

MA/PGDip in Strategic People Management

Resourcing and Talent Management - BMHR7010

The New Talent Economy

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Executive summary

The following report considers both external and internal factors of the current issues faced in today's challenging work climate, specifically in relation to the social housing landlord, Tai Tarian.

The report reveals that in response Tai Tarian will need to update its current practice for talent management, identifying clear guidelines to promote from within and in relation to sourcing new talent. Improved focus on advertising, increasing employer branding awareness and developing a management mindset to encourage a forward-thinking approach to secure and maintain future talent to achieve business outcomes will be needed.

Recommendations are made on a realistic achievable outcome with mindful consideration to financial restraints.

Contents	Page
1. Introduction.....	5
2. Literature review.....	5
2.1 Recruitment.....	5
2.1.a) External factors effecting recruitment.....	5
2.1.b) Internal factors affecting recruitment.....	7
2.1.c) Recruitment system, process, and practice.....	8
2.2 Attraction.....	9
2.2.a) Attraction - External factors.....	9
2.2.b) Attraction - Internal factors.....	10
2.2.c) Attraction system, process, and practice.....	11
2.3. Retention.....	12
2.3.a) Retention – External factors.....	12
2.3.b) Retention - Internal factors.....	13
2.3.c) Retention system, process, and practice.....	14
2.4 Development.....	15
2.4.a) Development – External Factors.....	15

2.4.b) Development – Internal Factors.....	15
2.4.c) Development system, process, and practice.....	17
3. Conclusion.....	18
4. Recommendations.....	19
4.1 Completion of Succession planning tool.....	19
4.2 Attracting talent.....	20
4.3 Developing Role profiles.....	21
4.4 Developing skills in-house.....	21
4.5 Apprenticeships.....	22
Link for TM&R video task.....	22
Reference.....	23
Bibliography for TM&R video task.....	31

1. Introduction

Tai Tarian is one of the largest social housing landlords in Wales, it was established in 2011 after the housing stock of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council was transferred to the organisation. As of January 2022, the organisation has 520 employees and approximately 9000 homes based throughout Neath Port Talbot and the Afan valleys.

The organisation is bound by Welsh Government legislation as a social housing provider - any changes in the Welfare system will affect Tai Tarian.

In line with Welsh government legislation and the worldwide climate crisis Tai Tarian plans to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Within this report I have considered both external and internal factors in relation to recruitment, attraction, retention, and development. Along with the systems, practices and process which support them in relation to the challenging climate Tai Tarian finds itself within.

2. Literature review

2.1. Recruitment

2.1.a) External factors effecting recruitment

The UK recently recorded a high of more than one million job vacancies (Giordano,2021), like many countries worldwide, it now finds itself amid a labour shortage. Within this tight labour market, organisations are needing to work harder to attract and retain their talent (Keller and Meaney,2017). Larger organisations, such as Tesco recently announced a £1000 bonus to attract new HGV drivers (Ruzicka,2021). Amazon has offered up to £3000 for new employees and a bonus to the current staff member that referred them, along with a £50 weekly bonus to

staff turning up to work on time, not only attracting but retaining employees with financial incentive (The Guardian,2021) Atom Bank has gone further; dropping to a four-day working week without cutting pay (Thomas,2021) all highlighting the extent of the labour shortage, something which is unlikely to change anytime soon (Johnstone,2021).

Currently referred to as the “great resignation”, the “big quit”(Jacobs,2021,p.33), or the “war for talent” (McGregor,2021) people across the world are choosing to retire, others to change career paths or to quit work in search of better work-life balance.

In response, senior labour market adviser at the CIPD, Gerwyn Davies (cited in Churchill,2021) has *“urged employers to focus on retaining their existing workforce”*, advising organisations to *“not only look at salary but line management skills, flexible working options, and opportunities to progress and develop skills”*.

