



Survey report  
Summer 2010

A large, blurred photograph of a group of people, likely in a meeting or collaborative work environment, serves as the background for the lower half of the page. The image is tinted with a purple/magenta color.

**THE TALENT PERSPECTIVE**  
WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE TO  
BE TALENT-MANAGED?

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# Foreword

We are excited to be launching the 'Talent Perspective' research, which builds on a series of CIPD talent-themed insights. This report, undertaken for us by Capgemini Consulting, looks specifically at what it feels like to be talent-managed and the organisational lessons that can be drawn from these experiences.

*We think it is important for the following reasons.*

Firstly, research on talent management programmes usually focuses on the employer's perspective, with seemingly few focused on the employee perspective. This research therefore offers us a fresh viewpoint and a new way of evaluating talent management activities. Our own evidence shows that organisations' focus on talent management has not only survived the troubled economic climate – in many cases it has even increased in importance (see CIPD publications *The War on Talent?* and *Fighting Back through Talent Innovation*). But amid tight margins, how do organisations ensure they are getting the most out of their activities and what lessons can organisations draw from participants as well as those not selected for programmes? This research seeks to answer these questions.

Secondly, the majority of participants in this survey are already senior managers or leaders and are part of a talent pool or programme aimed at developing their skills and capability further. Senior leaders have been deliberately selected because of the level of investment often targeted at them, and their importance in leading the organisation and establishing success and future sustainability. Furthermore, as our Next Generation HR research clearly spells out, we must also ensure through our talent activities that we are building leadership for the organisation challenges of tomorrow, not just replicating today's team more efficiently.

*So what do the findings tell us?*

Well, the research is useful because it provides us with clear evidence from senior talent participants to support some of our working assumptions. Namely, that participants on talent programmes or pools have high

engagement levels and are more likely to see a future with their organisation. They value personal development such as coaching and mentoring over more formal offerings and believe that the talent activities will help them to both perform better in their current roles and prepare them for potential future positions.

However, there are also a number of insights that bring a fresh lens to talent management activities. First of all there is good news for HR, which is viewed as playing a critical role in facilitating talent pools and programmes and maintaining momentum. Where HR is seen as centrally owning talent development activity, this positively affects how well the programme is run and its effectiveness in the business. The findings also show that the existence of structured selection processes serve to increase talent programmes' perceived value and the motivation of participants to perform. The negative effects of being 'passed over' are not as detrimental as might be feared, with employees' overall happiness and pride in their organisation not being impacted. This is particularly the case if individuals are provided with sensitive and practical feedback. Finally, one of the most interesting findings relates to the keenness of peer groups represented on talent programmes – often the highest-performing employees across the business – to continue to meet and network beyond the programme. Organisations, and especially HR, need to develop ways to manage this and get the most out of groups that have participated in talent programmes, harnessing their energy and creativity for business success.

I have just touched on a few of the many interesting messages emerging from this research and would urge you to explore this report as well as the very helpful practical checklists provided at the end for business leaders and HR/talent professionals alike. If you have any feedback about this research, then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**Claire McCartney**

CIPD Adviser, Resourcing and Talent Planning

# Executive summary

Now firmly embedded in everyday management language, the concept of talent management has been widely reported, analysed and commented on.

It is fair to say that existing research on talent management focuses predominantly on the employer's perspective. Opportunities to understand the employee's views are often limited to internally produced and analysed feedback forms and employee engagement surveys.

Our research aims to re-address this balance and provide a unique perspective on talent management, by looking at how it feels for senior employees to be talent-managed and the lessons that we can learn from that.

The study focuses on very senior employees who are undertaking elements of organised talent development activity, through membership of an organisation's 'top talent pool' or 'talent programme' and who are being prepared for future leadership roles. Two factors make this group important from a research perspective: they have a significant impact upon delivery of the organisation's strategy and business goals and there is typically substantial investment in managerial development. As a group of individuals they are also likely to be highly valued members of the organisation and in consequence their views are of particular interest to talent practitioners.

The study was undertaken in spring 2010, across 11 medium to large-sized organisations from a range of sectors and industries. It comprised a survey (302 full responses) followed by 17 follow-up interviews. The research findings are of particular use for talent practitioners and business leaders who wish to understand how to best focus talent investment and resources.

A number of key themes have emerged:

- The power and energy created from the formation of peer groups amongst the highest-performing individuals across the business, as a consequence of talent programmes and pools, provides a significant opportunity for organisations to harness talent.
- Having a selection process enhances the value the individual perceives from a talent programme and also enhances feelings of self-awareness, confidence and motivation to perform well, for those who are successful applicants. These benefits should be taken in conjunction with the effect of an unsuccessful application, which appears to be slightly lower levels of commitment to the organisation. There is some evidence to show that effective feedback can be a way to counteract or minimise this effect.
- Our respondents value coaching, mentoring and networking above the more formal development opportunities offered by a talent management programme.
- HR plays a critical role in co-ordinating talent pools and programmes and maintaining momentum. Where HR is seen as owning talent development activity, this has a positive impact upon how well run the programme is and also upon its reputation in the business.
- Our respondents believe that support and sponsorship for the talent pool/programme from the very top is high and note how critical this support is. However, business support and engagement across divisions and between line managers appears to be inconsistent, which has a strong effect upon perceptions of the programme.
- Organisations have a real opportunity to optimise the way they capitalise on the benefits of the development activities once individuals have completed the talent programme. Our respondents have a number of suggestions around how their experience could then be used.

As a consequence of our findings we have made some recommendations for talent management practitioners. A summary of our recommendations includes:

- Clearly communicate the rationale for, and core objectives of, your talent programme or pool.
- Ensure participants' expectations in a pool/programme are consistent with the expectations of the business and HR.
- While it is important that the business sponsors the programme, central HR is crucial in maintaining the consistency of the selection process, credibility of the programme and subsequently its overall reputation in the organisation.
- Consider reviewing the structure of your talent programme or pool with your business sponsor to ensure the inclusion of effective development opportunities such as coaching, mentoring and networking.
- Consider implementing a selection process for the top talent programme if you do not already have one.
- If you choose to implement a selection process, ensure that the criteria are administered consistently and have a planned strategy for those who are not accepted to be part of the programme.
- Make the selection process a learning event in itself. Take the time to ensure all applicants have detailed and constructive feedback.
- Maintain dialogue with those who have completed the talent pool/programme or who have been a part of it for a long time.
- Discuss with your business sponsors valuable ways in which the energy of previous participants may be harnessed.

# 1 Introduction

The concept of talent management is firmly embedded within enterprise from small business to global organisations and its existence, definition and growth has been charted through reports, analysis and commentary. Existing research has, however, predominantly focused on the employer's perspective, those responsible for talent strategy and investment in talent management interventions.

Opportunities to understand the employee view are often limited to internal feedback forms and employee engagement surveys. As a result, we do not really understand the employee perspective on what it feels like to be part of the talent management process. This gap in our knowledge may be significant. Those who are being actively talent-managed through talent programmes or talent pools are often an organisation's most valued employees and by not understanding their needs we could be misdirecting talent management efforts to the detriment of both the employee and the organisation.

To address this, the CIPD has commissioned this study into talent management to gain insight into how it feels to be actively managed through a talent programme or talent pool, specifically from the perspective of the most senior 'top talent' pool of employees in organisations. Our research aims to provide a unique perspective and insight for practitioners regarding employees' experience of being talent-managed and the corresponding organisational lessons.

The key objectives of this research are, therefore, to understand:

- what it feels like to be 'talent-managed' from the view of top talent
- what is most and least valued about the talent management process and the development opportunities that arise through the process

- the effect that 'being passed over' has on employees and their motivation
- what organisational lessons can be drawn from this in terms of content, positioning and running of the process.

We believe that there is significant value to be gained from understanding how employees feel about being 'talent-managed' and suggest that our findings contain useful insights for organisations that will provide food for thought when developing their bespoke talent approaches.

To set the context, we begin with a brief introduction of the research study followed by an overview of current talent management trends. We then describe our findings, conclusions and the recommendations we make for business leaders, those responsible for owning and administering the talent approach as well as academics and those wishing to undertake further research.

Our research study was undertaken in spring 2010, across 11 organisations covering a broad mix of sector, size and talent management approach. It focused on very senior employees who are undertaking elements of organised talent development activity through membership of a talent pool or talent programme and who are being prepared for future (leadership) roles.

Participating organisations in the survey are:

Astellas Pharmaceutical, Barclays, Big Lottery, BT, KPMG, Pizza Express, two NHS strategic health authorities (West Midlands and East of England), the Scottish Government and Vodafone. Panasonic was also involved in the research, providing us with case study insight and interviews, but didn't participate in the survey itself.

Participating organisations provided at least 40 names of employees to take part in the survey, some of whom were part of the talent management programme and some of whom were not involved. The total numbers of respondents and response rates varied across each organisation to give us a total response rate of 61%.

Further information on the research methodology and each participating organisation, including a brief description of their approach to talent management, organisation size and number of individuals invited to take part in the research, can be found in the appendices.

## 2 The context: talent management trends

Anyone with an interest in how people are managed at work cannot fail to be aware of the significance that the term 'talent management' has for business today. Fully entrenched in the management dictionary, the concept has permeated the far reaches of enterprise from multinational boardrooms to small businesses.

In this section of the report, we focus on key trends in the talent management arena, reflecting on general observations and changes that have influenced organisations' perceptions of and approach to talent management.

According to research by Bersin & Associates,<sup>1</sup> more than 35% of all large organisations have a talent management leader and almost one-third operate a formal talent strategy. There is now a high level of board and CEO engagement in talent management programmes and this represents a big change compared with a few years ago.

But what does it mean when we talk about talent management? And how consistent are definitions across organisations?

Most modern definitions encompass the entire employee lifecycle – workforce planning, recruitment, learning and development, performance management, competence development and retention through to exit and beyond. Talent management as a term and concept has become synonymous with what HR does.

For the purposes of this research we have used a more narrow definition of talent management:

*'Initiatives and/or strategies put in place to harness the unique talents of individual employees and convert their talent potential into optimum organisation performance'.*

In illustrating how talent management is currently applied, there are three trends to highlight:

- the shift from generic talent management programmes to a more targeted focus on key roles and (leadership) succession planning
- the increasingly broad nature of talent management interventions
- the impact of the recession and economic recovery on talent management – a tale of survival and renewed impetus.

### A more targeted approach

A key and ongoing debate among HR practitioners concerns the core purpose of talent management. Should approaches focus on enabling everybody to achieve their talent potential at work (the inclusive approach), or rather focus on a select group of the highest potential employees (the selective approach)?

Often in reality a blended approach is used, with some attention being paid to employees as a talent group as a whole, while special focus or attention is given to a particular core group or core groups of employees.

This is indeed the case in the majority of our participating organisations that, while they adopt an inclusive approach to talent, have in addition selected subgroups to be talent-managed in a more structured fashion, such as graduate populations, top talent programmes, high-potentials programmes and various schemes that may be aimed at specific functions with more technical skills (for example sales or engineering).

