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➔ **SPECIALIST TALENT MANAGEMENT**

– CREATING ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE  
AND PERSONAL MOTIVATION

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**CEFA**

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# INTRODUCTION

The report “Specialist Talent Management – Creating Organizational Value and Personal Motivation” has been made based on “The Specialist Issue in Talent Management” by Bernard Denys and Lieve van Vlijmen (DEA, 2013) and input from DEA’s 10th Thinking Box. The members of the Thinking Box met three times during the period October-December 2013 debating how to overcome challenges in working with both talent and career development of specialists.

DEA alone is responsible for the content of this report.

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Highly specialized employees are increasingly important in gaining and sustaining competitive advantages in the private sector, as well as in securing the quality and flexibility of the public sector. Specialists possess critical knowledge of specific areas and can, besides from contributing directly to R&D projects, play an important role in the strategic development of both private and public companies.

However, specialists are often being labeled as introverted geeks who share no interest in their organization or its surrounding environment. Though this obviously is not true, it is widely recognized that specialists have a different motivational scheme than their managerial colleagues, and that both specialists and their managers struggle to find the right balance between professional specialization and integration with the rest of the organization.

The Think Tank DEA initiated the project of specialist talent management to find out when and how to utilize the knowledge and expertise of these employees. If we can unlock the key to their motivation we might be able to establish a common ground for specialists and HR professionals to discuss and understand what career and career advancement looks like when you are a specialist and how this heterogeneous group of employees can become an asset to boost future organizational performance.

We find that making a clear cut definition of specialists is both struggling and meaningless, due to the fact that specialists specialize in many different professions and areas that hold no obvious common denominators.

On the contrary, an attempt to include and emphasize their many differences in a comprehensive definition might enable a better acknowledgement of each individual, but this would make it extremely difficult to develop and implement any tangible and general structures or strategies to facilitate the development of the group as a whole.

Therefore, a framework is needed to help simplifying the perception of specialists without making the definition too narrow.

We hope that this report will be an inspiration to both public and private companies working with specialists or specialist career management. By putting forward reflections and insights from theory and empirical experience from 9 of Denmark’s largest companies we aim to contribute to the ongoing debate on how Denmark can keep its position as a country that take good care of our highly specialized employees.



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# WHAT IS A SPECIALIST?

Commonly used terms in the literature which are closely related to specialists are knowledge workers, professionals and experts. The first and foremost important characteristic of a specialist is the relatively narrow job focus. Specialists are primarily interested in advancing their professional expertise, meaning that they typically have knowledge that is more in-depth, localized, embedded, and invested within particular knowledge domains<sup>1</sup>.

Specialists have a high need for professional growth and skill utilization; and they are diligent people who are looking to achieve, learn and grow. Personal development for specialists is thus mainly concerned with refining current skills or acquiring new ones, which makes the role of the organization a matter of enhancing the growth and development of the specialists. This implies that in addition to extrinsic factors such as salary, benefits, security, and working conditions, other factors are equally important to motivate employees, and specialists in particular have a high need for intrinsic satisfaction<sup>2</sup>.

To motivate its specialists, organizations must offer interesting jobs with a high level of skill variety. The organization needs to take responsibility for showing the specialists the overall organizational process of which they are a part of. Furthermore, managers should provide the specialists with the right amount of autonomy and pay high attention to provide adequate feedback. Employees in general need to have appropriate incentives and skills in place, however

it is the way in which their work is organized that provides them with the opportunity to contribute with an effective discretionary effort. Hence, the quality of the job itself is an additional important factor for employee performance<sup>3</sup>.

Based on theory we can conclude that:  
*Specialists are members of an organization that work in a specific field of expertise, have no people reporting to them, and have gained a lot of experience or are highly educated.*

## Specialists in the real world

Turning to the variety of ways in which the definition of specialists is applied to every day practice makes the settlement on a clear cut definition more challenging.

For example, at Coloplast, a specialist is defined as a person who masters advanced competencies at the right level, meaning that an individual does not necessarily have to be employed at a hierarchical high level in the organization in order to be a specialist. Likewise, at Lundbeck and Alfa Laval a specialist is someone without managerial responsibility who is specialized within a specific field where he or she is able to bring the knowledge to use. Therefore, specialists can be identified within every department, ranging from HR or Finance to Research & Development. At Carlsberg, specialists are defined as persons with in-depth technological or academic knowledge within a specific area, and at Novo Nordisk, specialists are perceived as highly skilled employees who are specialized in deeply rooted

work patterns. Within Grundfos, a specialist is understood as somebody who has the predominant behavioral fit towards thirst for knowledge.

Though these definitions emphasize different aspects of specialists (being lack of managerial responsibility, the specialist's place in the organization or the special characteristics of the work) they nonetheless share a relatively similar notion of who specialists are.

However this definition does not cover the variety of ways in which specialists work and function within their organizations. In order to better capture the specialists as we see them we can conclude that while most specialists share the same basic definition as described above, they will often take on different roles within their organization.

We find that specialists often possess one of three generic organizational roles. No role should be regarded as being better or more admirable than the others. The roles simply show the different ways in which specialists can come into play in different areas and processes of the organization.

However, it should be emphasized that what one specialist might regard as being motivational such as being consulted during planning of strategic development of the organization, might be regarded as a distraction by another specialist. Finally, we see that specialists may shift between roles at different stages in their career.

