

# Is talent born or made?

Ci Virtual Roundtable - Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> February 2012

This roundtable set out to explore the extent to which talent occurs naturally or can be developed, and the implications for organisational talent practices.

## PART 1: INSIGHT

Talent challenges faced by participants include:

- Creating robust talent pipelines for critical managerial and functional roles
- Identifying new sources of talent where there has been significant downsizing and known talent has already been deployed
- Specific shortages of talent; technical sales, procurement, HR, prospective senior managers who can take a strategic focus
- Growing senior leadership internally rather than recruiting

A picture emerged of organisations taking talent development seriously, identifying the need for different talent pools, but also recognising that

identifying people as ‘high potentials’ (HIPOs or HIPROs) is not always sufficient.

*Yes, identify potential.  
But we need to ask:  
“potential for what?”*

HIPOs can be disruptive, more critical of the organisation than others; they are sometimes more effective at pursuing their own career than developing others. Identifying some as ‘talent’ can leave others - ‘non-talent’ - demotivated.

Provocateur, Dr Paul Yost, (Seattle Pacific University) pointed out the need to understand what sort of potential is being assessed. He gave the example of an organisation which had moved away from using the language of HIPO/HIPRO or ‘A,B,C players’ and towards a segmented approach. Different talent pools were identified, including the ‘roots’ of the organisation - those whose ongoing contribution was important, but who previously

would not have been identified as talent. Motivations for each group were mapped - and found to be different. They also vary by career stage. In early career many people focus on their development. Later it is ‘contribution’.

## PART 2: INNOVATION

Research confirms that some elements of talent come from genetic predisposition. However, the rest can be developed. An individual’s ability to learn, apply their learning and encourage others to develop is key to creating a learning organisation.

Discussion focused on tools to encourage self-development, learning agility and potential. These included the CLC model of potential, an approach based on Deloitte’s ‘mass career customisation’ framework, Lominger’s viaEDGE product and Ci’s Career Healthcheck.



Paul Yost’s analysis of data from Ci’s recently piloted Career Healthcheck identified six dimensions which help individuals assess their ability to develop themselves and thus maximise their potential.

## PART 3: IMPACT

Encouraging development is challenging, especially where job moves are limited. Creative ideas from participants included:

- Assign talented individuals to key projects on a part-time basis
- Encourage informal peer learning events
- Talent ‘summits’ - share information about people and opportunities across an organisation
- Tap into people’s sense of legacy and contribution - key aspects of motivation.