*'Our programmes focus on the top talent but we also recognise that everyone has talent and we want everyone to develop their full potential.'*

<sup>1</sup> BERSIN & ASSOCIATES. (2010) *Enterprise learning & talent management predictions 2010*. Research report. Oakland, CA: Bersin & Associates.

However, in recent years, we have seen an increased use of the targeted, selective approach to talent management. In particular, we have seen increasing concern about and a higher level of investment in senior leadership, succession planning and 'make or break' roles across international boundaries. There is an increased focus on identifying key roles in the organisation and ensuring there will be a pipeline of good people to take on these roles, rather than investing in individuals just because they are considered 'talent' or 'high potential'. Concepts such as 'talent mobility' encompassing career development, succession management, talent planning and development planning are becoming more and more important.<sup>2</sup> Organisations will have to be more (globally) agile in the future and able to shift people across the organisation to fill key positions quickly; talent development programmes can provide easy access to these people.

The debates and assessment processes are also happening in a different way. Rather than closed table discussions facilitated by the HR director on a one-to-one basis with business leaders, we are increasingly seeing a collaborative discussion taking place as part of a regular agenda item at management meetings. This has led to a greater board awareness and focus on talent practices, which may have inspired the more targeted approach to talent.

### **The broader nature of talent management programmes**

Formalised learning and development sessions are increasingly complemented with other development activities to extend the learning into the day-to-day working life of the participants. Interventions such as coaching, mentoring, job rotations and secondments are recognised as integral parts of talent management programmes and the reported value of these interventions is immense.

In addition, social networking is becoming more important, both as a driver and outcome of talent management programmes. As organisations become more fluid in terms of structure and role definition, people need to be able to work in virtual teams, form alliances across (geographical) boundaries and have

easy access to knowledge and people. Contemporary talent management programmes provide a way for people to 'bond' with peers they would normally not have access to.

### **Between feast and famine – the impact of the recession and economic recovery**

In recent years the level of investment in talent management approaches and programmes has been like a rollercoaster ride. During the 'war for talent' in the early 2000s investments in talent management activities were high on the agenda. The recession that followed, however, has led to increased scrutiny of business spend, which in turn has placed increased pressure on HR to demonstrate their added value and justify investments as 'business critical'.

It is therefore no surprise that with an increased focus upon cost-cutting, a subsequent reduction in development budgets took place, although this was perhaps not as widespread as expected. Previous CIPD research showed that talent management investment decreased in some organisations while others recognised the need for a continuous investment in their people to capitalise on the opportunity to generate competitive advantage and increase revenue.

It looks like the latter group was right. Many organisations that have gone through restructuring exercises, a compensation freeze or have been forced to cut spend on employee development are now experiencing employee engagement at an all-time low. Team this with the early signs of recession recovery and opening up of the job market and the risk of losing key performers to competitors is very real. There is an expectation that the talent pool composition will change due to people moving to organisations that are performing strongly and are showing a consistent focus on employee development.

Many organisations have therefore reinvigorated their attempts to retain and attract key talent, putting talent management firmly back onto the executive agenda. Investing in the right people in the organisation is once more a key focus for HR, because those who get it right are better set up for the future.

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<sup>2</sup> BERSIN & ASSOCIATES. (2010) *Enterprise learning & talent management predictions 2010*. Research report. Oakland, CA: Bersin & Associates.

### **In summary**

Talent management has maintained or even increased its importance throughout the recession but we are seeing a renewed effort to target precious financial resources to those areas of the organisation that really matter. As we have already noted, research into talent management interventions and their effectiveness has been mainly conducted from the employer's perspective. Given the scarce resources to invest in programmes and the fact that employee engagement seems to be a real challenge for organisations at the moment, it is increasingly important to understand what employees really value in terms of talent management opportunities and to use their feedback to improve the offerings.

This research focuses on that question – what does it feel like to take part in or be excluded from talent management programmes?

# 3 What we found

Our analysis begins with an exploration of the level of work satisfaction or engagement displayed by our sample participants who are actively talent-managed. We then look at the value placed upon membership of the talent programme, why people are attracted to join, and how they feel about belonging to the talent pool. We then consider the impact of context and positioning on views towards talent; we look at perceptions of development investment, attitudes towards selection and reputation and ownership of talent management within the business. Finally, we discuss the impact of being excluded from a talent management approach.

Our conclusions and learnings for talent practitioners are suggested in the next section of the report.

## 3.1 What does it feel like to be actively talent-managed?

**There is a high level of engagement and pride in the organisation amongst our respondents, whether in a talent pool or not**

To understand the outlook of our survey participants and to set context for our findings, we tested the level of work satisfaction of all our survey participants. Overall, respondents demonstrated a strong sense of engagement at work, with engagement levels slightly higher for those identified on talent pools than not.

There was a strong sense of pride in being part of our profiled organisations, both from those within and outside of the talent pool. Generally, survey participants feel happy at work and believe their efforts are valued, that they have a future in their organisations and that they have the opportunity to take an active role in their personal development. Further, 81% of respondents who were members of talent programmes and pools agreed that membership of this group has positively impacted their engagement at work.

From the overall sample, public sector respondents were slightly happier at work and felt their efforts were more valued than the private sector (87% private compared with 94% public sector strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'I am happy at work', and 84% private sector employees compared with 92% public sector strongly agreed or agreed with the statement 'my efforts at work are valued'). However, in contrast to this, our private sector respondents were more positive about the career opportunities available to them (66% compared with 60%).

Might the high level of engagement suggest something about the nature of being talented in itself? Is high engagement actually a prerequisite to being recognised as 'talented'? In addition, the correlation between talent, engagement and performance would be interesting to explore in future research.

Participants at different levels of management had different views on engagement. We asked participants whether being in the talent programme has positively impacted their engagement with the organisation and those who were at 'management' level were in much stronger agreement compared with those at 'executive' level (86% compared with 67%).

Interestingly, those not in a talent pool were more likely to feel that decisions about their development had been made without their knowledge (32% of respondents not in a talent pool agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement, as opposed to less than 25% agreeing or strongly agreeing from within the talent pool). However, the reported high levels of engagement and happiness at work mentioned earlier may suggest they don't feel unduly aggrieved about this.

Table 1: Value statements from respondents who are members of a talent programme (%)

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am proud to work for my organisation	57.4	38.6	3.3	0.7	–
I am happy at work	28.7	59.2	7.0	4.0	1.1
My efforts at work are valued	24.3	60.7	11.0	3.3	0.7
Career opportunities are available for me within my organisation	19.5	45.2	19.1	14.3	1.8
Decisions have been made about my development without my knowledge	4.8	19.1	22.4	40.8	12.9
I feel I have a future with my organisation	24.3	53.7	16.9	4.4	0.7
I have had the opportunity to take an active role in my personal development in this company	43.4	45.6	8.8	2.2	–

Base: 302

Table 2: Value statements from respondents who are **not** members of a talent programme (%)

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I am proud to work for my organisation	45.5	48.5	6.1	–	–
I am happy at work	33.3	45.5	12.1	9.1	–
My efforts at work are valued	21.2	60.6	12.1	6.1	–
Career opportunities are available for me within my organisation	21.2	30.3	24.2	12.1	12.1
Decisions have been made about my development without my knowledge	12.1	21.2	24.2	24.2	18.2
I feel I have a future with my organisation	21.2	45.5	12.1	18.2	3.0
I have had the opportunity to take an active role in my personal development in this company	30.3	48.5	9.1	12.1	–

Base: 302

### **Underpinning high engagement there is a strong sense of value attributed to the talent process and to being part of a talent pool**

It is well documented that public recognition, a sense of belonging to something important, being developed at work and self-confidence are powerful sources of intrinsic motivation. That being so, belonging to a talent pool may create 'self-fulfilling prophecies', providing the confidence to grow within the organisation and fill the future leadership pipeline.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, both our qualitative and quantitative research strongly suggest positive feelings about being talent-managed. The qualitative data, in particular, suggests an overwhelmingly positive response towards participation on a talent programme. Respondents reported feeling special or receiving a 'vote of confidence' through their inclusion in a talent pool. They feel supported and valued by the organisation and were motivated to go the extra mile.

Several respondents commented that they felt more self-aware as a result of the development process they had been through and several reported an increase in confidence. This was a common theme across all our participating organisations. As each organisation differs in its approach to talent development and the development initiatives they offer, it may be that the process of being developed, or the simple fact of being recognised as top talent, is as important for self-awareness and confidence as the actual composition of the programme itself. However, talent programmes provide a great opportunity to explore and utilise individuals' self-awareness and confidence further through different interventions.

*'On a personal level, I have benefited immensely through increased self-awareness, excellent networking and diversified business experience. No other avenue could have provided me with those exceptional benefits in such a short space of time.'*

*'This investment has made me feel really valued as an individual...and has motivated me to want to give a return on that investment more than the conscientious work I have normally given.'*

The level of engagement and satisfaction with the talent programme could be expected given the calibre of the respondents and their participation in top talent pools. However, the strength of support for the talent programmes, in all their guises, in particular in the context of the current economic climate, is striking. Several respondents praised their organisation's commitment for continuing the talent programme despite challenging economic conditions. Indeed, more than one stated the talent programme as the sole reason for staying with their current organisation through the difficult times. In several examples participants commented on the strength and inspiration of their leadership in relation to the talent programme.

*'As is the case in most organisations there have been no pay rises recently and the talent pool has been instrumental in showing people they are valued and invested in.'*

*'Its value has been demonstrated over recent years as a retention tool. [The] talent pool has been instrumental in [me] remaining with my organisation in the past few years even after being targeted by other organisations.'*

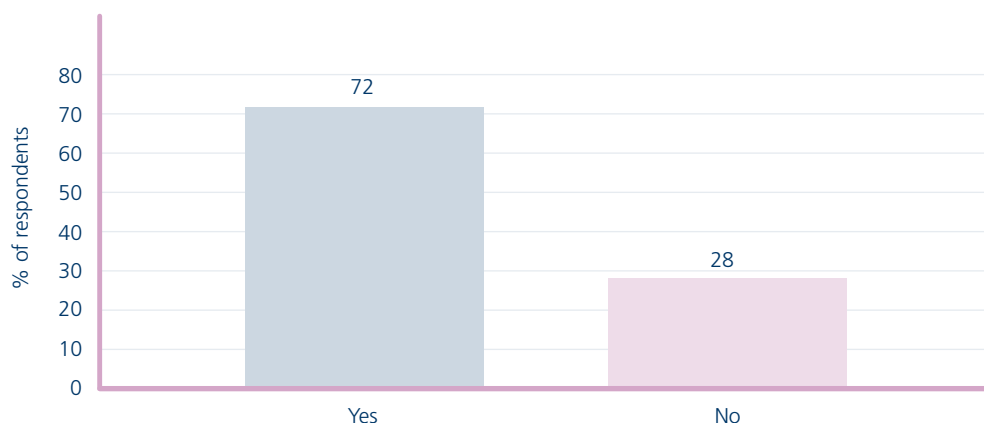
*'I find it really refreshing to listen to the CEO saying how the company would invest in people, especially in difficult times. This is an easy thing to say, but difficult to act on. But he'll be able to stand up and say in ten years' time that he had the foresight to invest through the depths of the recession, and reaped such great rewards.'*

*'Investment in staff no matter the conditions is something you would lose at your peril. Don't let the investment go!'*

### **Participants feel challenged by the opportunities and interventions that membership of the talent programme or pool brings them**

A large majority of respondents believe that membership of the talent programme would offer significant new challenges for them.