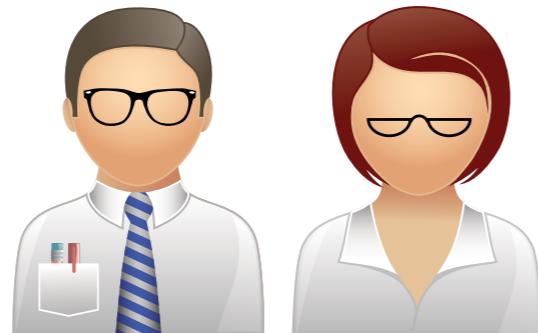
<sup>1</sup> Cesare and Thornton (1993); Kang and Snell (2009)

<sup>2</sup> Cesare and Thornton (1993); Katz (2005)

<sup>3</sup> Bailey, Berg and Sandy (2001)

## CORE CHARACTERISTICS

- A specialist is characterized by having in-depth knowledge of a specific specialized area.
- A specialist is motivated by creating new knowledge and will often regard himself as “man on the moon”.
- A specialist prefers loosely defined job tasks leaving him autonomy to define the right method and solution himself.
- A specialist requires acknowledgement and feedback for his work and is therefore dependent on having a leader who understands his field of expertise.

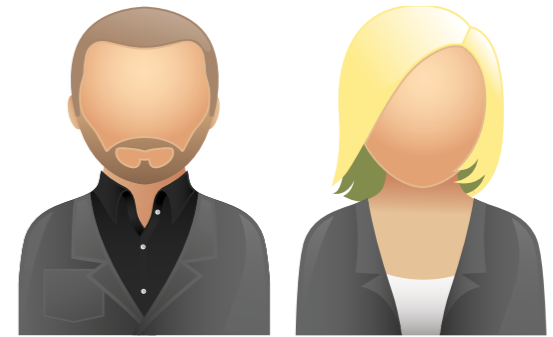


## THE PROFESSIONAL

The professional specialist's function is to be highly focused on his field of expertise in order to continuously be ahead of its development. He is expected to be a frontrunner in his field and to generate new knowledge, new methods and new solutions.

He is expected to communicate the results of his work to other employees and thereby sharing his knowledge of a given subject, and his role within the organization is in effect mainly concentrated on his own field of expertise.

## THE CONSULTANT



The consultant's function is to apply his in-depth knowledge to different areas and functions within the organization. He is expected to be highly skilled within his field of expertise, but at the same time he is expected to know and understand the processes and knowledge areas of the rest of the organization – thereby making him capable of translating his own knowledge and put it to use within different organizational contexts.

In order to ensure motivation and acknowledgement, the consultant's leader must be able to match him with the right projects within the organization, while at the same time establishing feedback loops from the areas to which the consultant is assigned.



## THE STRATEGIST

The strategist's function is to utilize his in-depth knowledge to strengthen the strategic development of the organization. He is expected to be highly skilled within his field of expertise, to know and understand the processes of the organization, and to further know and understand the context in which the organization operates. Thereby he will be capable of identifying when and how his own knowledge can be used to strengthen other professions within the organization, as well as how his knowledge can contribute to changing his organization's current and future position within its market or field.

# WHAT IS SPECIALIST TALENT MANAGEMENT?

By considering which roles are suited for which specialists in your organization, this can help clarify the goals and opportunities of specialist's individual career advancement and personal development – thereby creating an individualized foundation for motivation, retention and succession planning.

The demand for alternatives to traditional vertical career advancement has increased for both the individual and the organization. However, there are several types of non-vertical movements that organizations can offer to their employees for facilitating individual career success. Contemporary career advancement opportunities besides vertical movement are lateral or horizontal movements which include job enrichment, temporary movement, exploration, realignment or relocation<sup>4</sup>. A lateral move involves a change in job but not necessarily a change in pay, status, or level of responsibility. Horizontal, rather than upward, moves can broaden an employee's base of knowledge and skills, and helps in developing new competencies<sup>5</sup>. Another career mobility option is often called “growing in place”, or job enrichment<sup>6</sup>. This refers to revitalizing people's interest in their work by replacing rigidly defined, over-specialized jobs with positions that enable them to exercise greater responsibility and autonomy. Organizations that support these alternative career moves often have more qualified backups, and are in a better position to maximize the potential of their internal resources, while reducing

turnover and increasing employee job satisfaction. Moreover, the evaluations that employees make of the career opportunities offered by their employer, are determinants of important work-related attitudes and behaviors like satisfaction, commitment and intention to stay<sup>7</sup>.

It is the need to satisfy demand for alternative career and personal development opportunities, which has put specialist talent management on the agenda. However, neither theory nor practice within specialist talent management, currently differ substantially from what one might call classical talent management. Talent management strategies and practices, whether focused on managers, specialists or others, are integrated with other HR practices such as career management, training and development, succession planning, performance management, compensation and benefits, strategic HR planning, and recruitment and selection<sup>8</sup>.

The first step in specialist talent management is therefore, like the first step in any talent management program, to identify who the talents are and which of these to include in your program. The process of talent identification can be regarded as the first step in talent management, as this is where an organization differentiates between the employees that are regarded as ‘talents’ and the other employees. To select the employees who are most suitable for talent

management programs, it is first of all important that everyone who are involved in the decision making process are working off the same definition of ‘talent’ or ‘potential’<sup>9</sup>.

