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The Extent to which Strategic Talent Management is Understood, and Properly Utilised, in the Life Science Sector in Ireland

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The Extent to which Strategic Talent Management is Understood, and Properly Utilised, in the Life Science Sector in Ireland

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THE EXTENT TO WHICH STRATEGIC TALENT MANAGEMENT IS UNDERSTOOD, AND PROPERLY UTILISED, IN THE LIFE SCIENCE SECTOR IN IRELAND

By

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SUBMITTED TO CORK INSTITUTE of TECHNOLOGY
JULY 2018
The author hereby declares that, except where duly acknowledged, this thesis is entirely her own work and has not been submitted for any degree in any University or Institute of Technology.

Jennifer O’Brien (Student)

Date

Dr Deirdre O’Donovan (Supervisor)

Date
Dedication

I would like to dedicate my work to my parents who have always loved me unconditionally and whose good examples have taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve. They have been a constant source of support and encouragement during the challenges of study and life. I am truly thankful for having you in my life.
Abstract

In 2017, Ireland was named the best country in the world for attracting high-value foreign direct investment for the sixth year in a row and is home to the top ten global Life Science organisations. The Life Science industry in Ireland depends on a consistent pipeline of talent to realise the growth incentivised by this investment and as the war for talent rages, there is unrelenting pressure on these organisations to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain highly skilled STEM talent. The talent focus, consequently, has to become more strategic.

This thesis focuses on the extent to which Strategic Talent Management is understood, and properly utilised, in the Life Science Sector in Ireland. This sector is chosen as the focus of the study due to the significant presence of, and investment in, this sector in Ireland. In depth semi-structured interviews are conducted with five Senior HR Professionals from multinational organisations within the sector to support the study.

Ultimately, the study established the lack of understanding of the concept of Strategic Talent Management in the Life Science sector in Ireland. It becomes clear that there is a perceived confusion between Strategic Talent Management and Talent Development.

A second salient finding illustrated that elements of a Talent Management strategy are utilised in industry, but not in a strategic way. The study concluded that elements of a Talent Management strategy are applied as organisational tools, however these tools are not perceived, or used, in a tactical manner.

Additionally, a further prominent finding demonstrated the lack of confidence HR has in the ability of Line Managers to deploy a Talent Management strategy. Linked to this, the study also determined that there are a lack of robust processes in place to support the effective deployment of a Talent Management strategy.

Finally, a fifth key finding delineated a sense of overconfidence in the reputation of the Life Science sector, particularly the confidence of the longer established players in the sector is noted. This overconfidence is predicted to have a negative impact as the war for talent strengthens.
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Chapter 1: Introduction
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1.1 Introduction and Study Rationale

This study focuses on the Life Science Sector in Ireland, and assesses the understanding and utilisation of Strategic Talent Management in the industry. Strategic Talent Management is a well-established concept, having been on the minds of HR professionals for decades (Minbaeva and Collings, 2013). Many theories have been proposed to provide an explanation of the ideology. Ultimately, this has led to the perception of Strategic Talent Management as being a series of strategic activities in order to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain talent (CIPD, 2017; Ready et al., 2014; Lewis and Heckman, 2006). Despite this, Talent Management is considered as one of the five key challenges HR has faced, and felt least prepared for, between 2007 and 2017 (Boston Consulting Group, 2007) and remains the leading priority organisations will be addressing over the coming two years (CIPD, 2018). Alarmingly, only twenty percent of HR professionals function with a formal definition of Talent Management (CIPD, 2016) and despite good intentions, many organisations have failed to create a talent first strategy (Freiberg and Kao, 2008; Schweyer, 2004).

This study defines Strategic Talent Management and explores the journey of Talent Management from being an auxiliary responsibility of the HR department (Wellins et al., 2010) to playing a central part in counteracting the war for talent (Jackson, 2017). Although increasing in importance, the theory alarmingly remains underdeveloped (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Aston and Morton, 2005). Five reoccurring themes emerge, and are discussed, throughout the study, specifically; Attracting, Managing, Developing, Engaging and Retaining Talent. From the analysis of these themes, areas of disparity between literature and industry norms are highlighted, and the linkages between all elements of a dexterous Talent Management strategy are emphasised (Schweyer, 2004). Exploring these emergent themes, it becomes apparent that organisations who utilise the elements of a Talent Management Strategy have a more engaged (Stroko and Adamsen, 2016) and productive (Nilsson and Ellström, 2012) workforce with significantly higher retention rates (Ellehuus, 2012) than those who do not operate in a Strategic Talent Management way (Whelan and Carcary, 2011). Additionally, the link between optimising the employment relationship through a Talent Management Strategy
and the ability of the organisation to achieve organisational excellence is explored (CIPD, 2017c; Reidy et al., 2014; Ulrich, 1998).