Figure 1: Do you think being in the talent pool/programme will offer you significant new challenges?



Base: 268

Employees in our sample feel challenged by the talent management process; 79% of our respondents strongly agree or agree that their current role challenges them, and 72% believe that belonging to the talent pool or programme will in itself bring significant new challenges. We saw an interesting contrast between private and public sector responses in the level of challenge experienced – 71% of private sector respondents agreed that there would be significant new challenges compared with 56% from the public sector, perhaps reflecting the different nature of the talent programmes offered or expectations of the participants.

Further, 87% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that personal growth and development was possible in their current job and 90% agreed or strongly agreed that talent management development opportunities had indeed focused on developing themselves as individuals.

So we can confidently conclude that participants do value being part of the programme. But what impact does membership have on the perceived demands on individual performance?

We explored whether the challenge of the programme might become a burden for participants, thereby putting them off the programme and indeed the organisation. We found evidence that this was not the case – while 51% agreed or strongly agreed that they were expected to go the extra mile for their

organisation as a consequence of being on the programme, only 17% felt like it was just more work alongside a busy schedule, and while 30% agreed that the programme had involved a high degree of personal sacrifice, 47% disagreed or strongly disagreed that this was the case.

As noted before, participants do feel challenged by their involvement in the talent pool or programme but they also feel they have access to the required support and there is little evidence to suggest that the challenge of the programme puts undue pressure on the individual. Or at least that the pressure and workload are no greater than high-calibre individuals expect when accepting a place on a development programme.

The vast majority of participants agreed that membership of the talent programme or pool was beneficial for them, with 94% of respondents agreeing that it would help them develop their competence or leadership capability. Seventy-eight per cent agreed that they had the right level of support and encouragement to progress at their own pace. Of the respondents, 190 believed the talent programme has the flexibility to meet their personal circumstances, again highlighting the potential level of support for the programme available in the organisation. However, through our qualitative analysis there are suggestions that the level of support varies across business divisions and we will discuss this point further in section 3.5.

### 3.2 Why do people want to join the talent programme/pool and what are their expectations?

Throughout this section we examine why people have chosen to join the talent programme or pool, what they see its purpose to be and the expectations they have.

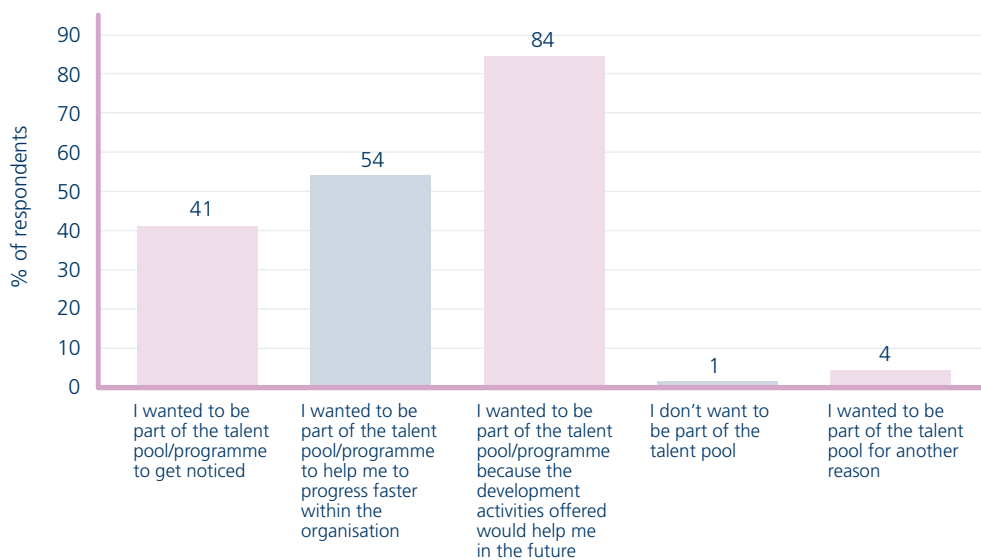
#### Rationale behind joining the talent programme/pool

We asked about the primary reason people wanted to be part of their organisation’s talent pool or programme to establish the extent to which individuals aim for self-development, to progress in the organisation or to raise their visibility and profile within the organisation.

Participants were given the option of choosing more than one response. By far the greatest proportion of respondents (84%) felt that the development opportunities offered would help them in the future, while 54% more specifically stated that they hoped the talent programme would help them progress faster in the organisation.

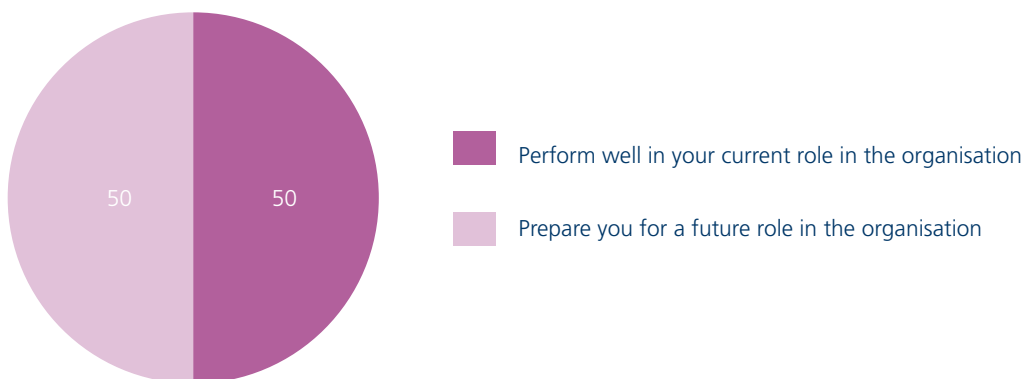
It seems, however, that participants’ expectations are not always reflective of whether or not the organisation has a clear talent strategy and is clear about the intended outcome of the talent programme.

Figure 2: Rationale behind joining the talent pool/programme



Base: 268

Figure 3: Does the talent pool help you more to: (%)



Base: 268

### **Employee expectations from the talent pool or programme may not always be in line with those of their organisation**

There was an almost exact 50:50 split in respondents' views as to the purpose of the talent pool or programme (see Figure 3 on the previous page). Of the 268 who answered this particular question, 133 believe that the programme would help them increase their performance in their current role, and 135 believe that the programme would help them prepare for a future role in the organisation. We noted a difference between private and public sector in the responses, with 62% of public sector respondents believing the talent programme would help them prepare for a future role compared with only 49% of private sector respondents. There was also an interesting gender split within the results, with 55% of men believing the talent programme would help them prepare for a future role compared with 46% of women.

In some cases, the different expectations can be explained by the different organisations participating in the survey, and their associated different practices. For some of our organisations the talent programme was about progression to the next level, and for others it was more about developing the individual at their particular grade. However, we also found a mixed response from participants within the same organisation, which suggests that in some cases there may be a lack of clarity around expectations and purpose set at the outset of the pool or programme.

This ties in with responses from our interviews and qualitative data from the survey, where a commonly raised concern was the lack of clarity and consistency around the purpose of the programme for those who have joined or are about to join. There are definite opportunities and areas for refinement for some of the talent programmes in this area.

*'How to set expectations right and to deliver against it?'*

*'[I have] concerns about consistency of briefing and expectation-setting at the outset.'*

### **Participants have mixed views as to the extent to which the talent programme will help them progress their career**

A closer examination shows more of a mixed result, particularly with regard to employee expectations around future opportunities and promotions that could be linked to the previous comment about clarity of programme purpose.

In addition, the current economic climate must be taken into consideration in response to this question as opportunities for career progression and job movement are currently limited by external factors constraining organisations' flexibility. Also, a minority of the talent programmes we examined were not set up with the aim of career progression but personal development within a role. Whatever the reason behind the split response, this does not appear to have had an effect upon overall levels of satisfaction with the organisation or with the programme.

### **3.3 What are the views around having a selection process for a talent programme or pool?**

This section describes our findings regarding the selection process, the perceived benefits and concerns around the selection process and the impact that this has upon employee perceptions.

#### **Employing a selection process increases the perceived value of the talent programme/pool**

Forty per cent of our survey respondents reported that they had been through a selection process to join the talent programme or pool. This actually means that 40% of respondents were aware that they went through a form of selection process, as some of our organisations operate a form of selection process involving nomination, or selection upon performance criteria, which could potentially be unknown to the prospective programme participant.

*'I really liked the structure and elements of formality which gave it a credible air – this was crucial as it was a new scheme. The process was well advertised and understood; it was conducted by warm, personable and known individuals who provided good feedback.'*

*'[The selection process] made me think if I wanted to go on the programme and gave reassurance that those chosen were of a similar mind set.'*

*'The difficulty of getting on ... emphasised the high value of the opportunity – it made it something you wanted to get onto and were proud to achieve.'*

*'I can't say it was an enjoyable process, but it definitely made me think about it and understand what I wanted out of it.'*

Of those who had knowingly been through a selection process, most were very positive about the way the process had been implemented in their organisation and also found the process itself valuable and rewarding. However, only 52% agreed that the application process was easy. Overall, 78% felt they had the support they needed to get them through the selection process and 83% felt encouraged by their line managers through this process. These results are very positive; however, this perhaps is not surprising in light of the fact that this group of employees had been successful in their applications to the talent programme.

#### **If there is a selection process, it must be transparent and feedback must be provided**

Participants who had been through a selection process also commented upon the increased chances for reflection and self-awareness that the selection process had provided, leading to a better-informed decision of whether to take part in the programme.

Participants were strongly in favour of thorough feedback being given throughout the selection process, although the dangers of poor feedback were rather startlingly illustrated by one of our interview participants.

*'The decisions on who was selected and why were not consistent or transparent and feedback to those who were not selected was inaccurate, badly handled and ultimately damaging to the organisation. Two unsuccessful candidates for example have since resigned, mainly to go to new opportunities but I believe the reason they started looking for new jobs in the first place were very much about the poor feedback they were given.'*

*'Feedback was given at each stage of the process so was useful even for those who did not progress.'*

*'The process was beneficial in helping you understand where your gaps lay. This then fed into your development plan.'*

A common cause for complaint amongst our respondents was the perceived lack of transparency around the selection process, in many cases linked to a lack of overall communication around the programme and/or an inconsistency of approach dependent on what division of the organisation the individual belonged to.

*'At the time I was not aware of what I was really being selected for, I had been put forward by the UK but had not been given much detail about what the programme actually entailed.'*

Also respondents were keen to stress that any perceived element of cronyism or selection based upon an individual's clout in the organisation would naturally lead to frustration amongst both those selected and those not. There were also comments about the consistency of the selection process. Several participants perceived differing levels of calibre within their talent programme, implying that different selection criteria had been levelled at different populations.