In literature, there are wide variations in terms of what ‘potential’ or ‘talent’ is, and what it refers to. As defined by Tarique: ‘potential is getting the right balance between individual characteristics and the requirements of particular tasks’<sup>10</sup>. This definition emphasizes the fact that a talented or high potential employee should have specific characteristics or skills that make him or her excel over others, without focusing on the employee's past performance. In contrast Ready states that ‘high potentials are those that consistently deliver strong results credibly, and master new types of expertise quickly, recognizing that behavior counts. They strive to achieve excellence, a relentless focus on learning, an enterprising spirit, and a capacity to make careful assessments of risks’<sup>11</sup>. Although the above definitions share some similarities, they can all be interpreted in different ways, and companies often vary in terms of whether they view talent as the performance and potential that exists in every employee, or whether it is more exclusively focused on scarce resources and senior positions.

<sup>4</sup> De Vos, et al., (2008); Kaye and Farren (1996); Kaye (2011)

<sup>5</sup> De Vos, Dewettinck and Buyens (2008); Kaye and Farren (1996); Schein (1978)

<sup>6</sup> Kaye (2011)

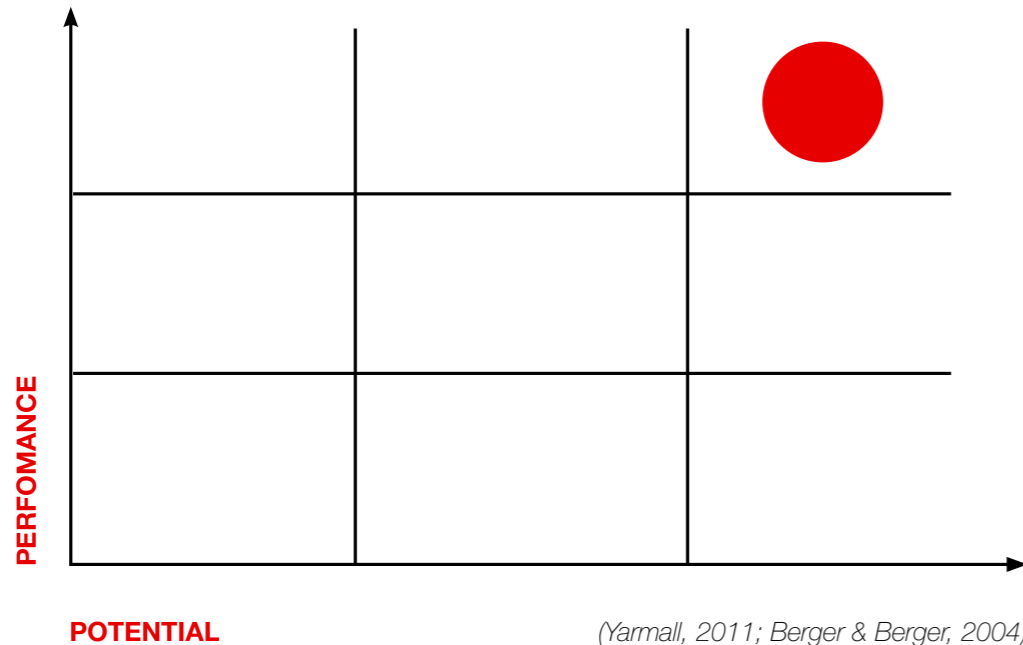
<sup>7</sup> De Vos and Buyens (2005); Kaye (2011) <sup>8</sup> McDonnell (2011)

<sup>8</sup> Gandz (2006); Reilly (2008); Garrow and Hirsh (2008); Pillai, Dhobale and Patil (2011)

<sup>9</sup> McDonnell (2011)

<sup>10</sup> Tarique et al. (2006)

<sup>11</sup> Ready et al. (2010)



(Yarnall, 2011; Berger & Berger, 2004)

To avoid confusion or misalignment during talent identification processes, many organizations have put objective measurements in place on how to rate potential. The tools that are most frequently used include boxed performance and potential matrices, like the nine box grid<sup>12</sup>. In these talent matrices, both performance and potential are individually rated as either low, medium and high, and the assessed individuals are as a result placed on the grid in accordance to their perceived performance and potential.

As previously mentioned, the perceived performance is often based on the delivery of a result or the achievement of an objective in the past. On the other hand, the rating of potential depends on the organization's definition of 'potential', once more emphasizing the severe importance of having a clear-cut corporate definition of the term<sup>13</sup>.

To accommodate the customization of the talent development strategies, Individualized Development Plans (IDPs) are widely used to help address the expectations and needs of top performers. In addition, the plans provide a structure through which subordinates receive managerial mentorship to ensure that the planned objectives are achieved. In this way, the learning curve is accelerated in comparison to traditional learning and development curves<sup>14</sup>.

In addition to the use of IDPs, some commentators have suggested to employ a 70:20:10 strategy in the development process. This is an extremely popular framework, though it is rarely implemented in a systematic way<sup>15</sup>. To illustrate in what manner the framework should be implemented, 70 percent of the personal development should take place through work activities, 20 percent through relationships, and 10 percent through formal development activities<sup>16</sup>.

According to research, this approach is well suited for talents as talents have two preferred modes of learning: observing role models and learning by discovering<sup>17</sup>.

Succession planning for specialists is mainly focused on the "what" – meaning isolation, distillation and transmission of "the right information" to people at the "right times" to ensure the continuity of operations and provide a foundation for future improvements. In this sense, technical - or specialist succession planning is a form of 'knowledge management', as it reflects the processes of getting the right

knowledge to the right people at the right time, and to help people share and act on information in order to improve organizational performance<sup>18</sup>.

Therefore, it is important in succession planning for specialists to connect employees and allow them to share their in-depth, rich, and tacit knowledge, in order to ensure a path for specialists to succeed each other.

