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TALENT MANAGEMENT AT SIMAC

Which future skills are of largest strategic importance for the Danish maritime industry as well as shipping businesses in general?

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Abstract. The maritime industry and shipping companies in general, have worked with talent management from a specializing point of view i.e. if you are a navigator, you will become even better, if you train and enhance your navigating skills every day. Recent research focuses on identifying personal skills rather than professional ones, and thus training these skills in different and challenging surroundings. But before you start preparing a "Start-up Talent Program", you must identify what talent skills are required within your business field, and which skills will be sought after in the future by the maritime industry. It is estimated that 10 per cent of the students have talent, and they possess a special gift [1]. The question is now, how to define it.

"Measuring talent is a straightforward enterprise: it simply corresponds to outstanding performance in the use of specific skills of any occupational field" [1]. But what is talent, and how do we identify talent in such correlation, and what are the specific skills?

How do we define talent within the Danish maritime industry, and what skills must be spotted and developed? Having this in mind, two lecturers at SIMAC have made individual interviews and focal group interviews with HR managers and other decision makers from different businesses within the maritime industry, as well as students at SIMAC.

Based on semi-structured interviews, the main purpose of the interviews was to stress out and define, *what is talent?* – a definition is given from shipping companies', industries within the maritime industry and from the students' perspective.

Which future skills are of largest strategic importance for the Danish maritime industry as well as shipping businesses in general? The respondents agreed on the fact that: A talent is a person, who possesses a certain skill, and delivers top-performance. Defined in a business correlation it is a skill or skills of strategic importance, and they can support, underpin and promote a company's competitiveness. Based on the interviews, the respondents defined talent as specific prerequisite i.e. unique qualifications. Some people possess these unique qualifications more than others, they are hard and complicated to achieve, and they are difficult to develop, as they need more than just normal training [2].

How do we define talent in the Danish maritime industry – what skills are required in order to possess talent? Based on the interviews, the primary markers in a talent definition: is a person, who possesses *spirit*, he or she is *engaged* in his or her work, by nature they are *curious*, *social competent*, and *innovative*, and he always possesses a *holistic approach* of every situation he or she engage in [2].

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Conclusion. Our analysis shows that the definition of talent is a person, who possesses a certain skill, or skills. Hence, we have been able to classify, that the required skills within the maritime business, are skills like spirit, engagement, curiosity, social competence; innovativeness and they have a holistic approach.

Key words: talent management, skills, training, effectual entrepreneurship

1 INTRODUCTION

According to a global survey performed by McKinsey, today more than ever, companies rely on talented employees and the way their talent is managed to gain competitive advantage [3].

This dissertation starts by acknowledging that in order to attain efficient talent management the organization must understand what talent means in relation to human performance, and how to incorporate talent management at a strategic level [3].

The research focuses on identifying - how the Danish maritime industry can successfully manage talent strategically within the organization. In order to conclude on this question, we have to ask ourselves 2 underlying questions:

- How do we define talent within the Danish maritime industry, and what skills must be spotted and developed?
- Which future skills are of largest strategic importance for the Danish maritime industry as well as shipping businesses in general?

2 METHODS

In this research, we will use semi-structured interviews, as it consists of several key questions that help to define the areas/the field questions to be explored. Furthermore, by using semi-structured interviews, it is thus possible to diverge in order to pursue a statement/response in more detail [4]. The flexibility of this approach, allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants but may not have previously been thought of by the interviewer.

To determine what talent skills are important, the research is based on qualitative methods i.e. interviews, as it provides a more thorough and a deeper understanding of what talent really is. As this research focuses on finding a new way of exploring and defining talent within the maritime industry, it is not possible to find relevant literature on this subject. Therefore, qualitative research interviews are of most importance as it explores the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of individuals on talent management.

The interviews studied this phenomenon, where detailed insights are required from individual participants. Second, personal interviews are also particularly appropriate for exploring sensitive topics, where participants may not want to share certain issues in a larger group environment.

Focus group interviews were used in order to explore this phenomenon. Students from SIMAC are selected, and it is important for us to set up groups that are already familiar with each other i.e. they enjoy a comfort and familiarity which facilitates discussion or the ability of challenging each other comfortably. Two focus groups are identified one representing junior officers and another one representing senior officers.

By this, we are interested in finding new perspectives on talent, and to see if there is a different perception on this issue. However, we decided on working with small focus groups, hence to ensure an interaction which is the key to a successful focus group.

The main purpose of the interviews is to stress out and define, *what is talent?* – a definition is given from shipping companies', industries within the maritime industry and from the students' perspective.

The length of interviews varies depending on the time available from the respondent. However, on average, talent interviews last 20-60 minutes.

3 HOW DO WE DEFINE TALENT WITHIN THE DANISH MARITIME INDUSTRY?

What is talent and how is it expressed? Talented persons are not afraid of trying something new; they seek challenges i.e. in their profession or their personal life's. They dare go upstream and try something new, even if there is a chance of failure. They are first-movers, as they commence new things, just to see if they will gain further knowledge of something new. One of the focus groups classified these people, as geeks, but in a positive way of interpreting their fundamental behavior [2].

