

TALENT MANAGEMENT IN SPORT

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Purpose: The main objective of the research presented in this article was to diagnose talent management in the Wrocław Taekwon-do Sports Club. In order to achieve this goal, the first part of the article explains the meaning of the term „talent management” in the scientific literature on management, and then, on the basis of the research carried out, an attempt was made to answer the question: which factors are the key determinants of the talent management process.

Design/methodology/approach: For the research presented in this paper, a literature analysis in the area of talent management. The studies in literature also included secondary sources, which were communications from research of similar scope.

The combination of different research methods allowed to obtain a broader context of the studied phenomenon and ensured a higher quality of the conducted research. The diversity of methods was aimed at achieving a consistency of the empirical basis for the inference. A diagnostic survey was adopted as the leading method. The remaining methods applied in the paper were auxiliary (complementary).

Findings: „Talent management” and having talented employees in a global economy is a strategically important resource affecting the market value of the organisation itself and providing a competitive advantage. Building a significant intellectual capital of the organisation requires the use of appropriate methods and tools to support the management, systematic measurement, constant comparison with competitors, elimination of barriers and use of opportunities for development (and such becomes the current crisis).

Research limitations/implications: In the future, research will be continued on a larger research sample.

Practical implications: The article presents the results of research carried out in one of Wrocław's sports clubs. The research results are very interesting and encourage more research. They are a valuable source of information for managers and coaches responsible for schools and the development of sports players. In turn, for those responsible for recruiting athletes, the results may be useful in terms of designing individual career paths of players.

Originality/value Based on empirical research, the article proposes an original set of systemic solutions for talent management to improve organisational performance.

Keywords: talent management, talent.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

We live in an era where companies are constantly outdoing themselves with new ideas to help them gain a competitive advantage. The growing importance of the human resources management process shows the direction in which these changes are taking place. Talent management, On the other hand, talent management is considered to be one of the main challenges of strategic human resources management. It turns out that it is the implementation and effective use of the talent management process in its strategy that helps to achieve high results and create a leading position of the organisation on the labour market. Therefore, in order to increase the competitiveness of companies on the market, they rely not only on their offerings, but also on proper search and then skillful use and retention of people who, thanks to their knowledge, above-average skills or natural leadership abilities, will contribute to the development of the whole company.

The concept of talent management emerged some thirty years ago, based on a concept initiated in the USA back in the 1980s. Already then, human resources started to be treated as assets and intellectual capital of a company. It was noticed that investing in the development of employees, the formation of a specific structure of employment and a constellation of personnel characteristics allows to create a competitive advantage in relation to other business entities. Despite the growing interest in this subject, a large part of companies is not aware of the existence or omits talent management when creating development strategies, not believing in the benefits resulting from their application. Thoughtful implementation of talent management processes may bring measurable effects not only in terms of income but also in terms of building a positive company image, increasing employee involvement and satisfaction which will directly contribute to obtaining a competitive advantage.

2. The essence of talent management

Talent management is considered to be one of the most important global trends which influence the human resources development policy (Knap-Stefaniuk, Karna, 2017). This trend is also visible in Poland, which results in emphasising the need to create special development programmes for employees with the highest potential (Tabor, 2013). Talent management, next to performance management and supporting the work-life balance, is also recognised as one of the three main challenges of strategic human resources management (HRM) (Brzeziński, 2015).

Talent is a complex set of expectations from both managers and their talented subordinates. Many of these expectations are undefined and most of the difficulties in managing talented people arise from that problem. There are three main streams in talent management:

- talent management equated with human resource management,
- talent management focusing on the flow of employees and their adequate deployment in the unit,
- talent management consisting in employing the most talented individuals and treating them as a superior asset (resource) for the organisation (Tabor, 2013).

In order to properly understand the concept of talent management, it is necessary to define it first. There are several definitions of talent.

In psychological terms, talent is defined as a person who has a better appearance and understanding of his or her unique interests and aptitudes than others, perceives the relationship of these attributes to educational and professional opportunities, thinks reflectively and knows how nurturing these individual characteristics can affect their future development (Achter, Lubinski, 2005).

