How to attract and retain international talent

A study by IESE's International Research Center on Organizations (IRCO) offers a plan to attract, develop and retain key people in a global talent shortage.

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A third of employers surveyed cannot find the talent they need, according to a 2012 poll by ManpowerGroup. And 12 percent of these employers look for talent outside their regional labor markets. This is the so-called "war for talent" that McKinsey predicted back in 1998.

Global competition today requires specialized technical knowledge and new professional skills. However, the ageing population in developed countries and the limited skills of young people in emerging economies make it hard to satisfy this need.

At the same time, international mobility is increasing. At the end of the last century, the dominant trend was the movement of talent from industrialized to emerging countries. Now we see mobility running in all directions. The types of international assignments vary greatly, too, with positions filled by frequent travelers, employees looking to work abroad and international staff.

A mobility strategy that is aimed at attracting promising new workers while simultaneously retaining existing talent is essential, explains IESE researcher Pilar García Lombardía in "Strategic International Talent Management," a study published by IESE's International Research Center on Organizations (IRCO) in collaboration with ERES Relocation Services.

Planning mobility

To design a mobility strategy, companies need to establish a framework with different

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employment options that suit the interests of both the company and the employees. There are currently four "generations" of workers in the same labor market and they all have very different profiles and motivations:

- *Baby Boomers* (About 50 to 65 years old): Very committed and with a tendency to remain longer in the workforce, this generation is sometimes called Gen-U (generation unretired). Most business leaders belong to this generation and possess both experience and a strong sense of mission.
- *Generation X* (About 35 to 45 years old): These are the students and children of Baby Boomers, known for their skepticism. They are most frequently technical experts with experience, possessing skills aimed at specific needs within the company.
- *Generation Y* (About 25 to 35 years old): This generation grew up in the era of globalization. They are focused on the here and now and short-term results rather than processes. As employees they can be considered emerging talent with great potential, possessing transferable skills and knowledge.
- *Millennials* (Under 25): Characterized to a large extent by individualism, which extends to their personal relationships. They exhibit a low level of commitment and are interested in challenges and moving around, as quick to change jobs as they are location. As employees they are focused on designing their own careers and have their own goals.

Keeping in mind the percentages of each group within an organization and assessing their competencies (knowledge, skills and temperaments), it is possible to determine outside hiring needs and internal promotion possibilities. This assessment also helps develop a mobility plan to promote the globalization of a company.

Attracting, retaining and promoting

A good strategy for managing international talent contains varying plans for attracting, retaining and promoting employees who are valuable now and will be valuable in the future, the report argues.

These plans must acknowledge that offering economic incentives alone is not efficient or even, in many cases, feasible.

The driving force behind retention should be adapted to the particular needs of the demographic group to which the employee belongs.

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We live in a globalized world with a shortage of talent. The careful and efficient management of international talent is an essential condition to achieve global competitiveness and ensure medium and long-term sustainability.

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