*'Not convinced that [the selection process] was fully competency based.'*

*'Selection wasn't consistent enough around the company. Outcome was a very differing level of participants.'*

*'As long as the selection processes are transparent and fair an unsuccessful application is okay. As soon as only the clout matters, it becomes frustrating.'*

### **3.4 What do participants think of the development opportunities open to them?**

#### **Coaching, mentoring and feedback sessions are valued over formal training**

Of particular interest to our research team was the type of development activities that participants had been

exposed to. The below data extract from our survey shows that the majority of employees viewed themselves as benefitting from developing their networks, developing new skills and engaging in challenging experiences.

Overwhelmingly respondents valued the exposure and access to the most senior members of the organisation, opportunities to experience new and diverse roles, coaching and mentoring.

While formal training is recognised as being beneficial, the most valued development opportunities were talent management interventions focusing on personal reflection and awareness such as coaching and mentoring – traditionally the less structured and less measured aspects of development.

With regards to coaching, respondents across the board rated both external and internal opportunities they had received very highly, and those who had not been coached expressed a wish to be involved in this area in the future. The opportunity to focus on self-development as opposed to formal qualifications appeared to be of particular attraction. Respondents were of the view that coaching did not replace the value of more formal aspects of development such as training but was useful to complement and aid learning.

*'This [coaching] was extremely powerful and allows you to reflect on the more formal aspects of learning*

*and allows you to embed the learning in your own style.'*

*'The external coaches were so valuable – previously a lot of development has been about qualifications and this was not like that at all.'*

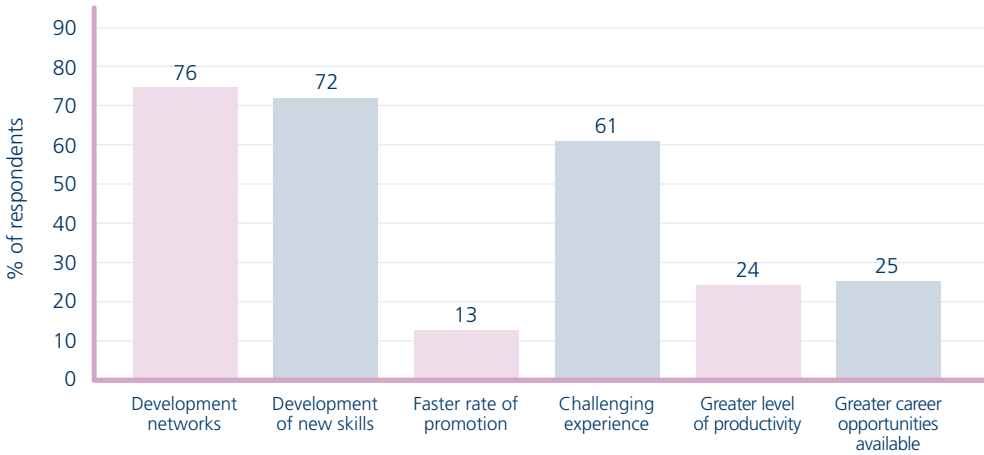
Self-awareness is a commonly perceived benefit from coaching and mentoring interventions. The value placed on these less structured, more individually based development activities is consistent across organisations, sectors and grades of individuals.

*'[Mentoring] helps realise full potential of people as individuals: stretches, motivates, and creates self-awareness which ultimately increases the chance to be a successful leader.'*

The value of networking with and exposure to the most senior members of the organisation is another common theme and a highly valued intervention. In addition, participants on talent programmes gain from peer networking and the opportunity to network with other high-performing individuals within the programme. Ninety-two per cent of respondents agreed that the development opportunities they have experienced have enabled them to build productive relationships with their colleagues.

*'We worked together, a team approach. It has been very supportive, [we] shared ideas, advice and got*

Figure 4: Which of the following benefits of being talent-managed have you experienced? (%)



Base: 268

Figure 5: Which of these opportunities has the talent pool/programme made available to you? (%)

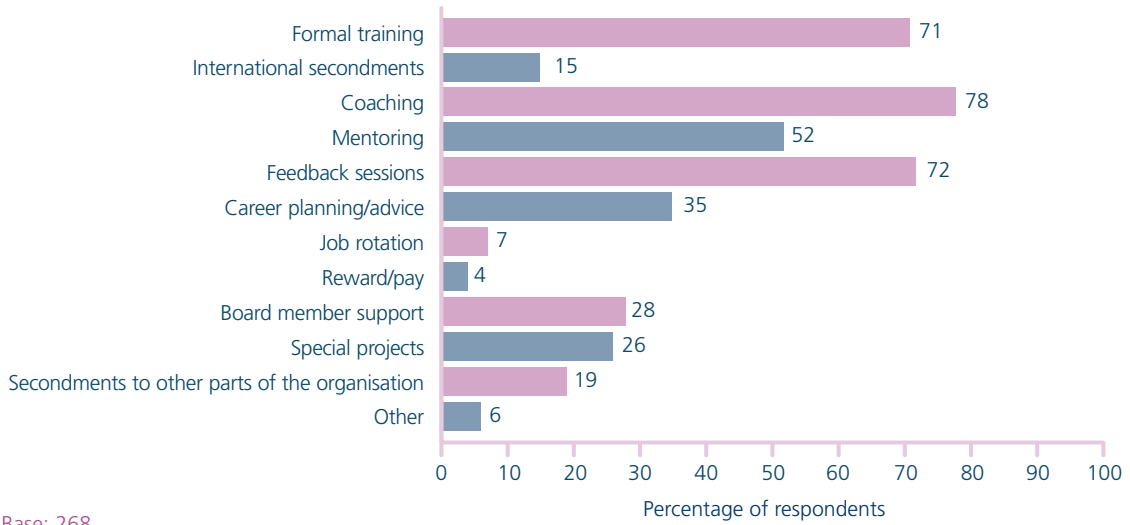
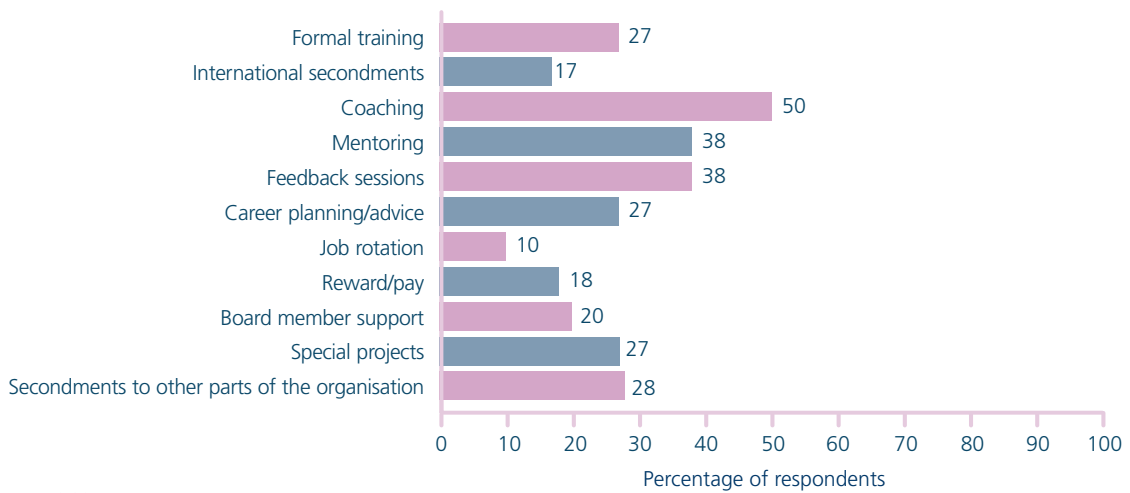


Figure 6: Please rate the top three opportunities you think would be most beneficial to you? (%)



*feedback from one another. I have built a great network across the organisation, but especially with those in the same building as me. Without the programme I wouldn't have had the opportunity.'*

*'Being a member of the talent programme has certainly opened doors and increased access to other colleagues and senior executives.'*

Not only is the creation of a community mentioned as the most valuable part of the programme from a

personal perspective, it is also reported to be a potential driver for improved business performance. Several respondents commented on the opportunities a talent programme created for the organisation in terms of high-performing teams and alumni networks that reach across organisation boundaries. More than one respondent questioned whether their organisation was making the most use of this opportunity and suggested ways in which more established members of the talent pool or programme, or those who had already been on the programme, could be used in the wider business.

*'[Benefits include] the opportunity to meet people that end up being friends, to meet individuals who complement our working career and that you can learn from.'*

*'Establishing a formal network of people who have been through the scheme would be useful for wider sharing of knowledge and identification of talent.'*

*'Making use of the outgoing talent pool as coaches etc for the new pool would be very good for the personal development of them all.'*

*'Broader business relationships will create synergies going forward.'*

### 3.5 How does the positioning of talent management in the organisation affect employee perceptions of the talent programme/pool?

In this section we review employee views on who owns and runs talent development activity in their organisation and how that affects the perception of the programme. We also examine the level of publicity and information-sharing around the programme and the impact that has before going on to describe opportunities for organisations to utilise the experiences of those who have already been through the talent programme.

### Perceptions around the ownership of talent management

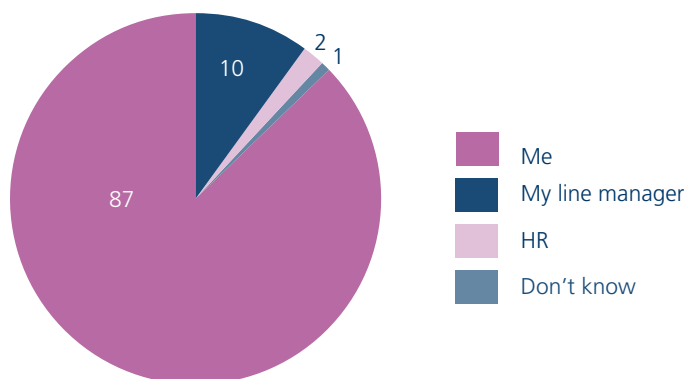
The talent and HR leaders participating in our study all agreed that the individual has to take ownership of their own career and manage their own development. Our respondents provided a slightly different perspective. In the main they agreed that they owned their own career and development (although 12% thought responsibility lay elsewhere). Interestingly, 11% of private sector respondents thought their line manager took prime responsibility for managing their career and development, compared with only 3% in the public sector, although most had a relatively clear view of the various responsibilities of the parties involved and understood their own role in this.

