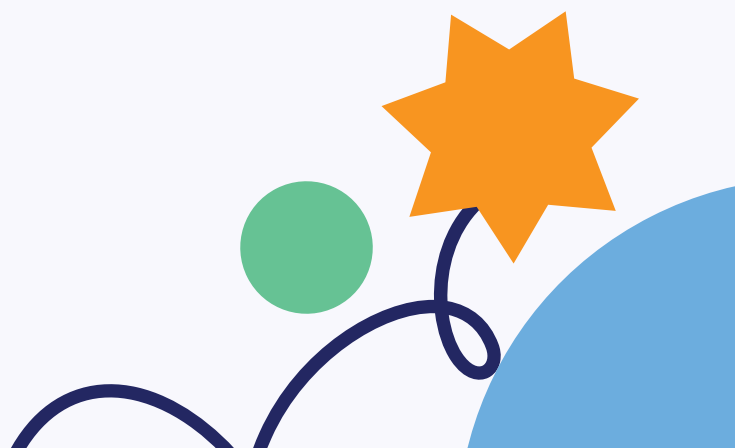## Listen & Lead:

Mastering your First 100 Days as VP of Talent

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Introduction

Letter from the Starcircle CEO

Dear New VP of Talent,

As you embark on your first 100 days in this pivotal role, I'm excited to present you with our guide that we hope will prove helpful. In preparing this ebook, we spoke with experienced talent professionals to gather insights that are crucial for your success. We understand that every organization, including ours, has its unique rhythm and priorities. You will face a variety of challenges and demands, often arriving in an unpredictable manner.

In the coming months, you will be busy building key relationships, assessing the talent needs of your organization, understanding your team's capabilities, and developing a strategic plan. How you navigate these early challenges and opportunities will set the tone for your tenure.

This ebook is more than just a guide; it's a reflection of our commitment to your success. We're here to support you every step of the way. If you ever need advice or assistance, remember that my team and I are just a phone call away.

Wishing you the very best of luck on this exciting journey!

James Galvin

CEO, Starcircle

Your First 100 Days

DAYS 1 - 30	DAYS 30 - 60	DAYS 60 - 100
LISTEN	**ANALYZE**	**IMPLEMENT**
• Meet as many people as possible	• Construct a detailed map of the organization's talent structure.	• Introduce changes incrementally to complement existing processes.
• Make your presence felt early	• Analyse the market, including talent pool and competitor activity	• Communicate clearly and transparently with your team about changes.
• Find out everything about the business	• Begin formulating a data-driven strategic plan.	• Stay adaptable and ready to refine your approach based on feedback and results.
• Learn about the company's culture, structure, vision and mission		

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Month 1:
LISTEN

"Listen far more than you speak, for your first 30 days."

- Seth Williams, Global TA Leader

Many new leaders begin their tenure with a listening tour — a series of first-time meetings with various stakeholders throughout the organization. Without a clear strategy, these meetings can become exhausting and yield little information.

As a new VP of Talent, leverage the knowledge of the CEO and HR leadership team to identify obvious and less-obvious stakeholders to engage. The list should include key clients and partners who are most critical to business objectives, end users of talent processes, such as managers and employees, and even relevant regulatory and legal bodies, industry associations and customers.

Focus questions on the most pressing concerns right now, anticipated challenges coming over the next 12 to 36 months, priorities for your role, and how you will be evaluated.

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Starting Right

Prepare for Day One

The first step for any new VP of Talent taking on a new role is to prepare for day one. This includes understanding the company culture, researching the company's history and current state, meeting with key stakeholders, and setting goals and expectations.

As you'll be aware from previous experience, for better or worse, the existing company culture will have played a critical role in shaping the Talent function you've just assumed control of.

It is essential to understand the culture in place, and learn how it impacts the company and the staff. Whether it's the company's values, the leadership style across the board, standard communication style, and the overall employee experience, it all adds up.

There's only so much we can learn from the outside looking in, but before starting, it's vital to research and gain as much information as you can about the history of the company, the current leadership org, successes, failures and everything in between.

