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FEATURED INSIGHT

Aligning Talent Acquisition to Business Strategy

Why strategy must come first, and what it means for how organisations in Ghana and across Africa hire



6
STAGES IN THE TALENT ACQUISITION CYCLE

1–3 yrs
STRATEGIC HORIZON TO PLAN TALENT FOR

24 mths
TO DEFINE WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE

3
WAYS TO COMPETE AND WIN

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Aligning talent acquisition to business strategy: why strategy must come first



Papa Owusu Bonsafo Bawua, LLB
Member, Association of Certified HRs (ACHR) · Head of Consulting and Program, HR Certification Centre

01 Introduction

In an era of intense competition, rapid technological change and shifting workforce expectations, organisations no longer succeed simply by hiring people. They succeed by hiring the *right people*, with the *right capabilities*, at the *right time*, to deliver clearly defined business objectives. This reality has elevated **talent acquisition** from an administrative HR function to a strategic business imperative.

Yet many organisations, particularly across Ghana and parts of Africa, continue to experience persistent talent challenges. These challenges are often blamed on skills shortages or labour market constraints. In reality, the deeper issue is frequently a lack of **clear, documented and well-researched business strategy**. When strategy is weak or unclear, talent acquisition inevitably becomes reactive, misaligned and ineffective.

02 Understanding talent acquisition

Talent acquisition is a **strategic and systematic process of identifying, attracting, selecting and retaining talent** to meet both current and future organisational needs. Unlike traditional recruitment, which focuses on filling immediate vacancies, talent acquisition is long-term, forward-looking and closely linked to where the organisation intends to go.

> **THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION**
> What people and capabilities does the organisation need to execute its strategy successfully?

The talent acquisition cycle

An effective talent acquisition framework typically follows a structured cycle:



1. **Workforce planning:** identifying future talent requirements based on business goals.
2. **Employer branding:** positioning the organisation as an employer of choice.
3. **Talent sourcing:** determining where and how to access required talent.
4. **Recruitment and selection:** assessing candidates for competence, potential and cultural fit.
5. **Onboarding and integration:** ensuring new hires transition effectively into the organisation.
6. **Retention and talent pipeline development:** sustaining critical skills and leadership continuity.

When this cycle operates independently of business strategy, recruitment becomes transactional and short-sighted. When aligned, it becomes a powerful driver of competitive advantage.

03 Why business strategy is the starting point

Talent acquisition cannot be aligned to business strategy unless a business **first has a clear strategy**. In simple terms, an organisation must know:

- Where it is going
- What it wants to achieve
- How it intends to compete and win

A major challenge facing many businesses in Ghana and across Africa is that strategic direction is often:

- Undocumented or poorly articulated
- Developed without adequate research
- Not tested against market realities

Many strategies are formed without a proper **SWOT analysis** (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) or **PESTLE analysis** (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors). When strategy is poorly developed, it creates downstream problems across the organisation, including in talent acquisition.

04 A strategic failure with talent consequences: the BlackBerry case

The decline of BlackBerry offers a powerful lesson in the relationship between strategy and talent.

In the late 2000s, BlackBerry dominated the smartphone market, particularly among corporate users, with secure devices and physical keyboards. Leadership believed that business users would never abandon physical keyboards for touchscreen phones. This assumption became the foundation of their strategy.

As the market shifted toward touch-based devices, app ecosystems and consumer-driven innovation, BlackBerry failed to adapt. The strategic rigidity had a direct impact on talent acquisition. Talented engineers, designers and software developers gravitated toward Apple and Android, companies seen as shaping the future.

BlackBerry increasingly struggled to attract top-tier talent, not because of weak recruitment processes, but because innovative professionals wanted to work on forward-looking technologies, not declining ones.

> ***The lesson is clear: when strategy is wrong, talent acquisition fails, regardless of how strong HR systems may be.***

05 Strategic diagnosis: questions that enable alignment

For talent acquisition to truly support business objectives, HR and leadership must clearly understand the organisation's strategic direction. This requires answering critical questions such as:

1. What are the organisation's key strategic priorities over the next one to three years?
2. What does success look like in the next 24 months, and how will it be measured?
3. How does the organisation intend to compete: through innovation, cost leadership or customer intimacy?
4. What critical capabilities exist today, and which ones must be developed or acquired?
5. Where is the organisation investing its capital and resources?
6. Is the strategic focus on growth, profitability or market expansion?

The answers to these questions provide the foundation on which an effective talent acquisition strategy can be built.

06 From business strategy to talent decisions: a practical perspective

Consider a business whose strategic priority is to expand operations into other African countries within the next three years. That strategic decision immediately shapes talent acquisition choices.

Transfer existing employees

Questions arise around training, relocation benefits, cultural adaptation and compliance with local labour laws.

Recruit in the host country

The organisation must build an employer brand that attracts talent in the new market, and design onboarding that integrates new hires into its culture.

Without a clear business strategy, these decisions become fragmented and inconsistent. With strategic clarity, talent acquisition becomes deliberate, coordinated and aligned with long-term objectives.

07 Conclusion

Aligning talent acquisition to business strategy is no longer optional. Organisations that treat recruitment as a reactive, administrative activity will continue to experience skills gaps, poor hires and high turnover.

Conversely, organisations that invest time in developing clear, research-driven strategies create the conditions for effective talent acquisition. The most capable professionals are attracted to organisations with vision, direction and a compelling future.

The central message for businesses in Ghana, Africa and beyond is simple but profound:

> ***Get the strategy right, and talent acquisition becomes a competitive advantage. Get it wrong, and even the best recruitment systems will fail.***

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Papa Owusu Bonsafo Bawua, LLB, is a member of the Association of Certified HRs (ACHR) and Head of Consulting and Program at the HR Certification Centre.

ABOUT ACHR

The Association of Certified HRs (ACHR) is a professional community of HR practitioners in Ghana, bringing together graduates of the HR Certification Centre's programmes and other HR professionals. ACHR Insights share members' views and research on issues shaping the world of work.

Contact: **059 802 3626 | 020 800 7585**
achr@phrglobal.com · Facebook: Association of Certified HRs-Ghana · Instagram: associationofcertifiedhrs