



THE ELLIOT GROUP

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LEADERSHIP
INSTITUTE

INSIGHTS

Building a Future-Proof Talent Roadmap

How to Attract and Empower
Exceptional Executives in a
Time of Great Change



We all know the talent behind any company is its greatest asset. But today, a growing divide separates what employers expect from their leaders and what top executive talent seeks from the companies they join.

During talent acquisition or human capital planning, organizations bring to the table the skills, experiences, and leadership qualities they believe will drive business success.

At the same time, best-in-class leaders have their own priorities when exploring opportunities: the environments, cultures, and possibilities they need or want to thrive.

Bridging the gaps – upfront, clearly, and purposefully – is essential.

Drawing on research from The Elliot Leadership Institute and data from The Elliot Group’s work with top businesses and executives, this whitepaper explores how companies can align corporate goals with executive expectations, and develop a holistic framework of systems and structures to consistently attract, engage, and retain transformational talent.

In This Whitepaper

Section I: Aligning Across Hiring Gaps

Section II: Building Employer Advantage



Strategies shape direction, but people drive outcomes.

When leaders invest in exceptional talent and create space for individuals to thrive, they build strong companies and enduring legacies.

Alice Elliot
Founder & CEO



Aligning Today's Organizations with Tomorrow's Talent

Through extensive executive search and leadership advisory work across the consumer sectors, The Elliot Group has identified four persistent gaps between what employers need and what best-in-class talent seeks. Bridging these gaps is the foundation of a competitive talent strategy.

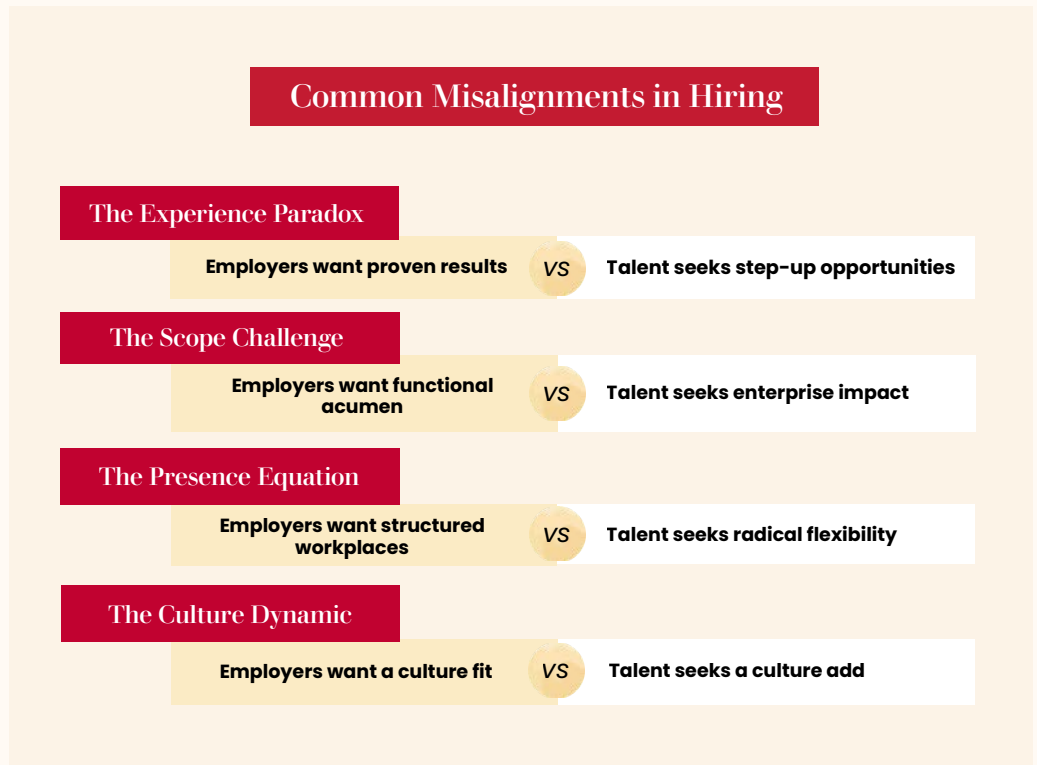
Organizations that recognize, address, and solve for these gaps will attract and retain leaders who drive lasting impact.

Gap I: Proven Results vs. Step-Up Opportunities

Employers want a known entity who can provide immediate, measurable, and scalable results across EBITDA growth, new market penetration, operational rigor, and more.

Best-in-class talent seek roles that offer room for stretch, provide time for learning and development, and include CEO-track visibility. They want impact and growth, not just a landing place.

To align, companies can clearly define both near-term performance expectations and long-term growth pathways, even when these conversations feel premature. When organizations design roles that include stretch opportunities and meaningful responsibilities, they engage ambitious leaders while achieving strategic goals.



Gap 2: Functional Acumen vs. Enterprise Impact

Employers want leaders with deep subject matter expertise who can operate with speed and discipline to support business growth. Someone to lead in their lane.

Best-in-class talent seek an opportunity where their work matters to the enterprise at large and results are aligned with a business mission. An opportunity where they have visibility and influence on decision-making and brand strategy.

To align, companies can focus on leadership systems and people pathways, in addition to job specs and competencies. Aligning individual performance management with broader business impact will help drive meaningful results.

Gap 3: Structured Workplaces vs. Radical Flexibility

Employers want leaders who show up – literally. A growing number of organizations believe in-person office presence signals commitment, accelerates decision-making, and enables real-time problem-solving that remote work can't replicate.

Best-in-class talent seek radical flexibility. Especially among Gen Z and younger Millennials, high-performing executives expect autonomy in terms of where and how they deliver outcomes and lead teams.

