

2020 OUTLOOK:
THE FUTURE
OF EMPLOYER
BRANDING

PART THREE OF
A FOUR-PART
SERIES

Talent Inside Out

HOW TALENT PERSONAS INFLUENCE HIRING DECISIONS



universum

Hiring companies use personas to look beyond traditional measures of competence. In the future, employers will consider more elusive success factors such as

PERSONALITY AND FIT.



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Making talent a strategic asset

In the first eBook in this series, we introduced the concept of *talent as an asset* – the notion that if talent is to be a critical driver of growth and innovation, it should be treated with the same degree of discipline, oversight and investment as found in areas like finance or product development.

Already we see the beginnings of this movement. Talent attraction and retention is no longer just an art, but increasingly also a science. In the last five years, incredible advances in technology have allowed C-level executives, talent managers and HR to build more nuanced profiles of prospective candidates and current employees than ever before.

Assessments

Not long ago, companies used time-consuming and expensive tools like the Myers–Briggs to test candidates. Given the resources



required, these personality tests were only used with senior hires. Nowadays, short, inexpensive surveys can assess qualities like creativity, patience, persistence and problem-solving. Some companies even use online games to test skills and *fit*.

MEDIAN COST OF TURNOVER
FOR MOST JOBS:

21%

OF AN EMPLOYER'S SALARY.

– Center for American Progress

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Sourcing

Online candidate sourcing tools use complex algorithms to seek out attractive candidates who may not even be looking for a job. What's more, these solutions can dig up factors such as how influential an individual is within a network of strategic value to a hiring company, or even hobbies that may shed light on an individual's level of discipline or well-roundedness.

Predictive tools

Advanced predictive tools let employers know who within the company may be more likely to quit by using factors such as performance reviews, tenure, geography and even personality tests.

Leveraging tools like these, however, requires a massive shift

within organizations. No longer can the job of talent attraction be concentrated within isolated teams, but it instead requires multidisciplinary decision-making and a clear mandate from C-level.

If talent is an asset, and talent planning and forecasting a critical strategic tool within the organization, what steps are organizations taking to adopt this mindset? One area where we see the first glimmers of this changing approach is in the adoption of persona-based recruiting. It is a bellwether of sorts – an indication that a company is now thinking beyond the traditional ways of recruiting candidates and honing in on factors that were once considered intangibles. What type of personality is most likely to succeed within the organization? And how should we identify, recruit and motivate these individuals?



AVERAGE COST TO HIRE A
NEW EMPLOYEE (USD):

\$3341

- Society for Human Resources Management

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Why personas?

A persona is a fictional representation of your ideal hire; it encompasses both quantifiable factors (such as area of study, mastery of technical skills or years of experience) as well as qualitative factors (such as motivation and aspirations).

The idea behind personas is this: The reasons why an individual is successful within an organization is partially tied to technical skills or quantifiable factors, but other more elusive factors are just as critical. A candidate's work ethic and values, among other things, can determine that oft-elusive success factor: *Fit*. And in a job market with a talent shortage in certain fields, companies can teach technical skills much more easily than they can adapt an individual to fit in. (See sidebar, *Rise of Corporate Universities*.)

A CANDIDATE'S WORK ETHIC
AND VALUES, AMONG OTHER
THINGS, CAN DETERMINE THAT
OFT-ELUSIVE SUCCESS FACTOR:

FIT.

RISE OF CORPORATE UNIVERSITIES AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR TALENT ATTRACTION

While corporate training programs have been around for decades, the current sophistication of these programs (dubbed *corporate universities*) is unprecedented. Tech and engineering giants like Google and Boeing, and global services firms like JP Morgan and Ernst & Young (EY) are investing in education and training like never before. These are comprehensive education programs that teach technical skills, soft skills, and even impart an organization's culture and values. High-growth global companies view them as a critical way to develop and retain top talent.