It has been predicted that employers in North America and Europe will demand eighteen million more third level educated workers than will be available in 2020 (McKinsey, 2012), therefore it is crucial for the employers of today to strengthen their employer brand (Michaels et al., 2001), optimise their recruitment processes (Bratton and Gold, 2017) and ensure their onboarding practices are robust (Hyatt, 2017) in order to attract talent.

Additionally, it is frequently suggested that people do not leave organisations but, rather, leave managers (Buckingham and Coffman, 1999; Chambers, 1998). Consequently, it is vital to ensure for sufficient leadership capabilities amongst managers (Larsen and Brewster, 2003), promote a progressive and forward thinking performance management system (Cappelli and Tavis, 2018; Armstrong and Taylor, 2017) and foster a strong culture of coaching within the organisation (Pullen and Crane, 2011), as it is extremely difficult to negate the effect of poor managerial skills and leadership (Lipman, 2015a).

The concept of a traditional career is being challenged, steering companies toward constant learning experiences that allow employees to build skills quickly, easily, and on their own terms (Deloitte, 2017). Learning and development as well as lateral and upward career progression opportunities are paramount in this regard, in order to prepare internal talent for the workplace of the future (CIPD, 2017a), develop their careers (Yarnall, 2008; Heinen and O’Neill, 2004) and for succession planning purposes (Conger and Fulmer, 2003).

Talent Engagement begins long before the employment contract is signed, and continues throughout the employee lifecycle as a whole, with each element of a Talent Management Strategy having an impact on engagement (Casey and O’Bryan, 2017; Vance, 2006). Effective corporate communication (Cornelissen, 2011; Van Riel, 2003), encouraging the employee voice to be heard (CIPD, 2017e) and providing wellbeing services and activities for employees (Fair and Wright, 2016) have been found to additionally boost engagement.

Despite forty percent of organisations in Ireland experiencing an increase in employee turnover (CIPD, 2018) fifty six percent of organisations do not calculate the cost of labour turnover (CIPD, 2017b). An effective reward strategy will serve to both attract and retain talent (Ncube
et al., 2013; Moore and Bussin, 2012). Additionally, recognition has become one of the most critical strategic people management tools to allow organisations to attract, motivate and retain talent (IBEC, 2013) and could be the untapped resource organisations require to improve business outcomes (Garr, 2012).

Ultimately, Strategic Talent Management is crucial to attract, manage, develop, engage and, above all, retain a high performing workforce (Whelan and Carcary, 2011) and investing in these practices may be the necessary measure in order to counteract the war for talent (Jackson, 2017). HR Professionals are investing a significant amount of time and effort into candidate attraction but are missing the additional pieces of the puzzle such as management, development and engagement, therefore creating an unforeseen retention issue for the future (Schmidt, 2016). Talent Management strategies that can both operate in the current climate and equally harvest growth in the future are extremely necessary (Rogers, 2017) and agile strategies may be the necessary answer (Cappelli and Tavis, 2018).

In 2017, Ireland was named the best country in the world for attracting high-value foreign direct investments for the sixth year in a row (Taylor, 2017) and is home to a significant number of multinational organisations in various industries, including the top ten global Life Science organisations (IDA Ireland, 2017). In order to support this level of investment, industries, inclusive of Life Science, depend on a consistent pipeline of talent and this demand for talent in Ireland is likely to continue to rise for the foreseeable future (Keogh, 2017). As the war for talent rages, organisations are finding it increasingly difficult to attract and, ultimately, retain talent (McDonnell, 2018). With this unrelenting pressure to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain highly skilled Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) employees, the talent focus has to become more strategic (Lawler, 2017), and the response to this need is a more holistic approach to Talent Management, optimising the end to end employee journey (Schooling, 2014), hence the reasoning for conducting the study.

