and retain the most effective teachers (Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling 2009).

Granted, talent management is a relatively new conversation for the public education sector, which traditionally has not fully invested in these types of learning and performance management technologies or made the transition from administrative, tactical human resources (HR) to more strategic talent management. But today, K–12 public educators are spending more time and effort trying to ensure they have the right people in place to help students succeed.

With the growth of metrics-driven charter schools, combined with the Obama administration’s focus on accountability and connecting educational funding to performance outcomes, the people who manage public schools—charter or otherwise—are now discussing how learning, performance and talent management strategies (and software) can help improve and demonstrate teacher effectiveness.

Streamlining Professional Development

An outstanding example of how learning and talent management can have a positive impact on K–12 education is Teach For America, a 20-year-old organization that is one of the nation's largest providers of teachers in low-income communities.

Teach For America's growing network of corps members need to be skilled instructional planners and data-driven decision makers to ensure their students catch up academically to their more affluent peers. A few years ago, the organization sought a more efficient and effective way to help teachers develop skills in areas such as academic goal setting, assessment creation, and effective planning to achieve student learning goals.

Teach For America began to implement a learning management system (LMS) in February 2009. One of the organization's immediate goals was to use the LMS to reduce the approximately 60 hours of in-person classroom training for new corps members, particularly since the organization was challenged with only a five-week period of in-person training time before teachers entered the classroom. By late July, corps members were participating in a blended learning curriculum consisting of online training and only 25 hours of classroom training.

Today, almost two years later, Teach For America reports significant improvement in the productivity of corps members, who reach more than 450,000 students across the country.

The LMS has helped Teach For America prepare new corps members—many of whom are not certified teachers or education majors—for the classroom. The LMS helps train corps members to set quantifiable goals, to better track performance, and to create student-achievement-focused classrooms.

Specific benefits of the learning management system include

- Reduced time-to-productivity (25 hours of online training to supplement 25 hours of in-person training).
- Improved metrics and goal setting for classrooms (70% of corps members have set metrics and goals that align to highly effective outcomes for their classrooms, versus 42% prior to use of the LMS).
- Greater access to training because of the Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) LMS platform, that allows users a quick, inexpensive alternative to traditional delivery platforms because it is accessed entirely via the Internet/Web browser, meaning little or no IT implementation costs.

Teach For America is just one example of how learning and talent management strategies and software can help transform an education organization. And since

Teach For America's objectives for improving teacher performance and student achievement are the same as those facing all schools and school districts, the good news is that the technology can be leveraged to improve the effectiveness of all teachers, enable the ongoing development of talented educators everywhere, and move the entire teaching profession forward.

K–12 educators also don't have to worry about finding millions of dollars to build their own learning and talent management technology solutions. The systems and best practices that support ongoing evaluation and development of talent have existed for years, and the tools are flexible enough to manage the specific processes required in the K–12 environment. Therefore, the true challenge is actually an educational talent pipeline issue: bringing in high-quality talent and using talent management strategies and solutions to retain that talent and to support continued growth.

Empowerment and Accountability

As charter and traditional public schools work to demonstrate their results to secure necessary funding, schools and districts using talent management strategies and tools have access to a powerful centralized system to easily manage, track and report on their efforts to create even more effective teachers and administrators. And while talent management software vendors can act as facilitators—offering a technology solution to support this process—the content, metrics and values will continue to come from the K–12 education community itself.

There is a growing movement of accountability in education, and educators everywhere recognize this reality. This movement can serve as an opportunity for empowerment. Talent management strategies and software, when used properly and efficiently, can help empower teachers to be excellent at what they do, giving them the chance to say, "I am a highly effective teacher, and this is why."

You can't ask for more powerful results than that.

References

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