Talented people show immense surplus in regards to their business field as well as in their everyday life. This makes them cable of helping other's e.g. if one has difficulty in understanding new theory, or students that have difficulty in finding their own learning cycle, they help! The students stated that these people will become good mentors and advisors for the new students entering SIMAC. One of the students did notice that: "These people do have a very good memory, as they tend to draw different theory from other subjects, and use these different theories when relevant" [2].

Talented persons are innovative. When looking at a new product they like to add new features into the product i.e. they are able to identify new demands and

needs. They are cable of innovating and developing new product solutions based on marked needs.

“If you have a look at COOL4SEA, they had a fantastic idea, they look at a problem at sea, and thought, what can we do in order to help them, and they were eager to find a new approach to a cooling system” [2].

When looking at developing new processes, talented persons are able to make a 360 turn around process. They commit themselves 100% to the assignment, and look out for a new approach [2]. Bringing talented people into a project has several advantages.

“It helps organizations identify problems before they even begin the brainstorming sessions. You can put them in any position and they will fulfill that position successfully finishing that task with success” [2].

Today, you will see a talented person as a person who possesses discipline – they like to work hard, they are very ambitious, they like to make a difference and they possess a certain drive. This means, that they are able to carry out any assignment within shorter time, than a normal employee [2]. Also you see them moving up the career ladder really quickly. If they are not challenged on the job, they move on to another organization, where they can find new and challenging assignments. Some of respondents even claim that the talented are very competitive, – and they like to compete – especially with themselves, and they constantly focus on their performance.

The respondents generally expressed positive feelings about being identified as a talent by their professors. However some of the respondents mentioned there might be increased pressure or anxiety around talents, as there might be high expectations around that person and on their performance [2].

4 WHICH FUTURE SKILLS ARE OF LARGEST STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE FOR THE DANISH MARITIME INDUSTRY?

To sum it up, it is now possible to identify 6 core personal values:

- Commitment and Engagement
- Curiosity
- Spirit
- Social competence
- Innovative
- Holistic approach

They will become tomorrow’s new leaders, taking action on things; they are skilled leaders as they understand the basic needs of their employees. Talent management is often referred to as the leadership pipeline [5].

Providing education to build expertise—and thereby boost performance—is fundamental to an effective talent program and to any dynamic organization.

5 WHICH PRINCIPLES ARE DEFINING THE WORK ON TALENTS AT SIMAC?

The theories of effectual reasoning advanced by Sarasvathy and Read (2001) proposes a decision making process that differs from traditional views of decision making used in the management sciences. The main differences being the disparity between the “Causation” and “Effectuation” point of view [6].

- **Causation:** The focus is on achieving a desired goal through a specific set of given means. Causation invokes search and select tactics and underlies most good management theories.
- **Effectuation:** The focus is on using a set of evolving means to achieve new and different goals. Effectuation evokes creative and transformative tactics. Effectual logic is the name given to heuristics used by expert entrepreneurs in new venture creation.

Traditionally the future is predicted through plans and knowledge without interaction with stakeholders. Objective data is analyzed with the purpose of decision making on strategies, plans and resources – this is known as the causational approach to problem solving.

“Effectuation” is a methodical approach enabling a talent to turn professional competences into action and achievement. The “effectuation” approach creates solutions by interacting with processes and stakeholders. The “effectuation” approach works from the thinking that innovative processes are less rational and linear than the causal approach.

Learning processes are filled with unpredictable incidents, actions and initiatives. Corporation and successive amendments creates a more heuristic path. The road to success is not given and according to Sarasvathy (2001) these unpredictable processes are the key to entrepreneurial success and can also be related to talent management [6].

The “Talent Programme” at SIMAC is based on the 6 talent characteristics stated earlier. Furthermore the content of the programme is developed and designed on the 5 principles of “Effectuation” [6]:

1. The bird-in-the-hand : means : who I am ? – What I am ? – whom I know ?
2. The affordable loss principle : risk : what can I afford to lose ?
3. The crazy quilt principle : partnerships : pre-commitment from partners and stakeholders
4. The lemonade principle : contingencies : ability to act on surprises

5. The captain-on-the ship : control : focus on activities within own control

The talent programme will embrace these 5 principles in all modules with the purpose of creating a theme of a pragmatic and activity based learning platform with the outcome of realizing new ideas and opportunities. Given different scenarios and operational challenges the students will define which principles have the most relevance and evidence in the given situation. The students are grouped in random teams making it essential to act upon resources, means and professional competences in hand. This approach will create a belief in the student that he is able to solve and be part of complex and value creating processes within his own project or in an existing company. According to Bandura (1995) this is related to as "*Self Efficacy*" [6].

The different aspects of the talent programme aims to operationalize – not "examinize" - the learning process in order to create value for the student. The student is exposed to different businesses enabling them to create partnerships and relations – learning to respect professional as well as personal competences within other people.

6 CONCLUSION

Based on qualitative research and empiricism within the maritime industry and qualified students, our analysis shows that the definition of talent is a person,

who possesses a certain skill, or skills. Hence, we have been able to classify, that the required skills within the maritime business, are skills like spirit, engagement, curiosity, social competence; innovativeness and they have holistic view.

The Talent Management Programme at SIMAC is based on a methodical approach "Effectuation" enabling a talent to convert professional competences into action and achievement.

By focusing on talent management and the core values identified – it is our belief that the maritime industry in Denmark will be able to secure and develop their current market position with the philosophy : "*A mile Ahead*"

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