Bringing Cutting Edge Talent Strategies To Your Organization

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Bringing Cutting Edge Talent Strategies To Your Organization

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The Talent Initiative
Today’s Agenda

- What is Your Employee Value Proposition?
- Description of the Talent Initiative
- Interactive Panel Discussion
- 10 Things You Can Do Today!
- Audience Q&A
- Available Resources
What is Your Employee Value Proposition?

- What is a key talent challenge that your organization has had to address in the past 18-24 months?
- Why Would A Talented Professional **Want** to Join and Stay With your Organization?
- Why Would A Talented Professional **Be Reluctant** to Join and Stay with Your Organization?
What is The Talent Initiative?
The Talent Initiative

- Cal-ICMA, State Affiliate of International City-County Management Association
- Assignment No. 1: Report on Attracting, Retaining, and Growing Local Government Talent
- Target Audiences:
  - Agency Leaders
  - Electeds
  - Professional Organizations
Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative

Three goals:

- Strengthen ability to compete effectively for employees
- Increase the pool of talent for top jobs
- Engage current and emerging local government leaders in a conversation about talent acquisition and retention
The Talent Challenge

Since 1990s: Flattening Organizations
• Less mid-managers available to advance

Employee development and training cut
• Seen as “non-essential”

Major generational retirement wave
• Most seasoned employees leaving/gone

The Talent Initiative
Attract. Retain. Grow
If You Don’t Have the Right People, You Can’t Get Stuff Done!
This is **NOT** About Millennials!

It’s about developing professionals from all generations to maximize organizational effectiveness.
Methods of Learning

350+ Surveys completed by Executives and HR leaders

12 Focus groups statewide

Q&A Interviews with private sector thought leaders
What Gets In the Way?

- Outdated compensation packages
- Need to develop Relational Skills
- Mid-management gap
- Personnel rules
- Time and money
- Political environment
- Outdated technology
- Complex hiring processes
- Unknown/Misaligned values
- Treating training as discretionary
- Desire for quick advancement
- Outdated culture
- High Housing costs
- Longer commutes
- Work-life balance
Today’s Workforce Is Asking...

- Are there big problems to solve in local government?
- Am I interested in solving these big problems?
- Will I be empowered to help solve the big problems?
“Meaning is the new money.”

- Daniel Pink
Every supervisor needs to understand that developing talent is a primary job duty.
Frequently Needed Core Skills

- Writing and communication skills
- Political awareness
- Fiscal and policy challenges
- Understanding The Big Picture
What Else Can We Do - Recruiting?

- Brand your agency, tell your story
- Refine the recruitment process
- Consider private sector employees
- Hire for values, attitude, learning agility
What Else Can We Do - Retention?

- Update your culture
- Break down the silos
- Provide stretch opportunities
- Support technology to meet today’s needs
- Conduct “Stay” interviews

...But Leave Bosses
What Else Can We Do – Elected Officials?

- Support and fund training – demand it
- Support opportunities for newer managers to deliver presentations
- Be mindful of how civility on the dais impacts an agency’s reputation
- Create a “culture of appreciation” – recognize staff for their work
Instead of asking…

“What if I train my employees and they leave?

You should be asking…

“What if I don’t train my employees and they stay?
Key Recommendations

- Make talent attraction, retention and development a strategic priority
- Include talent issues in orientation of newly elected officials
- Focus on the roles of mid-managers to promote workplace flexibility and employee engagement
- Promote local government service as a noble and honorable profession
5 Things to Get Managers Started

1. Conduct a brief workforce analysis
2. Enhance Job Announcements to showcase meaning and purpose of the work, values, culture
3. Fully Utilize “stretch” assignments
4. Ensure that all supervisors provide ongoing performance feedback
5. Conduct “stay interviews”
5 Things to Get Electeds Started

1. Ask your executive about their employee development plans
2. Encourage more employees to give presentations at meetings
3. Demonstrate professional civility among your peers
4. Celebrate organizational successes and share the credit
5. Encourage smart risk taking
Start a conversation with all employees about enhancing organizational culture (and then do something!)
Audience Q&A
Audience Question

