

Saville Assessment

WillisTowersWatson 



Build Talent Trends Report  
Round Table Discussion

Summer 2017



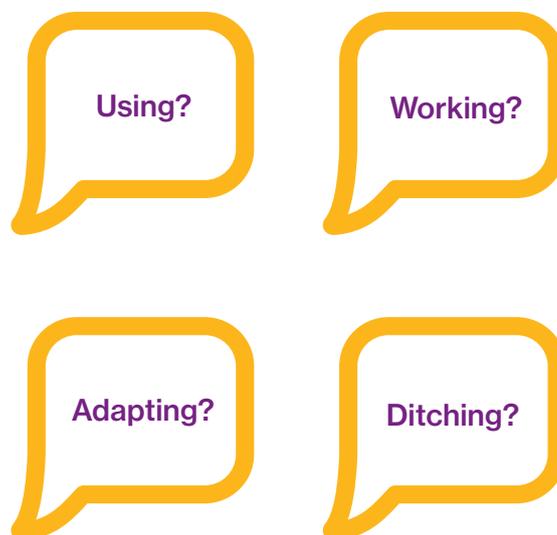
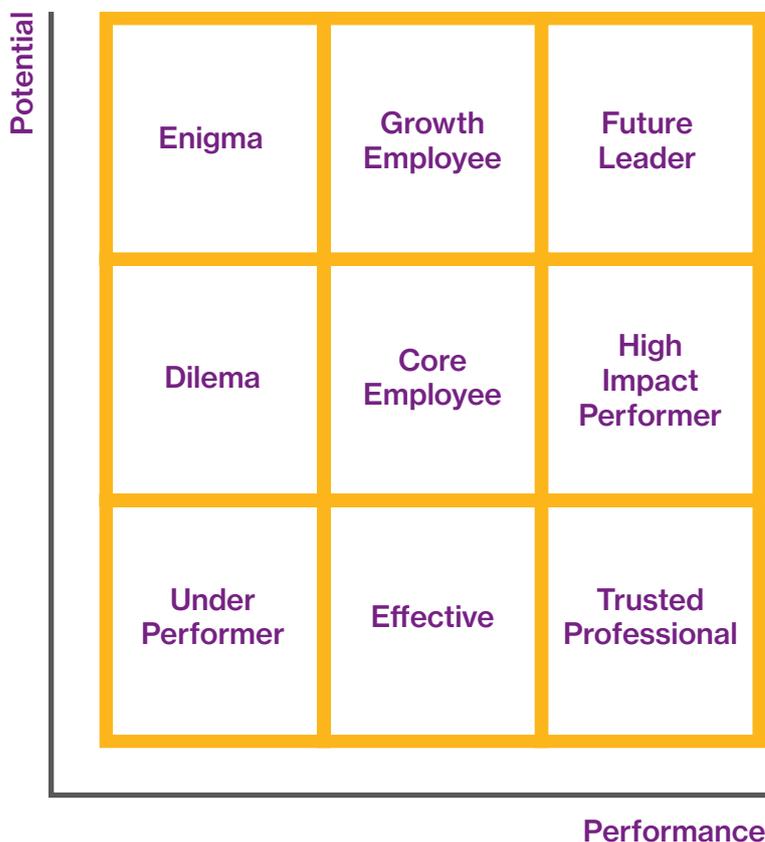
# Build Talent Synopsis

HR doesn't suffer from a lack of advice, particularly when it comes to talent assessment. The volume of noise around how organisations should build, retain and maximise their talent can be confusing. Nine-box grids, competencies vs strengths, engagement surveys; what's hot, what's not? what's in, what's out?

Saville Assessment brought over 200 HR Professionals together from a variety of organisations at its Talent Transformation Event Series. Together, in facilitated, open and candid discussion, delegates could cut through the noise and share real challenges, solutions and perspectives on how to maximise talent effectiveness now, and in the future. A common theme was reassurance. Delegates realised they were not alone in the challenges that they face; not behind the times in what they were doing and that there was no current trend which suits everyone when it comes to building talent.

Moving the conversation away from what organisations should be doing because it's in on-trend, common talent practices were discussed with questions asked around what is actually working? What have people ditched? Are there some approaches to talent management that people are still using effectively, but have been tweaked? A good example of this was the nine-box grid.

## On or Off the Grid?



Despite some unfavourable press, there was a lot of appetite for the nine-box grid and it is still widely used. To add value to organisational effectiveness, there were two key things to get right.

