

# *Future Thought* Series



## **Predictive Management in Call Centers: How to Optimize Investment in Human Capital**

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## Introduction

### Dr. Jac Fitz-enz, Series Editor

Call centers are a recent phenomenon in business. From a small, secondary service twenty years ago they have pushed to the forefront as a valuable marketing channel. Now more than answering information calls or dealing with complaints call centers are seen as a value adding function. With that has come the need to train, improve communication technology, provide support material and upgrade supervision. Many companies have gone offshore to lower labor rate countries to staff their centers. This has met with mixed success although it shows no sign of reversing itself. Once language skills are met, it seems possible to place the center anywhere on the globe. Success is not guaranteed by enhancing structural capital investments. At the end of the day a successful strategy is dependent on human behavior. The “trick” to optimizing call center value is described in the following paper. It is found within leadership.

### Call Centers in Today’s Global Economy

In today's global economy, it is critically important that call centers optimize their investment in human capital. Only the human capital asset can provide call centers with any real hope for meaningful market differentiation and operational success. Corporate strategy focused on developing a center's technological superiority, without greater attention given to the human capital asset, will result in a disastrous, short-lived plan doomed to failure. All assets, except the human capital asset, eventually become commodities. Beyond this, a host of external factors – an aging baby boomer population, job market instability, declining birthrates, and worker “unrest” – are combining to make it extremely challenging for call centers to optimize their investment in human capital. For most call centers, anywhere in the world, it is just plain difficult to find and keep good talent. Shifting world demographics, the aging workforce, and global mobility, as well as a myriad of internal challenges (i.e., limited resources, skill gaps, turnover, compensation plans, insufficient management skills, etc.) are forcing call centers to re-think their approach to talent leadership. The bottom line: call centers must do a better job executing their talent leadership systems (i.e., talent acquisition and deployment, talent development, talent benchmarking, and affirmation and differentiation). None of this will occur, however, unless call center managers demonstrate leadership by doing two critical things:

1. Possess the belief and “mindset” that talent leadership is the most critical variable in driving their organization's operational excellence.
2. Accept ultimate responsibility and accountability for becoming breakthrough call center talent leaders.

### Elements of a Winning Talent Leadership Mindset & Philosophy

At the core of creating a winning talent leadership mindset is the belief that accurate information drives effective strategies. This is good news for call centers, because, unlike many organizations in other industries, call centers already have great appreciation for accurate information. Operating metrics are a familiar form of call center information and receive intense attention in most call centers. But operating metrics alone are not enough. Call centers need to be passionately and diligently focused ahead on the knowledge, skills, and abilities (i.e., the com-

petencies) required in all their positions, especially leadership positions today and tomorrow. They need to be likewise focused on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of their incumbents (individual contributors and leadership alike), internal candidates, and external candidates as well. The call center with accurate information about position requirements, and the corresponding level of human capital knowledge, skills, and abilities available to fill those positions, is in the best position to be more strategic and intelligent when making all human capital decisions (i.e., selection, compensation, promotion, training, succession planning, performance management, etc.). In this definition, “passionately and diligently” means an unwavering commitment to measure, measure, and measure again.

Great call centers extend measurement beyond operational metrics to include significant focus on key predictive human capital metrics: skills, abilities, knowledge, engagement and retention levels, quality-of-hire, ROI, etc. These measures are examples of “leading indicators” that great call centers focus on and attend to as they know that such indicators do accurately predict ultimate operating metrics like revenue and profitability. All measurement should be directed at providing better information for improved decision-making.

At AlignMark, we like to say, “In Talent Leadership, like the field of medicine, prescription before diagnosis is malpractice.” It is not too far from the truth to say that call center leaders are engaging in malpractice when critical, strategic decision-making is attempted without rigorous attention to the predictive data and metrics. If a call center executive can lead managers and agents to arrive at a point mentally (through initial belief and eventual successes) where there is “passionate and diligent focus,” both on the targets that will drive its future success and the competencies needed to drive that success, much progress will have been made in building this core belief. The journey a call center team takes to arrive at a strong core belief is very important. That journey, coupled with a strong emerging belief that accurate information drives effective strategies, provides the foundation for other critical beliefs to emerge and become solidified. These beliefs, as they appear below, are shared by all great call centers:

- Better talent equals competitive advantage.
- Talent leadership “mindset” is the catalyst for action.
- Strengthening the talent pool is every leader’s job.
- Talent “gold standard” has been established (be a role model).
- Leaders, especially senior leaders, must be held accountable for aggressively developing center talent.
- Real money must be invested in talent leadership.
- Talent review processes are critical.