For organizations with corporate universities, recruiting individuals based on specific skills is less important than recruiting someone with great *potential*. It matters less that John Smith is an expert in a particular programming language if he has shown that he is a fast-learner, a hard worker, an excellent communicator and intensely loyal to his employer. In this scenario, John's educational background, for example, may be less important than the results of a personality test or his assessed cultural fit.



Companies are paying much more attention to soft skills and personality types than ever before because they now recognize how important those factors are, and because the technology has evolved to offer a way to test for them at a low price point.

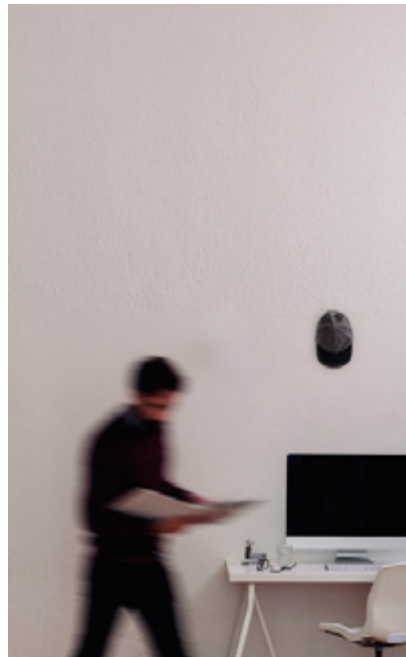
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Achieving fit matters even more for Millennials

60%

OF MILLENNIALS REQUIRE A "SENSE OF PURPOSE" FROM THEIR PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYER.

The issue of *fit* between employer and employee will become increasingly important as Millennials move into managerial and leadership roles. Millennials – who will make up 75 percent of the global workforce by 2025 –



have very different ideas about what makes an employer attractive, and what type of work life they want for themselves:

- Millennial research from Universum shows nearly one half (47 percent) say they would consider giving up a well-paid and prestigious job to gain better balance.
- Deloitte reports 60 percent of Millennials require a "sense of purpose" from their prospective employer.
- Also from Universum, research shows nearly a third (32 percent) fear they will not find a job that matches their personality.
- Universum's Global Student Survey confirms that softer values are becoming more important to students all over the world and confirm the quest for purpose.

FINDING SMART CREATIVES REQUIRES A DIFFERENT STRATEGY



In their recent book, *How Google Works*, Eric Schmidt (ex-CEO and current executive chairman, Google) and Jonathan Rosenberg (former SVP of products, Google) talk at length about "smart creatives". They are the restless, intellectually curious risk-takers; as the book explains, they combine "technical depth with business savvy and creative flair". And they power high-growth, global companies. Or, as Schmidt and Rosenberg argue, smart creatives are "the key to achieving success in the Internet Century".

Smart creatives are not found by filtering for Ivy League-only students or looking for bright engineers. Smart creatives have a combination of skill sets – some hard and others soft – that are impossible to recognize in a CV.

Finding and attracting the most talented knowledge workers is among the most critical strategic tasks facing organizations. These are those talent-as-asset workers that companies need most.

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Moving beyond traditional measures of attractiveness

39%

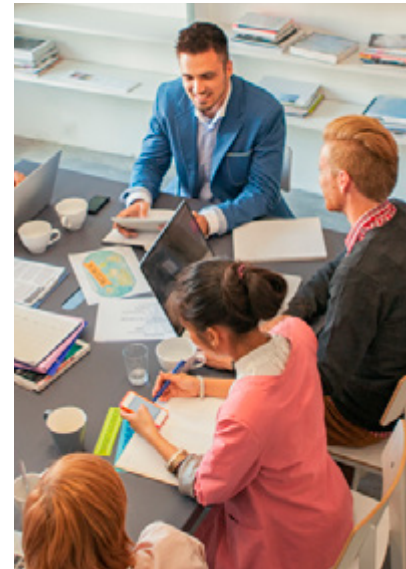
SAY CULTURAL FIT IS AN
IMPORTANT QUALIFICATION.

Our research confirms the shift: Organizations are prioritizing things like “personality” and “cultural fit” – both of which were cited more often than pedigree (i.e. degree from a specific university) or grades.