## Better Data

The effectiveness of a tool lives or dies on the information it is being fed. Delegates were more comfortable with measuring performance and the variety of metrics in place to do this, than potential. Reliable, valid and objective data is key to ensuring talent is identified and mapped to the right area. Many organisations still face challenges around defining what potential is and the bias and subjectivity which can creep in from line manager referrals. This was being overcome where organisations were using a personality assessment as part of the process for identifying potential, where individuals could self-nominate and where performance data was being quality assured by HR, and then calibrated together.

## Better Flexibility

Nobody wants to be part of what has been described as 'a yearly painful process'. Where delegates were using nine-box grids successfully, the model had been adapted to ensure it was relevant to the organisations' needs and continued to add value to building talent. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Some had reduced grids to four boxes, making it easier for managers to understand, engage and work with. Others were using a 12-box grid instead of nine. Delegates were increasing the value by increasing its agility using the grid to map talent laterally as well as horizontally; making it responsive rather than directive.

Nine-box grids can definitely fall into the friend or foe category for HR but feedback suggested there was still value to be gained from this trusted approach to talent development with it falling under the category of 'adapting' rather than 'ditching'.

## And our Survey Says...

Do people still think engagement surveys are worthwhile? The answer was 'yes'. The approach, frequency, content and format is changing but the value they offer is still recognised as important. So how are people using them well? Companies are experimenting with shorter, faster and more frequent 'pulse' style surveys. General opinion was that these can give the opportunity to listen to employees on an ongoing basis and track an employee's journey. In a lot of cases, these were happening in synergy with annual surveys, working together to make sure initiatives remained relevant and to address 'quick-wins' and short-term objectives as well as long term to drive better engagement.

Although the approach is changing, one of the most common problems remains the same; completion rates. Various ideas had proved successful with tackling this, in some cases seeing completion rates as high as 90%. These included:

- Using 'Survey Champions'.
- Linking with the organisations CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility).  
Completing the survey made you eligible to have a donation made to a nominated charity of your choice.

- Having live streaming moments on the intranet to provide indicators of what was being fed back to encourage people to make sure they had their say.

Ultimately, ensuring the data is acted on is critical to their success. Organisations could do them daily, weekly, monthly or yearly; via text, an app or email, but if the feedback isn't used they will fail. A clear pattern of 'you said, we did' on behalf of the leaders in the business is key to driving engagement and retention.

### Mind the Gap...

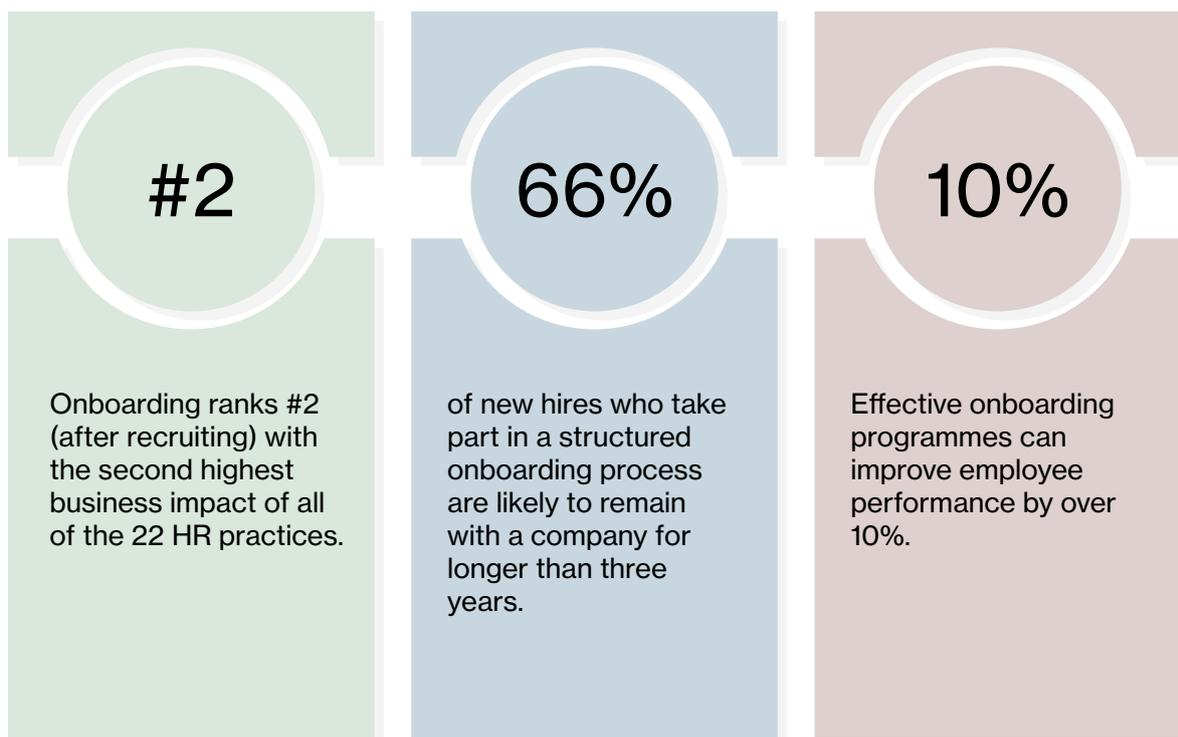
How organisations currently approach onboarding had the biggest gap in terms of what people were doing and potential to impact for the better.