*'You only get out of it what you put in.'*

*'I've learnt that you can't assume the business knows where you want to go, you have to take responsibility for development and not wait to be spoon-fed. But once you reach out, the support is fantastic.'*

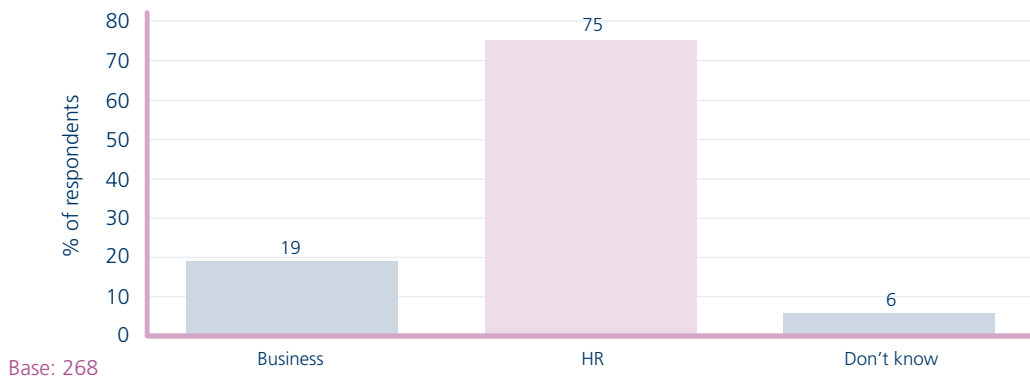
Respondents agreed that senior support and/or sponsorship for the talent initiative was essential for its success, with a high proportion also agreeing that the talent programme was visibly supported by the leaders of the organisation.

Figure 7: Who takes primary responsibility for managing your career and development? (%)



Base: 268

Figure 8: Who owns the talent development activity in your organisation?



The talent and HR leaders view the business as the owner and sponsor for talent development in the organisation, while HR takes responsibility for establishing, running and facilitating most of the talent development activity. However, 75% of our respondents believe that HR owns talent development activities in the organisation. A sector split was also apparent here, with respondents from the private sector being more likely to state that talent development activity was owned by the business rather than HR (22% compared with 11% in the public sector).

### The role of HR in increasing the perceived value of the programme

Moreover, there was a significant increase in the perceived value of the programme where HR was seen to own talent management activity in the organisation; of our respondents, 76% rated the talent programme as good or very good when it is owned by HR compared with 68% when it is not owned by HR.

There appear to be several reasons behind this, which were explained in supplementary survey and interview comments. Many felt that HR provided invaluable support in raising the credibility of the programme as a centrally run initiative, in keeping momentum going and in retaining consistency. While an accolade for the profession, this does also raise a question around how HR, as a facilitator of a process, is able to make such a difference to the reputation of a programme.

*'It really is up to you but HR needs to own, keep it together, plan and keep it going. I think without HR the programme would have fallen apart. HR is central to it; it's more credible if it is owned by HR.'*

One insight into this is that the relationship between the talent programme and the rest of the organisation is not as positive as it might be.

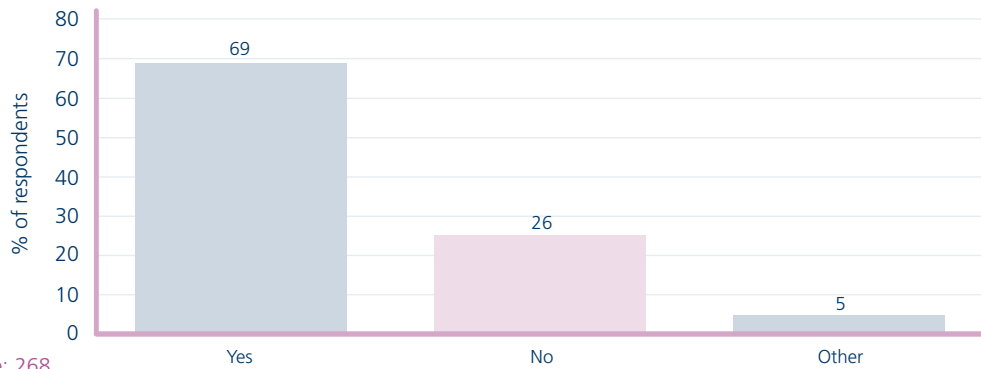
*'The integration with the business doesn't work well enough. HR does a fantastic job but there should be more ownership and accountability from the business. The obstacle there is probably the low maturity of the business and the fact that the countries still protect their own individuals.'*

*'It sometimes feels that they [local board] almost see the programme as a threat, because the talented want to grow further and explore new roles and international opportunities. They do not see the opportunity as much as the HQ does.'*

### Variable line manager support leads to inconsistency of selection, expectations and overall credibility of the programme

Although support for the programme at the top of the organisation is strong, there are difficulties at the divisional leadership and also at the line manager level. These difficulties appeared to occur for a range of reasons: lack of buy-in to the programme from that level of management, lack of support for individuals who were seen as wanting opportunities potentially outside of that division of the business and therefore were a risk to

Figure 9: Was it easy to find relevant information about the talent pool/programme?



Base: 268

the local business and also, upon occasion, such significant differences in culture between various business units that it had an impact upon how the programme was implemented in each area.

Several participants also felt that support within the business, to provide opportunities and to maximise the potential of the talent pool, stopped short of where it should be and suggested that this represented a lack of trust in the talent pool that undermined the value of the programme for participants.

*'Support for job rotation, secondments and international moves. I don't believe the business has had the courage or the faith to trust the top talent coming out of the programme. Why?'*

*'Providing challenges and stretch within the organisation; that means taking risks with talent.'*

*'Developing talent needs to be more aligned with opportunities within the organisation and there needs to be a culture of allowing people to "act up" onto roles, that is people need to be trusted and given responsibility.'*

### **Publicising the talent programme pool can increase the perception of its value**

We tackled this question from two differing perspectives: firstly, how easy it was to find information on the programme once individuals were part of it and, secondly, the general awareness of the programme throughout the business.

When we asked our survey respondents how easy it was to find information on the talent programme or pool, the responses showed that in general, information was easy to find but often only once the employee was on the talent pool or programme. However, just over a quarter still found it difficult to access sufficient information even when they were part of a pool/programme.

We then compared responses of those who found it easy to find information on the programme with those who did not against a number of value statements. The results show that where the information was easy to find, every statement has received a higher proportion of positive responses (Table 3 and 4 overleaf).

Table 3: Yes – it was easy to find the relevant information (%)

Item	True	False
The talent pool/programme has prepared me for a more senior role in the organisation	76.5	23.5
The talent pool/programme has encouraged me to get involved in areas of work I would not have otherwise been exposed to	65.2	34.8
The talent pool/programme has given me the right level of support and encouragement that I needed to progress at my own pace	81.8	18.2
The talent pool/programme has helped me deal with difficult situations that arise at work	75.9	24.1
The development activities I've been involved in have focused on developing me as an individual	90.9	9.1
I feel that I can influence the content/pace of my development	89.3	10.7
The development opportunities I've had have enabled me to build productive relationships with my colleagues	91.4	8.6
The talent pool/programme has the flexibility to meet my professional circumstances	80.2	19.8
<b>Average %</b>	<b>81.4</b>	<b>18.6</b>

Base: 187

Table 4: No – it was not easy to find the relevant information (%)

Item	True	False
The talent pool/programme has prepared me for a more senior role in the organisation	63.8	36.2
The talent pool/programme has encouraged me to get involved in areas of work I would not have otherwise been exposed to	59.4	40.6
The talent pool/programme has given me the right level of support and encouragement that I needed to progress at my own pace	73.9	26.1
The talent pool/programme has helped me deal with difficult situations that arise at work	56.5	43.5
The development activities I've been involved in have focused on developing me as an individual	85.5	14.5
I feel that I can influence the content/pace of my development	84.1	15.9
The development opportunities I've had have enabled me to build productive relationships with my colleagues	89.9	10.1
The talent pool/programme has the flexibility to meet my professional circumstances	60.9	39.1
<b>Average %</b>	<b>71.7</b>	<b>28.3</b>

Base: 69

As the responses in general are positive, this indicates that having readily available information on the pool/ programme can play a part in increasing the perception of the programme's value. However, not having information available doesn't significantly reduce the value in the participants' view. There is no correlation between the result and the way individuals feel about the organisation overall, showing that any effects are limited to the programme itself.

### **Visibility of the programme/pool within the business is essential to avoid inconsistencies in membership calibre and the selection process and to raise profile**

When we examine the overall visibility and awareness levels of the programme within different areas of business, we identify a similar issue as before: the responses seem to vary widely depending on the business unit the individual belongs to within the organisation.

*'Different leaders have different understandings of development and the value they place on it. Different people receive different levels of help when part of the talent pool for the same reason.'*

*'The profile within the organisation needs to be raised and the purpose of the programme clarified for those outside.'*

On occasion, this is perceived to be a general issue with the programme and something that could be improved across the business. However in many cases, it is recognised that how talent development works in different business units varies widely depending on the business leaders and the support and availability of the participant's line manager. Interestingly, several respondents state that participants in the talent pool or programme are sometimes unaware that they are part of the talent management process or even that they are on a form of 'talent list' at all.

*'There were some people on [the] programme who did not even know why they were there, they had just been told by their manager to go on a course.'*

Some participants also experienced a sense of secrecy surrounding the talent programme or pool, despite a

recent trend towards greater openness in the talent process amongst all our organisations.

*'Too much of a secret club, it needs promoting in a factual manner.'*

### **There is an opportunity for businesses to make more of those participants who have already been through the talent programme/pool or been on it for a long time**

Several of the organisations that we profiled have a talent programme/pool with no official end date, and some operate a reselection process on a regular basis to refresh membership of this group. A small majority of our participating organisations have a finite talent programme that typically finishes after a year, and that includes a variety of formal and informal talent interventions. We wanted to find out how those individuals who have completed a programme or have been on a programme for a significant length of time, feel.

This question area was not addressed as part of our original survey, but was included in interviews following a large number of related comments in the qualitative sections of the survey.

We have included a wide selection of the quotes we received in this area to illustrate the depth of feeling shown. While there was a common consensus that more could be done following the conclusion of a talent development programme/pool, respondents' views ranged widely. Some individuals felt that one or two minor additions such as a wrap-up session with HR would help to formally close out the programme, while others recommended a continuation of some sort of support framework to assist with future career moves. Others were simply frustrated that the opportunities they had perhaps hoped would arise from membership of the talent programme had not yet come to pass.

*'The programme was fantastic, but there has been nothing since so being part of the talent pool does not mean anything tangible now.'*

*'[It] would be good if there was a one-to-one interview at the end of the process with HR to ensure that what has been learnt does not dissipate.'*

*'Once the talent programme completes, the support network fades away. Continuation of a framework/ support structure would help.'*

*'It's sometimes more damaging to say tick, you've completed the programme, you can now continue in the same/original job you came from and that's the end of the learning.'*

*'It does plateau for those who went through the course some time ago – maybe some of that is inevitable.'*

Some respondents appeared personally aggrieved that their support mechanism had ceased to exist, while others gave a frank warning of the potential retention danger from employees who had been developed and who felt more skilled, more self-aware, more self-confident only to then discover that the opportunities they had hoped for within their own organisation were not available.

*'Any development programme forces attendees to think about the future. If the hosting organisation is unable to provide opportunities for development within the business then the participants will look outside the business. Who implements a pipeline needs to be able to handle its output.'*

One of the main benefits of the talent programme from the survey data was seen to be the development of networks amongst peers in the talent programme and the wider organisation. This group appears in cases become a powerful network or 'high-performing team', as one respondent put it. Several interviewees remarked upon the power of the talent peer groups and that this would be an opportunity for organisations to harness going forward.

