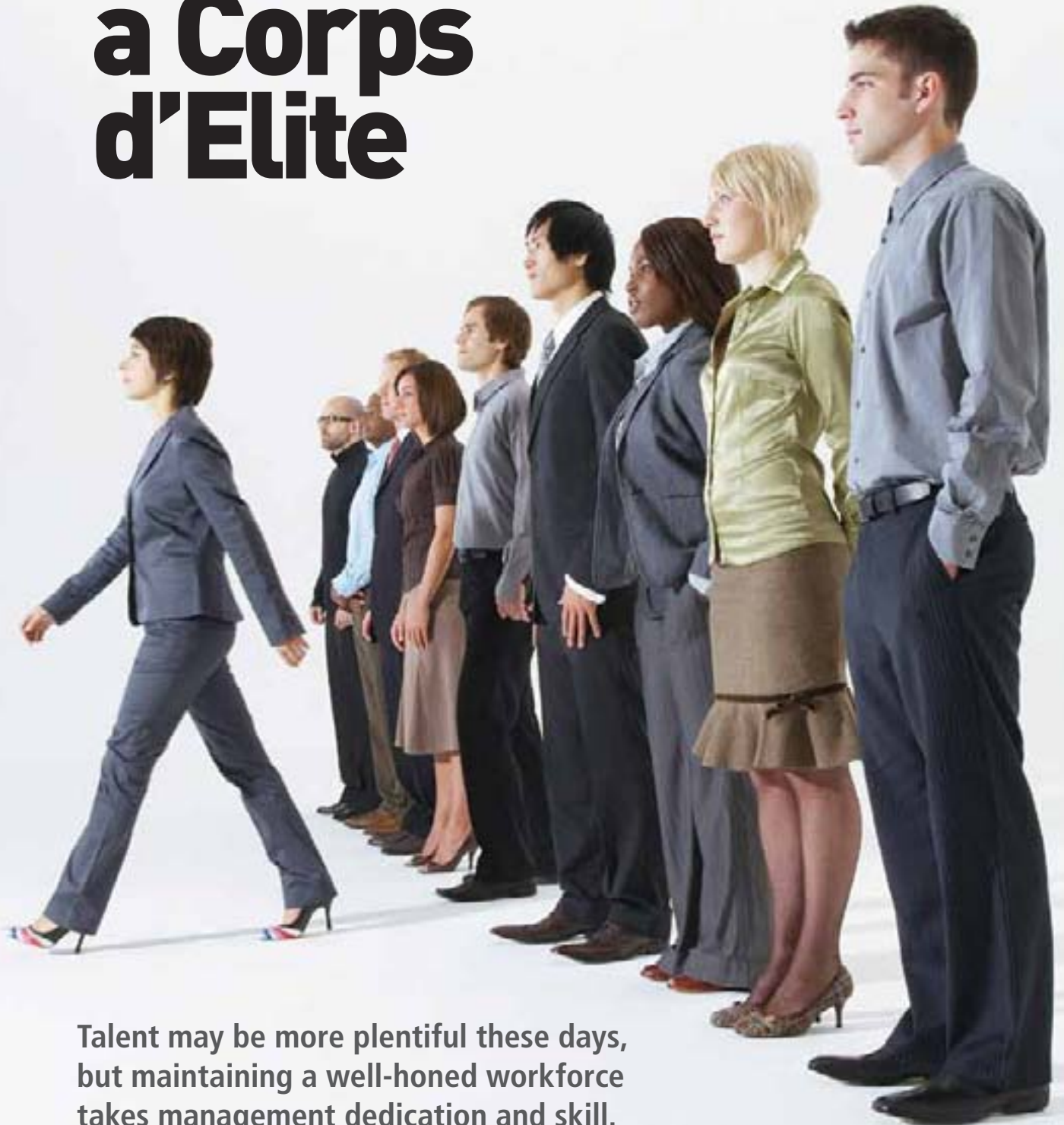


# Developing a Corps d'Elite



Talent may be more plentiful these days, but maintaining a well-honed workforce takes management dedication and skill.



**T**he strength and sustainability of the business recovery is still to be determined, but corporations across the country report at least one silver lining: It's become easier to attract and retain employees. Although the unemployment rate still hovers at 9.5%, and uncertainty over consumer confidence and the impact that Europe's debt woes will have on the long-term health of the global economy still make headlines, more and more companies report they are having an easier time finding and keeping talented workers.