As previously mentioned, it is crucial that specialists' work tasks are challenging, interesting and meaningful in order to motivate and retain top performers and talents. Altogether, these factors are strong drivers of commitment and minimize turnover intentions<sup>19</sup>. Regarding talented specialists, the organization should thus first of all provide the employee with opportunities to further develop their professional expertise and skills. As 'learning is key' to specialists, it is in the organizations uttermost interest to ensure that the specialists job is challenging and interesting, and that additional learning opportunities are provided through training and advancement potentials<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Berger and Berger (2004); Yarnall (2011)

<sup>13</sup> Ross (2013)

<sup>14</sup> Allen, et al. (2010); Aguinis, et al., (2012); Williams-Lee (2008)

<sup>15</sup> Garavan et al. (2011)

<sup>16</sup> Wilson and Van Velsor (2011)

<sup>17</sup> Pruis (2011); Ruijters' (2006)

<sup>18</sup> O'Dell and Hubert (2011); Rothwell and Poduch (2004); Smeltzer and Bonello (2004)

<sup>19</sup> Hackman and Oldham (1980); Trank, et al. (2002); Walsh and Taylor (2007)

<sup>20</sup> OCesare and Thornton (1993)

## CASES:

**ROCKWOOL®**  
BRANDSIKKER ISOLERING

 **Coloplast**

*Lundbeck* 

**BRFkredit**

**HALDOR TOPSØE**   
CATALYSING YOUR BUSINESS

**Carlsberg**

  
novo nordisk®

**GRUNDFOS®** 



In June 2013, DEA conducted nine semi-structured, in-depth interviews to obtain a deeper understanding of the development, issues and challenges that practitioners face in the field of specialist talent management. HR practitioners from nine Danish organizations have been interviewed. All interviewees can be regarded as experts in the field of talent management within their company and hold considerable experience in working with specialists.

Most companies presented in the following cases use the nine box grid or similar tools to identify suitable talents for their Talent Management Programs (TMP). In spite of the fact that the tools and processes involved, such as the Individual Development Plan and succession planning, are commonly used, the build up and execution of their development and training programs of specialists varies substantially in between the companies.

At Rockwool performance management is used to identify talents with help of the so called nine box grid approach. The performance management of Rockwool is a clear and transparent tool and is part of the Global HR system. It is the backbone for talent management and is also used for succession planning. Within this performance management, the organization makes use of personal development plans which are available for every employee in the company in order to improve personal performance. An advantage of using a global approach is the fact that it facilitates internal recruiting which is further supported by the development of job descriptions for internal job postings. By making these job descriptions, people have a better insight in the possibilities within the organization, and it becomes transparent what an individual needs to do or develop in order to become a candidate for a certain job.

At this moment there is no official Talent Management Program for specialists at the company, but there are many development opportunities, such as: being assigned a budget for training to further develop specific skills and knowledge, global assignments, and the participation in global and local projects. By doing so, Rockwool ensures that their specialists 'get out of their silo's', and into the rest of the company. Part of the global performance management system in Rockwool is the development of job descriptions for internal job postings. By making these job descriptions, people have a better insight in the possibilities within the organization, and it becomes transparent what an individual needs to do or develop in order to become a candidate for a certain job.

In terms of career development for specialists, Rockwool often works with job rotations. In addition to this, it is important to take into account the possibility to develop specialists through involvement in projects. Overall all these activities at Rockwool are aimed at maintaining a high retention rate, motivating people and to enable development of individual competencies.

## ABOUT ROCKWOOL:

From origin, Rockwool is a family owned company that has grown through mergers, acquisitions and Greenfield projects. The company is currently in transition from an engineering culture to a more customer oriented culture.

**Employees:** 9.300

**Countries:** 35 approximately

**Definition of specialists:** At Rockwool a specialist is defined as someone at a specific level in the organization with no one reporting to them, or someone that fulfills a very specific task that is company related.



Talent identification is part of the annual people review of the organization. Talents are those who have competencies in a specific area, and who have the personal competence to bring this knowledge to use. This means that being a talent is about having the right competencies and being able to use them in the right way within the organization.

Coloplast wants to make sure that all employees use their competencies and potential to the highest level and the organization has opted to work with a career model tool. There are many opportunities for individual training and development which are organized both internally and externally. The competencies that are trained are both functional and personal. One important goal is the training and development of managers in order to ensure that they have the ability to further develop individual employees. For that reason, all employees work with a personal development plan that is linked to the overall organizational goals.

The organization offers three different career paths to their employees: line managers, project managers and specialists. While line managers and project managers consist of a quite undifferentiated group of employees, the groups of specialists include many different functions and people who despite their differences are believed to have an aligned mindset on what is important in their job. One main driver for specialists is the need for challenging tasks. They prefer to gain competence within their specific area, meaning that vertical advancement is not always the most preferred direction of development for specialists. Therefore, the organization needs to focus on creating alternative career opportunities for

specialists. Although retention of specialists is not currently a problem at Coloplast, the organization still wants to ensure the development and acknowledgement of specialists and specifically those who are identified as being a talent.

## ABOUT COLOPLAST:

Coloplast founded in 1954, develops products and services that make life easier for people with very personal and private medical conditions. Their business includes ostomy care, urology and continence care, and wound and skin care.

**Employees:** 8.400

**Counties:** 40

**Definition of specialists:** at Coloplast, a specialist is defined as a person who is specialized in a specific area, and who works to solve specific problems. Specialists have high competencies at the right level, meaning that an individual does not necessarily have to be at a high level in the organization in order to be a specialist. The organization perceives specialists as human resources who can be allocated to business processes where needed.



