

# **A CASE STUDY ON THE APPLICATION OF TALENT MANAGEMENT IN ONE OF THE MINISTRIES OF THE CZECH REPUBLIC**

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## **Abstract**

Talent management includes the processes of planning, resourcing and developing qualified and motivated people that an organization needs now and in the future to achieve its strategic goals. The goal of the paper is to introduce an approach to the application of talent management in one of the ministries of the Czech Republic and discuss future opportunities of the application of talent management in the state administration. Achieving the goal of the paper is based on the review of available scientific literature, on the analysis of internal documents of the ministry and the main author's experience with the application of talent management in the ministry. The paper includes a case study on the application of talent management in one of the ministries of the Czech Republic where the need for stabilization and motivation of current employees was clearly identified. The results show that the ministry understands the application of talent management as a key tool of its HR strategy to prospectively meet the needs of talented people. The results should provide a real demonstration of good talent management practices in the state administration.

**Key words:** human resource management, talent management, state administration, Czech Republic

**JEL Code:** M10, M12, M50

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## **Introduction**

In 2015, the Act No. 234/2014 Coll., On Civil Service, came into effect in the Czech Republic, which completely changed all the functioning and personnel processes within the state administration. Until then, in many respects, rigidly functioning state administration has been further weakened by the procedural aspects of personnel management. The actual process of implementation of the Act also reflected the current labour market situation in the Czech Republic, which had the current trend of falling unemployment while increasing vacancies and

the economy as such was in a boom. For the state administration, which has a more demanding job during the recruitment period, a problematic period has occurred.

Despite the initial problems in the implementation of the Civil Service Act, it was clear that in the context of the ever-worsening labour market situation and the lack of high-quality employees, it would be necessary to take the required steps to maintain existing staff and recruit new employees.

A suitable way to attract, employ and develop enough qualified and motivated employees in the state administration should be based on the application of proven practices in talent management that includes processes of planning, resourcing and developing people with high performance and development potential (Šikýř, 2015). The process of talent planning should define how many and what sort of people are needed now and in the future. The process of talent resourcing includes obtaining suitable people within and outside the organization. And the process of talent development allows talented people to learn and develop their knowledge, skills and abilities for successful performance, professional growth and career advancement in the organization. (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014)

The effort of every organisation is to have talented staff (Fajčíková, Urbancová & Kučírková, 2018) and talent management processes focusing on people with above-average characteristics - talents - are found in many organizations (Vnoučková, Urbancová & Smolová, 2015). Of course, there are a lot of different practices and approaches to talent management (Makram, Sparrow & Greasley, 2017), but it's safe to say that in order to achieve organization's goals through qualified and motivated, it is necessary to have a functioning talent management system (Glaister, Karacay & Demirbag, 2018). However, the implementation of the talent management system needs to reflect the unique environment of the organization (Sheehan, Grant & Garavan, 2018).

The environment of the state administration itself is strictly limited in legislation and for this reason it is not possible to use any of the standard generally valid talent management systems that are known from business practice, especially because of the impossibility of guaranteeing any career progression to these selected employees. However, different experiences show that the talent management systems are also suitable for a specific environment of the state administration (Buttiens & Hondeghem, 2015) that is confronted with the intensifying competition for talent and suffer from a chronic shortage of talented people (Thunnissen & Buttiens, 2017) resulting from labour market shifts, new demographic trends and increasing demands for higher performance by public servants (Suk Kim & Kotchegura, 2017).

## **1 Goal and method**

The goal of the paper is to introduce an approach to the application of talent management in one of the ministries of the Czech Republic, define concepts, benefits and problems of the application of talent management in conditions of the ministry and discuss future opportunities of the application of talent management in the state administration.

Achieving the goal of the paper is based on the review of available scientific literature, on the analysis of internal documents of the ministry and the main author's experience with the application of talent management in the ministry.