1.2 The Research Question, Aims and Objectives

The research question of this study “To what extent is Strategic Talent Management understood and properly utilised in the Life Sciences sector in Ireland?”. The overall aim of the study is to gain a better understanding as to the concept of Strategic Talent Management and to
subsequently assess whether Strategic Talent Management is accurately understood and properly utilised within the Life Science sector in Ireland. Additionally, the objectives of this study are:

1. To research literature in order to gain an overarching understanding of Strategic Talent Management and compile a thorough literature review which will form the basis for questioning in empirical research.
2. Conduct interviews with Senior HR Professionals within the Life Sciences sector in Ireland to gain an insight as to how Strategic Talent Management is viewed and currently utilised in industry, and assess said interviews to trend findings and ultimately compile the basis for the thesis.
3. From the interview findings, explore the reasoning behind why this understanding and utilisation is or is not present.
4. Prepare recommendations for possible further study on the topic and identify recommendations for practice.

1.3 Chapter Outline

This chapter begins with an introduction, outlining the background to the study, debating the reasoning behind conducting the study, presenting the research question aims and objectives and discussing a high level chapter outline. A thorough analysis of the literature regarding Strategic Talent Management and the five themes repeatedly emerging throughout the literature will be conducted in Chapter 2.

Subsequently, the methodology supporting the study will be explored in depth in Chapter 3. In order to collect qualitative data for the study, a purposeful sampling method will be utilised (Marshall, 1996) which will involve maximum variation sampling (Berg and Lune, 2004). Semi structured interviews will specifically be utilised in order to explore industry thoughts and norms (Marshall and Rossman, 1999). Senior HR Professionals in the Life Sciences sector in Ireland will be interviewed due to the level of knowledge and experience needed in order to sufficiently answer interview questions and provide valid insight. A research methodology utilising grounded theory will be undertaken for this study (Martin and Turner, 1986) which will involve operating inductively (Strauss and Juliet, 1994). The study will utilise realism,
basing its research on protocols and techniques, therefore testing a hypothesis (Gill and Johnson, 2002) and, more specifically, critical realism so as to encapsulate a clearer and more rounded picture (Novikov and Novikov, 2013).

Chapter 4 will analyse the outputs of the primary research to form the basis for developing key findings, limitations and recommendations and will explore a number of themes such as the respondents’ perception of Talent Management and the importance of how and why talent is Attracted, Managed, Developed, Engaged and Retained.

Key findings and limitations of the study as well as recommendations for both industry and future research will be explored in Chapter 5. The salient findings established from conducting the study firstly determined that ultimately, there is a severe lack of understanding of the concept of Strategic Talent Management in the Life Science sector in Ireland. It becomes clear that there is a perceived confusion between Strategic Talent Management and Talent Development in the form of succession planning, with all five respondents making this linkage.

A second salient finding illustrated that elements of a Talent Management Strategy are utilised in industry, but not in a strategic way. Elements of a Talent Management strategy are utilised as organisational tools within the organisations represented by the respondents interviewed, however these tools are not perceived or used in a tactical way.

Additionally, a further prominent finding demonstrated the lack of confidence HR have in the ability of Line Managers to deploy a Talent Management Strategy. Throughout the primary research, it becomes apparent, at multiple stages, the HR simply lacks confidence in the ability of their Line Managers to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain their talent.

The study also established that there are a lack of robust processes in place to support the effective deployment of a Talent Management strategy. Without robust processes in place, the abilities of the Line Managers to effectively execute Talent Management strategies are hindered.

Finally, a fifth key finding highlighted a sense of overconfidence in the reputation of the Life Science sector. From the analysis of primary research, the confidence of the longer established
players in the sector is noted. This overconfidence is predicted to have a negative impact as the war for talent strengthens.

The study will draw to a close with an overall conclusion, again emphasising the importance of the study through an explanation of the key findings as identified.

1.4 Conclusion

Having introduced and provided insight into the background of the study, presented the rationale for conducting the study, outlined the research question, aims and objectives and provided a chapter outline in Chapter 1, the following chapter, Chapter 2, will focus on a thorough analysis of the literature. The chapter will explore the concept of Strategic Talent Management and emergent themes.
Chapter 2: Literature Review
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter will initially define the concept of Strategic Talent Management and subsequently discuss five major themes which repeatedly emerge throughout the literature. These themes are: Attracting, Managing, Developing, Engaging and Retaining Talent. Each element will be explored in detail and, ultimately, the review will analyse how each theme interlinks and is connected to the overall concept of Strategic Talent Management.

