



Reality HR: Jason Hanold, Global Director, Talent Acquisition, Whirlpool Corporation

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Whirlpool Corporation is the largest appliance manufacturer in the world, with annual revenues of eleven billion dollars and 68,000 employees. They have 50 manufacturing and technology centers around the globe and produce twelve major brands worldwide, which would include Whirlpool, KitchenAid, Bauknecht, Consul and other brands in 170 countries throughout the world.

We spoke with Jason Hanold, Global Human Resources about the company's success.

HR.com: Thank you for taking the time to share your HR success with us. What challenge would you like to share with us today?

JH: Whirlpool organization, like many others, must attract, retain, and develop exceptional talent to achieve its strategic objectives. Given the razor-thin margins in our industry, it is our belief that our truest competitive differentiator will be the caliber of our talent compared with that of our competitors. Also, we have been undergoing a very interesting challenge due to our history, growth and global presence. Whirlpool Corporation is 93 years old, but not a 93 year-old global business. We have that tenure in the US, but in Shanghai, China, it's a seven year-old company and in Italy, it's a 16 year-old company. Essentially, we are facing the challenges of comprehensive talent management integration throughout businesses that are at different stages of maturity. This creates diverse sets of challenges that result from areas such as talent development, talent intake, and from a growth maturity perspective.

HR.com: With this direction how did you start the project and form a team to tackle this large task?

JH: First, we defined a framework for "talent management" and its meaning to Whirlpool, and then established the discipline and rigor that reflects our philosophies, or Talent Tenets throughout each of those components. Our defined components for talent management:

- Talent Acquisition
- Retention
- Professional development
- Leadership development, which is different from professional development,

- so leadership/high-potential development
- Performance management
- Workforce planning
- Feedback and measurement

From here we needed to examine where we have robust capabilities for each of these components. Where do we have more of an ad hoc capability rather than a comprehensive and defined capability? Which of these capabilities as an organization do we need to make more robust? And even those that are comprehensive and defined, how do we integrate those across channels?

HR.com: So you need to continue to attract great talent to Whirlpool. Take us through how you attract talent.

JH: In order to adequately supply depth, breadth and diversity of talent to our “bench” for key leadership positions, we need to significantly populate from outside of the organization. Before we could articulate a compelling Employer Value Proposition and assess talent with rigor, there needed to be a robust agreement across the global organizational leadership, around our talent tenets that will enable us to go a bit deeper and develop our philosophies and the way we interact with candidates. Our candidates are either Whirlpool customers or potential Whirlpool customers, and we build our consideration processes accordingly. For example, we developed and launched an “Exceptional Candidate Experience”. The Exceptional Candidate Experience is ten uniquely defined, but inter-related, processes through which we execute our interview and employment consideration. Not only are we wanting to attract great candidates, but we also want to build customer loyalty to our Whirlpool brands through the program as most of us in HR do not interact directly with customers. Therefore, the flawless execution of this process, and by-product experience is the most critical and valuable component of our function.

“Exceptional Candidate Experience” has two meanings. First, we are going to identify and bring into our processes “exceptional” candidates. Secondly, from a candidate perspective, they’re going to have an “exceptional” experience when they engage with Whirlpool.

Also, from a staffing management perspective, we chose Taleo as our strategic vendor of choice to provide the technical system support across our Talent Acquisition strategy.

HR: So far you have illustrated that you have created employer branding and the start of an Exceptional Candidate Experience, what is next?

JH: War for Talent and Quality Sourcing - the process in which we identify people in the marketplace and attract them to Whirlpool. Also, we are exploring creative ways to partner with and better allocate sourcing dollars to search firms to align in our quest for top talent. The War for Talent, from a recruiting context, has shifted from the quantity perspective of the late 90s to the quality perspective of today. Therefore, we will pay more than the market standard of 33% retainer fee after one year, if the hired candidate is performing as a “top” or “emerging” talent within the organization.

HR: You now have technology in place and have created an environment that

welcomes potential candidates what is next?

JH: When candidates come in for interviews they are more engaged right from the start, they want to be a part of Whirlpool. The Exceptional Candidate Experience is showing early signs of success, not only from a candidate perspective, but from a hiring manager perspective as well. A more engaged candidate possesses contagious enthusiasm, which has a positive impact on the hiring managers. One of our managers summed it up nicely when he came back to us after he interviewed a candidate who was one of our first that we ran through this pilot program and he said “I want to adopt this person.”

HR.com: Marcus Buckingham speaks on engagement of employees and how they are most engaged early in their career. How do you keep these employees engaged?

JH: We actually initiated a massive 16,000-person Engagement Survey at Whirlpool recently. This survey measured the amount of discretionary effort that each employee brings to work each day. This helps us to measure how aligned an individual employee is with our organizational strategy. We then developed strategies for engaging our existing employees as well as opportunities for us to engage our new candidates from a talent perspective.

HR: How do you quantify the results of these surveys?