A common mistake among leaders is that they apply a one size fits all approach to a role. "This strategy brought me success in previous companies, so why not now" is an understandable mindset, but it's a slippery slope. The fact is, every company comes with its own unique set of circumstances.

Understand The Expectations

Before starting your new role, it's important to review the job description and expectations, and get a feel for the hiring demand including the volume and nature of requirements that your team will need to fill. This will help you understand the scope of the role and the specific responsibilities you will be expected to fulfill.

Do Your Research

As a VP of Talent, it's important to understand the company culture, values, mission, and its positioning and reputation in the market. Conduct research on the company to gain insights and better understand the talent landscape. Look for information on

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the company's history, key stakeholders, organizational structure, and strategic goals. This will help you align your talent strategy with the overall business objectives.

Open Your Mind

Prepare to be a sponge. Day One is one big learning opportunity - about the company, your colleagues, products, processes, tech stack and more. Typically you won't get all of that on day one but you can expect to hear a few things around company history, mission statement, colleague information and of course, logins, tools and passwords.

Develop Your Introduction

Take some time to practice a few touchpoints you want to hit when meeting people for the first time so you can make a great first impression on everyone you meet. Who you are, what you're there to do, previous experience and successes, etc. It might not seem important but considering you will be introducing yourself to potentially hundreds of people in your first week, it's a good step to take.

The goal of this is to explain who you are, what you offer, and your goals as a leader. Since this is an introduction, you should end your pitch by engaging the listener. That way, your pitch becomes a two-way conversation and also gives them the opportunity to introduce themselves.

Get to Know Your Team

One of the most important things you can do as a new VP of Talent is to get to know your team. Schedule meetings with each member of your team to understand their roles, responsibilities, and challenges. This will help you build relationships and establish trust, which is crucial for effective talent management.

Have Questions

If you're lucky enough to have time off between your previous role and this new role, it's a great time to consider what you want and need to know in the early stages of your new position, and write it all down. First days are generally an overwhelming experience and can cause us to lose our train of thought so having a list of key questions to hand will make all the difference.

Identify Key Stakeholders

In addition to your team, you should also identify key stakeholders within the organization. This includes senior leaders, department heads, and other stakeholders who may have an impact on talent management. Schedule meetings with these stakeholders to understand their needs, expectations, and challenges.

HIRING FRICTION COMPONENT
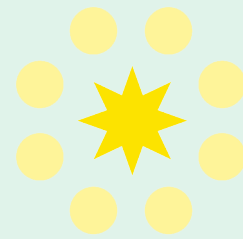
TALENT MARKET POSITIONING

Use tools such as Glassdoor and Comparably to find out what people are saying about the company. Check out Google News for recent headlines.

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Review Talent Metrics and Data

Begin by thoroughly reviewing all talent metrics and data available to you. This includes not only hiring funnel metrics but also key indicators like cost of hire, time to hire, and employee turnover rates. Additionally, delve into employee satisfaction scores, diversity and inclusion metrics, and performance management data.

Analyzing these metrics will help you gain a holistic understanding of your talent landscape. It's important to look for trends and patterns in the data, which can provide insights into the effectiveness of current talent strategies and processes. Consider how these metrics align with the organization's strategic goals.

This comprehensive analysis is vital for developing a robust talent strategy that aligns with the organization's objectives and addresses any identified gaps or opportunities. It also enables you to set measurable goals and track progress over time, ensuring that your talent initiatives are yielding the desired results.

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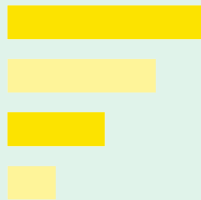
DATA INTEGRITY & AVAILABILITY

Check under the hood to see what data is available to you, what reports are being used, and what the data integrity is like in your ATS. Make a list of what you need but don't have.

Talk to Your Vendors

As a VP of Talent, working with external partners is often essential. This includes technology providers, external sourcers, recruitment firms, and consultants. Establishing relationships with these partners early on is crucial for a smooth transition and effective collaboration. Engaging with them helps in understanding their capabilities, aligning expectations, and setting clear communication channels. Regular interactions can also provide insights into industry trends and innovations, which can be invaluable in shaping your talent strategy. Furthermore, building strong vendor relationships fosters mutual understanding and support, ensuring they are aligned with your organization's goals and can respond effectively to your evolving needs.