Work *experience* remains the top qualification – 58 percent list it as a top factor when recruiting candidates for executive/office positions five years from now. Yet close behind it is *personality profile*, chosen by nearly half of the respondents (48 percent). CEOs were much more likely to value a personality profile (56 percent chose it).

Cultural fit was also an important factor for many; overall, 39 percent said it was an important qualification. When we look at the factor by job title, however, it’s clear there’s no consensus within

organizations about whether it matters. Less than one third (30 percent) of CEOs think cultural fit is important; 48 percent of HR, 40 percent of employer branding, and 28 percent of marketing professionals feel cultural fit is an important qualification.



In years past, one’s alma mater was a top consideration to weigh a candidate’s attractiveness – and, to be sure, certain professions still value alma mater (as we will show below). But overall, alma mater is no longer a critical qualification. Just 16 percent think it’s important. Only employer branding professionals seem to think it’s relatively important – 34 percent noted it as an important factor.

Not surprisingly, specific industries tend to believe alma mater matters more; 22 percent of respondents from both banking and management consulting organizations said a degree from a specific university was important. (And it’s likely the factor is significantly more important within certain firms that emphasize an Ivy League or Russell Group pedigree.)

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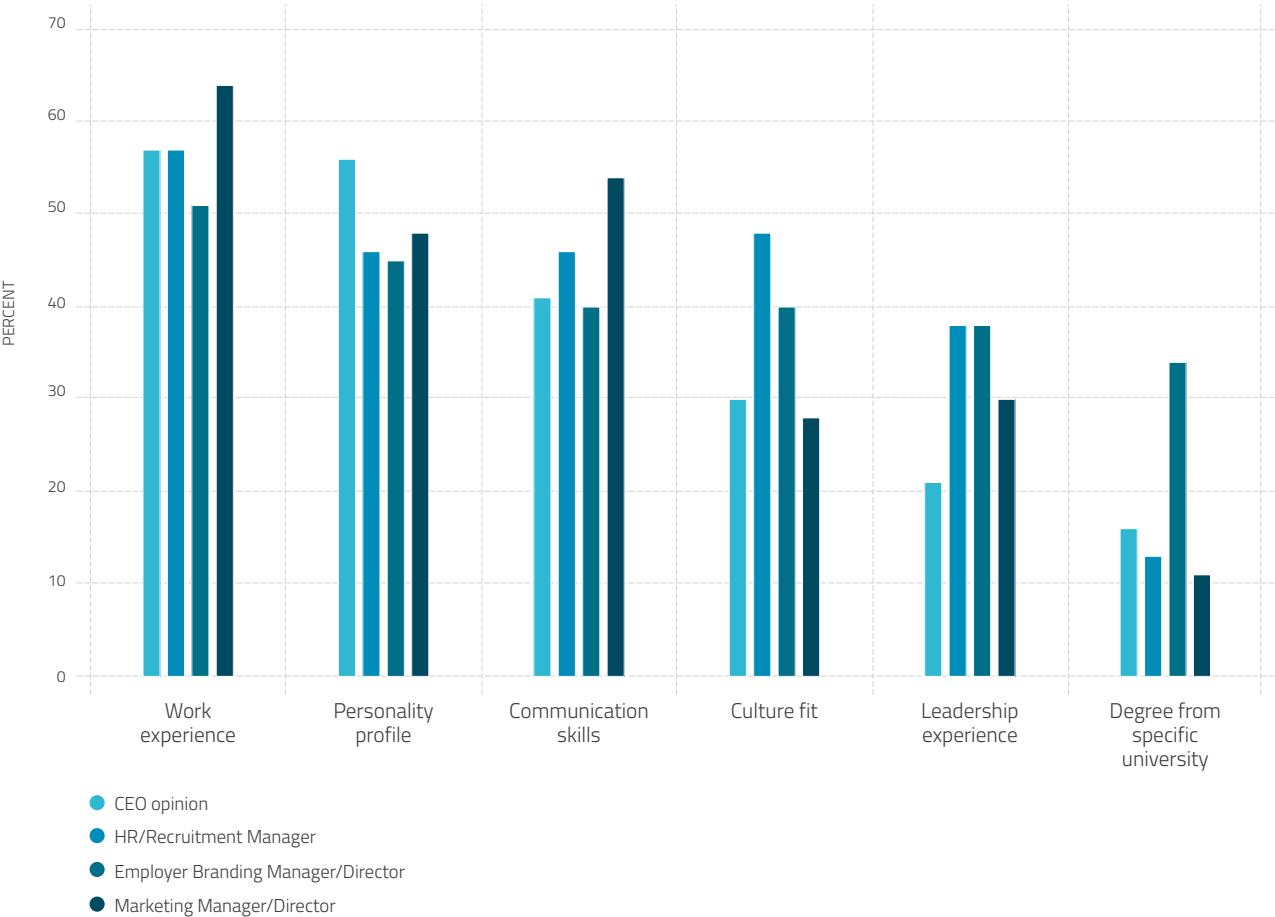
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FIGURE 1
CHOOSE THE MOST IMPORTANT
QUALIFICATIONS/EXPERIENCES
WHEN RECRUITING CANDIDATES
FOR EXECUTIVE/OFFICE POSITIONS
FIVE YEARS FROM NOW.