All of these beliefs should be the catalyst for action—positive action—and execution. According to McKinsey’s War for Talent surveys (200 companies; 1200 respondents) we would conclude that the percentage of companies engaged in positive talent leadership action and execution is very small. Indeed, when it comes to talent leadership, most organizations are failing, and fail-

ure is easily traceable to a weak mindset and belief. According to the McKinsey surveys, the percentage of senior managers who strongly agreed their own organization :

- Brings in talented people.....19%
- Develops people effectively.....3%
- Retains top talent.....8%
- Removes poor performers.....3%
- Knows the A, B, and C players.....16%

## External & Internal Challenges That are Raising the Stakes

Aging “baby boomers” (i.e., Bureau of Labor Statistics indicate in 2010, 24 million people will exit the workforce) declining birthrates, and volatility in the job market (i.e., a recent Manpower study surveyed 33,000 employers in 23 countries revealed that 80 percent were having a difficult time locating qualified candidates) are all raising the stakes on the human capital challenge. Global competition for talent is intense, and has resulted in both socio-economic and cultural challenges. Countries work hard to develop policies to attract talent with the social and technical skills to support their own economic growth, retain talent, and even reverse talent migration. However, the need for talent ultimately creates movement between countries. The United States, for example, relies on foreign talent in science and engineering. Clearly, the ability to attract and retain talent is vital to an organization’s success and overall sustainability.

Beyond the external factors, there are significant internal challenges that make it extremely difficult for HR, senior call center leaders, mid-level managers, and the call center first-line supervisors to believe in and execute winning talent leadership. The challenges include:

- Undesirable turnover
- Quality of hire issues
- Selection mistakes
- Limited resources for recruitment
- Rapidly changing scheduling needs
- Speed/rate of business change
- Limited time and budgets for training
- Skill gaps
- Insufficient management skills

- Insufficient supervisory business acumen
- Legal issues (adverse impact)
- Work/life balance issues
- Limited/sporadic use of performance management
- Employee disengagement
- Poor reward management
- Bench strength issues
- Downsizing

### The Power of Your Talent Leadership Value Proposition

An organization's Talent Leadership Value Proposition (TLVP) is the holistic sum of four critical talent leadership practices: (1) talent acquisition and deployment, (2) talent development and engagement, (3) talent benchmarking, and (4) talent affirmation and differentiation and their impact on multiple levels of business outcome, such as building capability, commitment, and alignment. See Figure 1. The TLVP continues to higher levels of business outcomes as well, such as individual and team excellence. All are directed toward driving business outcomes in a positive fashion. Regardless of the exact words used to capture a given organization's TLVP, one