Organisations worldwide are now pursuing a hybrid approach to work-life, with a combined home/office work option a strong focus going forward (Hawkins,2021). Large organisations such as Admiral (Admiral,2021) HSBC, and JP Morgan (Jolly,2021) have recently confirmed that this will be the way of work going forward. A global survey by the advisory company Qualtrics International Inc. revealed that around 4 out of 10 respondents would leave their role if asked to come back to the office full-time (Bloomberg,2021).

Brown (2021) suggests that there is a new revolution with workers re-evaluating what they want from work in the aftermath of dealing with COVID-19

restrictions working from home options, and loss of friends and family through the pandemic.

Kennedy (2021) states that *“The number of economically inactive people — those neither working nor actively seeking employment — is also over half a million higher than on the eve of the crisis”* highlighting this.

A stark finding from a Microsoft Corporation survey (Bloomberg,2021)

concludes that *“almost half of the world’s workers are considering quitting”*.

With growing attrition rates through resignation and retirement Tai Tarian, it is evident that the combinations are affecting the workforce.

2.1.b) Internal factors affecting recruitment

Tai Tarian has continued to recruit throughout the pandemic, the decline of job applications mirrors information published by the CIPD (2021a) in the *“Labour Market Outlook paper, autumn 2021”* showing that there is an increasing skills shortage, particularly for skilled workers, such as electricians, Plumbers, and building surveyors. The construction industry is largely unaffected by covid-19 (Office for National Statistics,2021) with demand increasing for these roles, salaries are rising in correlation (Churchill,2021). In turn, the salary gap in the organisation is becoming increasingly evident, as a public sector organisation, it is not able to increase salaries at this time.

Many organisations are facing an issue due to the retiring age group of those born between 1946-1964, referred to as the “baby boomers” (CIPD,2018). Within Tai Tarian employees nearing retirement age or at retirement age have chosen to retire – prior to the pandemic, generally, employees would choose to continue to work past this age.

2.1.c) Recruitment system, process, and practice

The best way to retain talent in an organisation is through its ability to employ the best candidate for the role from the start. For example, the company Xerox replaced its recruitment process with a specific online test and in turn, their attrition rates dropped by 20% (Keller & Meaney, 2017), as they hired the right persons for their roles in the beginning. To do this extensive consideration is needed to determine what skill set a person needs to complete a role. As it stands *“27% of employers say applicants lack either the hard skills or human strengths they needed to fulfil their roles”* (Prising, 2018).

During the recruitment process at Tai Tarian shortlisting criteria is currently selected from job profiles by hiring managers. Through recruitment meetings with managers, it is being identified that job roles are changing and *“Essential”* criteria on current role profiles are no longer as important. This could raise the question of what employers are looking for as *“Essential”* criteria may not be what is needed at this stage, as could be taught on the job. Feedback highlights this may be the case at Tai Tarian, suggesting the role profiles may not be fit for purpose.

The organisation uses a basic applicant tracking system for most of its recruitment process. Training sessions are provided by HR to hiring managers to use the system and on the importance of unbiased, fair, and impartial candidate selection and suitable interview questions for hiring managers to make informed choices for suitable candidates. The system requires a lot of manual input for the HR team and is prone to errors. The system does have features that would make

both internal user and external candidate journey considerably better, but again cost is the issue as these features all have extra cost.

2.2 Attraction

2.2.a) Attraction - External factors

Various studies have been undertaken to establish what employees look for in employment. Initially, claims were made that ultimately financial gain was the key to attracting and retaining talent, many studies have now shown that there is much more to be considered.

A recent study by Glassdoor (Thomas,2021) found that 1 in 4 of UK employees felt less connected to their boss and company culture than before the pandemic, especially amongst those in the 18-24 age. Company culture has been identified as a top contender in overall employee satisfaction these results suggest this may be another underlying factor of the “great resignation” (Cook,2021) and why so many younger workers are becoming more likely to change employment (Rigoni and Adkins,2016). Tai Tarians culture is based around its behaviours policy which sites 5 specific areas which are Teamwork, Honesty, Professionalism, Respect, and Commitment. It is promoted through all stages of an employee’s life cycle, interview questions include values-based, and are used when setting targets through the performance management system. Ethically, it is a leading organisation with the implementation of its carbon-neutral strategies, recently awarded as “Landlord of the Year” at the annual Wales Energy Efficiency Awards for the work it is doing to improve the sustainability of its tenants’ homes (Tai Tarian,2021).

