# Viewpoints

## Creating a winning employee experience

### Part 1: Acquiring new-age talent

By Abhishek Mittal, Vidisha Mehta and Shai Ganu

In evolutionary theory, there is a field of study called the *Red Queen* hypothesis. It proposes that every organism must constantly evolve and adapt to survive amongst organisms who are also constantly evolving. Business and HR leaders today find this hypothesis relevant to their operating environment.

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On one hand, we have an ever-changing business environment. Technology and automation are forcing organisations to take another look at their business models. Leaders are preoccupied with transforming their organisations and driving digitalisation. Willis Towers Watson's 2019 Pathways to Digital Enablement Survey shows that organisations across Asia are shifting their strategic priorities with a greater emphasis on agility, innovation and personalised customer experience as they embrace the use of data and digital technologies. The way work gets done is also changing fundamentally. There is an increasing emphasis on applying technology and automation to augment human performance and productivity. Furthermore, the notion of a traditional job is being challenged. Our data shows that organisations are gearing up to leverage a broader talent ecosystem, which includes gig economy workers, freelancers, partners etc. As a result of all of these changes, talent acquisition and retention are crucial to business success, yet increasingly complex.

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On the other hand, we have opposing organisms that are also ever-evolving — other organisations that compete with us for, among other things, the same talent pools. Our research shows that more than three out of five organisations have seen new competitors emerge because of digital technologies and feel threatened by start-ups. New skills are emerging at a fast pace and our Artificial Intelligence and Digital Talent Survey showed that more than 90% of organisations in Singapore are struggling to attract and retain digital talent.

In this context, organisations need talent more than talent needs organisations. So how do organisations sharpen their approach to talent acquisition and engagement strategies? In this article series, we will examine how new-age talent acquisition (the focus of this article) and retention strategies (the focus of part two) are crucial to business success.

**Willis Towers Watson**

## Talent acquisition priorities

There are three emerging talent acquisition priorities helping companies achieve their ambitions.

### 1. Understand your organisation's changing needs

First, we need to pay close attention to the changing skillset requirements of the business. With rapid technology change, the half-life of skills is shrinking at a brisk pace.

HR leaders need to understand this changing landscape and stay up to speed with what capabilities are needed by the business to execute the strategy. In doing so, we need to focus on behavioural as well as technical skills. This approach helps us to segment the target candidate pool, which is a useful input into sourcing strategy and candidate experience.

### 2. Redefine the candidate experience

Second, we need to rethink the very way in which we think about employees. Employees are essentially customers who want to buy interesting experiences from employers, using the currency of time. While we will subsequently cover the broader concept of employee experience in the next article, companies need to start paying more attention to the candidate experience as well.

HR leaders need to think about applying journey mapping and design thinking techniques to redesign hiring processes with a view to provide a world-class candidate experience. This could entail cutting down process waste, designing processes around personas, reimagining the traditional job descriptions to match how candidates like to consume job information, de-biasing job descriptions using technology, deploying chatbots and asynchronous interviewing.

Very importantly, the skillsets of a recruiter need to evolve to that of a talent relationship manager (like how we have client relationship managers in the business) and storyteller, who brings the ambitions of the organisation and the opportunities of the role to life.

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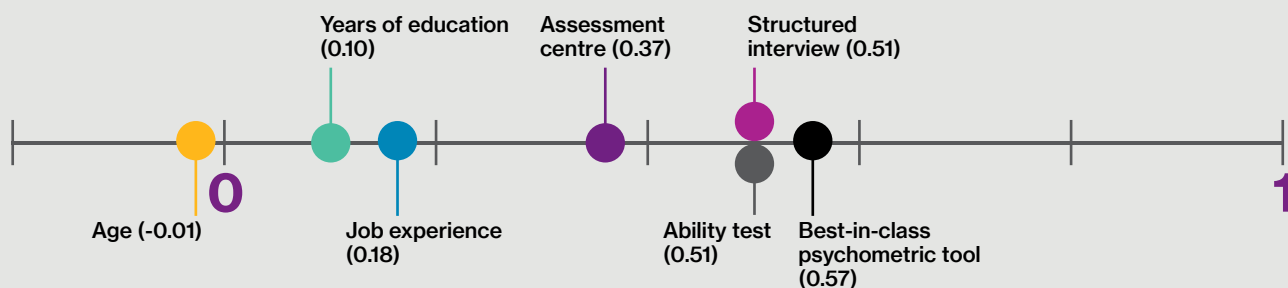
### 3. Streamline the hiring process