Talented specialists are identified during the organization's reviews. Succession management is executed by identifying key performers (talents) and key positions in each business unit. By taking into account performance and potential, succession management is inspired by the nine box grid approach. Since the organization is deeply dependent on specialists, Lundbeck recognized the importance of incorporating this group of employees in their TMP. The underlying goals of the TMP are twofold. First of all it is setup to accelerate the development of talented employees (managers/projectmanagers/specialists). A second reason is to increase retention of key people. Identifying a specialist as a talent and providing the possibility to participate in the TMP is an acknowledgement for his work and experience, which is considered to be a strong motivator for these employees. In addition, the TMP is part of the process of creating a high performance culture at Lundbeck. By communicating transparently about the program towards the rest of the organization, the organization tries to point out to those who are not selected for the TMP to do better if they want to be part of the program in the future. In this sense, the TMP does not only accelerate the participants, but takes along the organization as a whole.

The TMP relevant for specialists focuses on employees in their first management position or specialist job. In this program, employees from different departments with different functional backgrounds are brought together. The basic idea here is that "when bringing together talented people, only good things can happen". In addition, the TMP provides a good framework for building networks between the participants,

which stimulates the process of breaking down silo mentality. The program consists of three aspects: a personal development plan, four TMP modules and a local challenge. The content of the modules is mainly action based, it is specific to the organization, and the learning points of the modules of the TMP are fairly objective. Those objectives are: understanding the company, the industry and the strategic outlook of the company, and networking.

Not everybody who is identified as a talent is selected to be part of the TMP. The organization also takes into account the promotability of a talent. When selecting participants for the TMP, the organization decides whether an individual is ready to move forward and whether the organization has an idea of where this individual could move forward to. This means that the TMP is closely related to the succession planning of the organization.

## ABOUT LUNDBECK:

Lundbeck is a fully integrated global pharmaceutical company that was founded in 1915. Like many other companies in the industry, Lundbeck is facing the end of patents that for a long time have ensured a major part of the companies' revenues. Therefore, the company is challenged to substitute these key patents, resulting in Lundbeck's transformation from a one-product European organization to a multi-product global company.

**Employees:** 5.800

**Counties:** 57

**Definition of specialists:** Lundbeck defines specialists as those without managerial responsibility who are specialized within a specific field where they are able to bring their knowledge to use. Therefore, specialists can be identified within every department, ranging from HR and Finance to Research & Development.

Within BRFkredit, everyone can be perceived as being a specialist within their area of expertise. However, to be identified as a talented specialist, an employee is required to have a high level of specialty within his or her field of expertise, as well as a high level of personal skills, or the potential to develop them. The focus on the combination of both professional and personal competencies is important to the organization in order to ensure that talented specialists are able to transfer their knowledge to others thereby adding value to the bottom line of the organization.

As specialists and project managers are becoming more important, the organization incorporated them in their TMP. As the program mainly focuses on personal skills, it does not differentiate between these three groups. In terms of specialists, the main objectives of the program are the development of their personal and relational competencies, and to improve their understanding of the business culture and their impact on the bottom line. By doing so, BRFkredit aims at ensuring that talented specialists create more value. Since the moment that specialists were included in the program, there was more involvement from senior managers and external partners in order to review assessments and to provide more business insight. Overall, the program is mainly based on the professional experience of the people that were involved in the design of it, being HRD, senior managers and external partners, in order to ensure that the objectives are relevant to the organizations needs.

Simultaneously with the Learning Modules, an Action Learning Path and a Personal Development Plan are run. During the Action Learning

Path, the talented employees work together on Business Projects in order to provide them with the opportunity to put into practice what they have learned during the modules. Next to this, a Personal Development Plan is setup in cooperation with the talents direct manager. This Development Plan includes objectives that should be achieved by the talented specialist and it takes into account the learning points from the modules. Essential to the success of the Personal Development Plan is the feedback from the direct manager, and the willingness and discipline of the employee to implement what he or she has learned during the Learning Modules. Next to the feedback from the direct manager, the talented specialists also receive feedback from BRFkredit's HR consultants on the progress they have made during the program.

In terms of communication about the TMP, BRFkredit has decided only to communicate about it in their company magazine and to keep it rather exclusive and vague towards the rest of the company. By doing so, the perception is created among other employees that "If you do something extra, you will get something extra", resulting in a lot of (positive) curiosity about the program. In line with this perception is the management of the participants expectations. The organization makes clear to the participants that the program should be regarded as an investment in their career, and that after the program the participants are expected to show to the organization that the investment was worth it.

## ABOUT BRF KREDIT:

BRFkredit is an independent Danish mortgage bank whose primary purpose is to offer mortgage loans to private customers, business customers and customers in subsidized housing. With over 200 years of experience in mortgage banking, BRFkredit has chosen to be close to their customers.

**Employees: 850**

**Definition of specialists:** Within BRFkredit, everyone can be perceived as being a specialist within their area of expertise. However, to be identified as a talented specialist, an employee is required to have a high level of specialty within his or her field of expertise, as well as a high level of personal skills, or the potential to develop them.

At Haldor Topsøe, there are different kinds of specialists. These include employees with a lot of expertise and knowledge within a narrow and specific field, as well as others who are great at networking or who have a very strong business knowledge about specific markets, process areas or other. A major part of these specialists can be found within the R&D department, as for example Research Engineers. These research engineers are people with a high degree of scientific knowledge, which can be translated into new products or product improvements. For this case study, the focus will be on these R&D specialists.