Approximately 30% of organisations had a 'formal' onboarding process, whilst some admitted it was as little as a tick list of administration for the new starter. Current practices included implementing buddy systems, monthly lunches for new employees to get to know each other and placements with each area of the wider business.

Delegates agreed onboarding was important for setting expectations and engaging new employees early. This is backed by data illustrating the positive effect that well executed onboarding has for accelerating time

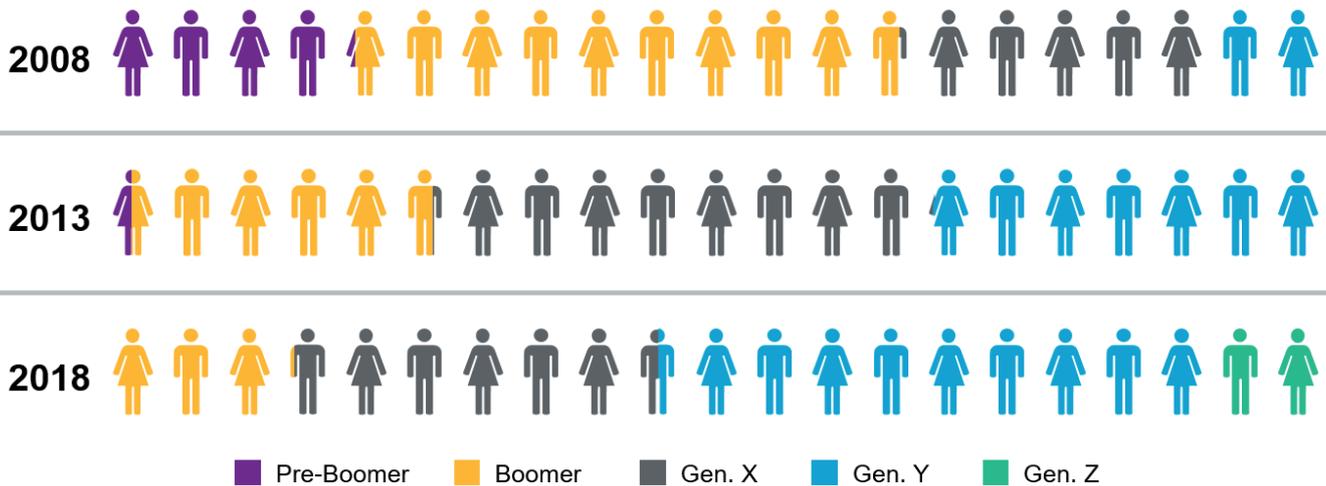
to productivity and reducing attrition. Delegates also discussed using onboarding to improve engagement from day one when people are commonly placed on probation, which was generally viewed as a negative way to welcome someone to the team. So, how can organisations onboard better?

- Agree whose responsibility it is. There was a lack of clarity as to whether this sat with L&D, HR or line managers. It was something that could be quite specific to the organisation, e.g. the line manager may not be available or work off-site. Overall, it was agreed that even if multiple parties are involved, one business area should own what the process looked like to maximise its impact.
- Use assessment data. Very few organisations were using selection data to inform onboarding but nearly all could see the value in doing so. Throughout the assessment process a wealth of data has been gathered about the candidate indicating how effective they will be in the role; how can this be used to make them effective as quickly as possible? Indicators on their work style, culture fit as well as potential strengths and limitations can all help shape how their initial induction should be pitched. Who would make an appropriate buddy or mentor, where are they likely to hit the ground running and what extra effort will need to be applied?