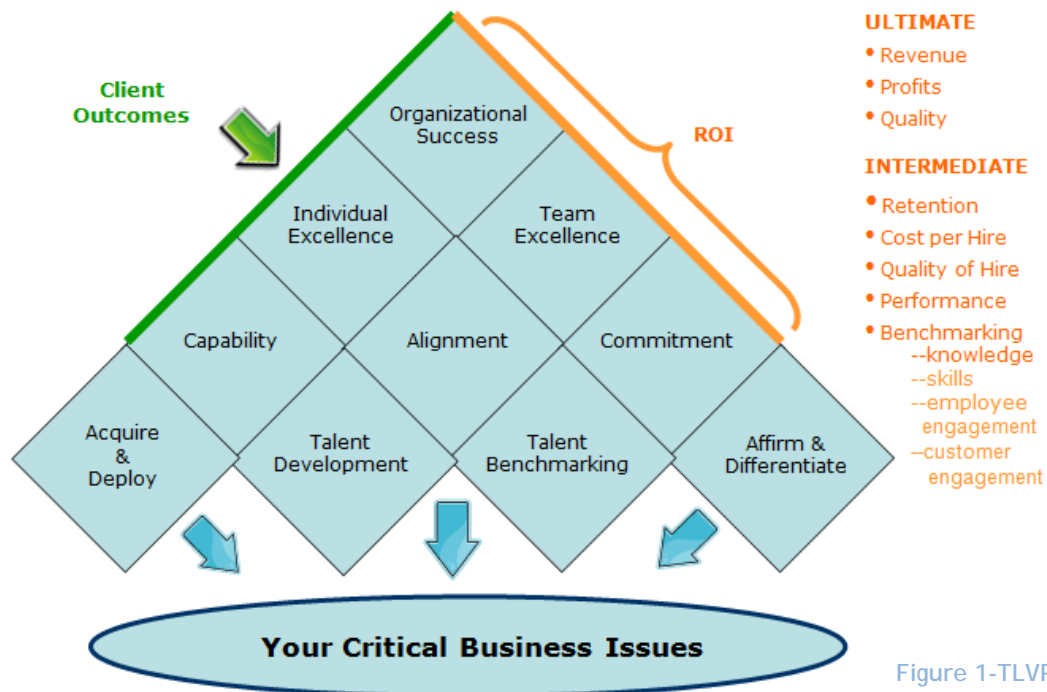


Figure 1-TLVP

thing is sure, the elements identified above need to be well thought out, believed in, communicated, executed, and measured—continuously.

At its core, a great TLVP encompasses everything employees experience and receive as they are employed by the organization—including satisfaction from the work they do, their comfort and “fit” within the culture, the quality of leadership, co-workers, compensation, etc. A great TLVP always encompasses the ways an organization fulfills the needs, expectations, and dreams of both incumbents and applicants and should provide the reason—everyday—for why a leader or individual contributor should recommit to giving their absolute best. More than anything, a great TLVP clearly connects winning talent leadership practices to business and operating metrics. As was discussed earlier, there exists no better way to create the belief in the value of the human capital asset, than by demonstrating the connectedness between winning talent leadership practices and operational success. What a great TLVP is not, is fancy words in a brochure, motivational posters hung around the workplace, or a loose connection of HR programs and initiatives.

At AlignMark, we believe an organization's ability to combat such challenges as the aging workforce, turnover, engagement issues, etc., exists in direct proportion to the strength and vibrancy of their talent acquisition and deployment practices, their talent development and engagement practices, their talent benchmarking practices, and how well they truly differentiate and affirm employee performance across the board. The most successful organizations develop creative recruiting strategies and tactics (e.g., career portals where the CEO or Senior VP of Operations delivers an engaging message to candidates); they screen and select only those candidates who demonstrate they have the highest probability of being successful, of staying (being retained), and of remaining committed; they provide a rich, engaging, dynamic, and compelling learning and performance support environment in which leaders and individual contributors are continually motivated and excited to become the best they can be; they provide benchmarking and certification opportunities for employees to prove—on a continuous basis—that they possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for success; and they reward and recognize those who truly execute. These are the foundational steps required for combating all external and internal challenges. In fact, great organizations, while mindful of these challenges, are never consumed by them.

A strong TLVP foundation leads to:

- Capability
- Commitment
- Alignment.

Great organizations excel in creating the belief that their people “can do” (i.e., possess the capability), “will do” (i.e., maintain their commitment), and “must do” (i.e., have the right alignment) that is required for success, now and into the future. To put it in different words, when talented people are trained and “nourished” to excel in their work, when they are provided a rich, engaging environment in which there is passion and excitement about doing great work and truly making a difference, and when they perceive a connection and alignment between their work and the realization of organizational goals and metrics—great things happen (i.e., individual and team excellence).

At AlignMark, we call that “Pull Magic”—where employees are passionate about being “pulled” in a direction of individual and organizational greatness. Many call centers, because they haven’t created this type of environment, achieve the opposite. In the absence of pull strategies, they resort to “Push” strategies, where people perceive being “pushed” in a direction most likely to benefit the organization – not the individual. Centers where push strategies are the dominant approach to driving organizational results tend to experience greater employee dissatisfaction, higher turnover, shrinking talent recruitment pools, and higher employee disengagement. Individual contributors lose sight of the relationship between their efforts and the organization’s success.

Push strategies facilitate the growth of organizational climates characterized by a division between management and individual contributors. Individual contributors feel disconnected. They increasingly disengage. A kind of “outcome myopia” emerges where decisions about discretionary effort and levels of engagement are based on what individuals perceive as good for themselves personally, effectively disregarding what is good for organizational success overall. Push strategies can encourage individual contributors to perceive management as a primary obstacle to the successful execution of their jobs. They foster the belief that their interests are in direct conflict with management’s. They view their work environment as “Us v. Them”, with “us” being the individual contributors, and “them” being management. The greater the push, the more visible the distinction becomes. And it doesn’t stop there. Push strategies quickly become self-perpetuating cycles. Because push strategies create employee resistance, management finds itself in the unpleasant position of having to “push” harder and harder to drive organizational results. Of course that leads to more resistance, which leads to more “push,” etc. Ultimately, that cycle has to be broken, and it can only be broken by the kind of intense commitment to improving talent leadership which will result in “pull” rather than “push.”

