

Why Should Organisations Recruit Multidisciplinary Talents?

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Often considered unfit, overqualified, dispersed, lost, and even disruptive, it is now time to consider multidisciplinary talent as a solution to current business-world challenges, as these individuals demonstrate curiosity, a predilection for the challenge, and risk tolerance, traits that today's organisations have come to expect of their employees.

The increasing paucity of leaders highlights that 'the world may now be one economy, but it is definitely not one talent market' (Talent Edge 2020, 2019, p. 14) and that programmes are unable to prepare the next generation of executive leaders to face the coming challenges (Ibid.). In this context, let us explore the hypothesis that multidisciplinary talent could be much more prepared and better equipped in today's environment.

Between curiosity and misunderstanding

Commonly negatively categorised in the recruitment process, multidisciplinary candidates clearly demonstrate a high level of curiosity, mainly to understand the world they evolve in. The scarcity of curiosity at work, confirmed by Gino (2018), reflects how multidisciplinary talent could address this lack within organisations.

This absence of curiosity may be because most people confront many obstacles when asking questions (Ibid.).

Indeed, multidisciplinary talents may be considered dangerous by many organisations and their stakeholders, because they will question the status quo and the possible, thereby instilling doubt when organisations are trying to build trust and confidence.

Whether curiosity is triggered to reduce undesirable feelings of uncertainty, to preserve a pleasant awakening sensation across exploratory behaviours, or to combine the neurobiological features of pleasures—rewarding and wanting (Kidd & Hayden, 2015)—it is essential to good organisational performance (Gino, 2018). Individuals with multidisciplinary talent are mostly intrinsically motivated, and their curiosity frequently leads to the misunderstanding of their real motivations by others.

Driven by passion

Individuals with multidisciplinary talent are usually driven by passion. This intense enthusiasm towards a desire for something motivates them to fulfil their passions, which renders them as highly engaged and leading individuals.

While Diderot (2004) describes the extremes of passion such that 'They can be so strong as to inhibit all practice of personal freedom, a state in which the soul is in some sense rendered passive' (p. 142), it is not surprising that passion may overcome mountains just as much as it can lead to disobedience, which is not tolerated within organisations.

Multidisciplinary talent will dispute the established order; however, would that not help organisations to anticipate their decisions and actions as well as strengthen their agility?

Ready for challenges

Individuals with multidisciplinary talent love challenges. Most colleagues admire or are jealous, and at times, even envious of them. That said, such individuals have most probably piqued more than one among their colleagues and supervisors and pushed others out of their comfort zones.

In the current competitive business world, challenges and changes, which we will explore under the next item, are the norm. Therefore, multidisciplinary talent could inspire others and train them on how to take on challenges. Moreover, remaining in one's comfort zone restricts opportunities and deprives individuals from taking control of their own lives (Joseph, 2016).

Welcome changes

It is well known that change is one of the most recurrent and most permanent issues faced by managers (Lawrence, 1969). However, multidisciplinary talent not only welcomes change but also seeks it. Change is a natural necessity or a positive improvement; therefore, resistance to change does not stand a chance. A person with multidisciplinary talent will typically be the employee who will lead the change and guide others throughout this journey. Is it not an employer's dream to benefit from employees with such abilities?

Brave in the face of risks

We live in risk societies (Beck, 1992) where individual identity is an essential driver of risk-taking (Zinn, 2017). An individual with multidisciplinary talent often shows predilection for high tolerance to calculated risks, which is at the heart of all concerns and is particularly necessary given the environmental uncertainties today. Moreover, their holistic views and

understanding of situations make it easier for them to assess risks and establish contingency plans.

A solution to the breathlessness of hyper-specialised talents

Introduced by Malone and Laubacher (2011), hyper-specialisation has emerged as a boon for businesses. However, an associated issue is starting to appear—the 'breathlessness' experienced by hyper-specialised talent, who finds it difficult to navigate a multidisciplinary and complex world. A multidisciplinary talent who can also be a specialist (refer to next item) would be in perfect harmony with today's sophisticated and dynamic business world.

Obliterate the myth

'A multidisciplinary talent is a generalist and cannot be a specialist!' Does having a master's or a doctoral degree make one a specialist, and having two masters or two doctoral degrees overwrite one or two of the person's specialisations? This relentless misconception creates barriers for individuals with multidisciplinary talent to enter organisations as well as for their career progression.

Besides, hyper-specialisation in more than one discipline is also possible. Nowadays, students increasingly study two or more master's or even doctoral degrees, leading to highly qualified multidisciplinary talents whose specialist titles will ultimately be stolen just because of this misconception.

A bow with more than one string

Being a multidisciplinary talent does not mean being unfit and overqualified; rather, job profiles are too restrictive. This increases the potential of such

individuals being misunderstood and feared. A multidisciplinary background does not indicate a dispersed or lost individual; on the contrary, it indicates an individual who is endowed with enhanced curiosity. However, it is true that such individuals will often cause discomfort to others because they are driven by passion, welcome challenges and changes, and are ready to take risks.

Finally, a multidisciplinary background does not imply 'unspecialised'; rather, multidisciplinary adds supplementary strings to a talent's bow. In other words, a combination of specialisations is what makes such individuals unique.

How about valuing differences and their potential? What if qualities such as competence and prowess differentiated the profiles, rather than standardisation that is limited to one specialisation? Are organisations ready to shake up the established order? These questions require organisations to take responsibility and be accountable regarding these matters.

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