THE GOOD NEWS: ORGANIZATIONS NO LONGER FIXATED ON PEDIGREE



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Personas will grow in importance

69%

OF EXECUTIVES SAY THEY
WILL USE PERSONA-BASED
RECRUITING IN THE FUTURE.

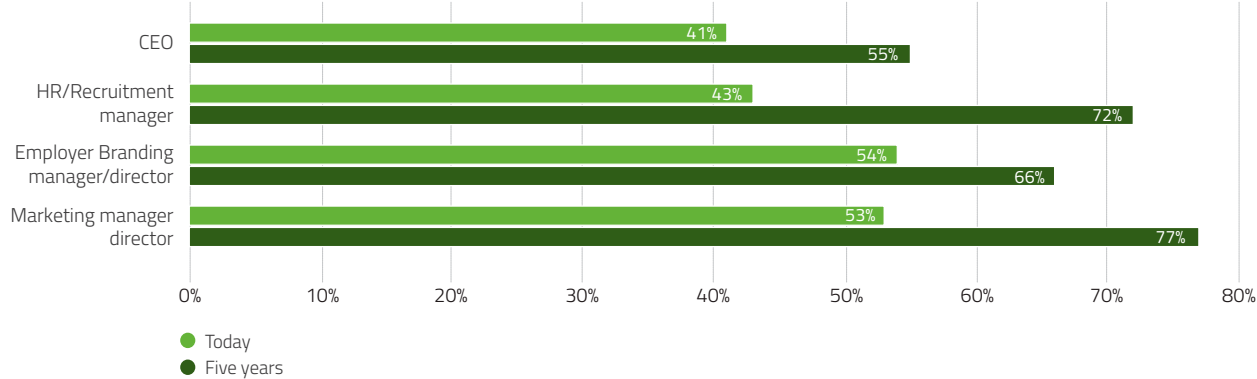
We asked executives specifically about personas used in recruiting. How common are they, and will they be used more in the future?

Overall, 44 percent say they use personas currently, and 69 percent will do so in the future – a 57 percent increase. Future adoption of persona-based recruiting was strongest among marketing professionals (not surprising, given that marketing already uses personas for customer profiling), and least likely to be cited as important in the future among CEOs.

