HRD Forum: Book Review

Reframing the Inclusivity Debate:
Towards Integrated Talent Management

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Inclusive Talent Management: How Business can Thrive in an Age of Diversity
Stephen Frost and Danny Kalman
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It was way back in 1997 that Steven Hankin of McKinsey & Company first wrote of "The War for Talent" outlining key demographic trends that are now in full swing. In *Inclusive Talent Management: How Business can Thrive in an Age of Diversity*, Frost and Kalman argue that in today's increasingly diverse society the traditional distinction between policies on diversity and inclusion and talent management are over. They develop a model they call Integrated Talent Management where they are intrinsically entwined. There is a wealth of passion and experience they bring to hand. They conclude that those leaders able to manage in such an integrated environment can have thriving organizations, handling today's urgent demands for the right talent.

The first half of the book looks at the reasons for the current predicament and the second outlines some practical measures to be taken. The authors outline three levels of past diversity approaches: Diversity 101 which was the introductory level programme and essentially compliance based; Diversity 2.0 which was still a mandatory based approach looking for training to overcome cultural problems and often working with the dangers of quotas; and finally Diversity 3.0 subtracting diversity barriers and integrating existing considerations into existing infrastructures and power structures. Their commentary is at times crushingly critical and which if you have experienced the programmes they describe may make you wince with its sharpness, yet it is nonetheless authentic, credible and above all accurate.

Having looked at how the conscious and more significantly the sub-conscious bias has driven systems and ideas, they conclude that people prefer sameness but usually understand the need for difference. Getting a hold on a personal basis of this cognitive dissonance will allow organizations to break into inclusive talent management: in other words, it is down to leadership. Homogeneous teams can be successful, but diverse teams both reflect the modern world and are on balance more successful as a result especially in the mid- to long-term.

The second half of the book constructs a thorough list of actions that leaders can employ to deliver inclusive talent management. There is much here that we have heard before, but the weight of

ideas, each with an example from business, shows how many opportunities there are for those organisations currently failing to address the challenge. There are chapters on recruitment, on promotions/development and on retention all with good ideas. The inclusive talent management model they draw makes good management sense.

The book concludes with comments on leadership. Setting an ideal where Inclusive Talent Management develops through a "hierarchy of competence" (Burch, 1970) to become an "unconscious competence", they hang a model around Aristotle's themes of leadership: logos (understanding), pathos (leading) and ethos (delivery). There is much here that can be found in other writings on leadership but its base lies in ensuring individuals understand themselves. By understanding oneself, the core that no amount of training will touch, one can grow as an inclusive leader with authenticity. The focus on the individual, surprisingly perhaps, is also recognised in how inclusive leaders manage their teams. The authors argue it is ok to focus on making individuals accountable within teams as this recognises their skills, perhaps unique to that person in a diverse group.

Overall, the book is well researched and peppered with relevant examples from a wide range of organisations. It avoids being preachy but shines with earnest purpose to reframe the inclusion debate in terms of 'why' and then offers practical advice on 'how'. It is grounded in practicality and at all times the argument is based on what makes good business sense. Its ringing conclusion is that Integrated Talent Management is an absolute requirement for organisations successfully tackling the challenge of talent enhancement and therefore sustaining their very existence.