In their publications, A. Miś and A. Poczowski define a talent as a person who „brings something to the organisation which is a kind of excess in this organisation, often not visible in its plans and strategy, due to the fact that the organisation is not aware of it until a certain moment. The features of the competence profile of a talented person are consistent with the needs of the organisation at an accepted level, but there is something that makes them special, which cannot be measured (Miś, Poczowski, 2008).

On the other hand, J. Kopeć defines the concept of talent as „innate abilities transforming, as a result of actions taken, into appropriate skills and passion thanks to which a given individual can make products or provide services that are socially useful and subject to high quality assessment, beautiful or pleasing to the senses of the receiver at a level higher than average and difficult to meet by the majority of other producers or reproducers of a given product or service (Kopeć, 2012).

Slightly different aspects in her definition of talent are pointed out by J.A. Tabor who notes in her publications that talent "is a person who combines innate skills, intelligence and a desire for self-fulfilment with the ability and willingness to continue learning and development. They may have experience, which we will judge by their high results already achieved at work, or they may be just starting their career, demonstrating competences which particularly distinguish them among candidates. Talent consists of qualifications, potential and capabilities as well as hard work to develop one's personality and professional competencies (Tabor, 2013).

It follows from the above definitions that that talents display above-average skills and a set of personal qualities such as individual effectiveness, leadership skills, entrepreneurship, passion in action and commitment to their work tasks, which allow them to achieve excellent results at work - Figure 1 (Miś, 2020). However, it is important to remember that talent should be interpreted not only as a person outstanding in above-average skills, but as an employee who through his or her involvement and own development contributes to the success of the organisation. Talent understood in this way becomes the subject of talent management, often expressed in the literature as TM.

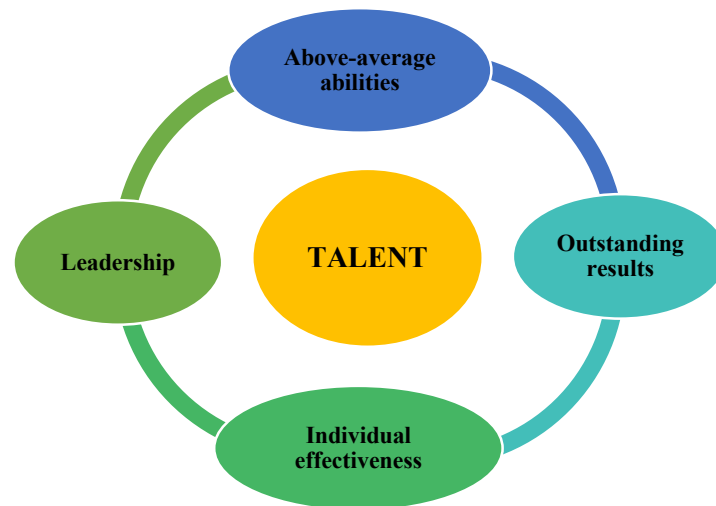


Figure 1. Set of personal characteristics defining talent.

Source: Own elaboration based on: Miś, 2020.

Considering the diversity of characteristics and individual abilities allowing for high performance at work the problem of defining the concept of talent management appears. Another issue is the lack of unanimity among management science experts. This is why, despite many attempts, it has not been possible to formulate a single definition of talent management.

M. Armstrong defines talent management as "the process of identifying, developing, recruiting, retaining and deploying talented individuals (Armstrong, 2011).

R.S. Wellins, A.B. Smith and L. McGee prefer to define talent management as "the recruitment, development, promotion and retention of talent, planned and executed in accordance with the current and future goals of the organisation (Wellins, Smith, 2006).

E.E. Lawler points out „attracting real talents and helping them understand what is expected of their work for the company. (...) It is also about providing employees with developmental experiences that create organisational strength and core competencies to retain real talent” (Lawler, 2008).

On the other hand, T. Davis states in his publications that "talent management is about recruiting and properly training and developing employees as well as retaining excellent performing employees on a continuous and consistently. A talent management strategy is a deliberate, structured approach by a company to the recruitment, retention, and training and development of talent in its organisation. and development of talented individuals in the organisation (Davis, Cutt, Flynn, Mowl, Orme, 2010).