Get Out There

While key stakeholders and executives will take up a lot of your time early on, it's also important to get a feel for things everywhere in the business. Take the time to introduce yourself to members of the organization where possible and gain as much information as possible. It all goes into the bank.

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Making Connections

In addition to the strategies outlined elsewhere, here are some tips for building strong relationships in your first 100 days as a VP of Talent.

Be authentic

Be yourself and show genuine interest in others. This can help build trust and establish you as a relatable and approachable leader.

Be respectful

Show respect for others' opinions and perspectives, even if you disagree with them. This can help build trust and establish you as a respectful and collaborative leader.

Be proactive

Take initiative and seek out opportunities to build relationships. This can help demonstrate your commitment to building relationships and establishing yourself as a valuable member of the team.

Be flexible

Be receptive to new ideas and approaches, and be willing to adapt your approach as needed. This can help build relationships and establish you as a flexible and adaptable leader.

Be transparent

Be open in your communications. This can help build trust and establish you as a transparent and trustworthy leader.

Be inclusive

Be accepting and seek out opportunities to collaborate with others. This can help build relationships and establish you as an inclusive and collaborative leader.

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Month 2:
ANALYZE

"The next 30 days then is about looking at all the information you've gathered and analyzing it."

- Finbarr O'Connell, Director of TA at OpenText

In your second month, the focus is on deep analysis. Utilize insights from your initial observations to compare your organization's talent state with the market and competitors. Identify skill gaps and scrutinize your talent acquisition strategies. This phase is crucial for understanding how your organization matches up to industry trends and competitor tactics. Reflect on your current practices and begin crafting a strategic improvement roadmap. This period of analysis is vital for transforming initial observations into actionable strategies, setting a solid foundation for the impactful changes you'll implement in the coming months.

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Forming a plan
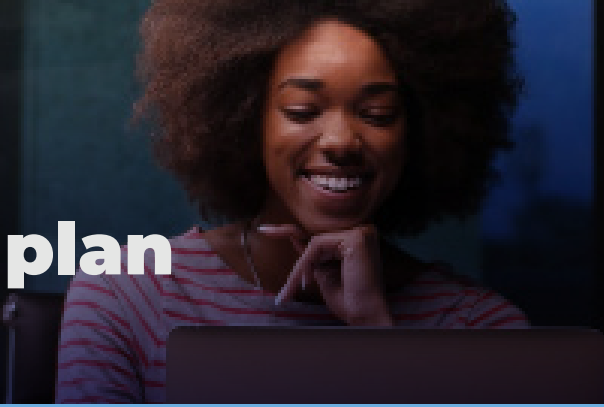
Know Your Team's Capability

Gaining an understanding of what has gone before, the team currently in place and the processes used will be one of the first actions you take as the new VP of Talent. Take the time to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current Talent Acquisition team and learn what gaps exist or areas in which the team may need additional support. Does your team have the skills and experience to get the job done? Do you have the technical expertise in the team that will enable you to get the most out of your technology?

Measure Your Capacity

Based on the number of reqs that you intend to fill, and based on the funnel metrics that were gathered as part of your data gathering phase, work out how many offers, interviews, phone calls, outreaches, and top-of-funnel candidate leads are going to needed in order to be successful. Is it achievable? If not, then you may need to consider some improvements to your tech stack or external support. Identify which stage of the funnel is the bottleneck. For example, a sourcing solution can help to add volume to the top of the funnel, whereas changes to the interview process can create capacity at the bottom of the funnel.

Review Candidate Sources

As a new VP of Talent, it's important to assess the diversity of your candidate sourcing channels. Are you effectively utilizing both active and passive sourcing methods? Relying too heavily on inbound applications or referrals could potentially compromise the quality of your talent pool. An optimal recruitment strategy should encompass a balanced mix of active channels, like job boards and recruiting events, and passive ones, such as networking and headhunting. This diversified approach ensures a broader, higher-quality candidate pool, enhancing the potential for finding the best fit for your organization. If the company is leveraging external vendors, agencies, or job boards, consider implementing a system to rank these resources based on their return on investment (ROI).