Within Haldor Topsøe, Research Engineers are evaluated individually. During this evaluation, the aspects taken into account are the ability to put knowledge into products, academic publishing and international recognition and scientific networking. If these research engineers are identified as being a talent, they can become a Principal Research Engineer. When they are successful in their job as a Principal Research Engineer, they can further develop their career to become a Line Manager, a Project Manager or a specialist, based on what type of job and job content they aspire. As a Principal Research Engineer, these employees are provided more possibilities for development, as compared to other employees.

Due to its size, Haldor Topsøe has not implemented an official Talent Development Program as they have been successful in identifying and nurturing talent throughout the years without a program. However, to ensure knowledge sharing between talented Research Engineers and the rest of the company as the company is becom-

ing larger, these employees are provided with development opportunities such as job rotations and courses on leadership skills and networking. In addition, to further develop their specialty, the Principal Research Engineers also get other opportunities like running projects with standard assignments to create new knowledge, in-house education, being assigned a travel budget to participate in conferences to increase their scientific network and the ability to use 20% of their time to conduct personal projects in which they can explore topics they are interested in.

## ABOUT HALDOR TOPSØE:

The company was founded in 1940 by Dr. Haldor Topsøe with the belief that only through applied fundamental research the company would build and retain their position as second to none in catalysis. This notion still governs the company's business activities. Haldor Topsøe's catalysis and processes are developed in close collaboration between research, engineering, and production, ensuring the creation of catalysis and processes, which meet and exceed client's expectations.

**Employees:** 2.500

**Countries:** 10

**Definition of specialists:** At Haldor Topsøe, there are different kinds of specialists. These include employees with a lot of expertise and knowledge within a narrow and specific field, as well as others who are great at networking or who have a very strong business knowledge about specific markets, process areas or other. A major part of these specialists can be found within the R&D department, as for example Research Engineers. These research engineers are people with a high degree of scientific knowledge, which can be translated into new products or product improvements. For this case study, the focus will be on these R&D specialists.



Talents are identified by making use of the nine box grid approach, which means that both potential and performance are rated, and people with the top score in both areas are identified as talents. At Carlsberg Denmark, these talents are defined as having potential, which again is defined as living up to the leadership competencies. At Carlsberg, everyone is a leader, either of people, of areas or of specific knowledge.

Carlsberg's corporate headquarters recently decided to design a TMP for specialists after they had noticed a need for this from within the organization. They started by conducting interviews with potential candidates and managers from all over the business and based on this information, Carlsberg's HR Development department, with the help of external vendors, setup the program. The main goals of this TMP are accelerated development of specialists in critical positions; learning about dilemmas they face during their daily business life, such as the ability to move within a matrix organization; and retention of key specialists by acknowledging their expertise and work. In addition, by making the program cross functional, the TMP provides a broader insight for participants and provides a holistic and strategic perspective as well. By combining both the needs of these talented specialists and the needs of the organization, the TMP ensures further development of the key people that the organization strongly relies upon. As the TMP focuses on accelerating personal development rather than broadening academic or specialists skills the content of the modules are real life strategic dilemmas developed with the help of line- and senior management to provide more business insight and develop-

ment opportunities, relevant to the organizations activities. After the TMP, some successful cases can be further developed or eventually be implemented in the organization. In addition, the participants form a talent pool which is regarded as a group of people who have a lot of potential and of which the organization expects high performance. Within Carlsberg, succession planning is used to fit critical positions in the organization with talented people. When it comes to specialists, the organization holds annual People Board meetings, during which the manager of a talented specialists discuss the individuals performance together with other managers. In this process, it will be decided whether this talented specialist is suited for another position based on performance management and the insight of a group of managers.

For specialists, the organization works with hierarchical titles, which are linked to a compensation and bonus system. As for career development, the organization expects the employees to actively define their own career path. The organization can provide opportunities and support, but the individual is responsible for his or her own career.

## ABOUT CARLSBERG:

Carlsberg is the 4th largest brewery group in the world. The company has grown through mergers and acquisitions to become a world leading company with brands such as Carlsberg and Tuborg. As an organization, Carlsberg is rather decentralized.

**Employees:** 41.000

**Countries:** 150

**Definition of specialists:** At Carlsberg specialists are defined as persons with deep technological or academic knowledge in a specific area.



For identifying talent, the company makes use of the nine box grid in which ones' potential and performance are assessed. By potential Novo-Nordisk understand the potential to move to a more complex task or have a higher impact, but this does not necessarily imply a higher step in hierarchy or title. The outcome of the nine box grid is combined with the organizational audit in which the organization assesses its business targets to define what they need and what the key positions are where the company needs talent.