A study by Harvard business review concluded that all employees, no matter age concludes that learning and development opportunities with line manager abilities coming out on top (Rigoni and Adkins,2016).

These factors show that organisations need to work harder to provide fulfilment to their employees if they want them to stay. The CIPD (2020b) concludes that:

“Organisations might do better to ensure their practices ensure everybody can contribute and flourish at work, regardless of their age and circumstances, and equip managers with the tools to support this”.

2.2.b) Attraction - Internal factors

An organisation’s *“Employee Value Proposition (EVP)”* can determine how it will attract and retain talent. An EVP is what an employee provides through time, experience, and knowledge, versus what they receive through salary, benefits, and reward (Keller & Meaney,2017).

Higgs (2004) highlights four approaches to how an organisation presents itself in the labour market. Being an employer of :

- *“Cash - generally pays well but does not treat employees well.*
- *Values - cannot pay well but awards employees with job security and rewarding work.*
- *Churn - both pay low and treat employees poorly.*
- *Choice - this is the best option, both, paying competitively and treating employees well”.*

(Wilkinson & Taylor, 2016,p.61)

An organisation should aim to become an “*Employer of choice*” (Coach mentoring,2021). Currently, Tai Tarian is not able to be an “Employer of choice” as it cannot compete with salaries in the current climate. Throughout the pandemic, the organisation has continued to recruit, not made any redundancies, and was able to “top-up” salaries of those receiving furlough payment from the government scheme. This shows job security therefore the organisation could be considered as an “*Employer of Values*” (Higgs,2004).

Another element of being an “*Employer of Values*” is “*rewarding work*” (Higgs,2004). Recent exit interview data from Tai Tarian suggests that employees feel there is a lack of promotion opportunities, suggesting a lack of reward, potentially contributing to why the organisation is losing talent, posing a question to its ability to be an “*Employer of Values*” (Higgs,2004).

To be competitive an organisation should provide a competitive salary, pension, comparable annual leave entitlement, along with a positive work-life balance through flexible working options; provision of reward/discount schemes, and the use of employee assistance programs, all of which add to a benefits package, attracting talent. This is referred to as “*Employer branding*” (Wilkinson & Taylor, 2016,p.58)

2.2.c) Attraction system, process, and practice

Previously, Tai Tarian employees had access to the Local Government Pension Scheme and 31 days plus bank holidays annual leave per year. As of 2016 this changed, and for new starters since then the pension scheme is now significantly less, along with 25 days plus bank holidays yearly annual leave entitlement. This does cause frustration amongst newer members of staff. Further research shows

that even though the new pension scheme and annual leave entitlement are less than those employed pre-2016, both are comparable with similar organisations such as Hafan Housing Association (Hafan,2021) and Melin Homes Housing Association (Melin Homes, 2021), which does prove positive.

Implementation of different working patterns through the pandemic has enabled employees to improve their work-life balance. The ability to have these options has given employees the support they need to deliver their role and care for the family around them, reducing the pressure and stress of having a rigid 9-5 working day. The success of this gives credibility to the fact that these flexible ways of working can continue within the organisation. This will then enable the organisation to attract talent from demographics that it has not been able to before, offering varied full and part-time working patterns and hours, through hybrid working options (Prising,2018).

Ultimately provision of a range of competitive benefits would be considered best, but it should be highlighted that what may attract one person, may not attract another, and an organisation will lose talent (due to the organisation or the person's situation), no matter what.

