

The Talent Crisis!

Paul Davis

Endeavour consultant, Paul Davis, has been invited to address the annual conference of the NSW Local Government Managers Australia at Port Macquarie this September. Paul's topic is solutions to address the current talent crisis which is challenging organisations the world over. Paul has some innovative solutions to the current talent shortage.

Many organisations, encouraged by the Australian Government, are seeking skilled migrants as a solution to their shortfall of talented employees. Paul argues that this approach is not only unsustainable, because talented people are a finite resource at any given time, but that it steals talent from developing nations. Paul cites the example of the decimation of the medical profession in many sub-Saharan countries as an example. Paul also argues that 'headhunting', traditional approaches to 'calendar dictated' learning and development and common approaches to succession planning are also poor strategies to attracting, developing and retaining talented people.

Paul argues that we need to design compelling workplaces – workplaces where people actually seek out positions and then want to stay for a career because the corporate rhetoric actually mirrors reality. Compelling workplaces, Paul suggests, require organisations to live up to the image they spend so much time and money creating and disseminating. Often new employees come to an organisation with a set of expectations based, quite fairly, on the image that a company projects. When new staff discover there is a yawning chasm between the promise and the reality then disillusionment quickly sets in.

A good starting point for examining the promises, rhetoric and reality of an organisation is to look at how current staff feels about their workplace through an in-house survey. Tough questions need to be

asked about whether the leadership really does role model corporate values, whether the business is centred on a foundation of ethical practice, whether staff actually do realise the opportunities promoted to them and whether the corporate products and services have consistent messages with the messages communicated within the company.

Paul says that companies must recruit with purpose, train with attitude and talk with integrity if they hope to employ the best and the brightest.

Paul argues strongly that the talent crisis is as much a result of our own doing as it is a consequence of global policy and economics. We have failed to plan ahead with workforce needs and we have failed to evolve our systems and practices around developing our staff. There are many jobs that do not require specific skills or qualifications – just capable, well trained people who have a supportive team around them and are allowed to take calculated risks as they learn. In this sense we should think less about qualifications and even experience and focus more on long term plans to train and keep people with promise and potential.

Ultimately, if there is a shortage of people, then we simply must get better at using those we already have on the payroll.