J. Kopeć defines talent management as a process of strategic importance for the company consisting in identifying employees with above-average abilities and achieving the best results at work or their identification, attracting them to the unit and creating an appropriate organisational culture conducive to the development of this group, so that they bring maximum value to the company's stakeholders and ensuring that these staff do not leave their current place of employment (Kopeć, 2012).

Strategic talent management is also understood as activities and processes involving the systematic identification of key positions affecting organisational competitiveness, the development of a pool of high-potential and highly effective talent to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to support the filling of these positions with competent people, ensuring their commitment to the organisation. These processes and actions lead to a measurable difference in organisational effectiveness now and in the future (Miś, 2020).

The effectiveness of talent management in an organisation depends on many factors. The management literature identifies, among other things, elements such as:

- attracting outstanding individuals to the organisation,
- keeping talents in the organisation,
- effective talent management,
- talent identification (Mikuła, 2001).

The variety of interpretations of the concept makes it difficult to establish a single definition as the most appropriate one. Therefore, it seems more reasonable to distinguish several main perspectives from which talent management can be considered. J. Blass describes it as:

- process perspective - the process perspective believes that the future success of the company depends on having the right talents, so talent management and nurturing should be a part of the daily processes of organisational life. Talent management and nurturing are an integral part of the organisation's processes;
- cultural perspective - the cultural perspective considers talent management as a kind of mindset, a belief that talent is essential to the success of a company. It is a belief that talent is a key factor in achieving business success, each individual talent is important to the organisation and talent development becomes part of the work routine;
- competitive perspective - from a competitive perspective, talent management is about identifying talent and offering them what they need to prevent them from being acquired by competitors;
- development perspective - according to the development perspective, talent management is about fast-tracking high-potential employees; talent management is about creating development paths for the most outstanding;
- HR planning perspective - following the HR planning perspective ZT is about connecting the right people with the right jobs at the right time and performing the right tasks;
- change management perspective - in the change management perspective talent management is used as a driving force for change in the organisation. ZT is treated as a part of a broader strategy, initiating changes in the company (Mróz, 2015).

It is assumed that similar or sometimes the same processes are used in talent management as in human resources management (Gottwald-Białdyga, 2018). In both processes people are the subject used to achieve the organisation's competitive advantage in the market. The key

aspect in talent management is the awareness of employees' self-realization with simultaneous continuous development. This will make their work much more efficient, satisfying potential employers. Talented employees use their abilities and natural aptitudes

Important concepts in relation to talent management are recruitment and selection, which enable the talent acquisition and identification process to operate efficiently. Recruitment of employees is aimed at selecting individuals who meet the requirements set for them by the company. After selection the organisation gives them the opportunity to further their education through training adapted to the needs of the company. Outstanding individuals who contribute to the organisation's profits and goals are recognised, if only through remuneration appropriate to their work. An employee appreciated by his employer has no intention of leaving for a competing company. Currently, many companies invest in human resources focusing on their quality rather than quantity. An important aspect is the choice and selection of individuals who thanks to their high competence will help achieve the company's strategic objectives.

The leader plays an important role in talent management. The role of a leader begins with getting to know the potential of the players and discovering their talents (Balcerzyk, 2021).

Summarising the above, the main premise of the talent management concept is to find ways in which the competencies and potential of employees can be revealed and then exploited.

3. Methods and characteristics of the research sample

The questionnaire concerning talent management in the Wrocław Sport Taekwon-do Club, conducted from the beginning of February to the middle of March 2022, was addressed to people actively training in the Wrocław Taekwon-do Sports Club (WTSC) who are not their competitors as well as to licensed competitors of the Club. It was divided into two sections - the first one applied to both tested groups while the second part referred only to licensed competitors of the described club. The research group consisted of 30 people (16 women and 14 men). The most numerous age group were 19-25 year olds (37%) and 15-18 year olds (33%). A less numerous group were people aged between 25 and 31 (20%). The least numerous group were people aged over 32 (only 10%).

The age of the competitors is closely related to the age category in which they compete. The Junior category is made up of players aged between 13 and 15. In this group of people, 13% of all respondents took part in the research. Juniors are 16 to 18 year olds and account for 23% of respondents to the survey. Seniors constitute the largest group of respondents - 57%. Competitors between 19 and 35 years of age take part in it. The last age category, and at the same time the least numerous group of respondents (7%) are Veterans aged over 35 years.