2.2 What Is Strategic Talent Management?

In the Sixties and Seventies, Talent Management was considered a peripheral responsibility consigned to the personnel department (Wellins et al., 2010). The concept of Strategic Talent Management has, however, increased in popularity due to McKinsey’s (1997) research and the subsequent Michaels et al. (2001) publication titled ‘The War for Talent’. Today, Talent Management is considered as one of the five key challenges HR has faced, and felt least prepared for between 2007 and 2017 (Boston Consulting Group, 2007). Similarly, a recent HR Practices in Ireland (CIPD, 2018) report highlights Talent Management as the leading priority that organisations are addressing over the coming two years, with fifty eight percent of organisations in Ireland focusing on this. This study also determined little variation in priorities based on organisational size, showing convergence of the issues affecting organisations in the Irish marketplace as a whole (CIPD, 2018).

The theory of Strategic Talent Management still remains underdeveloped, nevertheless, due to a lack of clear definition and conceptual boundaries (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Aston and Morton, 2005). Lewis and Heckman (2006, pg. 139) highlight the disparity in definitions, noting:

A disturbing lack of clarity regarding the definition, scope and overall goals of Talent Management.
Research by The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) (2006) reinforces the above, but from an industry perspective, outlining that although fifty one percent of HR professionals surveyed engaged in Talent Management activities, only twenty percent of those HR professionals functioned with a formal definition of Talent Management.

In order to bring some clarity to the concept, Lewis and Heckman’s (2006) definition of Talent Management involves a mixture of HR practices, the flow of HR within the organisation and also the sourcing, developing and rewarding of talent. Similarly, CIPD (2017b) attests that it is no longer enough to simply attract talented individuals. Instead, these individuals must be managed, developed and ultimately retained in a strategic way. Analytics should also be used to determine return on investment (CIPD, 2017b). Ready et al. (2014) interpret Talent Management strategies to involve the sourcing, engaging, developing and retaining of talent, in line with CIPD (2017b) and Lewis and Heckman’s (2006) perspectives. Reidy et al. (2014) additionally propose the idea that a superior Talent Management strategy is a key characteristic of a game changing organisation; one which is comprehensive, adds value to and supports the overall business strategy. Indeed, Chambers (1998, pg. 2) posited the need to:

_Elevate Talent Management to a burning corporate priority._

Further qualifying the above statement, Jackson (2017) speaks of the ongoing war for talent and describes how, in order to be successful in Talent Management, an end to end approach to sourcing, developing and engaging the workforce is needed. Jackson (2017) additionally advocates that investing in these practices may be the necessary measure in order to counteract the war for talent.

The importance of HR activities in achieving organisational excellence has been highlighted by Ulrich (1998), suggesting that HR should, ultimately, deliver results that enhance the value provided by the organisation to its customers, employees and investors, and should be defined by this delivery to key stakeholders. Similarly, the Valuing Your Talent (CIPD, 2017c) framework, as outlined in Figure 2.1, allows for a better understanding of an organisation's Talent Management Strategy, in the form of inputs and activities, and how these impact on overall business performance, in the form of outputs and outcomes. The framework allows an organisation to recognise the full potential of their employees and therefore how to manage,
develop, engage and retain these individuals accordingly in order to ultimately achieve organisational excellence and foster their desired culture (CIPD, 2017c).

Figure 2.1 The Valuing Your Talent Framework

Source: CIPD (2017c)

Stroko and Adamsen (2016, pg. 28) outline their thoughts on Talent Management activities, bringing home the importance of such strategies:

*Pure and simple, talent magnet companies live their values. They focus on employee experiences — using their talent processes as a way to translate their values into the culture, thereby creating great employee experiences.*

This is further supported by Chambers (1998) who identifies talent as the primary source of competitive advantage. Jackson (2017) also emphasises the points of Stroko and Adamsen (2016) and Chambers (1998) depicting Talent Management as a way of life going forward, and stressing the need for HR Professionals to learn to adapt. According to Accenture research (Rogers, 2017), seventy five percent of HR Professionals acknowledge that ensuring their
operating models are providing them with a competitive advantage is challenging in the current economic climate. It can, therefore, be seen that Talent Management strategies that can both operate in the current climate and equally harvest growth in the future are extremely necessary (Rogers, 2017) and agile strategies may be the necessary answer to this (Cappelli and Tavis, 2018).