JH: This is a larger challenge for us across all the aforementioned talent management components. We are not doing our job unless we quantify the economic value-add (EVA) of the deliverables produced. So there's a great onus that we're feeling or we're placing on ourselves to speak the language of the business. And so when we're meeting with our CEO, COO, and members of the Executive Committee, it's important that we can speak in meaningful measurable terms.

HR.com: And how are you doing that?

JH: We're doing that through a host of methods, but unfortunately not all things are measurable in a truly meaningful manner. For instance a past measurement was acceptance rates on offers. But it's not very meaningful and alone, doesn't say much about the effectiveness of the recruiting organization. Some companies may have a history of nearly 100% acceptance rates on offers. On the surface that sounds great, but not meaningful until one learns more about the *quality* of the talent that accepted an offer.

In all, consider variables in the measure and determine whether they are important to you, your senior executives, CEO, or to your talent acquisition team, and then make sure you're not sharing the seemingly trivial measurements with a senior leader. One executive told me that he was “very interested in the revenue per headcount”. To him, this is a meaningful measurement, as it simply reconciles revenue with the number of top and emerging talent within the organization. Over time, if the ratio is improving, it tells him that we are optimizing our talent and running a leaner organization and, at the same time, a better quality organization. So, although that's a very simple measure, it's very meaningful.

HR.com: It's not always that simple though. When you talk about having over 68,000 employees and all these different locations and part-time, full-time, contract and whatever, that's a difficult number to pin down.

JH: When it comes to correlating quality our initial focus is the impact that leadership quality has on the organization at the manager level and above. Although it's a 68,000-person company, that population is only 2,200 people. Clearly, this is more manageable, and indicative of the organizational trend.

HR.com: Right. You mentioned that your talent is your competitive differentiator.

JH: We're of the belief that once we optimize every process there is to optimize, and the organization is as lean as it can be, in an industry with our razor-thin margin our truest differentiator between our competitors and us is going to be the caliber of the talent that we have on our team. Meaning, you have better people who can do better work with fewer of them. And that's going to be where our competitive advantage comes through. And that's a very simplistic way; you have better innovation, better product design. You tend to gain market share through the quality of your people. And so that's why HR has come to a very different maturation stage: many years ago HR was a support and transactional function, mostly recognized with the back office capability, and certainly engaged in more of the employee relations side of the house. And over the last decade HR emerged as the "strategic business partner". HR is being thrust into a new arena: We are *driving* the transformation of this organization. Not simply "strategic partner", but "strategic driver".

HR.com: That's amazing. Because that's exactly what most senior-level HR professionals want to be able to obtain is the ears of the CEO and being able to actively participate in the business goals and objectives.

JH: It's unnerving. And it has forced us to take a good look at the caliber and quality of people we have within our own HR house. And this is what is creating a tremendous amount of new opportunity. We're actively seeking the best HR people in the market, with current and future opportunities in mind.

We have some contemporary leaders and thinkers on board, and we are making certain that we are up to the task, because we could really set where we're at as a function back a bit and we certainly don't want to do that. This is the new kind of challenge that we're facing.

It's an interesting time for people that are working in the Talent space as it pertains to overall leadership in business. If Talent and HR leaders in organizations accept this responsibility and execute incredibly well at driving our organization's transformation, I wouldn't be surprised to see future CEOs coming from the ranks of HR along with those from Sales and Marketing, Operations, and Finance functions.

HR.com: On such a positive note, and in closing, can you share some parting words of wisdom with our members.

JH: The HR house, and specifically the talent management capability, within an organization has to be *the* example of the best talent in the company. It's every HR

leader's responsibility to not make compromises on the quality and caliber of talent, especially if they're going to lead a business' transformation. HR has to position themselves to be a driver for an organization's transformation and the development of top talent.

We've all heard of the term "touch points." At Whirlpool, we have identified "Trust Points". Trust Points are opportunities for us to build mutual trust between our leaders and the employees who choose to follow them. This will help us move the needle on engagement. Employees will have as much accountability for their engagement as do our leaders.



Jason Hanold is Global Director, Talent Acquisition for Whirlpool Corporation. He's a talent management and human resources leader with progressive experiences in establishing organizational capability, specifically in areas of talent management strategy integration, global recruiting and human resources infrastructures, as well as developing strategies and initiatives which align with an organization's mission and talent needs. Jason has extensive experience in Talent Management and Acquisition with Whirlpool Corporation, McKinsey & Company and Deloitte Consulting.

While at McKinsey, he served as the Director of Recruiting, based in New York, New York, where he helped established their global experienced professional assessment and recruiting capability. There he collaborated with Helen Hanfield-Jones, the author of *The War for Talent*, co-authoring an article published in Europe, discussing the critical role of HR leadership in the war for talent.

At Deloitte Consulting, he established their first internal executive search capability and drove their technology recruiting strategies as their Americas Director of Leadership & Technology Recruiting.

Also, Jason has held HR generalist positions at State Farm Insurance Companies. Jason holds a Bachelors of Science in Communications from Illinois State University and is a graduate of MIT's Sloan School of Management's Advance Management Certification Program.