### Predictive Management: Talent Acquisition

According to the Society for Human Resource Management’s Talent Management Survey Report, the number one challenge for organizations today is building a deeper reservoir of successors at every level. This long view of talent management is especially true for call centers and is most relevant when considering successors for the multiple levels of leadership talent in a center. When attempting to attract, identify, and retain outstanding leadership talent, call centers must remain highly focused on the knowledge, skills, abilities, and “fit” of candidates. More than any other measurable asset, it is critical that all four of these – knowledge, skill, ability, and fit – align with job and organizational requirements.

Because so many call centers extract leadership talent from within the ranks of their individual contributor population, the focus on specific leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities tends to get lost. Over time, organizational fit is demonstrated; it’s easily observed. And in many centers this information alone leads to high performing individual contributors getting promoted to supervisory positions, often with little or no real evaluation of their capacity to lead others. The advancement rationale seems to be that individuals who are skilled and have excelled in one area will also be skilled and likely to excel in other areas, but of course this isn’t a reliable assumption. A much better basis for making advancement decisions lies in the deliberate measurement and alignment of knowledge, skills, and abilities required for leadership positions. Growing talent from within constitutes an excellent best practice, but failing to match candidates’ knowledge, skills, and abilities with the job requirements – particularly in the leadership domain – is certain to have devastating effects in the near and long term.

## Useful Measurement

Great call centers, as noted earlier, are passionate and diligent — through forward looking measurement — about identifying the profiles (i.e., knowledge, skills, work preferences, personality, etc.) of successful call center contributors — at all levels and positions today and into the near future. Nothing is static and insight into the future is essential. Once those profiles are identified, they become targets against which recruiting resources are deployed.

Within great call centers, it is typical for HR to create and implement sophisticated tools and processes that enable internal client groups to do a better job executing talent acquisition. The use of technology to help call centers source and screen talent is becoming more prevalent. Candidates can now visit an organization's web-site, be directed to their career portal, and click on a link to watch video of the CEO or Call Center Director delivering a dynamic and compelling recruiting message that both educates and inspires.

After experiencing such a powerful introduction to the organization, the candidate has the option to select from a menu of available positions. Candidates can then be presented with a brief "realistic job preview," after which they can self-select themselves out of the process prior to entering any identifying personal data. If they decide to continue, they enter some brief identification data and are then presented with a series of questions designed to determine if they are minimally qualified for the position. If they are deemed minimally qualified, they advance to a "work preferences" section where they respond to specific elements of the position (some of which may not be appealing, such as "You will be required to travel 60% of the time. Are you still interested in this position? Click 'Yes' or 'No'"). A candidate who (A) has entered their identification information, (B) has not been "knocked-out" for failing to meet the minimum qualifications, and (C) has not "self-selected" out because they are not interested in the position, then advances to a series of questions designed to capture their education and work experience. At this point, responses are scored "behind the scenes" as part of a scoring algorithm. The last section of this kind of technology-based sourcing and screening system may also include small simulations of parts of the job that assess a candidate's job-related skills. As an example, this kind of simulation could be as simple as a short "mock-up" of a frustrated customer call where the candidate must use his or her judgment to select an effective response. These responses are also scored within the scoring algorithm, resulting in powerful overall "readiness" data that can be used to differentiate one candidate from another.

## Enhanced Deployment

From a call center's standpoint, the deployment of a technology-based system that accomplishes the steps described above results in a number of organizational benefits most centers work hard to achieve, such as reduced turnover, low costs-per-hire, short times-to-fill, and an overall higher quality of hire (i.e., the best "leading indicator"). Couple all this with the positive branding elements associated with an engaging introduction, with the legal defensibility associated in using a standard protocol to determine minimum qualifications, and with the reduced risk of adverse impact associated with this process (individuals are defined as "applicants" later in a selection process when using the formula described above), and the overall power of an application process like this is enormously enhanced. With results like these, there can be little doubt this kind of solution is a winner. Of course, when a recruiting "back-end" is added which enables an organization to extract resumes to databases, track candidates, automatically stay in e-mail contact between hiring cycles, schedule interviews, etc., the system becomes even more robust.