HIRING FRICTION COMPONENT

Talent Sourcing & Attraction Capability

Get a clear understanding of the incumbent capability as it relates to sourcing, resurfacing, and attracting the talent that the organization needs.

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Map Your Recruitment Process

In an ideal world, you would inherit a thoroughly documented recruitment process from the team you're joining. However, it's common to find that such documentation is lacking. As a new VP of Talent, one of your key initial tasks is to undertake a detailed review of the entire hiring process and tech stack. Conducting this end-to-end audit is crucial for identifying inefficiencies, gaps, and potential areas for improvement. This assessment lays the groundwork for refining the recruitment strategy, ensuring it's efficient, effective, and aligned with the organization's talent acquisition goals.

Deep Dive Into Your Hiring Funnel

To optimize your recruitment process, it's vital to gain an in-depth understanding of your hiring funnel. Begin by reconstructing and analyzing the funnel in detail. This involves examining the ratios between each stage of the hiring process - from initial application to final hiring decision - and understanding how many candidates progress from one stage to the next.

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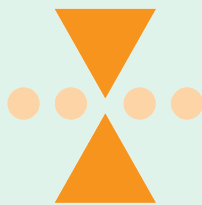
PROCESS & TIMING

It's crucial to gain a thorough understanding of the hiring process and recruitment funnel, including all its imperfections, as early as possible to avoid unwanted surprises.

Additionally, focus on the duration candidates spend at each stage. Assess whether there are any bottlenecks causing delays, or if certain stages are too brief, potentially overlooking qualified candidates. This time analysis helps in identifying inefficiencies and areas where the process could be streamlined or improved.

Understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for assessing the effectiveness of your current hiring practices but also for forecasting future hiring needs and timelines. By comprehensively analyzing the flow and duration of each stage in your hiring funnel, you can pinpoint areas for strategic improvements, ultimately enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of your talent acquisition process.

Measure Your Candidate Experience

Measuring candidate experience is vital in talent acquisition as it directly impacts an organization's ability to attract top talent. A positive candidate experience enhances your employer brand, making your company more attractive to prospective employees. It can also lead to higher acceptance rates and can turn candidates into brand ambassadors, regardless of whether they get the job. Conversely, a negative experience can deter skilled individuals from applying and harm your company's reputation in the job market. By regularly evaluating and improving the candidate experience, you ensure that your recruitment process is not only effective but also reflects positively on your organization's values and culture.

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Implement

"There's a tendency to dive into the weeds right then and there. But really... it's about creating that path and that roadmap."

- Marylin Pearson Hendricks, WorkTech Advisory Inc

In your third month as VP of Talent Acquisition, the focus shifts to implementation. Armed with insights from your analysis, it's time to put your strategic plans into action. This phase is about turning theories and data-driven strategies into tangible changes and initiatives. You'll start executing new recruitment processes, refining talent management systems, and rolling out innovative solutions to enhance talent acquisition and retention. This period is crucial for demonstrating impact, as you begin to see the fruits of your planning and analysis. It's about making a lasting impression through effective and measurable changes in your talent acquisition approach.