Schweyer (2004) asserts that although organisations realise talent is their most valuable asset, the majority do not act as though Strategic Talent Management is paramount and despite good intentions have failed to create a talent first strategy. Freiberg and Kao (2008) similarly proffer that organisations are still struggling to accomplish an effective end to end Talent Management strategy.

Ultimately, Strategic Talent Management is crucial to attract, manage, develop, engage and, above all, retain a high performing workforce (Whelan and Carcary, 2011). In turn, a high performing workforce is invaluable to organizations in order to gain competitive advantage (Whelan and Carcary, 2011; Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Lewis and Heckman, 2006), achieve strategic objectives, increase productivity (Nilsson and Ellström, 2012; Heinen, 2004), increase profitability and improve retention (Ellehuus, 2012). Essentially, the workforce is facing a new era of incomparable talent shortages, slowing worldwide economic growth, and organisations need to fundamentally change their approach to workforce challenges (World Economic Forum, 2011).

In order to manage, develop, engage and retain talent, individuals must initially be attracted to the organisation (Fernando, 2008). The next section explores the attraction of talent to include Employer Branding, the Recruitment Process and Onboarding.

2.3 Attracting Talent

A McKinsey (2012) Global Institute study has predicted that employers in North America and Europe will demand eighteen million more third level educated workers than will be available in 2020. This will lead to one in ten necessary roles not being filled (McKinsey, 2012). Consequently, there is a need for employers of today to optimise their candidate attraction methods (Bratton and Gold, 2017). This can be achieved by strengthening employer brand
(Michaels et al., 2001), streamlining the recruitment and selection process (Bratton and Gold, 2017) and optimising onboarding practices (Hyatt, 2017), which will be further discussed in the following sub-sections.

2.3.1 Employer Branding

From an attraction perspective, Michaels et al. (2001, pg. 41) advise that organisations need:

A strong value proposition – a compelling answer to the question, Why would a highly talented person choose to work here?

Supporting this statement, Cappelli (2015) stresses the need for organisations to set themselves apart from their competitors in order to attract top talent. Similarly, a current CIPD (2017d) survey strengthens the need for talent attraction activities, which states that nine out of ten organisations surveyed have been increasing efforts to improving their employer brand over the last year. Additionally, a recent LinkedIn report (Abbot et al., 2016) proposes that organisations are becoming more proactive in their branding strategies and utilising online channels, in essence eluding to the changing role of HR to encompass marketing activities. The reasoning behind the above Employer Branding actions has been illustrated effectively by a recent Willis Towers Watson (2014) report, as per Figure 2.2, which outlines the optimum experience and perception of a candidate before they join the organisation, the employee during employment and previous employees having left the organisation. Ultimately, Figure 2.2 advocates the importance of building a positive employer brand, through the candidate journey, long before an individual engages with the organisation through a recruitment and selection process and long after they have left, from an advocacy perspective (Huhman, 2016; Macafee, 2007). This further links with retention and exit interviews which will be discussed later in the chapter.

Keller and Meaney (2017) explore the idea that the Employee Value Proposition (EVP) will aid in both the attraction and, ultimately, the retention of talent. Keller and Meaney (2017, pg. 23) continue to state the importance of making the:

Offering of the company magnetic
It is emphasised, however, that delivering on this offering is key (Keller and Meaney, 2017). Similarly, Berman-Gorvine (2018) stresses the importance of following through on the promise of an EVP, determining that the absence of this leads to lack of trust. Again highlighting this need for trust, Ready et al. (2014) advocate the need for authenticity in order to be transparent. Interestingly, a study by Mercer (2017) highlights the shift from the EVP to the Individual Value Proposition (IVP), therefore emphasising the need to further personalise the way talent is attracted.

2.3.2 The Recruitment Process

Before talent can be developed, motivated and retained, it must first be identified and selected (Fernando, 2008). The importance of recruitment in end to end Talent Management is outlined by Fernando (2008), centralising recruitment at the core of further Talent Development and overall Talent Management activities and suggesting that this translates to the overall success of the organisation in the market. Supporting the viewpoint of Fernando (2008), Sangeetha (2010) and Barney (2001) argue the importance of stringent recruitment and selection practices in sustaining organisational performance and competitive advantage. Brazeel (2010), in comparison, highlights the need for organisations to immediately develop a robust recruitment and selection strategy in order to counteract the effects of turnover and equally to increase the organisations chance of securing top talent.