"We have definitely benefited from the softer economy," says Vic Buzachero, corporate senior vice president for innovation, human resources, and performance management at Scripps Health, a not-for-profit health care delivery network based in San Diego. "The downturn has resulted in a very robust labor supply, and the turnover among our employees is much lower.

This means fewer jobs are available, but our employees are happy to be here because they consider us a top employer."

Creative companies are making the most of this development to move and stay ahead of the competition. Human resource experts have always maintained that the most potent and long-lasting competitive advantage a company possesses—in good times or challenging ones—is its workforce. It follows, then, that a culture that enables workers to feel pride in their company, be confident about advancement opportunities, and believe they are valued as an integral part of a firm's success is key to getting and keeping the best talent.

### THE NEED-TO-KNOW FACTOR

A 2010 employee job-satisfaction survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), based in Alexandria, Va., showed that nearly two-thirds of respondents said that job security is the leading indicator of job satisfaction. For most corporations, says SHRM, this translates into fostering an atmosphere where employees have access to accurate and timely information not only about their company's financial health but also its plans for potential budget cuts, hiring freezes, and layoffs.

Beyond those financial nuts and bolts, human resource managers report that workers want to feel that their employers

truly understand them. For Scripps Health, that means designing a workplace built around the different life stages of its employees. “If you focus on the things that really matter to people, rather than what HR might think matters, you’ll get good results,” says Buzachero.

With 13,000 employees who span several generations, Scripps Health manages recent college graduates—so-called millennials—all the way through to the most senior baby-boomers. The company, says Buzachero, realized it was important to understand the differences in how each generation worked and what motivated them. Toward that end, his staff created a series of affinity groups and focus groups, designed to home in on the specifics employees value and the incentives that are most effective for each group.

“A 29-year-old married worker with young kids is different from a single 29-year-old worker, even though they’re the same age,” Buzachero says. For parents of young children, the company discovered that a schedule of four 10-hour days is

**“Our goal is to provide employees with the right experiences, learning, and coaching needed to have a successful and fulfilling career.”**

—Nancy Altobello  
Ernst & Young

is to recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach doesn’t work anymore,” he adds. “If you want to attract and keep the best people, you have to understand what really motivates them.”

Most HR professionals agree on another essential: determining how technology can best be used to communicate with workers. While many companies have established internal

preferable to five eight-hour days. For married workers in their 40s and 50s, scholarship opportunities for their high school students rank high on the list.

The biggest concern among workers nearing retirement age, Scripps discovered, was, well, retiring. “Many of them didn’t want to—or, for financial reasons, couldn’t,” says Buzachero. To accommodate these workers, Scripps offers staged retirement. This enables workers 55 and over who have worked for the company at least ten years to receive full-time benefits but work only a part-time schedule. Scripps benefits, Buzachero explains, by keeping valuable and experienced workers on staff at half the cost of their salaries. “The point

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## The Great Motivating Factor

Scripps Health believes investing in talent development boosts employee loyalty.

**S**cripps Health believes the best way to keep and motivate its talented workforce is through continual education and leadership development. Each year, all employees participate in at least one learning program offered by the company, including onsite, online, or at local colleges and universities. More than 3,000 employees take advantage of the tuition reimbursement benefit each year. And Scripps, a not-for-profit health care system, puts its money where its mouth is: In 2009 the company invested more than \$10 million in staff training and development.

Scripps’ Emerging Leader Program (ELP) helps non-management employees prepare for the next step in their careers at the company. Over the course of 12



months, employees work with mentors and are immersed in programs and workshops to help strengthen skills in project management, business writing, effective communication, and leadership. An individual development plan is created for each participant to help chart progress and professional development.

Another program, Scripps Leadership Academy, is aimed at deepening the pool of up-and-coming managers who can step into leadership roles. One day each month Scripps CEO Chris Van Gorder and his executive team lead a group of 25 or more high-potential managers in workshops on leadership skills, team building, and business planning. Since 2002, 225 managers have graduated from the Leadership Academy.

Vic Buzachero, corporate senior vice president for innovation, human resources, and performance management at Scripps, is convinced that developing effective leaders is one of the best investments a company can make. “Good leaders motivate the rest of the company and attract the best talent,” he says, “and satisfied employees make it easier to offer the best care to our patients.” ●



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social media sites to link their employees together, Atlantic Health, a nonprofit health care system based in Morristown, N.J., takes a different approach. "We don't have affinity groups or bloggers, but we do have something called the *Rumor Mill* for employees," says Lynn Turner, director of human resources and organization development.