\*Source: Boston Consulting Group

## Organisation Demographic Shift



Two key areas dominated discussion around dealing with multiple and shifting demographics; managing expectations and managing pipelines. Take formal training as part of the 70/20/10 model. For one organisation at the more mature end of the spectrum, they wanted less online learning as they viewed it as 'free' so not 'proper' training, whereas the younger cohort of employees wanted more. This also had a flip side where some millennials felt so saturated with digital exposure that they appreciated an alternative platform of training.

The millennial generation upwards expect a faster path to promotion and development which can cause friction with older colleagues. Where it had been used, reverse mentoring was viewed as being very effective for facilitating good working relationships amongst different groups and leveraging the different skill sets they had to offer.

One of the biggest challenges facing organisations here was the characteristic of 'Boomers' being more loyal and holding a 'job-for-life', limiting promotion opportunities for upcoming talent. Concerns here were the Catch 22 of 'If we don't develop our high-potentials because we can't guarantee a fast-track or immediate route to the senior level, will they leave us? But if we do develop and train them with no immediate roles free, have we equipped them to take a role elsewhere?'

Delegates collaborated in groups to perform an 'Agile Audits' exercise. The exercise involved identifying what behaviours identify potential at different levels within an organisation – this could be completed at a more granular level for different roles. The aim was to provide a 'potential heatmap'. If current talent population was audited, talent pinch-points could be identified; a pinch-point being a high-risk area where fewer than 20% of the population possess the areas of strength required. As well as identifying what talent is needed in the current state, gaps between levels could also be identified. For example, our Graduate Lessons Learnt research illustrated the following profiles:

## Graduate Profile?



### Highest Rated

1. Evaluating Problems
2. Creating Innovation
3. Processing Details
4. Investigating Issues



### Lowest Rated

1. Providing Leadership
2. Showing Resilience
3. Driving Success
4. Giving Support

## What are key qualities of future leaders?



### Most important qualities

1. Driving Success
2. Providing Leadership
3. Building Relationships
4. Communicating Information



### Least important qualities

1. Processing Details
2. Evaluating Problems
3. Investigating Issues
4. Structuring Tasks

In this case (and the principle could be applied to others), if graduates are expected to be on a path to a senior level position, the gaps can be identified. To achieve this, it could be that the development route could be more lateral with stretch and rotation programmes to build that capability instead of linear.

Where gaps in the current state have been identified it could also offer valuable lateral opportunities, maximising talent effectiveness and avoiding an immediate linear direction of talent travel where there could be blockages to such a pipeline.

## Building Talent - Where Next?

What was evident from talking talent was that there appears to be no holy grail, no one-size-fits-all approach and certainly no trends that everyone should be adhering to when it comes to talent development.

Whilst having a breadth of understanding of what is out there is insightful, no-one should be told "nine-box grids are pointless", "ditch the survey", "strengths trump competencies", or essentially "what you are doing is wrong". Every organisation attending had its own nuances but what united them was the reassurance that they weren't alone in the challenges they faced.

## About Saville Assessment, a Willis Towers Watson Company

Saville Assessment help clients improve business performance across three key areas of assessment; Hire Talent, Build Talent and Lead Talent.

Our portfolio is designed based on extensive research into successful workplace performance and the critical relationship between talent, motive and workplace culture. We enable clients to identify potential, accelerate performance and achieve exceptional talent acquisition, and developmental results.

In the Build Talent space we work with our clients to support pinpointing and growing key talent with a focus on:

Talent  
Audits

Onboarding

Engagement  
&  
Retention

Performance  
Development

Individual  
Capability

Team  
Effectiveness

Employee  
Insights  
Surveys

To discuss how we could help you build  
your talent, please get in touch



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Our mission is to transform assessment around the world. We enable organisations to identify potential, accelerate performance, and achieve outstanding results. Our portfolio of leading-edge assessments are designed based on extensive research into successful workplace performance and the critical relationship between motive, talent and workplace culture. With representatives in over 80 countries we are transforming how organisations Hire, Build and Lead talent globally. Learn more at [www.savilleassessment.com](http://www.savilleassessment.com)