The paper includes a case study on the application of talent management in one of the ministries of the Czech Republic where the need for stabilization and motivation of current employees was clearly identified. On the basis of the internal situational analysis, it was decided that it is of primary importance to focus on stabilizing younger employees who are currently not in a leading position. Based on the decision, at the turn of 2016-2017, a pilot project of talent management was settled for the development of the key employees of the ministry, which aimed in particular at the motivation, professional and personnel development of selected key employees of the ministry. The project was subsequently implemented in 2017. The results of the project presented in this paper should provide a real demonstration of good talent management practices in the state administration. It should outline the possibilities that can be created in a relatively rigid environment of state administration and how to subsequently shift the personnel effort a great step forward.

## **2 Result and discussion**

Within the ministry, the need for greater collaboration with current employees was identified at the end of 2016 in order to increase their employability, personal and professional development, and overall stabilization of the Office's staffing capabilities. Taking into account the requirements and limitations of the state administration, it was decided that it would be appropriate to create a specific development project for selected key employees of the Ministry, which would correspond to the talent management system, but with a modification for the state administration platform. From the outset, it was clear that it would not be possible to use the standard "corporate" talent management system, but some modification would have to be made. In this context, it was proposed to take part in the project in the form of talent management and in part as a development project for selected employees. At the same time, it was crucial that this project had real added value for both its participants and the employer itself. Within the

Ministry itself, but also in the state administration, this was the first use of a similar system. For this reason, the whole project was perceived as a pilot, which would be able to solve some unusual circumstances at run time, and prepare a completely new, already tested concept for the future.

The introduction of a talent management system in a specific environment of the ministry can be divided into three basic milestones. These milestones are a preparatory phase that included situational analysis of the state administration environment, benchmarking with other ministries of the Czech Republic in order to find out whether a similar project is already working somewhere else, and the creation and planning of the whole project itself. The second milestone was the implementation of the talent management system at the ministry, where the proposed concept of the project was tested. And the last part of the project was the final phase, which included the final evaluation and evaluation of the project.

## **2.1 Preparatory phase**

The preparatory phase is crucial for most projects and it is often decided whether the project will be successful or not. For so-called soft projects, in this case specifically targeting employees of their own organization, this is perhaps twice as good. That is why it was necessary to communicate everything sensitively in the preparation of the talent management project at the Ministry and to carefully consider all the variants.

As part of this initial phase, the ministries HR department carried out a basic situational analysis of the ministry itself and its internal environment. This analysis has revealed what constraints and barriers are hidden in government, including legislative constraints in relation to the introduction of a specific talent management system, and therefore what corrections will be needed within the framework of the general talent management rules.

Consequently, based on the above findings, an initial proposal of a model of the talent management system was created within the state administration. This model will be described in more detail in subchapter 3.2 Implementation. This model was first introduced to the minister and after approval by the smallest ministry leadership, which decided of the pilot testing it in the ministry. The pilot program was subsequently introduced to all senior staff who received complete information of the planned implementation, the requirements for the tenderers, including a timetable for the whole calendar year of implementation.

## 2.2 Implementation

Within the talent management project at the ministry, the implementation phase was perceived as an activity from the very presentation of the basic attributes of the project to the ministry's leadership to the final evaluation session with all participants. After the presentation of the project itself, all of them were approached with the offer to include their key employees in this project.

It was only after the commencement of the communication phase that the registration phase of the employees started. The actual process of signing up for the project meant for these employees to create their own motivation letter with information and justification for signing up for this project, including the inclusion of an actual curriculum vitae. At the same time their application had to include a letter of recommendation from their supervisor to make it clear that this employee is really important for the organization itself.

Due to the fact that 21 applicants entered the project, which was about three times more than the planned capacity of the project, the selection of the employees was followed by a structured personal interview before the selection board. The selection commission was a four-member and was made up of independent members from the ministry's ministry and HR department. All applicants were confronted with the same set of questions. Based on the results of these interviews, 6 employees were selected to complete the entire project.