- What resonated with me?
- What didn’t resonate with me?
- What do I have to add?
Call to Action

What’s One Thing You Can Do To Enhance Our Employee Value Proposition?
Resources

○ Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative Website:

  cal-icma.org/talentinitiative

○ Talent 2.0 Report
○ Examples of Exemplary Programs
○ Best Practices Articles
○ “Best Places for Talent Development” Recognition (Coming Soon!)
Submit Your Exemplary Program
To The Cal-ICMA Talent Development Team

mmanc.org/talentprograms
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For More Info  
cal-icma.org/talentinitiative
The purpose of the Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative is to help managers in local government focus on the business imperative of attracting, retaining, and growing talent.

**Assessment Activities**

To assess the talent challenges facing local governments in California, the Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative Team reviewed current talent management literature, administered a survey of 372 senior managers, conducted interviews with private and non-profit sector thought leaders, and facilitated 11 focus groups throughout California involving 272 local government managers.

**Key Findings About The Talent Challenge**

Local governments have not adequately prepared for the baby-boomer retirement wave and are struggling to fill the void; yet there is reason for hope. Local governments possess a potential advantage in attracting and retaining today’s talent. This is because today’s work force seeks meaning in their work and wants to make a difference. At its core, the purpose of local government is to serve communities and provide for a high quality of life for residents. Careers in local government are an opportunity to contribute to building communities – what better way to have impact?

“A fundamental recommendation of this effort is to ensure that every manager understands that the professional development of their employees is a primary job duty.”

Local governments can no longer rely on “stealing” talent from other agencies; more than ever, public agencies need to grow their own talent. Employees who are learning and growing are more likely to stay with an organization. Talent development must be integral to every manager’s core duties. Successfully attracting and retaining talent requires a positive organizational culture. A traditional bureaucratic governmental culture inhibits innovation, discourages experimentation, and turns away the best talent. Retooling organizational cultures to better attract and retain early-career talent will enhance organizations for all employees and positively affect performance and productivity.

**Challenges in Attracting, Retaining and Growing Talent**

Managers who participated in the 11 focus groups identified an array of challenges that need to be addressed. They also expressed the need to engage elected officials in a conversation about the issues. A few of the key challenges they identified include:

- **Attraction/Recruitment**
  - Agencies are experiencing a large number of vacancies in key positions, and there are fewer seasoned department heads and other senior managers to recruit from other local government agencies.
  - Internal candidates frequently lack sufficient management experience and leadership ("soft") skills.
  - The hiring process in local governments can be lengthy and includes factors that make it less competitive with other sectors, including testing requirements and minimum qualifications that can disqualify untraditional candidates.
  - Job specifications and operating practices (e.g., job duties, work schedules) in local government organizations can be inflexible.
  - Agencies do not allocate sufficient resources to market or brand their organizations.

- **Retention & Development**
  - Local governments have not made training and professional development a priority.
  - Long commutes, high-cost housing, and lack of child care all work against retention.
• Traditional or even “stodgy” organization cultures are not inspiring for early-career professionals.

• The deep recession and restructuring of organizations have resulted in the elimination of mid-manager and other “step-up” positions.

• Political in-fighting and uncivil discourse discourage talented professionals from entering or staying in the public sector.

• Mid-career professionals are reluctant to pursue higher-level positions when there are adversarial politics and impacts on work-life balance.

**Themes from Thought Leaders**
The Talent Initiative Team conducted four interviews with recognized “Thought Leaders” from the technology and non-profit sectors in order to enhance our understanding of how to better compete for talent. Themes included:

1. Early-career professionals want to have a role in addressing social problems; they want to have an impact.

2. These professionals lack an understanding that local governments are in the business of solving community problems; the profession must do a better job of branding this message and adapting organizational culture to engage enterprising millennials.

3. Talent initiatives need the active encouragement and support of senior leadership.

4. Local governments must tell their story, especially regarding the opportunity to serve and make a difference.

**Findings & Recommendations**
The Talent Initiative report identifies a variety of actions, both large and small, that local governments can make to increase their chances for successfully attracting, retaining, and growing talent.