2.3. Retention

2.3.a) Retention – External factors

The exact definition of talent management has long been disputed by theorists (Taylor,2019,p.7), described as *“simply a matter of anticipating the need for human capital and then setting out a plan to meet it”* (Cappelli,2008,p.74) or furthermore:

“An integrated set of processes, programs and cultural norms in an organisation designed and implemented to attract, develop, deploy and retain talent to achieve strategic objectives and meet future business needs”

(Silzer and Dowell,2010,p.18).

Whichever definition is considered this process covers a variety of initiatives that are claimed to help to attract and retain talented employees, which is interlinked with workforce planning described as *“the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles, at the right time and the right cost”* (CIPD,2021a).

The way an organisation chooses to view its talent can be seen from different perspectives. Taylor (2019,p.8) highlights inclusive or exclusive approaches, with broad or narrow scope views. Exclusive talent referees to those with specific professional skills, generally those within the senior management team, sometimes referred to as *“queen bee”* philosophy where talent is rare. Inclusive talent is just the opposite where all employees are seen to process talent that contributes to the organisation’s overall strategies. A broad scope for what talent management means is the view that talent management consists of all processes from recruitment throughout a person’s career. A narrow scope of talent management suggests that talent management activities focus primarily on workforce and succession planning ensuring the organisation can meet its core talent needs.

To encourage staff retention, talent and performance management (PM), is said to be a key component towards an employee’s positive feeling of purpose and expectations. It should be fair, with clear, meaningful expectations, which add value to both the employees’ work and the outcomes of the organisation. Through

this recognition, they will be more likely to stay in an organisation (Armitage & Keeble-Ramsay, 2015).

2.3.b) Retention - Internal factors

Feedback from the Senior Management team at Tai Tarian has been differential concerning the PM system, generally, the only aspect that it is used for is because new or transferred employees receive financial incentive after a probationary period. The opinion is that it does not add value and is considered a waste of resource and time. With this feeding from the top of the organisation, it is easy to see why things are put into performance plans as a “tick box exercise”. This diminishes the point of the performance appraisal for ongoing development needs and is part of criticisms that instead of providing motivation they have a negative effect (Taylor,2016,p.208).

2.3.c) Retention system, process, and practice

There is no specific formal process of succession planning at Tai Tarian, but it appears to take place on an informal basis, especially at a higher senior management level. Within the performance management system of Tai Tarian, there is the provision of a “ *12 grid – career management framework*” (Tai Tarian,2016) , which is a matrix to identify if a person is achieving above and beyond their role and is suitable to progress. However, it does not give guidance on the next steps on how a person can/will progress, concluding that the tool adds no value and is not clear and meaningful (Armitage & Keeble-Ramsay, 2015). It could be perceived that progression and promotion are given based on if you are “liked” by certain influential members of the senior management team, causing frustration and low morale to breed within the organisation (Andriotis,2016).

The CIPD (2012) advises that best practice would be to take a blended approach to talent management (Cited in Taylor,2019,p,9). When considering the points mentioned, the organisation's approach to talent management is not currently "blended". The lack of follow-up of succession planning could not be considered a narrow approach as this approach generally focuses on succession planning (Taylor, 2019). The "*queen bee*" perspective could be perceived within the organisation as promotion appears to be given if you are liked by the Senior Management Team. This does not promote staff development, motivation, which is the intention of the Performance Management System (Purcell et al,2003).

2.4 Development

2.4.a) Development – External Factors

Tai Tarian is currently considering how its hybrid approach to work life will be but currently no formal plan is in place. Working from home can provide a greater work-life balance, no time taken up by commute enabling some to stay in employment. The bonus of not using transport is also helping towards cutting carbon emissions, a focus on many minds with recent news of the effect of emissions on the planet's future (National Geographic,2019).

The result of the instant "work from home" scenario has now given managers the autonomy, trust, and flexibility that they strived to have before, trust has been gained as business outcomes have been still delivered even though there has not been the constant physical supervision of working in the office, this is also slowly filtering down from managers to their teams, giving autonomy to all, something all employees strive for according to Kropp, Cambon, and Clark (2021).