Specialists generally have a high impact on NovoNordisk's business, and being acknowledged for this is extremely important. Until recently the organization was not really focusing enough on this impact in terms of the Finance, Legal and IT department. One of the aims of the new TMP for specialists in these areas is to prevent specialists from having to move into management positions, which is not always interesting or desirable. The TMP was primarily based on the outcome of interviews that were conducted with specialists from the previous mentioned areas. One of the outcomes of the interviews was the fact that it is important for talented specialists to be regarded as experts, both inside and outside of the organization. Moreover, rewards for specialists are very important although these do not necessarily have to be tangible. In addition to the outcomes of the interviews, also the experience of the HR department and input from their university network was used to set up the program. It has been designed in such a way that it has a similar impact as the TMP for generalists. Retention management is important for the organization and the TMP can provide possibilities to enforce this. But the strong culture

of NovoNordisk is an even more essential factor that helps retain specialists in the company. The content of the TMP for specialists is based on building self awareness and becoming better equipped to navigate within the organization and to build a network. In this sense, it is not about developing specific knowledge, as this is done during other training and development activities. The program provides a model to work on individual development, pitfalls, reflection, feedback, and to make a personal development plan in order to address individual development needs. Interaction with the executive management is key during the program. Setting the expectations right at the beginning of the program is essential to the perceived success of it. The follow-up of the program consists of picking a manager from another department as a mentor and to further work on personal development. Moreover the program results in a new network consisting of other participants of the program which is beneficial for both the individual and the organization. In this network, the individual has the possibility to share experiences and knowledge and the organization has a so called talent pool that can be used by the organization in challenging projects within the organization.

Within Novo Nordisk, the career paths and development opportunities for specialists differ widely per specialty, as well as the extent to which levels and titles are used. For some specialists, as for example lawyers, these official acknowledgements can be more important than for other specialists. When needed, there are different career levels and titles installed, although they do not always automatically imply an increase in salary.

## ABOUT NOVO NORDISK:

Novo Nordisk is the world's largest provider of medication for diabetes (insulin). It was founded in 1923. Diabetes is a worldwide epidemic which implies that there are many business opportunities for the company.

**Employees:** 34.000

**Countries:** 150

**Definition of specialists:** Novo Nordisk, specialists are perceived as highly skilled employees who are specialized into deep patterns in their work. There is a belief that specialists should not be managed too much. The organization lives from these specialists since their contribution is essential to the organization. For this case study we are primarily focusing on the Finance, Legal and IT department of the organization. The R&D department, where there are generally many specialists as well, is outside the scope of this case study although the organization also has talent management practices for those specialists.

As part of the yearly organizational review, departments identify their star performers. This is being done by making use of the so called nine box grid. Performance, potential and motivation are then combined to identify the talents that could benefit from taking part in the TMP. Based on 10 competencies that Grundfos believe to be necessary to reach future goals, talents are assessed at their own assessment centre. One of the outcomes from this assessment is the individuals behavioral fit. Globally there are 130 talents identified at Grundfos of which 18 have a specialist behavioral fit. When participating in the talent management program, there are high requirements for the participants. One of these requirements is a high personal effort from the participants as the talent is considered to be the driver of its own development.

In 2009, Grundfos decided to develop and implement a new global TMP. Managers from different parts of the organization, and from different countries, were brought together for one week at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) where their CEO gave them the assignment to come up with a strategy or plan on “how to work with talents at Grundfos”. Based on activities like workshops, which were facilitated by CBS professors, a TMP was developed. The TMP is called “Talent Engine”, and it is part of the overall Talent Management of the organization. The program is a 3 year acceleration program that in short consists of setting up a Talent Development Plan by the talent himself, looking at achievements and learning points of the past as well as the conditions for learning from a holistic point of view. It also consist of half year milestones with their

daily manager and ongoing training activities developed through matchmaking – a process in which the organization matches talents with new projects that are interesting for both the business and the talents. Grundfos does not differentiate in the outline for the program for leader, innovators and specialists, since they have individualized approaches to the program. Therefore, the daily manager of a talented individual plays an essential role in the acceleration process. This is further emphasized by the fact that the TMP is based on the 70:20:10 approach. This means that 70 percent of what you learn comes from practice, 20 percent from your network and 10 percent during classes. To optimize learning, Grundfos chose to make their talents daily activities –the 70 percent part– more challenging, and they incorporated moments of reflection.

Grundfos tends not to work with succession planning since they believe that one cannot know now which position or function will be essential for the organization in the future. The organization recognizes the fact that they need to ensure a consistent flow of “talent-build-up” (e.g. pipelining), but Grundfos does not believe in doing this unilaterally (i.e. “this position could be filled by these people”).

## ABOUT GRUNDFOS:

Grundfos is a foundation owned, post WO II engineering company that provides water solutions.

Their annual production of more than 16 million pump units makes Grundfos one of the world’s leading pump manufacturers. The organization’s philosophy is: ‘If you can’t buy it, make it!’ and has a proximity approach to working with its customers.

**Employees:** 19.000

**Counties:** 60

**Definition of specialist:** Within Grundfos, the distinction is being made between innovators, specialists and leaders. However, this distinction is not being made on a functional level as the company works with a 3-way split which is focused on a more behavioral fit. Therefore, an employee can have a behavioral fit towards an innovator, specialists or leader or a combination of two or even three. An individuals’ behavioral fit is not considered a stigma, but it is used for building on people’s strengths. In this definition, a specialist is somebody who has the predominant behavioral fit towards thirst for knowledge.



The company believes that everyone has talent and that this talent needs to be developed. In addition to this, they prefer to use the concept of 'potential' rather than 'talent', because 'potential' focuses more on the organizational needs.

At Alfa Laval, talent management for specialists differs from talent management for leaders, as the 'one size fits all' approach for leaders is not applicable to such a heterogeneous group as specialists who need a more individualized approach. Talented specialists are identified during the process of succession planning by the company. The company does not make use of assessment centers but lets the managers identify the high potentials or key position holders in the company. The company has a high emphasis on succession planning in order to better prepare candidates for critical positions in the future, which holds for both managers and specialists. These critical positions are identified by the managers of the organization, and based on this information the company assesses whether there is a specialist available in the organization or whether a new specialist must be recruited to be trained and developed to fulfill this critical position in the future.