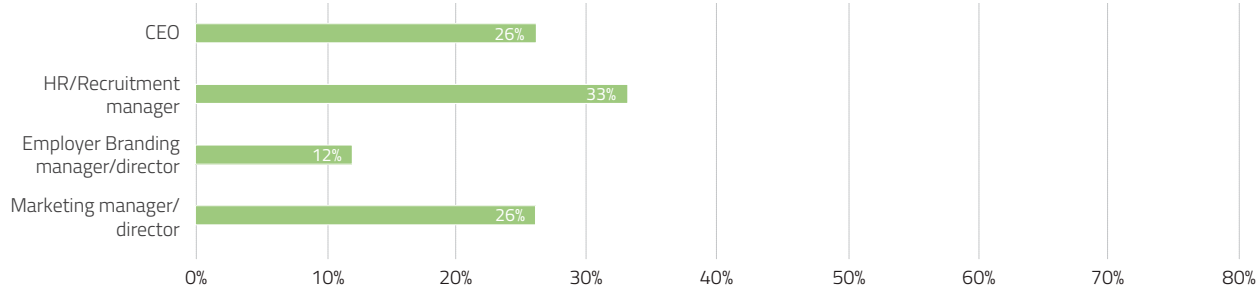
We also asked whether respondents knew what talent personas are. One quarter of CEOs (26 percent) say they don't know, and a third of HR professionals (33 percent) say the same. [FIGURE 2](#)


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FIGURE 2
DO YOU OR ARE YOU PLANNING TO WORK WITH TALENT PERSONAS/CAREER TYPES WHEN RECRUITING IN YOUR COMPANY?
YES



I DON'T KNOW WHAT TALENT PERSONAS ARE



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Hiring by type

39%

OF RESPONDENTS SAY THEY REQUIRE ENTREPRENEUR-TYPES TODAY AND 42% WILL WANT TO RECRUIT THEM IN FIVE YEARS.

We were curious to understand what types of employees are in highest demand within global organizations and what effect that may have on talent attraction in the coming years.

Leaders are still the most required career type; 56 percent say they have a need for leaders today, and 61 percent will have that need in five years. Close behind, however, is a need for *entrepreneurs*. Thirty-nine percent of respondents say they require entrepreneur-types today, and 42 percent will want to recruit them in five years. All other career types registered significantly lower than these two types.

The need for more leader-types is hardly surprising, but the admission that entrepreneur-types are also

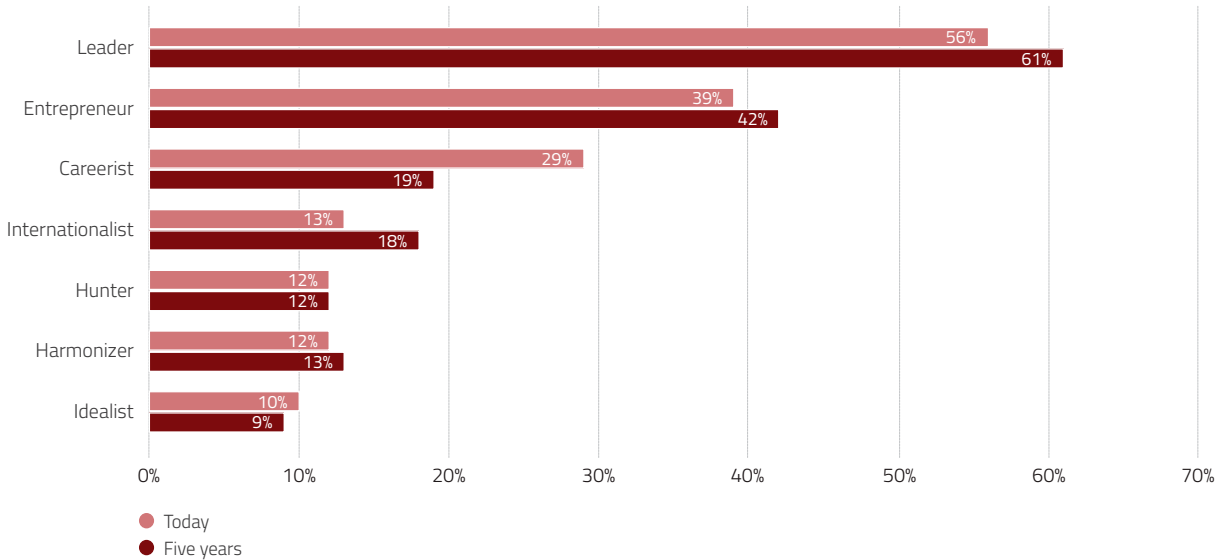
in such high demand is quite interesting. For large companies, attracting top talent in fields such as digital media and quantitative analysis is highly challenging because they are competing against the promise and informal cultures of high-growth start-ups. Also, bestselling books like *The Year Without Pants* (about the founding of Wordpress) and *Without Their Permission* (about the founding of Reddit), among many others, glamorize the world of start-ups for all professionals. More and more, we see larger organizations sponsoring smaller entrepreneurial teams within their own walls (sometimes called *intrapreneurial* projects) to help generate new ideas, spur innovation and improve employee satisfaction.