*'The establishment of the pool is relatively easy – what is harder is the maintenance of the group, the communication, the creation of the high-performance "like minded" community.'*

*'Great experience...and some great opportunities, but feels there is a need to address the question of what happens next.'*

Some participants also described examples of opportunities for organisations to actively reap the benefits from those who have completed a talent programme, including formation of an alumni network, integration of talent 'intakes' and ongoing mentoring and coaching opportunities.

### **3.6 What does it feel like to not be actively talent-managed?**

In this section we review the opinions of those who are not currently on a talent management pool or programme in comparison with those who are. We then examine the difference in perceived levels of investment between those on the talent programme and pool and those not.

#### **Those not on the talent programme are less likely to feel they have a future with the organisation**

A concern for any organisation pursuing selective talent management strategies is the impact that this may have on those excluded from programmes.

As we have noted, those who have applied unsuccessfully to a programme may be less likely to see a future with their organisation.

Overall, however, we found no significant difference between the respondent groups regarding level of pride in their organisation and overall happiness with the organisation, suggesting a lower level of impact than might be feared or indicating that other development opportunities are available for non-participants.

To test this area of common organisational concern further, we questioned each of our respondents around a range of value statements, before being presented with any questions specifically concerning the talent programme and whether or not they had been chosen to participate in it. The results between those who are on the talent programme and those who are not show differences in several areas (in order of maximum difference of opinion).

**1 Difference in feeling whether they had a future in the organisation.** As senior-level employees, most respondents see a future in the organisation, whether in a talent pool or not, though talent pool membership makes this more

likely. Seventy-seven per cent of those in the talent pool or programme agreed (those respondents who 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement) that they had a future in the organisation compared with 67% of non-participants. Amongst those on the talent programme, only 7% disagreed (those respondents who 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement) that they had a future in the organisation compared with 21% of those not on the programme.

## 2 **Difference in perceived level of career**

**opportunities available.** Talent programmes also increase the perception of opportunities for career development; 64% of those on the talent programme agreed that career opportunities were available to them in their organisation, compared with 52% of those not on the talent programme. Similarly, 17% of those on the talent programme disagreed that there were career opportunities available compared with 24% of those not on the talent programme.

## 3 **Level of control over their career.** When looking at the statement 'decisions have been made about my development without my knowledge', those on the talent programme are more likely to disagree. For the statement, 'I have had the opportunity to take an active role in my personal development', those not on the programme are more likely to disagree.

It is worth noting that if the results for those individuals who applied and were not selected to the talent programme are separated from those who were eligible but not on the programme, the unsuccessful applicants show the least positive perception of both the career opportunities available to them and their future in the organisation.

The prime cause for concern for organisations using selection processes is therefore the impact that not being successful on applying to a programme appears to have on individual motivation for staying in the organisation. While our population of respondents in this group was too small to offer a statistically significant result, there was a marked dip in how the employee felt about their future with the organisation following an unsuccessful application to a talent programme. This is perhaps due to a negative impact on their confidence and perceived 'value' of the

organisation, taking a rejection for the talent programme as a vote of 'not good enough'. It is worth noting however that of our 11 respondents in this group, all but one would reapply to the talent programme if they had the chance, suggesting that they see the talent programme as having value despite not being selected for it.

Overall then, those not selected for the talent programme displayed mixed feelings that were in general less positive – not being selected seems to impact upon self-confidence and motivation for staying with an organisation.

*'It would be fair to say that not being successful in the application gave my confidence a huge knock, and led me to question my ability.'*

*'I had a bad day and didn't get on the programme! That was my problem so it hasn't affected my motivation.'*

*'I felt very demotivated about the issues around my ineligibility for the talent pool.'*

Amongst those who were not on the talent programme but were eligible for it (that is, either there is no selection process in place or it is not visible to the employee or the individual has chosen not to participate) there was no significant difference in levels of confidence about their future with the organisation compared with talent pool participants.

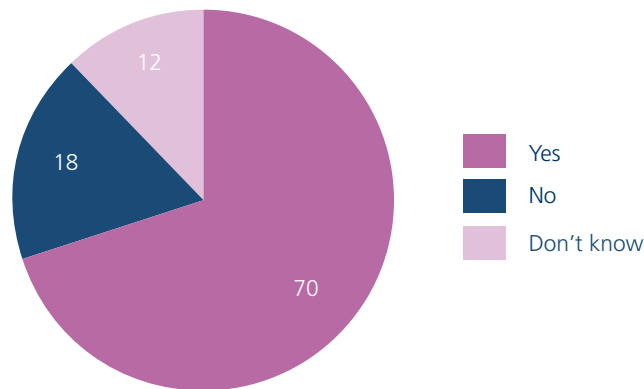
*'Feedback has been positive and I very much aspire to be part of the programme in the short term.'*

*'Already under huge amounts of pressure as part of a project team and therefore not a good time to take on additional responsibility.'*

*'I am happy with my current position as I feel that enough opportunities for me to develop are offered outside of the programme.'*

Probing this further, we wanted to explore the extent to which people felt that investment in development was prioritised towards those identified within a talent pool.

Figure 10: Overall, do you think more investment is given to developing those on the talent pool/programme than those not on the talent pool/programme? (%)



Base: 268

**There is a clear difference between perceived levels of investment between those on a talent programme and those not**

While 70% of our total respondents assumed that there was more investment given to those on the talent pool/programme (see Figure 10), all of those not successful in their application believed that participants were offered a greater range of support and/or development opportunities than non-participants. However, survey participants in the majority of our profiled organisations felt that, although in most cases more investment was given to the top talent programme, in general many other development opportunities were provided. Those not selected for a talent programme all agreed that other development opportunities were available to them, with the most commonly available development opportunity being formal training.

In a number of cases, where there was an increased investment in the individual, or perceived increase in investment, this appeared to have had a beneficial effect on how the individual felt about the organisation and their career prospects within it.

*'The investment that has been put into me during this process is enormous. It is not just financial, but has also been the support, advice and guidance of a number of people. This investment has made me feel really valued as an individual. It has also changed dramatically the way in which I perceive [my organisation].'*

# 4 What we can learn

There are a number of lessons that can be drawn from looking at the 'talent perspective' for individuals and organisations to improve talent management initiatives.

- Our respondents value coaching, mentoring and networking above the more formal development opportunities offered by a talent management programme.
- Having a selection process increases the value the individual perceives from the programme and also enhances feelings of self-awareness, confidence and motivation to perform well for those who are successful applicants. These benefits must be contrasted with the effect of an unsuccessful application, which appears to be lower levels of commitment to the organisation. There is some evidence to show that effective feedback can be a way to counteract or minimise this effect.
- HR plays a critical role in co-ordinating talent pools and programmes and maintaining momentum. Where HR is seen as owning talent development activity, this has a big positive impact upon how well run the programme is and also upon its reputation in the business.
- Our respondents believe that support and sponsorship for the talent pool/programme from the top is very high and have noted how critical this support is. However, business support across divisions and between line managers appears to be inconsistent and this has a large effect upon the perceptions of the programme.
- Organisations have an opportunity to develop ways to manage and get the most out of top employees once they have been on the talent programme for a length of time or after they have finished being on the talent programme.
- In particular, the power and energy created from the formation of peer groups amongst the highest-performing individuals across the business as a consequence of talent programmes and pools provides a significant opportunity for organisations to harness.

Consequently, our practical recommendations are as follows:

## For business leaders

- Agree the explicit business goals and strategic intent behind your talent programme with your HR team up front and ensure that the talent strategy is communicated to the wider business.
- Sponsor the talent programme and demonstrate visible leadership and commitment from the business to ensure the programme has credibility for employees and to increase their sense of value of being part of it.
  - Trust your talent to deliver and therefore create the appropriate spaces and opportunities for participants.
  - Provide a consistent approach to talent across divisions and functions.
  - Continue to run a successful and supporting business. Harness the company culture and engage with the participants – you are their inspiration, don't lose this.
- Your line management structure should be encouraged to follow your lead in their support for the programme. If they don't, this will damage the credibility of and business commitment for the programme. It also creates difficulties on an individual level.
  - Ensure line managers have visibility of the appropriate processes (selection, nomination and so on).
  - Set consistent expectations and hold briefings about what being part of the pool/programme means for their team member.
  - Ensure line managers understand their role in supporting individuals on the programme.
- The 'senior talent' population values coaching, mentoring, networking, exposure to other parts of the business and exposure to you and your immediate team more than formal training and other structured interventions. Therefore, it may be

beneficial to review the nature and composition of your talent programme with your HR director to ensure that the right balance of formal training and other development opportunities are available.

- Is networking a more cost-effective and value investment than other talent management interventions?
- Does each talent management activity have independent value or is the value reaped as a result of the culmination of activities or applied learning?
- Are there synergies with the learning and development strategy?
- There appears to be a certain amount of power and energy created from the formation of peer groups amongst the highest-performing individuals across the business as a consequence of a top talent programme or pool being in place. This provides a significant opportunity for you to harness. Consider how you can make the most of this group of people.
  - Could you form alumni groups and integrate the ‘intakes’ of participants?
  - Could these groups be utilised in other ways to support the business and continue the learning after the training has finished, for example in solving strategic business problems?
  - Could you use previous participants to mentor and coach other intakes?

#### **For heads of talent, HR teams and other talent specialists**

- Clearly communicate the rationale for and core objectives of your talent programme or pool. This is not just about setting expectations but about managing them throughout.
  - Ensure individual expectations are consistent with the expectations of the business and HR.
  - Communicate the timescales and level of commitment required.
- While the business sponsors the programme, there are benefits from having a central HR face and contact running the programme. Be proud of your role in this and be visible – your presence is crucial in maintaining the credibility and consistency of the process as well as in maintaining the perceived value of the programme.

- Review the structure of your talent programme or pool with your business sponsor. Coaching, mentoring and networking are most valued by senior talent pool members.
  - Ensure the balance is right between formal structured training and these types of activity.
  - Ensure you have considered the needs of the organisation as well as participants on the programme.
- Consider implementing a selection process for the top talent programme if you do not already have one. This may not be appropriate for all organisations or cultures, but there is evidence it increases the perceived value of the programme as well as feelings of self-awareness, confidence and motivation to perform amongst participants.
- If you choose to implement a selection process, ensure that the criteria are administered consistently and that you have a planned strategy for those who are not accepted to be part of the programme to mitigate against decreased commitment to the organisation.
- Make the selection process a learning event in itself. Take the time to ensure all applicants have detailed and constructive feedback.
- Maintain dialogue with those who have completed the talent pool/programme or who have been a part of it for a long time. This can be a wrap-up interview at the very least to manage expectations, but there may be other opportunities to keep involvement going.
- It is clear that organisations have an opportunity to develop ways to manage and get the most out of top employees who have been through the talent process due to the peer group created as part of the talent programme or pool. Discuss with your business sponsors valuable ways in which this energy may be harnessed.

#### **Finally, the study provides a number of avenues for further research, these include:**

- the power and effective use of talent management peer groups
- an in-depth examination of the impact on those who are not part of talent pools or programmes in terms of motivation and organisation engagement
- the correlation between talent, engagement and performance.