It is important to understand, however, that these types of systems, and other technical systems and tools like it (e.g., assessment tools, performance appraisal systems, succession planning systems, etc.), are ways in which HR can add value by freeing call center leaders to focus on other “mission critical” issues. Yet, these very same tools and processes can, and often do, backfire when leaders place too much importance on them. The risk is that an attitude can quickly develop in a call center where leaders begin to perceive that sourcing and selection, performance management, assessment, etc., is handled by systems and processes that function independently and outside the span of their professional duties. They can begin to believe that Talent Management is primarily HR's job and responsibility. And, of course, that belief will be enormously detrimental to the operational success of the organization.

### Whose Job is Talent Management?

All call center leaders must assume ultimate responsibility for acquiring talent. After all, they are the most knowledgeable about the culture of the organization and the personality of their teams; they understand the work that needs to be executed; and they know the results that are required from the team members they manage. They are in the very best position to recruit and select the right people for their teams. Unfortunately, it is not an uncommon trend in call centers to develop processes and procedures for “relieving” leaders of this responsibility. But being relieved of primary accountability for the acquisition of talent ultimately creates bigger, more pervasive human capital issues over the long term. In order to achieve the big organizational benefits - reduced turnover, improved productivity and quality, greater achievement of team and organizational goals, it is absolutely critical that call center leaders assume the ultimate responsibility for talent leadership. That responsibility embraces the four foundational areas discussed earlier: talent acquisition and deployment, talent development, talent benchmarking, and affirmation and differentiation. HR's role is a support role. They are the coaches, not the players. HR's job is to provide the tools, processes, and systems that enable call center leaders to execute the four foundational elements of Talent Leadership at the very highest levels.

### A Leadership Index

To help call centers diagnose their strengths and weaknesses in the four foundational areas comprising Talent Leadership, AlignMark has created a talent leadership index. The AlignMark Talent Leadership Index (ATLI) is a powerful diagnostic tool that enables an organization's HR department and its internal client groups to assess the relative health of their talent leadership beliefs and practices. In fact, the individual elements comprising each foundational area have been proven to accurately predict capability, commitment, and alignment as well as ultimate metrics such as call center revenue and margins. The elements—themselves—are proven “leading indicators”. Call center leaders who create a winning environment in which each element is believed in and executed realize, in turn, significantly greater operational success than leaders who do not create such an environment. Therefore, with respect to talent acquisition, the “leading indicator” elements include:

- Application process should be straightforward, easy, and convenient for applicants to use.
- Application process should make a good “first impression” and should be perceived by applicants as fair and appropriate.

- Prior to interviewing, candidates are pre-screened to ensure they are minimally qualified for the position.
- Prior to interviewing and/or more in-depth assessments, candidates are ranked on preferred experience and skill information.
- Candidates who pass the pre-screen are able to schedule themselves for next steps.
- Candidates are provided immediate feedback as part of the screening process.

Call centers with excellent reputations in their communities may well be positioned to attract top talent, but excellent reputations aren't always a "given" for call centers. High employee churn often results in seeds of negativity germinating throughout a community. Misunderstanding or lack of information about what call centers do can negatively influence top talent from exploring opportunities with even the most outstanding call centers. The net result is that even deserving centers with good reputations can find it challenging to attract top talent. But acquiring top talent is not beyond reach. The principles described here are a powerful first step to meaningful improvement to better talent management.

### Predictive Management: Talent Deployment

AlignMark's three-part definition of Talent Deployment:

- Accurately measuring, through assessment, a candidate's deep-rooted skills, abilities, interests, and personality factors.
- Accurately matching a candidate's skills, abilities, interests, and personality factors to those positions and culture for which there is a high probability of their being successful and staying longer.
- Implementing the steps above at each level and position within the organization so that deployment decisions around both external and internal candidates are efficient and effective and, ultimately, drive individual and operational success.

Inferior deployment decisions, unfortunately, are commonplace in many call centers. Focus groups with CEO's and senior call center leaders clearly indicate the three most troubling deployment mistakes: (1) "quick quits" (i.e., employees who voluntarily leave within six months), (2) "fast fires" (i.e., employees who are involuntarily terminated within six months of their being hired), and (3) "bad hires" (i.e., people who are hired or promoted but do not excel). According to Spherion's Emerging Workforce Study, the average cost to replace an individual contributor in the U.S. is 1.5 times their base salary. Those are just the direct costs. Indirect costs, which are associated with decreases in productivity, team morale, and customer satisfaction and retention, are estimated to be 3 to 5 times direct costs. Clearly, deployment decisions are of critical importance.

