

## **At the Source: The Struggles Talent Managers Say They Face**

What are the biggest challenges for talent management?

It's a question that gets asked a lot around the meeting table and the newsroom alike, as evidenced by the numerous "Top 5" or "Top 10" lists of HR issues released annually by multiple magazines and industry publications. And it's one that has multiple and varied responses, depending on who you ask.

You could perhaps find some answers within those scholarly articles or online news stories, but if you really want a finger on the pulse, it's always best to just go directly to the source.

That's exactly what I did during the Talent Management Alliance (TMA) Conference in Chicago last month. While there, I had the pleasure of meeting and talking with many interesting and capable leaders within the talent management/organizational development field.

In my conversations with these professionals, talk very often turned to modern-day challenges, and I asked many of them what they'd say was their most difficult struggle they are currently facing.

I thought our readers might be interested in some of their responses, since you might perhaps relate to - or may even be dealing with - some of the same struggles within your own organization.

### Developing Mid-Level Managers

A couple of leaders acknowledged that they were doing a great job with onboarding senior managers and even with first-line supervisory support, but really struggle with those "in the middle." Concerns ranged from helping them get ready for the next leadership position all the way to finding an assessment solution appropriate to kick-start their development.

This is not uncommon, in that we at E·A·S·I·Consult® often discover that many organizations have fully developed entry-level assessments and senior executive programs in place but lack the same for mid-level managers. Unfortunately, this can be a costly oversight, given that this segment of employees often represents a significant percentage of an organization's population and, in many cases, will likely one day become a part of that organization's leadership team.

*How Could E·A·S·I·Consult Help?*

There are a number of ways E•A•S•I could partner with an organization to address mid-level management issues. For example, if readiness for future positions is of concern, we would map out relevant assessment, development and coaching strategies. If the issues are more narrowly defined (e.g., unable to effectively mentor or coach lower-level supervisors or emerging managers), we might discuss training on topics such as coaching, motivation, supervisory support, participative leadership, engagement, etc. And finally, if either career pathing or succession planning has been overlooked, we might discuss ways to create an **“ideal profile” for that position against which high potentials** could be measured.

### Leveraging Learning Agility

When I asked talent management leaders about their familiarity with the construct of learning agility, most had at least heard the term and were interested in knowing more but beyond that, their responses differed greatly.

Some leaders noted using other published learning agility tools with varying degrees of satisfaction; others said they had developed their own in-house method of measurement. Then there were those who had not pursued any formal measurement tool. Despite those variations, they all shared some level uncertainty about whether they were fully leveraging learning agility across their organizations.

#### *How Could E•A•S•I-Consult Help?*

After more than five years of research out of Teachers College, Columbia University, E•A•S•I has launched self-**assessment and 360° Feedback versions of the *Burke Learning Agility Inventory® (Burke LAI®)***. Therefore, we can offer clients and partners a research-based, scientifically validated measure of learning agility that can be leveraged as a new measure of leadership potential. Its nine dimensions are incredibly useful for: establishing candidate fit for a job; identifying high potentials; assessing, developing and coaching leaders; and succession planning.

#### **Assessment “Phobia”**

When I explained what we do at E•A•S•I-Consult, numerous leaders at the conference revealed that, while they certainly understand the value of individual assessments, their organizations **are resistant to adopting them... for a variety of reasons.**

One person mentioned, for example, that her workplace had stopped using assessments many years ago, after a tool used in selection caused the organization to be investigated by a certain governing body. Another attendee said scientists within her organization - who

believe that psychological/personality-based assessments are not a “true science” - have essentially created a mental roadblock to implementing them.

### *How Could E•A•S•I-Consult Help?*

When I tell people that E•A•S•I stands for *Expert Advocates in Selection International*<sup>®</sup>, they often pause for a minute to absorb the meaning. As I/O psychologists, our job is to serve as *experts*, educating our clients on key topics related to assessments - reliability, validity and adverse impact, among others - and the science behind the data. We also *advocate* for our **clients’ best interests, ensuring that each assessment provides incremental value** to whatever process they may have in place.

**Finally, while we don’t work in the *selection* space alone, it is an area where we can truly contribute to our clients’ bottom lines. From our assessment processes and off-the-shelf and customized pre-employment tools to structured interview guides and training, we at E•A•S•I-Consult pride ourselves on being just the right size to meet all of our clients’ hiring needs.**

So, to all of our current and future clients and partners - and to those leaders I was fortunate enough to meet at the TMA conference - a sincere thanks for your trust in our expertise!

### About the Author

*Rebekah Cardenas, Ph.D., is vice president of business development and assessment solutions at E•A•S•I-Consult<sup>®</sup>. E•A•S•I-Consult works with Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and mid-sized corporations to provide customized Talent Management solutions. E•A•S•I-Consult specialties include individual assessment, online employment testing, survey research, competency modeling, leadership development, executive coaching, 360-degree feedback, online structured interviews, and EEO hiring compliance. The company is a leader in the field of providing accurate information about people through professional assessment. To learn more about E•A•S•I-Consult, visit <https://easiconsult.com> or email [ContactUs@easiconsult.com](mailto:ContactUs@easiconsult.com) or call 800.922.EASI.*