# Acknowledgements

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Sarah Goodson, NHS East of England

Caroline Wigley and Rachel Kirkwood, NHS West Midlands

Danny Kalman, Panasonic

Julie MacDonald, Pizza Express

Angela McCallum, the Scottish Government

Michelle Wilkinson and Helen Hopkins, Vodafone

Thank you to all our survey and interview respondents for sharing their views and opinions on what it feels like to be talent-managed.

# Appendix A – Our research process

## Defining the research parameters

In determining the research approach, we recognise that although definitions of talent management could at particular points in time cover all employees at an organisation, for the purposes of our survey, we need to focus upon a particular subgroup of employees in order to develop meaningful results.

We decided to focus only on senior employees who were undertaking some sort of organised talent development activity through membership of an organisation's 'top talent pool' or 'talent programme' and were being lined up for future top leadership roles. Two factors make this group important from a research perspective: they have a significant impact upon delivery of the organisation's business goals and there is typically a substantial investment in management development at this level. As a group of individuals they would also clearly be highly valued members of the organisation and in consequence we perceived that their views would be of particular interest to talent practitioners.

Therefore, a more specific description of our research is that it examines 'what it feels like to be actively talent-managed from the perspective of *highly valued* employees'.

We approached a range of medium to large organisations to participate in the survey. Not only has this ensured a breadth of perspective, but these organisations were also more likely to have the type of organised talent development activity we wanted to focus on: a top talent pool or talent programme aimed at this senior group of employees.

We established several criteria for organisations to self-select against to ensure that the number of variables we were dealing with was contained to a reasonable level:

- The organisation has an existing leadership development programme, talent pool or equivalent

development activity targeted at high-potential employees.

- The programme is aimed at senior manager/director equivalent in the organisation – those who are lined up for future top-level executive positions.
- The leadership development programme is aimed at a population that includes UK employees.

To enable us to make some comparisons as to the effect of the talent management programme upon the rest of the organisation, we also surveyed a small number of individuals who were not on the talent programme (but were eligible for it) and those who had applied but were unsuccessful in gaining a place on the programme.

More information on the organisations selected can be found in Appendix B.

## Research methodology

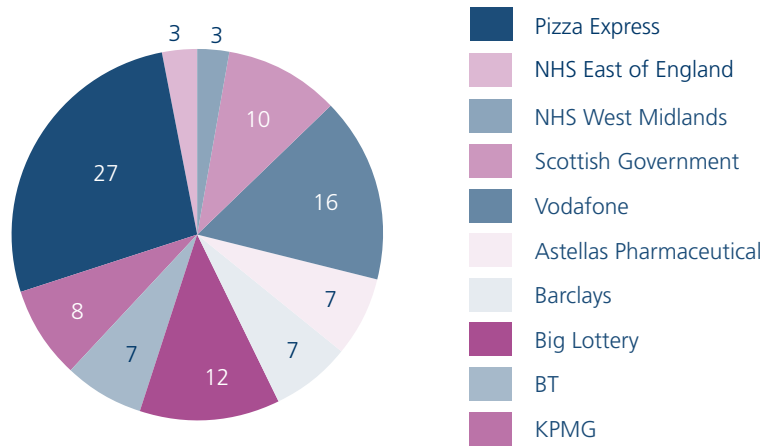
As outlined in the introduction, our participating organisations cover a broad mix of sector, size and talent management approaches. We have attempted to provide a range of industries while keeping the results comparable and meaningful across the multiple variables.

Participating organisations in the survey are:

Astellas Pharmaceutical, Barclays, Big Lottery, BT, KPMG, Pizza Express, two NHS strategic health authorities (West Midlands and East of England), the Scottish Government and Vodafone. Panasonic was also involved in the research, providing us with case study insight and interviews but not participating in the survey itself.

Participating organisations provided at least 40 names of employees to take part in the survey, a mixture of those that took part in the talent management programme and those that were not involved. The total numbers of respondents and response rates varied across each organisation to give us a final proportion of respondents as follows:

Figure 11: Which of the following organisations do you belong to? (%)



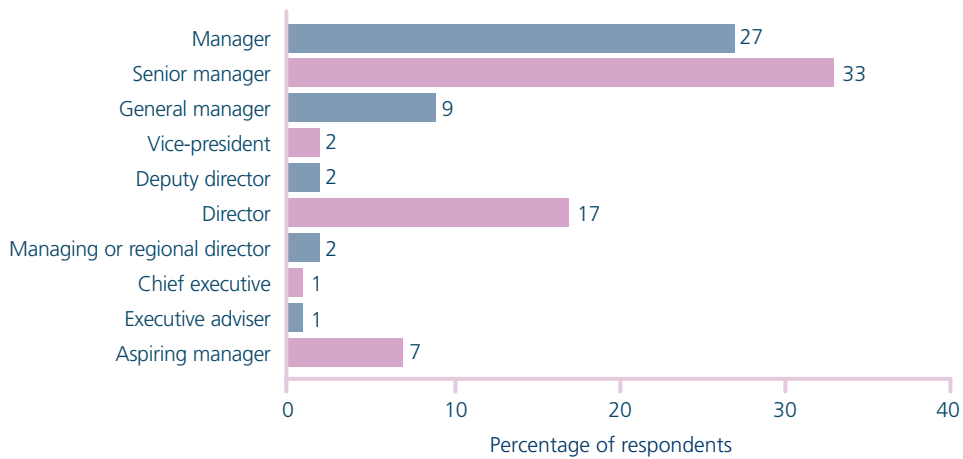
Base: 302

To ensure there was no bias of the findings resulting from a larger response rate in certain organisations, we assessed the results of the survey together and also without data from the organisation that gave us the largest number of responses (Pizza Express). Each organisation provided us with enough data to ensure the results for their own organisation were statistically viable within the main data set.

While the research was primarily aimed at those individuals who were part of the organisation's top talent pool or programme, most of our participating organisations also allowed us access to some individuals who were not part of their talent pool or programme to

enable us to provide a comparison of viewpoints and level of engagement. Within this group, there are two distinct populations: those who were unsuccessful in applying for a talent management programme and those who are eligible to apply but haven't done so yet. These two populations combined, include enough responses (34) to ensure that comparison of results with those included in the talent management programme is statistically significant. However, where the two subsets of respondents in the 'excluded' group appear to suggest differing views on their organisations and talent management opportunities, we are unable to state these differences with statistical certainty due to the smaller number of respondents in each of these

Figure 12: Which equivalent grade or level best describes you? (%)



Base: 302

subgroups. Where our findings are indicative of a possible trend but are not conclusive from a statistical point of view we have noted this in the text to avoid any possibility of confusion.

Our respondents were in the main at managerial level or above. Due to the different organisation structures there is still a range of managerial grades involved, which enabled a comparison to be made between perceptions of the more junior versus the more senior staff.

### Our research process

There have been three parts to the research:

#### 1 Understanding our case study organisations:

We spent time with the talent directors or HR directors in each of our organisations to get a clearer view of their organisation, talent management practices, aims and priorities. We also discussed their organisation's output from the survey data to understand any organisation-specific learnings.

#### 2 Gathering data through an online survey:

Ten of our eleven organisations took part in an online survey. The survey was structured in such a way that participants were 'routed' to different parts depending on whether they were part of the talent management programme or not. The survey contained primarily quantitative data, with a few open questions to provide supplementary qualitative information.

#### 3 Interviews:

These were held with between two and three respondents from each of the participating organisations to delve deeper into some of the themes arising from the survey.

Throughout the research process we used the collective input of the participating organisations to generate hypotheses and shape the survey and focus interview questions.

### Question areas

To help us structure our survey and the research as a whole, we developed a number of areas that we felt it would be useful to explore:

- what it feels like to be talent-managed
- employee motivations and aspirations
- joining the talent programme

- value from the talent programme
- positioning of talent management in the organisation.

Underneath each of these areas we posed a number of questions that we built into the survey design; these are illustrated on the following page.

### Survey structure

The survey was conducted through an online tool and potential respondents were invited via email. The survey was open during the month of March 2010 for three weeks. The survey had an overall response rate of 61%, giving a total of 302 full responses (350 including partial responses).

The survey was structured so that the respondent firstly answered a number of value statement type questions (for example: 'I feel proud to work for my organisation') before being routed in one of several directions for the remainder of the survey. The routes were:

- A: for those who were on a talent pool or programme
- B: for those who had just started a talent programme
- C: for those who had applied for but were not successful for a talent pool or programme
- D: for those who were eligible for but not on a talent pool or programme.

The vast majority of respondents were in the first category (268), leaving 33 respondents who were not on a programme (only one respondent had only just joined the programme, and therefore answered route B, these answers have been discounted).

Our qualitative research was undertaken using a variation on the phenomenological approach. We took all the qualitative material from the survey and interviews, extracted key words and grouped and themed these to derive key themes, which were then built into our overall findings. We have selected quotes to illustrate our research based on these common themes.

Table 5

Question area	Examples of questions covered
What does it feel like to be talent-managed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does it feel like to be talent-managed?</li> <li>• Do employees value being talent-managed and to what extent?</li> <li>• Do participants in a talent management programme feel under pressure as a result of the programme?</li> <li>• How does it feel to be an employee who is not being actively talent-managed?</li> </ul>
Employee motivations and aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do participants see as the purpose of the talent management programme?</li> <li>• Why do participants want to join in the talent programme? Why do they not?</li> <li>• Is there a perception amongst employees of differing levels of investment between those on a talent programme and those not? Does this have an effect on how employees feel?</li> </ul>
Joining the programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do participants think about having a selection process for a talent programme?</li> <li>• What are the perceived benefits and what does not work?</li> </ul>
Value from the talent programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are participants getting what they want from their talent programme?</li> <li>• What aspects of a talent programme do employees value the most?</li> <li>• How do participants feel after the talent programme has finished, or where there is no finish date, after they have been part of the talent programme for a while?</li> </ul>
Positioning of talent management in the organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who do employees perceive owns the talent development activity in their organisation? Who runs the programme? Does the way a programme is managed or administered affect its perceived value?</li> <li>• What level of awareness is there of the talent programme, is it visible in the organisation? What impact does this have on perceptions of the programme?</li> </ul>

# Appendix B – Organisation summaries

## Astellas

Astellas is one of the top 20 pharmaceutical companies in the world, employing 14,000 people globally, with a presence in 22 countries. As a young and forward-thinking company, Astellas is dedicated to improving the lives of people around the world through the introduction of innovative and reliable pharmaceutical products. Astellas Europe focuses on transplantation, urology, dermatology, anti-infectives and pain management.

### Talent management: the context

The talent management approach at Astellas is aligned to achieving their business philosophy, 'Vision 2015', representing Astellas' goals and aspirations for the future.

The new programme, recently embedded and part of a wider employee engagement initiative, 'Employer of Choice', a strategic priority for the business is aimed at senior executives in the Europe, Middle East and Africa region of the business. It comprises the top 200 individuals within the organisation, based predominantly on grade and role. Individuals are selected to participate by a combination of HR and management team nomination and new hires/promotes in role are automatically guaranteed a place on the programme. Once identified as a member of the programme, individuals attend a residential course, 'the leadership journey', followed by coaching and the creation of personal development plans within the context of a 360 competency framework.