A fundamental recommendation of this effort is to ensure that every manager understands that the professional development of their employees is a primary job duty and that all employees take responsibility to grow and develop in their work. If both leaders and employees embrace their roles, all other recommendations can follow.

**Assistance from Professional Organizations**
Professional organizations play an important role in championing local government as a noble, rewarding, engaging, and thriving job sector. Therefore, regional and professional organizations should be enlisted to assist advancing the Talent Initiative by:

• Developing sample branding materials including enticing job announcements that all government agencies can customize and use in their efforts to attract talent (Cal-ICMA with ILG)

• Hosting educational sessions that highlight the importance of attracting, retaining, engaging, and developing talent and address the challenges identified through the Talent Initiative (Cal-ICMA, LCC, MMANC/SC, CSAC, and others)

• Promoting shared service models for delivering training and development programs on a regional basis (CPAAC)

• Expanding ICMA student chapters and outreach efforts to universities to engage early-career professionals (MMANC/SC)

• Focusing on leadership development (with emphasis on “soft skills”) for mid-managers and aspiring leaders (Cal-ICMA, MMANC/SC, ELGL)

• Conducting “Future County Department Heads” and “Future City Manager” seminars (CACE, CSAC Institute, Cal-ICMA)

• Drafting model language for employment agreements to provide greater flexibility addressing staffing challenges (CALPELRA)

**Key Recommendations**

**Attracting Talent**

• Eliminate minimum qualifications for entry-level positions

• Update job postings to focus on meaning, values, learning, skills development, and organizational culture
• Hire for potential and learning agility vs. technical skills and knowledge

• Expand recruitment reach by using social media sites and new technologies

• Offer internships or fellowships to students, independently or through the ICMA Local Government Management Fellowship Program

Retaining and Developing Talent

• Assess the leadership pipeline and develop home-grown talent

• Provide staff with training and professional development opportunities annually, develop specific learning outcomes

• Offer mentoring and coaching to aspiring professional

• Utilize multi-departmental and cross-functional project action teams

• Use interim or acting assignments or provide job rotation opportunities to fill roles or “try out” staff

• Ensure that all supervisors are accountable for the development of their staff and follow up regularly

Retooling Organizational Culture

• Use on-boarding activities with new employees to engage them with top management and discuss organizational values and “What we care about”

• Incorporate more flexibility in scheduling, holiday closures, and other ways to do our work

• Create opportunities for face-to-face interactions with top management

• Create a “culture of appreciation” and recognition

• Promote more autonomy for employees and provide opportunities to work on the whole project

• Increase employee engagement, including active listening, engaging them in problem-solving, and promoting a sense of community and belonging

• Promote a practice of ongoing performance conversations with employees (not just annual performance evaluations)

Encouraging Employee Initiative

• Promote growth and development as a core element of each employee’s job responsibilities

• Encourage employees to identify their career development goals and support their ability to achieve them

• Invite each employee to include desired professional development plans in their regular reviews with a supervisor

Follow-Up Action Steps

The Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative Team seeks to advance the recommendations contained in this report by:

• Updating the Cal-ICMA website to include tools, a knowledge-sharing database, and other resources for organizations to use in implementing the Talent Initiative locally.

• Continuing to solicit exemplary programs and examples of best practices that can be shared via the Cal-ICMA website.

• Learning from the private sector and adapting and communicating relevant practices.

• Engaging professional associations in discussions about their roles and contribution in implementing these recommendations; developing an implementation plan.

• Creating a “Great Places” program to showcase talent management efforts and acknowledge organizations that are implementing the best practices contained in this report.
TEN IDEAS TO IMPLEMENT TODAY

This Talent Initiative report provides a menu of diverse recommendations for local government executives. Leaders can start anywhere they'd like in implementing any or all of the recommendations in this report to better attract, retain, and grow talent.