### Solutions

When we asked senior leaders how their own call centers could best combat the three most troubling deployment mistakes cited above, they responded by indicating the importance of:

First, early elimination from the selection process those job candidates who would likely burn-out or underperform because they were not suited to the work and/or call center environment (as a means to combating the “quick quit” and “fast fire” issues)

Second, hiring only those candidates who clearly demonstrate that they have the skills, motivation and personality characteristics to excel in these roles now and into the future (as a means to combating the “bad hire” issue).

The focus group work done with senior leaders clearly demonstrated that an unwavering commitment, passion, and focus for providing applicants, new employees, and incumbents with real opportunities for success does make a difference. This work also reinforced the importance that organizations need to encourage and develop their talent leadership mindsets — that accurate information drives effective strategies. It is very clear that no significant progress can be made, by any organization, in creating a strong talent leadership mindset, or in the execution of the four critical foundation elements, without laser-focused attention to continuous measurement of their people's capabilities within their corresponding position requirements. The place for any executive team to start improvement efforts in their call centers is with a careful reflection of their personal commitments and beliefs, and then with a subsequent honest assessment of the relative “health” of their talent leadership beliefs and practices within the organization itself.

With respect to talent deployment, the “leading indicator” elements include:

- Selection instruments should yield some kind of “readiness” indicator.
- Selection instruments must be valid and reliable.
- Job simulation should be utilized.
- Assessments should also be able to deliver a basis for development planning going forward.
- Selection processes should be compliant with EEOC and ADA legislation.

### Predictive Management: Talent Development, Engagement and Benchmarking

Effective talent leadership results in robust measures on two critical “leading indicators” for every call center: employee engagement and turnover. Engagement, in fact, makes or breaks the bottom line. And turnover, a hot topic in the final days leading to the Department of Labor's gloomy prediction of 10 million more jobs than workers by 2010, is—without question— a formidable obstacle to profitability. Effective talent leadership in the immediate and foreseeable future will determine for many businesses, especially call center outsourcers, whether or not they remain viable. What matters now, however, is knowing how to manage both engagement and turnover.

To do this, call centers must know how committed, capable and aligned their people are. This returns us to the dictum reiterated throughout this: all three “leading indicators” must be measured continuously, because accurate information drives effective strategies.

How does a call center organization strengthen their leadership capability as a foundation for creating an engaged workforce? Some of the “leading indicator” elements appear below:

- Objectively assessing supervisory and managerial skills
- Leveraging assessment results (i.e., Development Planning)
- Skill-based training programs that truly “raise the talent bar”:
- Analysis & Problem Solving
- Initiative
- Influence
- Team Building
- Situational Style of Interaction
- Change Management
- Talent Leadership
- Formalize mentoring relationships for newer supervisors and create structured opportunities for newer leaders to “process” their growth as leaders with more tenured and mature leaders

While all of these help “raise the talent bar”, the single most important and immediate need is providing all call center leaders with talent leadership training opportunities where leaders begin to shape a more positive mindset, come to a greater appreciation of the full scope of their talent management responsibilities, and begin to take action for being outstanding talent leaders.

With respect to Talent Development, Engagement and Benchmarking, some of the “leading indicator” elements include:

- Managers and supervisors need to be held accountable for talent leadership
- Retention goals should exist for every manager and supervisor
- Training for each individual is based on accurate diagnostic information

- Learning sessions are brief, engaging, and experiential
- Engagement survey's should be executed once per year—at a minimum
- Managers and supervisors empower call center agents to take charge of their own development

The process of building employee engagement is ongoing and is best fostered through meaningful and enriching work experience. Effective employee engagement, a mixture of tangible and intangible factors, is the result of an environment of stimulation, development, learning, support, and contribution. This will require, at a minimum, strong leadership, a sense of shared destiny, autonomy, accountability, and the kinds of opportunities for development and advancement addressed in this Chapter.