A variety of positives is evident, but it should be noted that the effect of isolation and lack of social interaction is negatively affecting some employees (Stanley, 2021). This coincides with sickness absence rates due to mental health issues at Tai Tarian.

2.4.b) Development – Internal Factors

Internally for the past year Tai Tarian have been focused on health and wellbeing strategies, to support employees at this time. Mental health specific accredited I-act training has been delivered to all managers and employees, providing guidance on how to support colleagues at work and at home. Tai Tarian has recently been recognised by the Chartered Institute of Housing for Excellence in Health and Well-being as a result of this work, and in categories for Supporting Communities, Working in Partnership, Best Housing Story for its work supporting people during the pandemic. If this is to continue, and at some point the organisation is able to compete for salaries it could therefore be considered an *“Employer of choice (Coach Mentoring,2021)*

Hobson (2021) states *“when all of our workplace interactions are scheduled... You put innovation at risk”*, highlighting that Microsoft research of *“The Spontaneous Encounter Theory”* after a recent experiment completed understanding the effects of remote work on collaboration. It suggests the ad-hoc run-ins that we have at the office create a time of collaboration that we are now losing working from home, concluding that these “meetings” should try to be achieved. Researchers at Harvard Business School (Bojinov, Choudhury, and Lane. 2020:21-125) found that such events as they refer to as *“virtual water cooler”* are a success and clear indicator for better innovation. Tai Tarian is trying to promote catchups (all be it via Zoom and inevitably planned into a person’s calendar) these events were promoted as a

general chat, and have not had the uptake desired, a focus on certain topics that affect employees could gain more uptake in future. Although this is another zoom meeting, potentially adding to what has been identified as “*Zoom fatigue*”, which is feelings of fatigue and exhaustion due to attending constant video meetings (Gabriel, Robertson, and Shockley, 2021), another issue highlighted by Tai Tarian staff.

Available learning and development initiatives are said to be key to retaining employees, something that has caused further debate by many theorists.

Taylor(2019:339) claims that some theorists suggest that once an employee has developed through training, they will, in turn, leave an organisation to use their new skillset further. Although, a study has revealed that there was no evidence to suggest development opportunities lead to staying or leaving an organisation (Green et al, 2000).

Allen and Bryant (2012:72-73) investigate further and conclude that giving training to employees without then providing adequate opportunity to progress is what will make employees want to leave, not providing the skill set itself.

2.4.c) Development system, process, and practice

The organisation will fund external courses for development, but employees will need to stay after completion of the course for a further 2 years (if not they will need to pay the cost back). The process of this is unclear and very little is written in the policy, which is similar to a lot of processes across the organisation - things are passed down via employees, which does little to promote this option, potentially losing talent as employees are not aware.

Tai Tarian has recently implemented a new training system with new content and training courses added weekly. Feedback from employees does highlight a concern, with many stating that they find the system hard to navigate. Emails have been sent from the training team which can appear that completion of the courses is just about its compliance rates, and a tick box exercise, this is causing lack of interest in the courses and the system.

The system, just like that of HR and payroll is stand alone, this causes the HR, payroll, and training team excessive work, with repetitive data input into systems, due to cost this issue is unlikely to be remedied any time soon. This takes time away from “*adding value*” to the organisation and ultimately turns the teams into admin functions with no strategic input or “*seat at the SMT table*” (Baczor and Zheltoukhova, 2015).

3. Conclusion

Many influences will affect the future of Tai Tarian’s capability to recruit and retain talent. To combat external factors; internal strategies should be robust, through a blended approach (CIPD,2012, Cited in Taylor,2019,p,9). The importance of attracting a diverse workforce brings new ideas and innovation to an organisation.

“It is no longer a question of asking potential candidates what they can bring to the company but of presenting to them what the company can offer in terms of professional life and the reasons why the potential employee should consider working there”

(Allal-Chérif, Aránega, and Sánchez,2021).