Although Boxall (2011) notes that HR functions have, so far, progressed from being reactive and administrative to proactive and executive in recruitment and selection processes, a recent CIPD (2015) report highlights the ongoing recruitment challenges organisations are facing. These include increased skills shortages, increased difficulty in recruiting staff at all levels, the lack of available required skills and, most alarmingly, the little change in practices employed to decrease recruitment difficulties (CIPD, 2015).

In order for recruitment and selection to be successful, it must be strategic (Brazeel, 2010; Sangeetha, 2010; Fernando, 2008), beginning with the use of Schneider’s (1987) Attraction – Selection – Attrition (ASA) Framework to identify person – organisation (P – O) fit and person – job (P – J) fit. To compliment this, Bratton and Gold (2017) suggest the use of organisational appropriate selection methods to determine the ideal candidate for the role, team and organisation which can include the elements as discussed in Figure 2.3.
The adaptation of these processes from the administrative to strategic will lead to an increased appeal to a larger number of applicants, therefore more choice from a selection perspective (Brainne, 2008) as well as increased organisational performance (Armstrong, 2014).

2.3.3 Onboarding

According to Maurer (2015), onboarding is a key step to engaging and retaining talent and should extend itself to the first year of the employees’ lifecycle. Hyatt (2017, pg. 53) further underpins this ideology, suggesting that:

*A well-designed, fun and engaging onboarding process has a significantly greater effect on employee engagement and retention when compared to the old-school mentality of one-day orientation.*

From an industry perspective, a study by Equifax (2014) reported that forty percent of employees who left their jobs voluntarily in 2013 did so within six months of starting in the position. Additionally, research conducted by The British Columbia Human Resource Management Association (White, 2012) concluded that turnover can be over thirty percent in the first three months. Alternatively, a report by the Society for Human Resource Management
(Bauer, 2010) proposes that employees who attended a well-structured onboarding program were sixty nine percent more likely to remain at a company up to three years. Similarly, a survey by The Impact Instruction Group (Franko, 2013) outlines that fifty four percent of organizations see increased new hire productivity and fifty percent higher retention rates for new hires when a standardized onboarding process is in place. It can be determined, from the above statistics, that there is a significant link between the initial onboarding period and attrition rates, with the organisation specific onboarding practice determining whether this has a positive or negative effect on attrition (Hyatt, 2017). Supporting this, a recent HR Practices in Ireland (CIPD, 2018) report lists induction, alongside learning and development and work life balance, as a top action needed to improve retention.

Although this is the case, few organisations prioritize onboarding programs, but still expect new employees to drive results within 90 days (Llarena, 2013). Typically, onboarding programmes extend to the first week of employment and, subsequently, leave the new employee unprepared and with a lack of deep knowledge and understanding of the requirements of their role or company culture (Ellis et al., 2017; Llarena, 2013). Organisations who are engaging in effective onboarding programmes are including steps such as are outlined in Figure 2.4.

**Figure 2.4 Steps in an Effective Onboarding Programme**

- Beginning the process before the employee's first day
- Define Job Specific Roles and Responsibilities
- Regular 'Check In's' during first 6 months
- Cultural Integration
- Buddy System

Source: Adapted from Ellis et al., (2017, pg. 34)
Companies with optimised and successful onboarding programmes, including the steps outlined in Figure 2.4, are more likely to experience higher retention rates and, additionally, measurable profit growth (Ellis et al., 2017).

Subsequent to talent being attracted, individuals need to be effectively managed. The following section will explore the area of Managing Talent.

2.4 Managing Talent

Buckingham and Coffman (1999, pg. 48) proffer that:

*People leave managers, not companies.*

In order to manage talent effectively and appropriately, the biggest decision an organisation has to make is who is named manager (Lipman, 2015a). It is extremely difficult to negate the effect of poor managerial skills and leadership (Lipman, 2015a). This section will explore the importance of effective management of talent, focusing on Leadership Capabilities, Performance Management and fostering a Coaching Culture.