Here are ten ideas to consider in beginning your efforts:

1. Conduct a simple workforce analysis (i.e., showing retirement risk now and in five years for different employee groups).
2. Eliminate minimum qualifications for entry-level positions; hire for potential or learning agility.
3. Enhance job announcements to showcase the meaning and purpose of the work, organizational values and culture, and opportunities to grow and develop.
4. Fully utilize “stretch” assignments, including participation on cross-functional project teams.
5. Train all supervisors and managers on how to coach and conduct development conversations with all direct reports.
6. Ensure that supervisors and managers provide ongoing performance feedback to employees, not just a once-a-year performance evaluation.
7. Conduct “stay interviews” with key talent (or better yet with all employees).
8. Hire one or several university interns and limited-term Management Fellows (those graduating with master’s degrees).
9. Incorporate more flexibility into scheduling including, where appropriate, telecommuting.
10. Ensure ongoing face-to-face interaction between employees and top management.

Bonus Idea: Start a conversation with all employees about enhancing organizational culture (and then do something!).

A CALL TO ACTION

Talent Initiative research suggests that agencies are losing the battle for talent. We need to act now if our organizations are to remain competitive in the face of the challenges impacting our communities.

We encourage you to take the following steps now:

- Discuss this report’s Executive Summary with your executive team.
- Start a conversation with key employees regarding your agency's Employee Value Proposition. Ask three questions:
  - Why would a talented professional want to join us and stay with us?
  - Why would a talented professional be reluctant to join us and stay with us?
  - What can we all do to enhance our Employee Value Proposition?
- Conduct a study session or other conversation with the governing board about your Employee Value Proposition; engage governing board members in helping top management address talent challenges.
- Implement a few ideas from the Ten Ideas to Implement Today section of this report.

Start your journey to becoming an Employer of Choice!
For more information on the Talent Initiative, or to view the full report, visit:

https://icma.org/cal-icma/talentinitiative
Talent 2.0

-- Ten Tips for Elected Officials --

Elected officials need professional talent to execute their policy agenda. Elected officials can play a significant role in helping their local government better attract, retain and grow talent.

Here are ten tips:

1. Conduct with the full governing board and top management a conversation about your local government’s Employee Value Proposition (EVP).
   - Why would a talented professional want to join your organization and stay?
   - Why would a talented professional be reluctant to join your organization and stay?
   - What are concrete steps that the governing board and top management can take in order to enhance your Employee Value Proposition?

2. Ensure that governing body meetings are conducted in a business-like manner, even if there are major policy disagreements.

3. Do not allow community members, other stakeholders, or other governing body members to attack staff at governing body meetings or community meetings (disagreements about policy recommendations are fine, but not personal attacks).

4. Encourage professional staff to take smart risks in order to promote innovation; treat mistakes or missteps as opportunities to learn and get better.

5. Express in public and in private appreciation for good staff efforts in executing the governing body’s policy agenda.

6. Provide policy direction and then hand it off to staff to work on the details.

7. Inquire how top management is providing learning opportunities to “grow” inside talent; adequately fund employee development.
8. Ensure that the organization is offering internships and management fellowships to “hook” younger talent on careers in local government.

9. Make governing body meetings a “safe” place for mid-level staff to present reports, improve their presentation skills, interact with policy-makers, and otherwise stretch and grow.

10. Support workplace flexibility and wellness proposals.

**Bonus**

Encourage top management to involve staff in the no-cost Coaching Program (webinars, one-to-one coaching, leadership advice columns) offered by the International City/County Management Association at [www.icma.org/coaching](http://www.icma.org/coaching).

(To view the full “Talent 2.0” report and access more resources and best practices, go to [https://icma.org/cal-icma/talentinitiative](https://icma.org/cal-icma/talentinitiative))
City governments are in a war for talent, and we are losing the war. City agencies face a continuing “retirement wave” of baby-boomer managers and professionals exiting careers in local government, resulting in a leadership crisis and brain drain.

This talent crisis features two challenges:

1. We have not adequately prepared professionals in the city government pipeline to advance and take over major management responsibilities; and

2. Young people are not pursuing city government careers. Survey research of university students indicates that at best they know little of local government work and at worst, they view this work as bureaucratic and unexciting.

To exacerbate matters, talent is mobile. In our competitive job markets, talent can easily leave for a better job elsewhere.