Because of the specialist culture (freedom, influence, respect, flexibility and advanced technologies), retention rate is not a general problem for the company. In the past, when specialists resigned, more than once it happened that they came back with the reason that they highly valued the culture and the informal acknowledgement and possibilities at Alfa Laval. However, in the context of competition for talent, Alfa Laval has to prepare for further growth, and to stay ahead of its competitors. Therefore, to stay on

the frontline in terms of technology development and new markets, the necessity for TMPs becomes apparent.

A TMP for specialists has been developed but has not yet been implemented. With the current challenging economical environment, there is a higher financial emphasis by the organization on the development of sales employees. This TMP for specialists would be based on bringing together specialists at a more senior level to work on concrete challenges. The content of the program is primarily based on the outcome of interviewing people internally. From these interviews, it has been concluded that communication and influencing in a network are very important, especially in a matrix organization. These subjects have also been taken into account when setting up the TMP.

Talent management at Alfa Laval is currently focused on open recruitment (60%) succession planning (30%) and career mapping (10%). Most of the vacant positions will be posted openly and any employee can apply. All hiring managers are obliged to give feedback to the internal candidates that apply to open recruitment. As part of the Performance Development dialogue, anyone who shows interest should be able to get a personal development plan. Furthermore, there is a budget for specialists to further improve their specialization as part of their development actions.

Each segment has prepared or is in the process of preparing a career path for both managers and specialists. The way of presenting these career paths, though, can vary depending on the culture of the country where the unit is located. The informal rewards, such as infor-

mal status, respect and freedom, are essential to retain specialists in critical positions and the informal rewards at Alfa Laval are relatively high. Furthermore, because of the constantly new technologies at Alfa Laval, specialists state that, even if they never change titles, their work never stays the same, which they perceive as being very positive. By making use of career mapping, which is in general more successful

for younger employees, the view of specialists on career development possibilities within the organization becomes broader and clearer. Although Alfa Laval provides different development opportunities, people are in a more informal way encouraged to find their career for themselves, meaning that they are responsible for their own career as well.

## ABOUT ALFA LAVAL:

Alfa Laval is an international knowledge company that was founded in 1883. It sells customized solution to their customers. The company holds more than 1900 patents and focuses on energy optimization, environmental protection and food production through technological leadership in heat transfer, separation and fluid handling. Products and solutions are used in such areas as food and water supply, energy, environmental protection and pharmaceuticals.

**Employees:** 16.000

**Counties:** 100

**Definition of specialists:** Alfa Laval defines specialists as employees at a certain level in the organization that have no people reporting to them. Due to the matrix structure of the organization and the possibility to participate in different jobs or projects, it could be that someone has both a managerial and specialist function. But as some specialists perform the best in just a specialists function or prefer not to have a managerial position, this is not a regular functional split.



## POINTS TO CONSIDER

The entire list of challenges when working with specialist talent management is long. However, from the statement of “design of career paths for specialists is too difficult and does not fit traditional hierarchical organizational structures” to “specialists are very sensitive to critique and feedback” and “specialists are not motivated by money or power”, we find that challenges should be categorized into three main themes that HR employees and managers of specialists should pay specific attention to in their work. These themes are: stigmatization, motivation and the organizational roles.

### AVOID STIGMATIZATION

Avoiding stereotypes and stigmatization when communicating to - and about - specialists might be just as important as it is to avoid stigmatization in any other case where people are involved. Nonetheless, people do in general tend to stereotype, when we lack in-depth knowledge about a profession, and since specialists show to be a much more heterogeneous group than for instance their management colleagues, the risk of missing subtle nuances are high. Unlocking the full potential of our specialists obviously will not be achieved by stereotyping specialists as introverted “geeks” with no interest in – and valid perception of - their surroundings. However, in order to ease the implementation of organizational structures to support specialist development we need a framework to better categorize and understand the nature of our specialists as a group, and not merely as individuals.

We find that looking at different organizational specialist functions instead of their individual characteristics can aid in simplifying the perception, while avoiding stigmatization as a consequence of a too narrow definition.

### CREATE MOTIVATION

Unlocking the key to what motivates specialists is central, due to the notion that specialists (at least compared to generalists) have a different motivational scheme. They do not care as much for moving upwards in the hierarchy, but rather need autonomy to immerse themselves in their professionalism. But is this the whole truth? And what can we actually learn and take away with regards to motivation as a means for retaining and further developing specialists within our organization? We find that even though specialists share some of the same basic characteristics, their motivational schemes vary. When debating future possible job functions, both specialist and manager must consider in which way the specialist prefers to increase and apply his specific knowledge.

### FOCUS ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL ROLES

The role of the specialists within their organizations is what challenges managers of specialists the most. There is clearly an organizational advantage to be gained if the interaction between specialists and co-workers is strengthened. This would create a base for knowledge sharing, dissemination of business insights, and understanding (and appreciation) of each others’ work basis, as well as establishing a foundation for the organization to utilize the skills and expertise of its specialists, and apply it in strategy and business development. However, this would not necessarily be perceived as a positive development by all specialists.

We find that the managerial challenge is not only to create structures that push specialists out of their silos and into the broader scope of their organizations, but moreover to recognize which specialists will be motivated by the process. Defining future roles for specialists must therefore be based on each specialist’s individual motivational scheme. In doing so, the perspective on specialist functions is once again a tool for simplifying the process, whilst creating room for difference.

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## ABOUT DEA

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