FIGURE 3


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FIGURE 3
WHEN RECRUITING FOR EXECUTIVE/OFFICE POSITIONS, WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING CAREER TYPES DO YOU LOOK TO RECRUIT FOR, TODAY AND IN THE FUTURE?

LEADER IS MOST REQUIRED CAREER TYPE



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What qualities define a leader?

41%

SAY A FUTURE LEADER SHOULD
EMPOWER HIS/HER EMPLOYEES.

Given the importance of recruiting leaders (61 percent of respondents say they will be searching for leaders in five years), we asked executives what they expect from a future leader. The overall averages were not terribly surprising (e.g. 41 percent say a future leader should empower his/her employees). However, we did find very interesting divergences in opinion among different functional areas within the organization. For example, nearly half (48 percent) of HR professionals say a leader should empower their employees, yet only 26 percent of CEOs feel the same way. A goal-oriented leader is deemed important by CEOs (31 percent chose that characteristic) but only 24 percent of HR professionals selected that option.

FIGURE 4 / FIGURE 5

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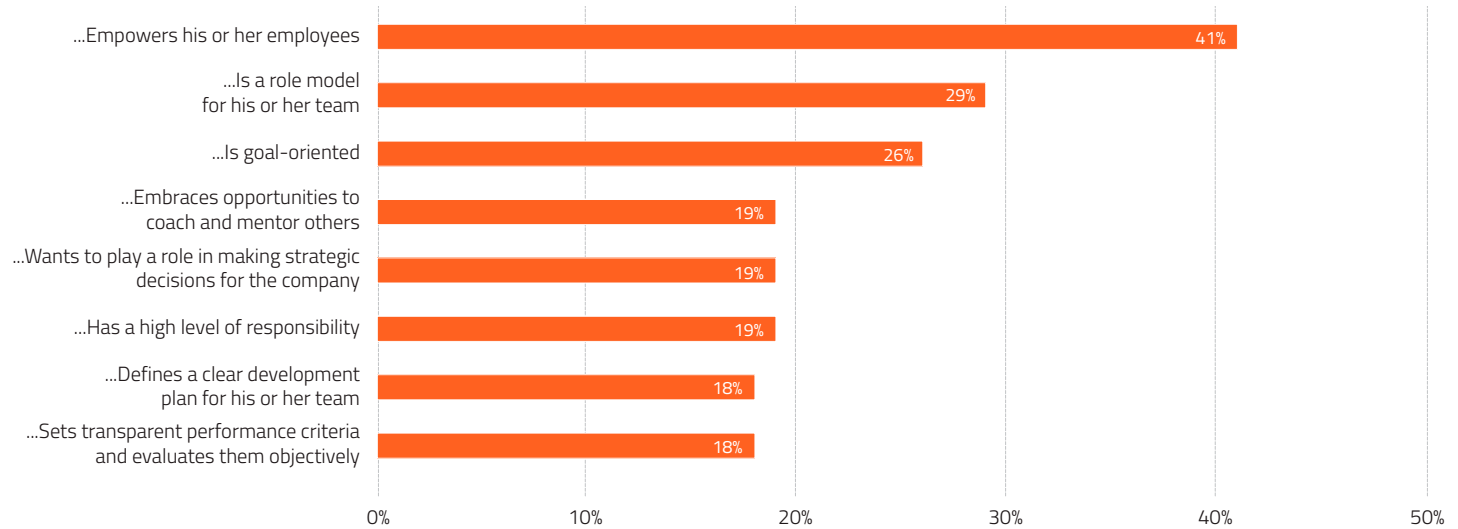
FIGURE 4

**WHAT DO YOU EXPECT
FROM A LEADER?**

A FUTURE LEADER...