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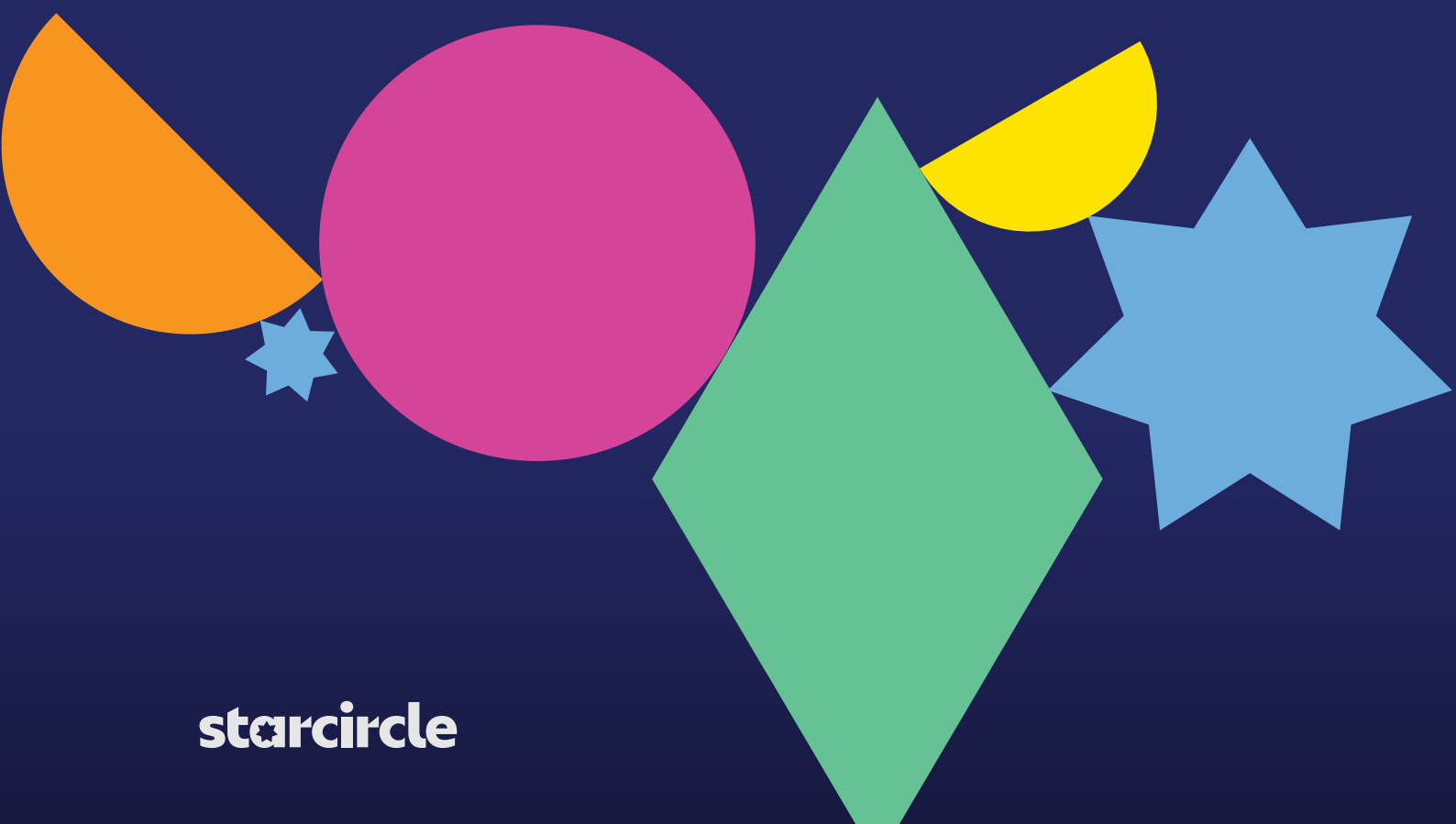
Implementing Changes and Navigating Challenges

The first 100 days in a new position can be a critical time for any leader. In a lot of ways you're driving blind, figuring things out as you go and flying the plane while building it. In an ideal world you would enter a well oiled machine full of stability, characters that complement one another and positivity all around, but this is a fantasy.

From day one you will be presented with challenges across the board. They could be budgetary, interpersonal, structural and even legal. But as you progress, learn more and understand business needs, you can start making the changes required as you see fit.

Your first 100 days aren't the best times to make changes and you'd probably prefer not to be faced with challenges, but sometimes needs must. If and when you need them, the steps below will help you.

Implementing Changes

Making changes within your first three months is a significant undertaking, so it's important to approach it carefully and thoughtfully.

Have A Vision

Once you understand the current state, develop a clear vision of where you want the organization to be in the future. This should be aligned with the company's overall strategy and goals.

Workforce Plan

Based on your assessment, create a plan that outlines the changes you need to make. This should include a timeline for implementation, as well as a communication plan for employees.

Build A Coalition

You can't make changes alone. Team up with stakeholders who can help you implement your vision. This includes senior leaders, managers, and employees. Involve them in the process, listen to their feedback, and address their concerns.

