

# Media Article



Vocational Guidance Services

## EMBRACE THE TALENT OF TOMORROW

Many lucky managers got their first step on the career ladder as part of a structured management trainee scheme straight from University. Such programmes are typically the annual HR showpiece of serious employers in the market; they can also be the annual HR headache with more than 300 applicants per position to be filled.

This intake of fresh talent is interesting in other aspects. The influx of young, enthusiastic managers all eager to prove themselves often precipitates a cultural revolution within organizations, especially if the organization has never undergone such an exercise before, and is taking on sizable numbers.

Another element of such programmes is that they mirror the economic as well as sector growth or decline in which they take place. For instance, if a sector of industry is suffering from a lack of business confidence, it is tempting to cut back on the time and expense that goes into organizing the annual management trainee programme, as well as to fall into the mentality of 'we should be down-sizing, not recruiting'.

However, such an approach can be dangerously shortsighted, because the graduates recruited now are going to make the difference to the bottom line several years from now. A sensible approach would be to budget for the annual exercise strategically, isolating it from the immediate financial concerns. A tricky balance and forecast between present and future needs has to be found, as, of course, it will be wasteful to bring on board too many bright young things and not to keep them challenged. However, if steady intake stops where will that leave management when the eventual up-turn in business happens? With serious talent short falls! This is such a long-term exercise that one present Managing Director we work with started as a Management Trainee himself 25 years ago.

Talking culturally, it is often the young intake that can drive the business out of its present hole. The cream of the Management Trainee crop will challenge systems, procedures and can generally put 'noses out of joint' for the old-timers who might be sitting back and taking it easy. There can be a lot of jealousy about the amount of attention and management mentioning that goes into the 'new young things' but unless you, as an existing manager, want to look badly out of touch, you should embrace such initiatives. After all, who will fill your position and allow you the opportunity of promotion? Volunteer to mentor the new intake and reap the benefit of lots of new ideas that you can adopt as your own.

So no matter what the headaches, be proud if your organization adopts such a scheme. The more serious employers are targeting fresh talent in innovative ways. Intel Corporation, for example, even attends school fairs, offers scholarships and internships to University students on holiday, all to 'trap' the best talent for the future first. Locally, employers are now tapping into Kenyan networks abroad to bring back the best young graduates and employers are 'branding' themselves with brochures and web sites. How does this benefit you if you work in such an organization? Well, it raises the positive profile of your employer as a whole, ensuring your future career security and marketability.

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