The Atlantic Health *Rumor Mill*, which is accessible via an internal site, allows an employee to post a rumor (anonymously if preferred) and have it clarified within 24 to 48 hours. "Sometimes it's something silly, like a rumor that everyone is getting fuel-efficient cars," says Turner. "But sometimes it's something serious, perhaps a rumor about layoffs. If it's something that's on someone's mind and we can clear it up, we do so."

Once new employees are hired, most HR experts say the next key to success is keeping them engaged and motivated.



## WHAT MATTERS MOST

**Managers take note:** Here are the top five factors that foster employee loyalty, based on the "2010 Employee Job Satisfaction Survey" by the Society for Human Resource Management.

**1. Job security.** Workers are focused on avoiding unemployment in this weak labor market. Many feel their professional skills and importance to their organization's success increases their chances of not getting fired.

**2. Benefits.** The unstable economy and the rising cost of health care, along with faltering retirement benefits, make offerings from employers more important than ever.

**3. Opportunities to use skills.** Employees feel better about their jobs when they are utilizing their abilities and contributing to their organizations.

**4. Organization's financial stability.** This factor is increasingly important at a time when many companies and industries thought to be stable have collapsed or needed federal bailouts.

**5. Compensation.** Due to the economic climate, many companies are radically changing the way they pay and bonus their workforce. Some have frozen wage increases and reduced worker hours to avoid layoffs.

Ernst & Young, the global professional services firm, takes a holistic approach to career development, says Nancy Altobello, Americas vice chair of people. The company has established a performance management and development process that links an employee's career objectives and development plan to the goals and strategies of the firm overall.

Building on that foundation, the Ernst & Young process includes annual goal-setting and mid-year performance reviews, as well as ongoing conversations with an Ernst & Young career counselor to personalize areas of development such as communication skills, management, and operations. "Our goal," Altobello says, "is to provide employees with the right experiences, learning, and coaching needed to have a successful and fulfilling career."

### ON-THE-JOB COACHING

While learning opportunities and training are essential, Altobello believes that the personalized attention that comes with a coach or mentor is the piece of the puzzle that can make all the difference. As she sees it, "The high-value learning moments come from the on-the-job coaching."

Every month for the past two years, Ernst & Young has sent out an e-mail asking employees for examples of good coaching and who provided it. "We want folks to spend no

more than 30 seconds on this," explains Altobello. "Just a quick response so we can get a good sense of how the coaching is going." If a particular member of the staff is identified in several or more e-mails as a valuable coach, he or she gets a note saying so. "We have very good participation with these e-mails because it really means a lot to people to be acknowledged as a good coach," she says.

To gather more in-depth intelligence on employee attitudes and opinions, Ernst & Young also sends out an internal survey every 18 months. What the company has discovered, says Altobello, is that younger employees want to feel that their contributions matter, and they are specific. "They're telling us they want stretch assignments, the authority to manage their schedules, and access to our executives."

If the Ernst & Young employees do a good job, they also want public praise in the form of a staff e-mail or memo from the boss. "Earlier generations probably wanted the same things, but they just didn't verbalize it," says Altobello. "Younger people today aren't afraid to make their feelings known. Our senior executives appreciate these insights. It makes them better managers, and it makes us a better firm overall." —Susan Caminiti

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## STRATEGY FOR GROWTH

Hiring and mentoring top talent is a priority for Atlantic Health.



**W**hen it comes to attracting and keeping the best talent, Atlantic Health is all-encompassing. "We try to support every level of talent with different offerings that address their particular needs and challenges," says Lynn Turner, director of human resources and organization development for the Morristown, N.J.-based health care system.

For top-level executives, Atlantic offers what it calls a "discovery process" that spans a total of four months. During that time, senior team members receive 360-degree performance reviews, personality assessments, and personal coaching sessions. The goal is to build upon current leadership skills and identify areas of opportunity for further development. Since the 10,000 employees at Atlantic Health are spread over multiple loca-



tions in central New Jersey, it's often been a challenge for managers to really get to know one another. The company has overcome that hurdle by bringing together two teams once a month in groups of 30 for leadership training. Over the course of a year, Atlantic's man-

agers learn leadership skills such as how to get the most out of cross-functional teams and how to communicate effectively with staff. "We know it's working because I'll hear from managers how much easier it is to get things done when they can put a face with a name," Turner says.

With a generous benefits and tuition reimbursement program, Atlantic Health employees are also encouraged to go back to school to earn advanced degrees or attend one of the numerous on-site training courses to enhance their professional development. Says Turner: "We're a great place to work. We work hard to keep the best talent." ●



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