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THESE ARE THE
QUALITIES THAT THOSE
IN A POSITION TO
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THINK A LEADER
SHOULD POSSESS.

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FIGURE 5

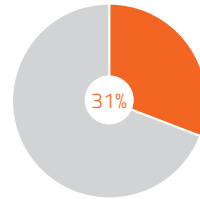
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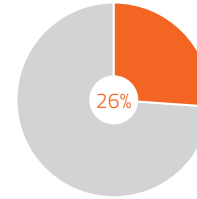


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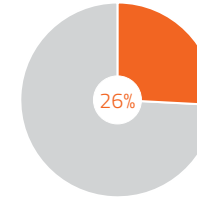
CEO TOP 3



...Is goal-oriented

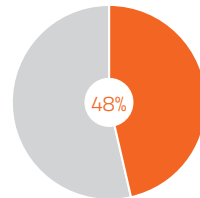


...Has a high level
of responsibility

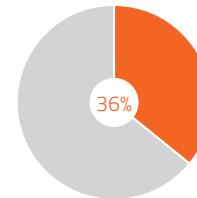


...Empowers his or
her employees

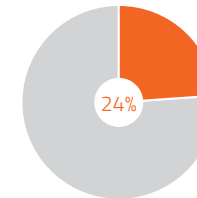
HR TOP 3



...Empowers his or
her employees



...Is a role model for
his or her team



...Is goal-oriented

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What makes a leader?

The Millennial perspective.

31%

OF MILLENNIALS PREFER A LEADER WITH TECHNICAL OR FUNCTIONAL EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD THEY ARE MANAGING.



The results from this study become even more interesting when compared to our [global Millennial study](#), released earlier this year. We asked very similar questions of company executives and recent college graduates, and the gap between the opinions expressed by these two groups is particularly telling.

For example, 41 percent of executives say empowering his or her employees is an important attribute of leaders, while only 31 percent of Millennials say the same. Transparent performance criteria were an important consideration for 29 percent of Millennials, while only 18 percent

of executives chose it. And nearly a third of Millennials (31 percent) prefer a leader with technical or functional expertise in the field they are managing, while just 11 percent of executives felt the same.

For organizations, this is a clear call to action. If it's really true that 61 percent of respondents will be looking for leaders in five years' time, then they need to think carefully about (a) what qualities they are recruiting for, and (b) to what extent those correspond with the qualities Millennials are looking for. And for the moment, there seems to be poor alignment between the two.