Among the respondents people with high (at least 10 years) training experience dominate and they constitute 53% of all the respondents. This draws attention to the fact that many people with long-term experience train at the club which can be used in shaping young players. The second largest group (37%) is represented by people with 5-10 years of training experience. Less numerous, 7% and 3%, are respectively the groups of respondents with 2 to 5 and less than 2 years of training experience.

The aim of the conducted research was to diagnose talent management in the Wrocław Taekwon-do Sports Club.

4. Managing the talented competitors

According to research, 80% of those training at the WTSC are its licensed players, while the remaining 20% only train there. This draws attention to several aspects. The first is an extremely innovative approach to players from rival clubs, which is cooperation. The club does not close itself off to competitors; on the contrary, it makes its resources available to them. In return, it receives certain benefits, including talented players from other clubs raising the level of training - sharing their knowledge and skills. It also gives an opportunity to learn about the strengths and weaknesses of rivals, as well as the training methods of other clubs, so that appropriate tactics can be developed.

Another important issue in the context of talent management is the fact that there is an opportunity to get talented, already formed players, who may decide to leave their previous club. At this point it will be important to present the opportunities that the club offers its players. The most important factors that can determine this are availability, financial considerations, development prospects and the atmosphere at the club.

Research shows that as many as 47% of those surveyed admit to having participated in at least one training camp of the Polish National Taekwon-do Team. This means that these are (or were) well-formed athletes who maintain a very high level of performance, have extensive experience competing in national and international championships, and are constantly developing. They achieve high results and are often versatile - winning medals in various categories, both individual and team. The fact of being in the national team requires them to devote a great deal of time to preparing for sports events. Almost half (47%) of the respondents are very experienced competitors and are ready to pass on their skills and knowledge. As many as 90% of the respondents indicated that they were medallists at international tournaments and 86% said that they had won a medal at national tournaments.

Considering the above factors, this group of people should be defined as talents. It should be remembered that some of them are not players of Wrocław Taekwon-do Sports Club, but they train there every day. Thanks to that the level of training is raised and licensed players have the opportunity to draw knowledge, skills and experience from them.

The study attempted to identify factors motivating athletes to train and develop. The factors were divided into two types. The first one was self-motivation which includes factors coming from inside a person, i.e. opportunities for physical and psychological self-development (participation in trainings, courses or competitions), own satisfaction, a desire to improve motor abilities and maintain an athletic body. This type of motivation is the most important for talent development, because the definition of talent presupposes a high level of self-motivation. However, it is also important to provide other factors, which are referred to as extrinsic motivation. This group includes other influences such as pressure from coaches, parents or peers, financial benefits such as the desire for scholarships and prizes, the desire to win medals and the opportunity to meet friends at training or competitions.

Research has shown that 90% of people training at the Club train primarily for their own satisfaction and have a high level of self-motivation. They value activities that enable self-development in the form of participation in competitions and improvement of motor skills such as agility, speed or strength. Most respondents are also positively motivated by the possibility to stay in athletic shape. A small percentage of people train because of external pressures, financial gain or winning medals. However, many people treat participation in training or competitions as a great opportunity to meet with friends.

It is also important to mention the club's process of acquiring talented athletes. About 20% of the players are persons acquired by the Wrocław club from other sports clubs. Due to this, the respondents were asked about the above issues.