2.4.1 Leadership Capabilities

Defining good managerial and leadership talent can be difficult, as elements of this ability eludes definition and differs per organisation (Michaels et al., 2001). Freiberg and Kao (2008) highlight the need to develop managerial and leadership capabilities and address shortages of management and leadership talent as being in the top five workforce challenges. Looking at this challenge in more depth, Chambers (1998) stresses the need to hold Line Managers accountable for talent which is supported by Buckingham and Coffman’s (1999) statement that people do not leave organisations but, rather, leave managers. Due to the growing global trend of devolving HR responsibilities to Line Management (Larsen and Brewster, 2003), and the viewpoint of HR Professionals in Ireland that this devolution has so far been ineffective (CIPD, 2018), it is therefore more important than ever for leaders and managers to be equipped to support Talent Management strategies (Larsen and Brewster, 2003).
Efforts to define and develop managerial and leadership talent can be achieved by creating a thorough organisational competency model (Brownwell, 2006). Similarly, Boyatzis (1982) argues that organisational values are the basis for competency definition. By developing a matrix of behavioural, technical and leadership competencies, organisations can create a concrete definition of what an effective manager looks like specifically within their organisational context (Zheltoukhova and Weeks, 2017). Furthermore, by assessing a candidate’s current competencies and comparing these to the competencies and skills needed to succeed in a leadership position, organizations can make better informed decisions when hiring, developing and succession planning for leadership talent (Spencer and Watkin, 2006).

Together, committed line leaders and gifted HR managers manifest the organizational culture, leading to the organisation becoming a magnet for top talent (Ready et al., 2014). An organisation should adopt a specific leadership style which promotes said engagement therefore empowering their employees (CIPD, 2014). Corporate Executive Board (CEB) (2014) research highlights that employees who work in organisations that adopt the above approach show thirty five percent higher employee engagement. Furthermore, developing successful leaders and managers will ultimately lead to a sustained competitive advantage for the organisation (Caligiuri, 2006). It must be noted, however, that having a great model is hard enough; finding outstanding talent to execute it is even more challenging (Ready et al., 2014).

The historic, operational, definition of the role of a manager is no longer sufficient for the workplace of today (Ryan, 2016). Managers search for process, control and stability while trying to problem solve as quickly as possible, therefore at times not fully understanding the core issue of the problem (Garavin et al., 2009). Leaders, conversely, are accepting of an element of chaos and lack of structure and are prepared to postpone closure so as to gain a deeper understanding as to the core issue at hand (Garavin et al., 2009). Overall, the role of a manager is to continue the organisational functionality while a leader aligns employees to the vision and mission of the organisation (Ratcliffe, 2013). Ratcliffe (2013) posits the need to realise that team managers are not just managing teams, but leading them also. Organisations, ultimately, need both managers and leaders in order to succeed in the marketplace (Zaleznik, 2004). Developing both entails less focus on logic and operational exercises in support of an environment which cultivates creativity and imagination (Zaleznik, 2004).
2.4.2 Performance Management

Performance management is perceived as a critical process of organizational effectiveness (Gruman and Saks, 2011) and is a top HR priority in Ireland for 2018 (CIPD, 2018). Due to the strong correlation between knowledge workers and overall organisational performance, the productivity of said knowledge workers is one of the main concerns within organisations (Drucker, 1993). Only thirty one per cent of managers, however, are confident in the ability of their performance management systems to identify high performers (Blass, 2007).

In practice, identifying high performers within the organisation can be difficult due to the continued use of subjective performance appraisals, which can often paint an unreliable picture of internal talent (Rowland, 2011; Dries and Pepermans, 2008). A survey by Deloitte (2017) highlighted that seventy nine percent of global executives rated agile performance management as a high organizational priority. This requires a necessary shift away from a rule and planning based system toward a simpler and faster model driven by feedback from all participants (Cappelli and Tavis, 2018). Essentially, more of an emphasis is needed on continuous feedback and coaching, by reducing the focus on appraisal (Armstrong and Taylor 2017). Furthermore, competency based Human Resource Management utilises a competency analysis with the results informing and improving HR process, inclusive of performance management (Armstrong and Taylor 2017). Consequently, this new performance management method purportedly increases productivity and changes corporate culture for the better (Cappelli and Tavis, 2018). Overall, an effective performance management strategy and system will form part of the foundation for the Talent Management strategy (Khatri et al., 2010).