With this in mind, Tai Tarian will need to work harder than ever to maintain the skills it needs, it has the use of talent management tools, some more efficient than

others. For example, the lack of follow-up after using the succession planning tool to identify talent is seriously lacking and causing frustration amongst current employees, along with exit interview data suggesting that employees feel there is no opportunity for promotion. Developing a suitable process to enable this tool to add value will change this feeling.

If Tai Tarian fixes the succession planning issue, along with highlighting its extensive learning opportunities in place, it could therefore be considered as an “*employer of values*”, when considering that employees now value the likes of training development rather than financial gain it would suggest that Tai Tarian can then be competitive in today’s volatile job climate.

4. Recommendations

In an ideal world my main recommendation would be a system that encompasses HR, Payroll and training needs so that the teams are able to focus on working with managers and teams rather than on repetitive admin tasks due to the stand-alone systems in place. Considering the financial constraints of the organisation at this time recommendations have been based on lower-cost initiatives which can be implemented relatively quickly.

4.1 Completion of Succession planning tool

Completion of the current succession planning tool will provide managers with the ability to not only identify employees who are achieving above and beyond but also define a clear progression plan for their future. A re-launch of the performance management system after this is completed, with clear explanation of its importance. The feedback from exit interviews in relation to perceived lack of promotion abilities should also be highlighted to the senior management team.

Encouraging positive buy-in from the top-down to managers to change negative views of the system will be needed.

4.2 Attracting talent

To attract talent Tai Tarian should consider who its job adverts are reaching.

A recruitment campaign was launched by IKEA for a new store in Australia, to reach varied potential employees they added a job advert to the instructions of all its furniture. This kept campaign costs down and targeted IKEA fans, resulting in 4,285 applicants and 280 new employees hired (The undercover recruiter,2021).

When considering Ikeas's success, this simple approach could be used, by adding job adverts to the mail Tai Tarian currently sends out to its tenants – its customers. With these roles not being able to work from home the need to work locally to travel the area is key so this hits the demographic needed and also promotes employment within the area.

For roles able to work from home, the social media presence when promoting vacancies needs to be developed, this is not only low cost but also reaches talent that may not be actively looking for work, enabling the promotion of employer brand quickly and efficiently (Allal-Chérif, Aránega, and Sánchez,2021).

Whatever approach is used the job adverts should promote all the organisation has to offer, focusing on what has been shown as what employees want from job roles, highlighting all benefits, not just financial incentives. This advertising will reach candidates that may not know about the organisation or its varied job roles, increasing diversity, along with new ideas and talents.

4.3 Developing Role profiles

Feedback from managers during the recruitment process is that role profile “*Essential*” criteria is sometimes no longer a realistic essential need, and that potentially certain skills could now be developed via on-the-job training. Re-assessing role profiles with current managers to update could prove a useful task, this approach is being used across organisations in response to current hiring issues and will ensure the organisation attracts the correct talent from the start.

Prising (2018) states that:

“Employers are adjusting education and experience required to fill the role More than one-third (36%) are being more flexible about the education or experience requirements for the role”.

This will increase the scope of potential candidates to job applications, and the task itself will encourage managers to re-think and consider a people planning thought process, and what they really need from their teams going forward to ensure future success.

4.4 Developing skills in-house

As Tai Tarian offers financial support with training and study of external courses along with its extensive in-house training this, in turn, will cost less to support an internal colleague to upskill rather than the cost of a new hire (Adams,2021). This also has the added benefit that an internal employee will know how the organisation runs and how to use its internal systems, saving time and money and ensuring promotion opportunities within to retain staff.

4.5 Apprenticeships

According to HR Magazine (2021), apprenticeships look to become an important part of future government plans to ‘build back better’ to recover from the pandemic. Planning for this will ensure the organisation is ready to implement this option quickly, this can be done by visiting schools/colleges to promote working for social housing and showcase the variety of jobs available and the opportunity for apprenticeships. Also educating school leavers that this is a possible route for women, promoting gender equality, encouraging new talent from younger generations, and setting out a career path to work for the organisation.

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Please see link below for TM&R video task:

https://youtu.be/q3eQ_O9cZMk

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