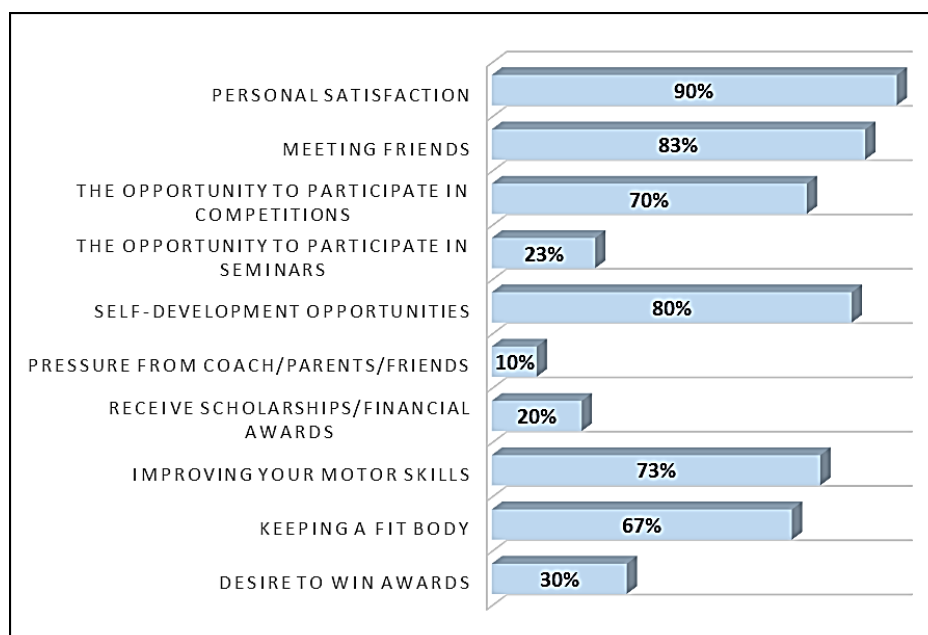


Figure 2. Diagram showing factors influencing players' motivation.

Source: Author's own analysis.

It turns out that the factor that most encourages the respondents to choose the Wrocław Club is the wide range of talented players who are successful in the national and international arena. Their achievements motivate and the talents themselves are living examples to follow. Thanks to this new icons appear and they promote the club all over Poland.

Interesting trainings and a wide and trained coaching staff are also very important factors indicated by the respondents. The first of them prevents routine which kills creativity and accelerates professional burnout, which unfortunately often affects above-average talented people. Related to this is the fact that 79% of respondents believe that the Club's coaching staff is professionally prepared to work with young people. Their participation in coaching courses or seminars develops their competences, and they themselves propose modern training solutions. This leads to a conclusion - the two above factors function inseparably with each other. Another related advantage noted by 63% of the respondents is a wide range of coaching staff, thanks to which trainings are varied, and an additional advantage of the described element is a multidimensional view obtained thanks to trainings under the supervision of several coaches. It should be noted that as many as 21% of the respondents rather did not pay attention to this issue when choosing a club.

The respondents also identified who has the greatest influence from their environment on their sporting career. All players highlighted the coach as the person who clearly contributes to shaping the path of their sporting career. About 46% of the respondents at the same time mentioned that it is the coach, through his decisions, who influences his athletes to the greatest extent. This means that according to the respondents, the coach's concepts, training selection, his or her help and support is the key to their success. More than 38% of the athletes stated that they themselves decide on the trajectory of their sports career. This demonstrates the high self-awareness of the respondents who are thoughtfully attempting to take the most important decisions concerning their careers. They are aware of their capabilities and are able to use their knowledge and skills for self-improvement. Another frequent answer was the statement that the respondents' career is strongly influenced by their friends training in the Wrocław Club. Therefore, it should be noted that joint trainings, trips to competitions or training camps with friends can motivate for self-development, introduce healthy rivalry and elements of entertainment. The influence of people outside the sports environment (parents, siblings and friends) was considered insignificant by the competitors.

The research shows that the players of Wrocław Club most value the opportunity to practice with titled players training in the club. This opportunity would positively influence as many as 91% of respondents. A great prospect for development for 88% of people would also be the opportunity to compete in various competitions. Over 80% of the respondents also indicated that participation in inter-club sparring, seminars and training would have a positive impact on improving and expanding their skills.

As part of talent management, the Club provides opportunities for players to develop by running their own sections. More than 38% of all respondents, are individuals who already have their own training sections or individuals who the coaches can support when necessary. The club makes proper use of the competences of talented players by managing them properly. By assigning them to their own training groups, the club makes it clear that it has great trust in them, while the talents can show their creativity by introducing innovative solutions.

The surveyed organisation promotes its talented players through financial support. As many as 92% of the respondents perceive that without the Club's financial support they would not be able to secure participation in competitions. The club trains a small number of people who receive awards and scholarships from various sources such as the Marshal's Office or the Municipal Office in Wrocław.