Based on the information in the table number 1 it can be stated that the key employees program was aimed at participants who have a shorter work experience with their employer. More than 83 % of participants are less than two years in an organization. The main reason is that this group is ductile for employers, and at the same time they are not employees who are already fully integrated from the employer's point of view. At the same time, this group is critical from the point of view of human resources, because employees with two years of experience at the employer are also problematic from the viewpoint of higher fluctuations.

**Tab. 1: Distribution of employees in the project according to length of service with the employer**

Length of practice at employer	Number
Within one year	2
Within two years	3
More than two years	1

Source: Author

At the same time, it is a group of employees with a total shorter working experience. Again, this is mainly due to the fact that this group generally has fewer working habits, both in a good sense and in a negative way. From the employer's point of view, this is a ductile group with which it is worth working more. At the same time, these employees are slowly entering a senior position within the organization. The group has four participants from six with the praxis under three years.

**Tab. 2: Current practice of TM participant**

Practitioner length of practice	Number
Within one year	2
Within three years	2
More than four years	2

Source: Author

Given the fact that it was judged that it was not possible to implement a conventional model of talent management in the private sector as part of the planning of this project as it is commonly used in the private sector, the planning of the general talent management rules was the concept, including its own content, was tailored to the employees of the state administration. The entire project was planned for the calendar year, when the first two months were dedicated to internal communication, project presentation and selection of suitable staff. The next ten months focused on the actual implementation and subsequent evaluation of the project.

As mentioned above, the concept of talent management has to be redrafted, so the conditions of state administration within this modified version are, according to the author, rather the development program of key employees. The main objective of this project was to stabilize the key staff of the ministry, their personal and professional development, and to expand the horizons within the framework of the issues being done, thus understanding the running of the whole office as such. These goals will help to increase employee ownership with the ministry, improve their employers' insight, and help build a better employer name. In connection with the objectives set, the main activities were selected which formed a complex part of the development program. These were four educational activities, each of which had to develop the specific soft skills that are key to the employees selected in a similar program. The first course focused on personality development of selected employees, identifying their strengths and finding their own potential, including further work on them themselves. The second course was focused on mastering advanced communication and presentation techniques. This course was supplemented in particular by the practice of self-presentation skills and the

arts to prosper. These two first courses were attended by selected staff involved in the project during the spring season. Subsequently, during the summer period, the key activity of the whole project was followed, ensuring participation in several daily internships in another organization. Ideally, it is also at the central government body - the ministry, or in some subordinate organization. This internship (also found in the subsequent project evaluation) for participants in the development project in terms of overall key benefits and provided the participants with the greatest added value. The selection of the internship has always been discussed with the project participant himself and his senior employee. It was therefore a compromise solution for what the employee wanted and what the employer thought was appropriate for him. All traineeships attended by employees were always related to their job description and job content. These employees have the opportunity to see their work from the point of view of the other interested party, the entity that is governed by the rules set by it, or to get acquainted with the same type of work they perform, but in another organization. After completing the internship, feedback was requested not only from the staff of the ministry of project participants, but also from the trainee guarantors who are employees of the organization where the traineeship was completed.

The final phase of the project took place during the autumn period, with an ethics and protocol training course, since the basics of this course should be controlled by everyone, especially the senior worker. The last course was focused on managerial competence of Leadership. This course has been tailored for people who have no management experience. Here, the selected employees should get acquainted with the basics of team leadership and clarify what the role of the executive brings with them. After the last educational event, the project was evaluated in the form of a structured questionnaire survey where the information thus obtained was orally consulted during a round table evaluation attended by all selected staff from this project, the HR director and the state secretary as the highest representative of the ministry. In the framework of this evaluation, it was possible to discuss the entire project, to clarify the questionnaire survey and to listen to the participants' recommendations for a future year.

Beyond the standard educational activities and internships, throughout the entire calendar year, the employees involved in this project were very closely involved in the activities of the ministry, in particular with their work responsibilities, to work more intensely with their superiors, to participate in key meetings that would otherwise not have been normally accessible. Participate in meetings of the top management of the ministry, including

participation in meetings of the minister himself. These employees should be continuously evaluated and receive continuous feedback from their immediate superior.

