

Setting a High Bar

Employees and employers are finding it increasingly difficult to connect with each other on the job market. What are the reasons? This was the topic of the HR Today Research Roundtable, organised by von Rundstedt and HR Today. The participants were Thomas Bösch, Head of HR at Novartis Switzerland, Peter Ziswiler, Head of HR at Georg Fischer AG, Thomas A. Biland, executive search specialist, and Pascal Scheiwiller, CEO of von Rundstedt.

"Many employers are still insisting on narrowly defined job profiles, but the job market has dried up," says executive search specialist Thomas A. Biland. Pascal Scheiwiller, CEO of von Rundstedt, agrees: "The everything-must-fit mentality has gained strength in the last ten years. Companies are no longer willing to make compromises when filling positions."

Peter Ziswiler, Head of HR at Georg Fischer AG, and Pascal Scheiwiller observe that companies are putting the bar very high for external candidates but are willing to accept people from within the company even if they fall short of the ideal. Scheiwiller suspects that HR managers are afraid of not finding new employees and, on the other hand, are too quick to release employees who turn out to be less than satisfactory.

According to Scheiwiller, employers will fail to meet their goals if they continue to focus exclusively on professional expertise in their recruiting. The working world is changing too fast for this. Creativity, social skills and problem-solving ability are much more meaningful. "These are the attributes that count in a disruptive environment."

So are job profiles on the way out as criteria for hiring? In the opinion of Thomas Bösch, they have become much less important to companies. "Many skills are now so short-lived that they are no longer essential to corporate success. It's better to look more closely at candidates' basic skills and find people who can contribute to change." But what does this mean for employees? "What counts is their ability to apply their knowledge and transfer it from one environment to another," says Bösch. "People who have pursued a linear career sometimes find this difficult." Bösch also believes that agility has less to do with age than with personality – a point on which Thomas A. Biland, Pascal Scheiwiller and Peter Ziswiler all agree.

Whereas job advertisements often emphasise agility, many companies remain stuck in rigid structures. "Businesses too must increase their agility," says Ziswiler. "Employees have to be given opportunities to move into other areas of the company where they can contribute their strengths and abilities," adds Scheiwiller. For this purpose companies need to develop more flexible structures. But that means placing trust in their employees,

which is where there are deficits in practice. "Companies often don't have the courage to give their people tasks outside the areas where they have always worked," says Ziswiler. Trust requires openness so that critical topics and developments can be addressed. "We can be agile only if we're open and honest with one another."

Many companies are following the opposite trend, however. They are restricting creativity and setting up elaborate structures for compliance and management control. According to Scheiwiller, this is one reason why more and more employees in middle and lower management of major companies are looking for alternative careers. "Many excellent people want to leave the corporate world. They prefer to work in environments where they have greater freedom." Biland also discerns this need among job candidates and points to a contradiction in employers' behaviour: "Big companies talk a lot about freedom, self-fulfilment and dynamism. But in fact they are monitoring their employees more and more closely. The weaker people accept this grudgingly; the stronger ones leave when they no longer see any meaning in their work."

Take part in the survey: research.hrtoday.ch

How are HR managers reacting to the polarisation on the Swiss job market? Let us know what you think.

You and Switzerland's entire HR community are invited to take part in von Rundstedt's survey on the increasing polarisation on the Swiss job market. What are you doing to attract people with key profiles and other skilled personnel? In what ways are you promoting their development and securing their loyalty? What steps are you taking to maintain the employability of people with outdated profiles and ensure them a place in the company? And what is your assessment of the current situation on the job market?

To explore these questions in greater depth, von Rundstedt has organised two additional roundtable discussions with experts in this field:

"Winners on the job market" and "Losers on the job market". The panels will be moderated by Corinne Pärer, editor-in-chief of HR Today, and the results will be published in the online and print versions of the magazine.

The results of the survey will be evaluated in the summer, published in HR Today in the autumn and presented for discussion at a network event on 12 September. The results will be sent to all participants. Registration for this event is free of charge.

To the survey:



von Rundstedt & Partner Schweiz employs a staff of about 70 people and has nine branch offices throughout Switzerland. It regularly publishes job market barometers based on its market data and other sources of information. It also conducts regular market studies and research projects on the Swiss job market. www.rundstedt.ch

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