It is remarkable that more than half of the respondents do not attach importance to activity in social media. Most of the respondents also do not pay attention to the club's involvement in various promotional activities of their players. This also makes it difficult to attract potential sponsors. Slightly more than 1/3 of the respondents believe that this aspect is important for them. It should be remembered that through proper conducting of individual profiles or websites the club can effectively communicate with the surroundings. The benefit can also be the shaping a positive image of the club.

The research shows that the Wrocław club cares about monitoring the departure of talented players. Usually the reasons for such decisions are injuries or relocation. The club is positively perceived by its players and 96% of the respondents said that they would definitely recommend the club to their friends. Only 4% are unable to say whether they would recommend the club to their friends or colleagues. This shows that often, despite the decision to leave the club for various reasons, the players will remember the club very pleasantly and as a result shape a positive image of the organisation in the sports environment.

5. Conclusions

At the Wrocław Club, a group of talented players can be identified and singled out based on an analysis of their achievements. These are individuals who have a great wealth of knowledge and experience and are constantly expanding their skills and qualifications. Talented people can also include some people who are not players at the Club but train there on a daily basis. Therefore, it seems reasonable to pay attention to attracting such players. In addition to the mentioned groups of people, young, developing players should also be mentioned. Such people can also supply the existing pool of talents, so it is important to bet on their development as well.

The Management Science literature emphasises the importance of conducting a reliable, starting from strategy planning to conducting an in-depth analysis and evaluation of talent management in an organisation. The conducted research shows that talent management processes in the studied organisation are carried out automatically and consciously. Thanks to the developed system, which nevertheless requires a few improvements, the players achieve excellent results. The atmosphere in the Club is also worth mentioning. Consequently, the following conclusions emerge after the analysis:

- the Club trains talented people who have great knowledge and skills, who regularly win medals in the national and international arena and are appointed to the National Team identified as talents;
- they are highly motivated and train primarily for their own satisfaction;
- the researched organisation has adopted an extremely innovative approach to athletes from rival clubs - cooperation. The club makes its resources available to them and in return receives certain benefits: a high level of training, as well as the opportunity to learn knowledge and skills from them;
- research shows that a club takes advantage of the opportunities offered by allowing talented players from rival clubs to train with them, later acquiring them on a permanent contract;
- the factor which most encourages players to choose Wrocław Club is the wide range of talented successful players. Their achievements become a motivating factor and the talents themselves are examples to follow;
- very important elements are also interesting trainings and a wide and well-trained coaching staff indicated by the respondents. Coaching courses or seminars help widen horizons and offer modern training solutions;
- the club makes proper use of the competences of talented players by managing them properly. The club uses the skills of talented players in the right way by managing them properly, assigning them to their own training groups which shows that it has great confidence in them. The talents can show their creativity by introducing new solutions;
- the players claim that if they received a competitive offer, they would not accept it. None of the interviewees are inclined to leave the Club which shows high loyalty towards the Club and proves that the players feel comfortable and the Club meets their requirements;
- almost all players, despite having to decide to leave the club for various reasons (injuries, change of residence), stated that they would recommend the club to their friends which contributes to the formation of a positive image of the organization in the sports environment.

The analysis of the collected results allows us to formulate a conclusion that proper talent management in the researched organisation brings results in the form of successes of talented players on the national and international arena. However, the talent management process needs to be improved:

- the club should focus on the planning process and in particular the long-term planning of the players' career paths. This should include elements such as discussing previous seasons, learning from mistakes made and targeting specific goals to be achieved in future seasons;
- another element for improvement is the funding of talented players. Although it is the club that provides the most financial support to its players, it very often turns out that the burden of financing participation in sporting events falls on the athletes themselves and their families;
- it would be advisable to intensify the club's efforts to raise funds by submitting scholarship and award applications.

To sum up the research on the issue of "talent management", it should be stated that talents require appropriate conditions to reveal themselves and develop. It is necessary to know the area of activity of the employee, in which the information for talent development will be obtained. The implementation of "talent management" programmes is mainly conducive to increasing the company's competitiveness in the market, supporting organisational culture, retaining talented employees in the company, ensuring the inflow of new talented employees, creating a positive image on the external labour market.

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