Why Elected Officials Should Care

As an elected official, you may have a great policy agenda that will enhance your community. However, your policy agenda is powerless without talent to implement those ideas and make them come to life. As Thomas Edison is attributed with saying, “Vision without execution is hallucination.”
Certainly your ability as an elected official to make a positive difference in your community is based on your policy ideas and direction, yet it is also based on attracting, retaining and “growing” talent to achieve your agenda. In terms of putting your policy goals into action, it is all about talent.

**The Dimensions of the Talent Challenge**

To explore the nature and scope of the talent crisis, Cal-ICMA (the California affiliate of the International City/County Management Association) conducted research that included:

- A survey of 272 city managers, human resources directors and emerging leaders;
- Eleven focus groups throughout California involving 372 senior managers; and
- A series of interviews with thought leaders from the corporate high-tech and nonprofit sectors.

The research found that:

- In the face of the baby-boomer retirement wave, local governments have not adequately built a talent pipeline;
- Local governments can no longer rely on “stealing” talent from other agencies. More than ever, public agencies need to cultivate talent from within;
- Talent retention is largely about learning, challenge and engagement. Employees who are learning and growing are more likely to stay with an organization;
- Winning the war for talent is more about organizational culture, including political culture, than money (assuming that an agency pays competitively); and
- Elected officials play a key role in helping their city governments attract, retain and foster talent.

**The Impact of a Toxic Political Culture**

The senior managers and emerging leaders in the statewide survey and focus groups indicated that talented professionals pay a lot of attention to the political culture of particular city governments. For example, after reading the announcement of an enticing vacant position in your city, talented professionals will typically attend a city council meeting or two and/or watch videos of several council meetings. Will they see:

- Disrespectful interactions and infighting among council members?
- Community members attacking staff who present professional recommendations that may be unpopular?
- Council members talking issues to death without taking any action?
- Council members adding yet another priority to staff’s full plate without considering other priority projects already underway?
- Council members showing no appreciation for staff’s efforts to address difficult problems in the community?

If these forms of toxic political culture characterize council meetings in your city, why would a talented professional join you? Why would a talented professional stay with you?

Furthermore, are you and your elected colleagues driving talent away?

Department managers certainly have a responsibility and role in helping the city council improve the political culture. For example, managers can work with the council to:

- Schedule priority- and goal-setting sessions with the council;
- Remind the council about focusing on established priorities;
- Recommend actions that allow staff to take “smart risks” and promote innovation; and
- Propose — with the council’s support — protocols for civic discourse at council meetings.

However, elected officials ultimately must own their political culture and commit to better behavior. Otherwise, a negative political culture will undercut efforts to accomplish community goals and the city’s efforts to attract and retain professional talent.

**Starting the Conversation About Talent**

Because attracting and retaining talent is about organizational culture, the Cal-ICMA Talent Initiative recommends that city councils begin to address their talent challenges by engaging top management in a discussion of the organization’s Employee Value Proposition (EVP) — the unique set of rewards and benefits employees receive in return for the skills, capabilities and commitment they provide to the organization.

To start the conversation about the organization’s EVP, the council and top management must address three questions.

**Why would a talented professional want to join our organization and stay with us?** Possible answers include: Our city government provides challenging opportunities to make a difference; we provide training and professional development opportunities to promote staff advancement; we demonstrate appreciation for the work of staff; and as a council-staff team, we get things done.

**Why would a talented professional be reluctant to join our organization and remain with us?** Possible answers include: Our city government does not provide flexibility on when or how to do the work; our legacy technologies are out of date and we have not invested in new technologies; council members have “zero tolerance” for mistakes and therefore undercut innovation; and there is much conflict and infighting among council members.

**What are a few action steps that we must take to enhance our EVP and become more competitive for talent?** Possible answers include: The council will support flexible scheduling and telecommuting when appropriate; we will invest in new technologies to enhance the way staff members do their work; and we will support measures promoting civility in the council chambers.
Of course, after the conversation, the city council and top management must take action to enhance the EVP.