### Predictive Management: Affirmation & Differentiation

Earlier we indicated that only 16% of organizations separate employees into performance categories – “A”, “B” and “C” players. If a call center does not engage in a systematic approach to separate talent, both in terms of performance and potential, then it becomes impossible to make the best strategic human resources decisions (i.e., rewards, promotion, succession planning, and termination decisions). After all, agents who consistently execute at the highest levels should be rewarded more than employees who don't.

Great call centers distribute the investments they make in their people accordingly. They differentiate on things like pay, bonuses, opportunities, shifts, and recognition. They reward their best performers with fast-track growth and pay them substantially more than their average performers. They develop and “affirm” their solid performers who always trying to raise their game. They also assertively address and remove employees who are underperforming. Their belief, a perceptive and correct one, is that condoning or tolerating poor performance is destructive to high performers' motivation for greater success and achievement; leadership's actions always speak louder than words, and few things communicate organizational indifference and apathy more loudly than treating high, average, and low performers exactly the same.

Most call centers, unfortunately, struggle with this concept. Typically, they don't have a way to identify the A's, B's and C's, nor do they have a systematic approach and process to ensure that appropriate actions are taken. Most organizations, frankly, conduct one-day succession planning exercises at corporate headquarters; however, those exercises have little honesty and little resultant action. On the other hand, great call centers have a passionate and diligent focus on executing “talent reviews.”

With respect to Talent Affirmation and Differentiation, here are some of the “leading indicator” elements:

- Performance Management is a joint partnership between manager and employee.
- Performance Management is continuous and on-going.
- The “process” is more than a “form” or “software.”

- Managers are trained to separate the A's, B's, and C's.
- Performance criteria are valid.
- Final ratings based on "what" and "how."
- A-rated employees receive substantially more organizational investment than B or C rated employees.

### Conclusion

To what extent are your talent leadership processes (which include a winning mindset) contributing to, or detracting from, your operational excellence? Are your processes helping you Win or Lose? As we have shown throughout this paper, the answer to this question, is critical. Research clearly shows that great call centers: (1) enjoy higher engagement and retention levels of their most talented agents, (2) experience higher quality and customer satisfaction results, (3) realize significantly higher profit and revenue levels and (4) excel in the four foundational areas that comprise "talent leadership".

At we have spent over 30 years partnering with all types of organizations across the globe. Our focus and unwavering passion is helping our clients optimize the investment they make in human capital. Our hope and challenge to HR leaders, senior leaders, managers, and call center employees, anyone who has taken their time to read this discussion, is to recognize that the foundational elements of talent leadership execution should be first on your list of priorities. If you are an HR or call center leader, ask yourself the following four questions:

- Do I believe that talent leadership is the most critical variable in driving operational excellence? If you don't believe this, then it will be impossible for you to exact positive change in your organization.
- Has my organization made it a priority to cultivate and shape a positive talent leadership mindset? It is critical that all managers and supervisors engage in talent leadership workshops, mentoring relationships with more seasoned leaders, and debriefing or "processing" sessions in which leaders discuss the ways in which developing and maintaining a positive leadership mindset can be challenging.
- As a leader, am I passionately and diligently focused on the measurement of the knowledge, skills, abilities, as well as the "fit" (personality), that ensure operational success? If not, take this to your boss and share your desire to become more focused on measurement! Enthusiastically persist until those around you join you in your commitment.
- What is the "health" of my center? Review the Talent Leadership Index twice a year and record your answers so you can observe and share improvements over time.

Finally, begin executing; measure again and again.

## Authors

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## About Alignmark

AlignMark, Inc. is a leading provider of innovative human resource products and services created to assist call centers. Our vision is to help our call center clients optimize their investment in human capital by offering leading-edge, cost-effective solutions to their most challenging business problems (e.g., low unemployment, aging workforce, job growth, turnover, etc.).

AlignMark, Inc. has been a leader in the human capital field for over 30 years, dating back to the original assessment center work at AT&T in the late 1960's. Since then, AlignMark has assessed hundreds of thousands of employees using its' technology-based assessment solutions. AlignMark is headquartered in Maitland, Florida with offices in Toronto, Canada and Bangalore, India. Phone: 800-682-4587; Web Site: [www.alignmark.com](http://www.alignmark.com).

## About Human Capital Source

Human Capital Source (HCS) has been recognized for decades as the authority on human capital performance strategy, analysis and measurement. HCS is a robust source for those seeking information, advice and solutions to manage high performing workforce assets. HCS offers the highest quality research and consultancy services through its staff of seasoned veterans from Fortune 500 firms in technology, finance and retailing.