### Statistics

Organisation size: 14,000  
Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 200  
Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 20

## Barclays

Barclays provides financial services to more than 48 million customers in over 50 countries worldwide. Barclays is a major global financial services provider engaged in retail banking, credit cards, corporate banking, investment banking, wealth management and investment management services with an extensive international presence in Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia.

### Talent management: the context

*'We are coming up to our second year in talent using an enhanced approach. Later this year, we will be adapting our approach by strategically aligning talent and organisational plans to give us a comprehensive picture of where we are heading as a UK retail bank.'*

The focus of talent management at Barclays, for the purpose of this research, is based on the B6 community (around 1,300 staff) and the Emerging Leaders Programme (200 participants). Participants in the Emerging Leaders Programme are selected using a 'potential assessment tool' based on drive, judgement and ambition, following line manager nomination. The programme, in its current form, has been in place for two years with four intakes a year. The programme lasts for eight months and consists of networking events, informal line manager coaching and formal training opportunities such as the Enhancing Management Capabilities course.

### Statistics

Organisation size: 144,000 globally  
Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 200  
Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 30

## Big Lottery (BIG)

Big Lottery, founded in 2004, is responsible for awarding half the funds raised by the National Lottery. Every year BIG gives out millions of pounds from the National Lottery to good causes, with the aim to bring real improvements to communities and the lives of people most in need. Projects include those to improve health, education and the environment.

### Talent management: the context

The talent management programmes at BIG, initiated earlier this year, are aimed at two streams of participants – Ascend and Aspire: those that are seeking to be in a managerial position, and those in first-level management positions who are aiming at a higher-level position. There are currently 34 individuals on the programmes in total, which is one year in duration with modules including formal training and coaching.

### Statistics

Organisation size: 1,000

Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 34

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 50

## BT

Operating in more than 170 countries, BT is one of the world's leading providers of communications solutions and services. BT's principal activities include networked IT services, local, national and international telecommunications services, broadband and Internet products and services.

### Talent management: the context

*'At BT we know that our best talent make their greatest contribution when they have the right challenges and opportunities, and are learning. Our talent agenda is all about active career management – enabling stretch appointments and underpinning these with focused support on development.'*

The purpose of BT's talent pool is to identify and proactively manage the careers of those people across the business who have the strongest potential to step into top leadership roles at some point in the future. Timelines vary and the talent population is categorised accordingly. BT identifies its talent on the basis of current performance, behaviours and track record, as well as a number of indicators of potential; talent pool membership is reassessed annually. Commitments made to talent pool members vary according to expected timescales for progression into leadership roles, but in all cases are focused on expediting career development. These commitments are set out in the BT Talent Deal – a two-way deal, which also describes what is expected of those in the talent population. For the purposes of the CIPD research, BT nominated some of the participants in their top talent category to complete our survey.

### Statistics

Organisation size: 128,000

Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 1,400

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 40

## KPMG

KPMG operates as an international network of member firms to provide audit, tax and advisory services and industry insight to help organisations negotiate risks and perform in the dynamic and challenging environments in which they do business.

### Talent management: the context

KPMG aims to establish a robust leadership pipeline for the future aligned to the Emerging Leaders strategy outlined in 2008 and board support to focus on top talent. The Emerging Leaders programme, born as a UK concept, and currently being implemented across Europe, is aimed at the top 5% of employees expected to one day be partners, across three grades: assistant manager, manager and senior manager. There are currently 270 future partners identified.

The programme is focused on identifying talent and providing networking and development opportunities including board-level and client exposure, coaching and training focused on business acumen (business development, management of people, personal skills and behaviours).

*'The aim of KPMG's talent programme is to identify, retain and accelerate the development of those with genuine potential to reach equity partner.'* Elizabeth Church, Head of Talent Management for KPMG UK

### Statistics

Organisation size: approximately 10,000 in the UK

Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 500

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 35

## NHS East of England

NHS East of England is the strategic health authority (SHA) working with 40 local NHS organisations across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk and Suffolk. The NHS East of England is responsible for ensuring the money spent on health care in the region delivers the best services and value for money for over 5.5 million residents.

### Talent management: the context

NHS East of England talent management aims to establish an executive talent pipeline that identifies, tracks and develops positions and retains critical leadership talent within the service. The current focus is on three programmes relevant to the CIPD research: Senior Clinical Leaders programme, Aspiring Directors (general) programme and High Potential Executive Programme for aspirant CEOs, which run for a period of 9–12 months. Despite talent management being defined at the programme level it is relevant to consider and evaluate the talent management process in light of the NHS decision to establish a new and systematic approach to facilitate executive career development and succession planning. The purpose of this research has therefore focused on a senior talent pool rather than specific programmes.

### Statistics

Organisation size: consists of 41 organisations, approximately 1,650 staff

Number identified as in talent pool/on talent programme: 168

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 40

## NHS West Midlands

NHS West Midlands is the strategic health authority (SHA) working with 44 local NHS organisations across Birmingham, Coventry, the Black Country, Herefordshire, Shropshire, Solihull, Staffordshire, Stoke on Trent, Telford and Wrekin, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. The NHS West Midlands is responsible for ensuring the money spent on health care in the region delivers the best services and value for money for over 5.4 million residents.

### Talent management: the context

NHS West Midlands aims to establish an executive talent pipeline that identifies, tracks and develops positions and retains critical leadership talent within the service. The current focus is on two main programmes relevant to the CIPD research: Aspiring CEO programme and the Aspiring Director programme. There is also a third programme aimed at clinical leaders. The programmes therefore range from talent pipeline of future CEOs to programmes aimed at transitioning from technical expertise to management and leadership roles.

### Statistics

Organisation size: not applicable as the delivery was on behalf of our 44 constituent organisations

Number identified as in talent pool/on talent programme: 340

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 100

## Panasonic

Panasonic is one of the largest electronic product manufacturers in the world, manufacturing and marketing a wide range of products under the Panasonic brand including AV, home appliances, industrial solutions and consumer electronic products.

### Talent management: the context

The Panasonic approach to talent management is based on identifying, developing and retaining individuals with potential, aligned to talent management programmes globally. The largely inclusive approach recognises that all individuals have talent and should be able to develop it fully.

There are however specific talent management programmes in place for top talent with participants identified as high potential to become future leaders. There are two main programmes, relevant to the CIPD research: talent for tomorrow and the high-potential programme. Talent for tomorrow is a European programme aimed at identifying and developing the top talent below manager level. This two-year programme is being piloted using a self-nomination process.

The high-potential programme is a global talent management programme focused on three tracks – high potential 1, 2 and 3 – where identification of high-potentials is annual. It is targeted at employees who are already operating at manager level. HP3 is a regional programme that aims to identify the ‘next generation’ of leaders. It is a long-term programme and it focuses on developing the top talent’s leadership skills. HP2 is targeted at employees already in management positions that have been identified as having high potential. This is not as long term as HP3 (three to five years). HP1 focuses on developing the top talent already in a senior leadership role. This programme is run from Panasonic’s head office in Japan. In terms of length, this is a shorter programme to provide the organisation’s leadership.

### Statistics

Organisation size: approximately 292,000 employees globally

Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: Talent for Tomorrow: 14; High-potential programme (all tiers): 80

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: One focus interview conducted with the Global Head of Talent Management.

## PizzaExpress

PizzaExpress is a well-recognised chain of Italian restaurants based in the UK. The first restaurant was opened in London in 1965 starting a tradition of excellent food and delightful service now offered at over 375 restaurants in the UK.

### Talent management: the context

The PizzaExpress approach to talent management is based on developing and retaining those individuals classified as top and lead talent, to ensure a leadership pipeline for the future, aligned to their corporate strategy.

In 2008 PizzaExpress started its 'Future Engage Deliver Programme' with board members and in 2009 extended this to operational managers and functional heads – in total it covers around 100 people. The programme is six days, run in three sets of two days, largely focusing on building effective relationships, holding difficult conversations and the importance of engagement. The leaders help create the future of PizzaExpress and gain an understanding of their impact when they are 'playing to win' or 'playing to avoid losing'.

*'At PizzaExpress we strongly believe that the success of the business rests firmly on the shoulders of every individual who works at the company. If people show up at work and do their best, the business thrives. If they don't, the business suffers. That's why talent management and nurturing our teams is such a critical focus at every level of the company.'* Julie MacDonald, HR Director, PizzaExpress

### Statistics

Organisation size: 9,500

Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 100

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 100

## Scottish Government

The Scottish Government is the devolved government for Scotland. The Scottish Government is responsible for most of the issues of day-to-day concern to the people of Scotland, including health, education, justice, rural affairs and transport. The Scottish Government (previously known as the Scottish Executive) was formed in 1999 following the May 1997 general election.

### Talent management: the context

*'The purpose of the Scottish Government talent management programme is to build long-term leadership capacity to deliver for the people of Scotland. Our approach to talent is to strike the right balance between developing identified potential and developing the capabilities of the whole workforce. We aim to ensure effective successions and help people transition from potential to impact.'*

The Scottish Government aims to establish a talent pipeline of civil servants that identifies, tracks and develops individuals to retain critical talent within the Scottish Government. The talent management programmes focus on three main tracks and grades: middle managers, potential senior civil servants, and a programme for senior civil servants. Potential senior civil servants are those considered likely to make it to the top 3–5% of the organisation. For the purpose of this research we will focus on the potential senior civil servant category.

### Statistics

Organisation size: 5,672

Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 23

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 35

## Vodafone

Vodafone are one of the world's leading mobile telecommunications companies with a significant presence in Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Asia-Pacific and the United States. Vodafone provide a total telecommunications service to both individual and business customers, including mobile voice, messaging, data and fixed broadband services.

### Talent management: the context

The Vodafone approach to talent management is based on identifying, developing and retaining an internationally mobile leadership pipeline for the future, aligned to the 'Vodafone Way'.

Following a review of the existing programmes in line with Vodafone's business and talent strategy, the Inspire programme was launched in 2008. The Inspire programme, a 'flagship' leadership development programme, is aimed at executives and senior managers and represents just one segment of the global talent pool. Eligibility is dependent on manager nomination. The programme, with a targeted duration of approximately 15 months, uses the 70:20:10 learning methodology to provide an appropriate balance of on-the-job training, projects, coaching, mentoring, international assignments and a series of development modules focusing on business acumen and leadership behaviours, to enable Vodafone to nurture and grow its leadership talent for the future.

### Statistics

Organisation size: 85,000

Number identified in talent pool/on specific talent programme: 120

Number of individuals invited to participate in the research: 70

We explore leading-edge people management and development issues through our research. Our aim is to share knowledge, increase learning and understanding, and help our members make informed decisions about improving practice in their organisations.

We produce many resources on talent issues including guides, books, practical tools, surveys and research reports. We also organise a number of conferences, events and training courses. Please visit [www.cipd.co.uk](http://www.cipd.co.uk) to find out more.



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