How Elected Officials Can Better Attract, Retain and Nurture Talent

Although retooling “stodgy” organizational cultures requires the active involvement of your city manager and other senior managers, it must also involve elected officials’ active participation.

Consider these 10 ideas for elected officials — in partnership with top management — to help the organization better attract, retain and nurture talent:

1. Conduct a conversation with the full governing board and top management about your local government’s EVP;
2. Ensure that governing board meetings are conducted in a business-like manner, even if major policy disagreements occur;
3. Do not allow community members, other stakeholders or other governing board members to attack staff at governing board meetings or community meetings (disagreements about policy recommendations are fine, but not personal attacks);
4. Encourage professional staff to take smart risks to promote innovation. If staff are committed to excellence, treat mistakes or missteps as opportunities to learn and get better;
5. Take action after a thoughtful discussion of different perspectives and then give staff direction, recognizing that everything may not be perfect. Allow staff to make adjustments along the way;
6. Express appreciation in public and in private for good staff efforts in executing the governing board’s policy agenda;
7. Ask how top management is providing learning opportunities to develop inside talent and adequately fund employee development;
8. Ensure that the organization is offering internships and management fellowships to “hook” younger talent on careers in local government;
9. Make governing board meetings a “safe” place for mid-level staff to present reports, improve their presentation skills, interact with governing board members and otherwise stretch and grow; and
10. Ask how top management provides flexibility in scheduling and determining where and when work is done. Support flexibility and wellness proposals.

Got Talent?

As an elected official, if you want to achieve your policy agenda and make a positive difference in your community, you need talent. Without talent, it is all just policy talk.

Interested in Learning More About This Topic?

Want to hear more about positioning your city to win the war for talent? Attend the session “Bringing Cutting-Edge Talent Strategies to Your Organization” at the League of California Cities 2018 Annual Conference & Expo. Frank Benest will join a panel of city officials addressing this issue.

The session will be held Thursday, Sept. 13, from 2:45–4:00 p.m. See the conference program or app for location details.

Available Talent Development Resources for Your City

The Cal-ICMA website features the following resources to help your city government attract talent:

- The full report and an executive summary from its Talent Initiative “Talent 2.0”;
- “10 Ideas to Better Attract, Retain and Grow Talent”;
- A best practices compendium; and
- “Stay Interview” questions.

Visit www.cal-icma.org and click on “Talent Initiative.”
Stay Interviews
(excerpt from Marnie Green/Painless Performance)

A stay interview can be informal dialogue, in an informal setting. It can be a short conversation or a detailed exploration. The key is to ask for the employee's perspectives about their work and to listen. Here are a few questions you might use to get the conversation started:

- What do you like most about your work?
- What keeps you here?
- What would entice you away?
- What do you want to learn this year?
- What makes for a great day at work?
- What brings you down on the job?
- Is there anything you’d like to change about your job?
- What would make your job more satisfying and rewarding?
- Do you feel recognized for your accomplishments?
- What strengths or talents do you have that aren't being used?
- How do you like to be recognized, acknowledged, and rewarded for a job well done?
- What is your greatest challenge or roadblock?
- What part of working here strikes you as ridiculous?
- What would make your work more meaningful and satisfying?
- What conditions would cause you to seek employment elsewhere?
- How can I or the organization help you reach your career goals?
- What support do you need to be more effective?
- How am I doing as your supporting leader?
- What is the most satisfying part about your job right now?
- What is least satisfying about your job?
- If you could wave a magic wand, what changes would you make in the work environment?
- What makes you feel like a valuable contributor?
- What can we do to ensure we keep you with us?

What if They Ask for the Moon?
You may be tempted to avoid the 'stay conversation' because you can't deliver on what your employee asks for. Don't be afraid! You probably won't be able to say "yes" to all of the requests you hear. What you can do is validate their feelings, express your support, and assure them you'll do what you can to explore options. Avoid saying you can't meet their needs. Instead, focus on what you can do. Commit to reviewing their feedback and give them a timeline for further discussion. Sometimes, just listening is what is really needed. It is more important to know why they stay, rather than why they leave. You probably already know why they leave. Lead more stay interviews and your organization is likely to hold fewer exit interviews.

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