### **2.3 Evaluation**

After completing all the planned activities under the development project for selected key employees of the ministry, a comprehensive evaluation of this year's activity was carried out. The evaluation consisted in filling in the structured questionnaire by the participants of the project in order to find out whether the project was benefit to them both professionally and personally. Whether the overall project fulfilled their expectations and whether the activities selected were chosen appropriately or recommended to replace them for others. Subsequently, individual activities were addressed in the questionnaire. Finally, their recommendations for further project follow-up, or any other relevant information concerning the project itself, were mentioned. Feedback was returned from all participants in the project, i.e. with 100% success, and subsequently evaluated by the HR department. In the end, the project was also consulted with the ministry's senior staff, in the framework of structured interviews, who noted the overall benefit of the project and recommended it to be continued. The information thus obtained was then discussed at a round table with all participants attended by the HR director and the state secretary, where the informal evaluation of the project and the possible comments were given. Within the project, it was found appropriate to integrate into talent programs especially employees with shorter working experience. This group is key, especially because of its ductility and the possibility of further utilization within the organization.

On the basis of the feedback received, it was found that the participants most appreciated the opportunity to undertake an internship in another organization within this project. Passing this placement for them was of the greatest benefit because they could compare the functioning and activities of another organization with its own position at the ministry. They also appreciated the possibility of personnel development beyond the standard educational activities organized within the ministry and an individual approach within the project. On the other hand, unfortunately, part of the project connected with the possibility of participating in important meetings of the ministry was not so successful. Due to the very demanding year of work and small intervention of the staff department, this part has not been fully fulfilled and is certainly one of the points, which needs to be implemented in the case of the next year of the development project. Participation in senior management meetings or expert working groups is a great motivation for employees assigned to a similar project.

In general, however, it is possible to state on the basis of the survey that all the participants praised the project as such and recommended its further continuation. A partial shortage was the failure to achieve one of the goals, in close cooperation with the top management. The author takes this information as an important challenge for improvement in the next year of the talent management system in the state administration. As part of this project, it is necessary for the staff to work not only with the talents themselves but also with their senior staff.

## **Conclusion**

The paper introduces the implementation of talent management system in a specific environment of the state administration in the Czech Republic, namely in one of the ministries of the Czech Republic. The paper describes an example of well-established practices in the form of a case study and can thus provide an inspiration to other HR departments within and outside the state administration.

The paper outlined the theoretical basis of the problem solving with a focus on the state administration, so that further understanding of the developed of the talent management system and its subsequent implementation was readable to readers. Subsequently, the talent management system itself was introduced, including specific activities and steps that had to be implemented for successful application. After application of the talent management system, a partial qualitative research was carried out on the success of the implemented system and the implementation itself. This research has produced clear results clearly defining that both the system itself and the implementation have been successful and the participants have evaluated the individual activities as properly chosen. Of course, some of the recommendations for the next period have also emerged from this final analysis.

On the basis of the information obtained from the implementation of the talent management system in the state administration it can be generally stated that the selected HR activities, which have been implemented in the private sector so far, are gradually beginning to successfully integrate into the HR management in the state administration. In the turbulent environment of the Czech labour market, employers are increasingly aware that human capital is becoming the most important thing that organizations have. The state administration is not the exception. That is why employers' access to and their individual work with employees is increasingly important. A study carried out under this paper in a real environment of the state administration in the Czech Republic confirmed the suitability of applying modern HR methods

to the state administration environment and outlined another possible way of developing and working with employees.

The main contribution of this paper is found in the presentation of the system itself, which is also successfully tested in the state administration environment. In this form, the talent management system is very well usable in another organization, both inside and outside the state administration. For other employers, it may be the initial impulse for running a similar system, or it can serve to correct their existing systems.

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