To align, employers can replace control with clarity. Define clear KPIs and high-quality standards that must be met, then empower individuals to find the best ways to execute. Be clear on guardrails but listen to individual needs.

Gap 4: Culture Fit vs. Culture Add

Employers want a level of predictability, leaders who reinforce existing values. Business can prioritize "culture fit," seeking leaders who conform to existing norms and reinforce established ways of working.

Best-in-class talent seek to make their mark, to challenge assumptions, and bring fresh perspectives. They want to elevate teams and deliver lasting, measurable impact.

To align, employers can strategically hire and support leaders that honor a company's culture while driving meaningful change through new ways of thinking and performing.

Building Employer Advantage

Understanding and bridging the gaps between employers' needs and top talent demands is just step one. Organizations that develop and commit to a systemic approach to human capital planning and employer brand gain a competitive advantage in attracting and retaining transformative leaders.

Five Steps to a Future-Proof People Strategy

Define and Live Your Values

Culture becomes authentic when values are demonstrated through consistent behaviors.

Companies that succeed reward leaders for more than hitting numbers. They hold leaders accountable for how they make decisions, engage teams, and serve customers.

Business leaders that demonstrate the values behind a brand's slogans are the ones that resonate.



What to do now

Conduct a culture audit. Survey your team about whether company values are reflected in day-to-day decisions and recognition. If there's a gap, start closing it quickly.

From Concept to Competitive Advantage

Focus Areas	Action Pathways
Define & Live Your Values	Conduct a Culture Audit
Build a True Performance Culture	Evaluate Current Performance Metrics
Evaluate Compensation & Total Value	Review and Benchmark Comp Plans
Design for Future Growth	Map 5-Year Growth Stages
Systemize Talent Readiness	Take Succession Planning Past the C-Suite

"We help organizations turn aspirational values into daily behaviors that drive measurable impact.

When culture is lived authentically from leadership down, it fuels retention and results, creating a competitive advantage that's hard to replicate."

Joan Ray
Executive Vice President



Build a True Performance Culture

Performance cultures are actively designed and managed. Leading companies define the few metrics that matter most, link them to strategy, and communicate them from day one. Regular review cycles ensure consistent, future-focused accountability.



What to do now

Evaluate your current performance metrics. Are they clearly defined, consistently measured, and linked to business strategy?

Start with 3-5 key metrics that matter most to your strategy. Show every leader how their functional excellence drives enterprise success.

"Organizations should measure the results of their people with the same rigor they apply to forecasting and P&L.

For candidates, this clarity signals that performance is measured fairly and opportunities for growth are real — making the role more attractive to top talent."

Brian Schwartz
Managing Director,
Executive Search



"Don't hire for a narrow lane. Hire leaders with business sense who can do more with less. The leader who can take a company from 5 to 30 units may not be the same one who can scale to 100.

Anticipating these stages early helps organizations avoid crises and ensures leadership evolves with the business."

Rikin Lakhani
Senior Vice President



Design for Future Growth

Hire for the company you're becoming, not just the company you are today. Organizations that win will map leadership needs against growth stages—from startup through scale—and build roles that evolve as the business does. This forward-looking approach signals to candidates that career pathways are real, not aspirational, creating a powerful differentiator in competitive talent markets.



What to do now

Map out your organization's growth stages for the next 3-5 years. Identify which leadership capabilities you'll need at each stage and start developing those skills in your current team, or identify the right external talent to bring into your organization.

Evaluate Compensation and Total Value

Senior leaders evaluate opportunities holistically and are fine-tuned to equity, flexibility, and long-term wealth creation. They expect clarity on how performance will be rewarded and what lifestyle or relocation support is available.

Companies that benchmark broadly, even outside their sectors, will stand out to exceptional talent.

Compensation signals alignment with modern leadership priorities.



What to do now

Review your total compensation package beyond base and bonus. Benchmark against both your peers and high-performing companies in adjacent sectors. Consider creative solutions for work-life integration that pair flexibility with accountability.

"If you don't have the right people leading at all levels, you won't be successful. And if those people don't feel valued, retention will be difficult.

Invest accordingly, because it is the most important investment a company can make."

Bernadette Kane

Executive Vice President



"Companies that regularly refine their leadership and team structures are better prepared for anything the future brings. Think of it as 'succession planning plus.'

Leaders are actively developed, rotated across functions, and consistently stretched to learn. When top talent sees that level of commitment to people, they want to be a part of it."

Sarah Lockyer

President,
The Elliot Leadership Institute



Systematize Talent Readiness

Succession planning, talent audits, and gap identification are paramount for continuity and growth.

High-growth companies or organizations in transition should identify critical roles and high-performing talent to understand where internal development is needed and when external expertise is wise.



What to do now

Evaluate critical roles beyond the C-suite for your next growth phase or business need, assess where you'll need external talent, and develop high-performers internally with intentional stretch opportunities and executive coaching.

Your Leadership Strategy Starts Here

The Elliot Group bridges today's talent and tomorrow's successes.

We understand today's executive talent market

and serve as ever-present advisors engaged with businesses across consumer sectors to build human capital structures, identify and secure leaders, and drive people and organizational success.

For 40 years, we have connected top-level talent and organizations as a full-service human capital advisory and retained executive search firm. We harness deep relationships and strategic perspective to power businesses forward.


Our Leadership & Consulting Services

- Executive Search
- Advisory
- Board Development
- Benchmarking
- M&A Talent Advisory
- Talent Sequencing
- Succession Planning



Contact The Elliot Group to design a talent strategy that creates a lasting competitive advantage.

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