Spread The Word

Be transparent about the reasons for the restructuring and what changes will be made and ensure everyone affected understands.

Make Help Available

Restructuring can be stressful for employees, so it's important to provide support. This may include offering career counseling, outplacement services, and other resources.

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Get counsel

Make sure that any restructuring is in compliance with labor laws and regulations. Consult with legal experts to ensure that you are following all applicable laws.

Phase It In

Trying to implement too many changes at once can be overwhelming and may not be successful. Implement changes in phases, starting with the most critical areas first. This will allow you to assess the impact of the changes and make adjustments as needed.

> "A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others."
>
> **Douglas MacArthur**

Measure Success

Establish metrics for measuring the success of the changes you have implemented. This will help you determine if you are on track to achieving your goals and make any necessary adjustments.

Remember, change takes time, and it is essential to be patient and persistent in your efforts. By following these steps, you can increase your chances of successfully implementing changes and driving positive outcomes for your organization.

Navigating Challenges

Identify The Root Cause

When faced with a difficulty in the company, the first step is to identify the root cause of the issue. This could involve conducting an investigation, analyzing data, or conducting interviews with employees.

Develop A Plan Of Action

Once the root cause has been identified, address the issue. This could involve implementing new policies or procedures, providing training or coaching to employees, or making organizational changes.

Get Stakeholders Onboard

It is important for HR managers to get their messages out widely, including employees, managers, and executives, about the issue and the plan of action. This will help to ensure that everyone is aware of what is being done to address the issue and can provide input and feedback.

Monitor Progress

After implementing the plan of action, the HR manager should track developments to ensure that the issue is being addressed and the plan is working effectively. This could involve tracking metrics, conducting surveys or focus groups, or soliciting feedback from employees.

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Review And Refine

Continuously evaluate and modify your approach to dealing with difficulties in the company. This could involve revising policies or procedures, providing additional training or coaching, or making organizational changes to address ongoing issues.

Overall, dealing with difficulties in the company requires a proactive and strategic approach. Identify the root cause of the issue, develop a plan of action, communicate with stakeholders, monitor progress, and continuously evaluate and refine the approach to ensure ongoing success.

Looking Back

Review Your Accomplishments

Reflect on the successes and challenges of your recruitment efforts. Identify strategies and initiatives that were effective and areas that fell short of expectations. Consider what could be enhanced or approached differently. This introspection is crucial for continuous improvement.

Strategy Adjustment

Revisit and fine-tune your approach to talent acquisition, ensuring it is in sync with the company's evolving goals and objectives. This involves a thorough assessment of the current talent market landscape, understanding emerging trends, and identifying critical skills and competencies required for the company's growth. Consider the effectiveness of your sourcing channels, the efficiency of the hiring process, and the overall candidate experience. Develop targeted recruitment strategies to attract and retain top talent, and consider innovative methods to reach a diverse pool of candidates. Additionally, align your talent acquisition strategy with the broader HR and business strategies to ensure a cohesive approach towards achieving organizational objectives. This comprehensive strategy refinement should not only address immediate needs but also anticipate future talent requirements, positioning your organization to effectively compete in the dynamic talent market.

HIRING FRICTION COMPONENT

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Now that you are monitoring the data you need, ensure that you have a system in place to continuously review and adapt. Focus on all areas: people, processes, and tools.

Communication Checklist

As a new VP of Talent, effective communication with your team is critical during the first 100 days of your tenure. The way you communicate with your team sets the tone for your relationship and establishes expectations for their work. Here are some ways you can communicate effectively with your team early on.

When communicating with your team, it's important to keep in mind the message you want to convey. Here are some key points to include in your communication

- Acknowledge the team's achievements and contributions to the organization.

- Explain your vision for the department and how it aligns with the company's goals.

- Set expectations for the team's performance and provide clear guidelines for achieving those expectations.

- Explain how you plan to measure success and what metrics will be used.

- Encourage feedback and suggestions from the team.

- Provide support and resources to help the team achieve their goals.

- Express confidence in the team's ability to succeed and willingness to work collaboratively to achieve the department's goals.

Listen & Lead:

Mastering your First 100 Days as VP of Talent

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