

## The way you **attract and retain** the best and brightest has changed.



**Brooke Alexander is the author of SuperTalent.** Widely recognised as a talent specialist, she has appeared within a variety of lifestyle and business media. Companies hire her to help them attract, motivate and retain their best and brightest, and individuals work with her to become known as the best in their field.

Corporations don't have *engagement issues* with employees; they have *connection problems* with people. Businesses need to understand that the best and brightest, *SuperTalent™* are their greatest asset. Companies that talk about having engagement problems haven't identified the real wants and needs of their people. Add to that the changes in popular culture, the emergence of Generation Y and the explosion of social trends, and organisations have to realize that employee expectations have changed; dramatically. And in turn they need to change the way they attract, manage and retain their talented people.

Right now thousands of high potential employees feel undervalued, unacknowledged and unappreciated by their employers. These individuals desperately *want and need to feel valued*. But in many organisations, senior management are seemingly unaware of the wants and needs of their best and brightest and wonder why their most talented are walking out the front door. The reasons for disengagement across the entire workforce varies, however in the case for SuperTalent, the best and brightest are leaving for three very simple reasons.

**SuperTalent think differently to the majority of employees.** They want to become future leaders. They want to be acknowledged and recognised for their professional skills, talents and expertise. They want to become professionally famous at work and be identified as integral to the success of the organisation they work for, and they want it *fast* – generally faster than the company can cope with. These employees have a unique rational and emotional commitment to the companies they work for; yet I'm constantly shocked by the lack of emotional and rational commitment they *receive* from their employers. Many entrepreneurs have shared this with me as their primary reason to leave their current employer and establish their own endeavour.

**SuperTalent have a need to learn.** In fact, they have an insatiable appetite for learning and development. They crave advancement and knowledge. However, many companies don't acknowledge their individual need for self-directed learning and development and send their best and brightest along to "cookie cutter" style training programs and workshops. Generic, traditional training programs do little to enhance personal aspirations, or foster the impetus required for future industry leaders. I know of individual cases where the inability of an employer to foster *self-directed* learning has led to their best and brightest walking out the front door.

**SuperTalent thrive and multiply in cultures that support them with distinction and encourage individuality.** However, many businesses in the Asia-Pacific region appear to operate within tall poppy type cultures that tell people to comply, conform and *get in line*. This is the point where many stars are disengaging. In one particular case an employer's inability to give individual recognition and respect, led to dissatisfaction and disengagement across an entire team.

It's an unfortunate fact of organisational life that the existing operational cultures of many businesses don't serve their people. More, bigger, faster, is great if you can deliver more, bigger, faster. *But most organisations need to find a better way to attract, motivate and retain their best people before they burn out, defect to the competition or leave to start up their own endeavour.*

Take a moment to consider the following statement. How often have you heard someone say, 'I just can't find the right people', or 'If only Catherine didn't leave' etc.? So often we play the blame game rather than taking the time to really look at and review ageing management frameworks. When do companies allocate time to review organisational frameworks? Normally when it's too late - after talent leaves, a takeover or a management restructure. And in the majority of businesses it never happens. *'It's the way we've always done it.'* Sound familiar?

The first step for employers is to recognise what is and isn't working. I know it sounds like a very simple concept. But in reality, when do you allow yourself – let alone in your businesses – a moment to stop and answer the question. If you were a great manager you might ask the question at the end of a project; what worked, and what didn't? If you were a great leader you might ask the question every week and focus on getting the answers right for your business, your clients and your team's success. But if you're a SuperTalented, high-potential employee you're probably telling yourself what is and isn't working and wondering three things: if I tell anyone, will they do anything about it; should I be taking my ideas to the competitor down the road who might do something about it; or maybe it's time for me to go and start up my own enterprise or business. Why? Because I know I have the skills, talent, experience and expertise to do it. So why should I stay where I'm currently working?

Did you know that these are the conversations SuperTalent are having every day in organisations where they feel undervalued, unacknowledged and unappreciated by their employers?

No longer can businesses and corporations ignore the needs of their talented people. The world has changed, and in turn the rules of engagement are more crucial than ever before. If you want to keep your SuperTalent, you need to work to keep them.

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