Third, we need to find ways to improve the efficacy of the hiring process. Hiring efficacy is measured by a low False Positive and False Negative rate. A False Positive is when we hire someone who doesn't work out (i.e., we falsely believed they would be great). A False Negative is when we did not hire someone who would have been great, but we couldn't spot the talent. A perfect hiring team would never hire anyone who didn't work out and never pass on someone who might have been great. Estimates of the cost of a bad hire range between 30-100%, with some sources citing even higher costs for critical talent and leadership roles.

## Using technology to up your game

Today, there are a number of hiring tools which promise intelligent hiring decisions using artificial intelligence (AI), game-based simulations and other technologies. We can all benefit from what evidence-based research tells us about the effectiveness of our hiring tools.

In a large-scale meta-analysis research spanning 85 years, general mental ability tests were shown to have the highest level of predictive validity for overall job performance (see Figure 1). One could attain similar levels of validity with highly structured interviews, but often such capabilities are not well-embedded across the managerial population in organisations. Thanks to advances in the science of psychometrics, there are tools available which can even surpass these levels of validity. The fundamental question to ask when selecting assessment tools is about their validity and whether they help you make smart hiring choices, rather than achieve speed alone.

**Figure 1**: Predictive validity of factors on overall job performance



Years of education (0.10)
Assessment centre (0.37)
Structured interview (0.51)
Age (-0.01)
0
Job experience (0.18)
Ability test (0.51)
Best-in-class psychometric tool (0.57)
1

Source: Extracted from Schmidt, F. & Hunter, J. The Validity and Utility of Selection Methods in Personnel Psychology: Practical and Theoretical Implications of 85 years of Research Findings. American Psychological Association: Psychological Bulletin. Vol 124(2)

The benefits of AI in talent acquisition are irrefutable, particularly for filtering a high volume of applications. We need to remember that algorithms do not automatically eliminate bias. It's still important to be vigilant about preventing selection bias in the data being used to train the AI. This happens when the data is not representative of the population, causing the technology to optimise the outputs for the dominant group. Techniques such as weighting underrepresented data points more heavily to make the AI aware of its importance can be useful in such cases. Used effectively, AI has the potential to streamline the hiring process while boosting diversity. But that can only happen if the algorithms behind the tools are immune to human bias.

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With social media and other open platforms driving increasing transparency about organisational culture and practice, delivering on the promise made during the talent acquisition process has never been more important. So the next question for employers is: once employees are hired, how to design their experience and journey with the same focus and attention that was once applied to customer experience. Employee experience, or EX as we call it, is not just a buzzword.

## Spotlight: DBS implements virtual bank recruiter

In 2018, DBS introduced JIM (Job Intelligence Maestro) for recruitment in its wealth management business; to review résumés, conduct pre-screening assessments, and conduct psychometric profiling for candidates; and the results have been remarkable:

- Prior to JIM, the bank's recruiters would spend up to 20% of their time collecting information and corresponding with candidates, before meeting with shortlisted candidates.

- By automating the pre-screening process, JIM saved approximately 40 hours a month, and reduced the amount of time to screen candidates.

- This has also enhanced the candidate experience by reducing the time to complete all application formalities.

- Candidates benefited from a faster, more accessible process, thanks to real-time engagement available 24/7 allowing candidates to engage with JIM outside normal business hours.

- JIM received encouraging feedback from candidates, with over 90% reporting a positive experience.

Source: https://www.dbs.com/newsroom/ DBS_introduces_Jim_Southeast_Asias_first_virtual_bank_recruiter

## For more information

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## About Willis Towers Watson

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