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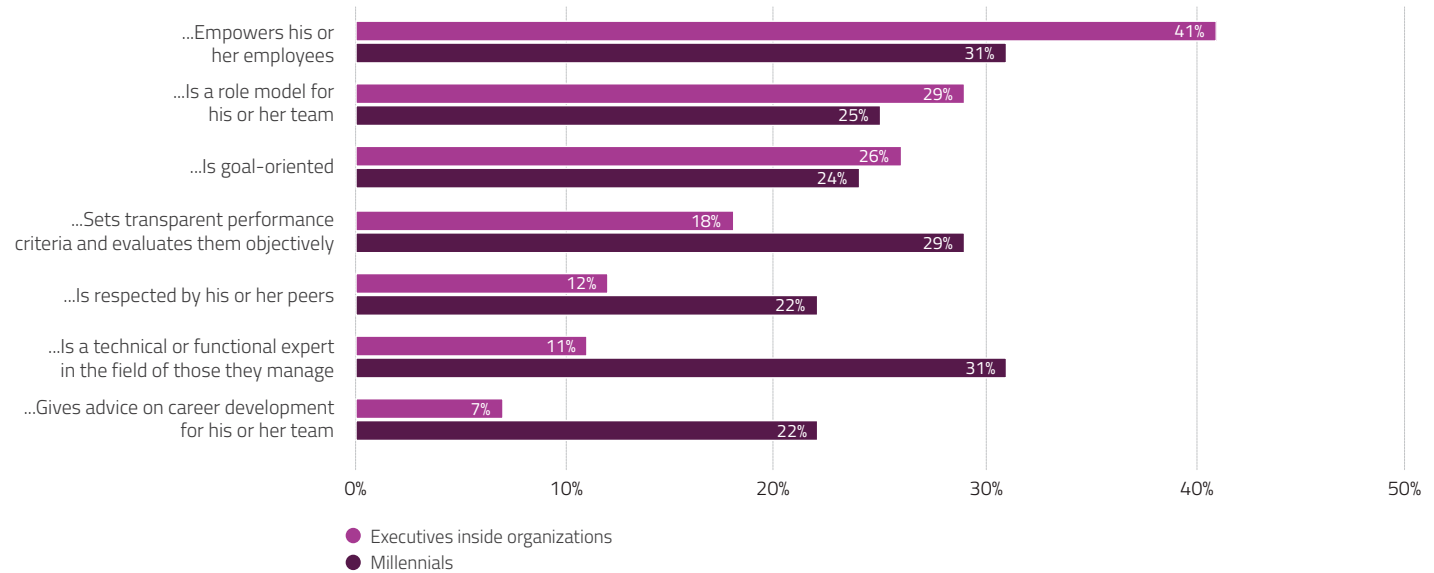
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EXECUTIVES INSIDE
ORGANIZATIONS VS. MILLENNIALS

A LEADER...



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For organizations, the research delivers an important message. In the future, companies will use persona-based recruiting in greater numbers. And this trend, as the research suggests, indicates a growing appreciation for non-traditional factors in hiring. So what does this mean for employers?

Estimating fit requires significant internal work. To understand which employees will best succeed within your organization requires a clear sense of internal culture. To exploit the array of tools and methods for assessing *fit*, companies must determine what values they stand for and what type of work life they offer. And, when required, make the changes that will make their organization more attractive for prospective hires.

Tools offer insights... and limitations. Even the most advanced algorithm chasers, such

as Google, still rely on multiple in-person interviews to make a final assessment of fit. Technology can shorten the time-to-hire for new employees and filter out those who won't succeed, but human intuition and a shared sense of company values offer the clearest indication of whether a candidate will fit inside a team or company.

Personas and fit are moving targets. Similar to the ethos of *hacking* and *optimization* within high-growth tech companies, persona-based recruiting should always be a work in progress. Companies must continually assess whether they are looking for the right qualifications, skills and attitudes. What's more, companies must measure the attitudes and requirements of rising professionals – more especially the Millennial generation – to ensure they are predicting what they will need in the future, rather than making decisions based on the past.

Want more information about auditing your own brand, taking steps to improve accountability within your organization, or even resources that point to where you can start?

Check out our Employer Attractiveness Rankings

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The 2020 Outlook survey is based on 2338 interviews conducted online between mid-October and mid-December 2014 across 18 countries. Respondents are representing a variety of industries and job functions. More than 50 percent were working within HR and 16 percent were CEOs of their respective organization, while 23 percent were working

for organizations with more than 1000 employees in the country. The following industries are covered by the research: Banks, Chemicals, Construction, Consumer Electronics and Household Appliances, Educational and Scientific Institutions, Engineering and Manufacturing, Fast Moving Consumer Goods, Technology Hardware & Equipment, Legal

Services, Management and Strategy Consulting, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)/Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), Energy (Oil & Gas, Renewable Energy, Nuclear Energy), Real Estate, Retail, Software and Computer Services. Please note that industry breakdowns are only shown for industries with more than 100 survey respondents.

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