Although it is clear that change is necessary and a move from traditional performance appraisals is imminent (Rowland, 2011; Dries and Pepermans, 2008), there is limited evidence to suggest a solid replacement (Gifford, 2016). Many multinational organisations such as Accenture (Cunningham, 2015), GE (Nisen, 2015) and Microsoft (Warren, 2013) are mentioned in the headlines for abolishing performance management, however, there is ongoing debate regarding whether this is the best option. Decades ago, McGregor (1972, 1960) advocated the need for this employee led goal setting and performance management. A recent article by Kinley (2016) now highlights the readiness of organisations to embrace this methodology, highlighting the two main performance management disruptions of today as being a shift away from forced ranking and a system of more frequent, less formal
conversations. Many of the organisations who have appeared to step away from the annual performance appraisal, however, continue to hold an end of year conversation (Cappelli and Tavis, 2016; Baer, 2014), to cement what has been discussed frequently over the course of the year (Armstrong and Baron, 2015, Hutchinson, 2013).

Overall, if appraisals are seen internally as a box ticking exercise, change is needed (Roberts, 2013). It is clear from the literature, however, that an effective performance management system which plays a part in goal setting, monitoring progress, learning and development activities, succession planning and feedback provision is necessary, and, therefore, an extremely worthwhile activity (Gifford, 2016).

2.4.3 Coaching Culture

Schein (1985) claims that the most important role of a manager is to maintain organisational culture. A recent Oracle (2016) report reinforces Schein’s (1985) thoughts and proposes that in the current war for talent, it is crucial for an organisation to create the right environment and culture in order to attract and retain talent. Interestingly, there has been a recent shift in the thinking of Line Managers from the need for top talent specifically, to the importance of cultural fit when hiring and developing talent (Jackson, 2017). Gleeson (2017) qualifies Jackson’s (2017) thoughts when proposing the idea that hiring employees that are a good cultural fit and have values that align with those of the company will most likely be successful and this will have knock on positive impacts on the organisation as a whole.

In today’s business climate, coaching is commonly used to develop the skills of the employee and to enhance their ability to lead and guide internal and external interactions at various levels (Pullen and Crane, 2011). There is an element of disparity in the literature regarding the definition of a coaching culture. Eldridge and Dembkowski (2004) describe an organisational coaching culture as one where both formal coaching occurs but also where informal coaching is utilised to lead others. Alternatively, Ting (2006) views coaching as a routine mechanism to manage and develop talent, while solving business challenges. Crane (2005), conversely, stresses the need for coaching to be adopted at all levels within the organisation for it to be successful, and outlines seven characteristics of an effective coaching culture, as outlined in Figure 2.5.
From an industry perspective, nine out of ten organisations use coaching by Line Managers and eighty four percent of people found coaching by Line Managers to be either effective or very effective (CIPD, 2016b). Coaching targets high performance and improvement at work and focuses on specific skills and goals, although it may also have an impact on an individual’s personal attributes such as social interaction or confidence (CIPD, 2016b). A Bersin by Deloitte (2007) study found significantly high correlation between a coaching culture and increased business performance, employee engagement and overall retention. A further, and more recent, Bersin by Deloitte (2011) study concluded that companies who provide the relevant support to managers who are involved in coaching are one hundred and thirty percent more likely to achieve stronger business result and a thirty nine percent increase in employee engagement, productivity and customer service. In addition to this, companies whose senior leaders are very
frequently involved in coaching have twenty one percent higher business results (Bersin and
Associates 2011). As the literature suggests, coaching is an extremely important tool in not
only managing talent (CIPD, 2016b) but also developing individuals (CIPD, 2016a) and
achieving operational excellence (Bersin and Associates 2011; Bersin by Deloitte, 2007).

Having attracted a candidate to the organisation and correctly managed this individual, this
person must, subsequently, be developed. The following section will explore the area of
Developing Talent in more detail.

2.5 Developing Talent

A recent study by Glassdoor revealed that, for Millennials, the ability to learn and progress
within the organisation is currently a main driver when considering opportunities (Deloitte,
2017). Only one third of Millennials, however, believe that the organisations they work for are
utilising their skills to the best of their ability (Smith and Turner, 2017) and forty two percent
would be likely to leave the organisation they work for if they are not learning at a fast enough
pace (Smith and Turner, 2017). This section will explore the importance of Learning and
Development strategies, as well as the area of Career Development to include Rotation
Opportunities and Succession Planning.

2.5.1 Learning and Development

Drucker (1993) defines knowledge as being the primary resource needed for economies, and
proposes that knowledge is also the source of increased productivity. When used strategically,
and aligned with effective performance management, learning and development can enhance
productivity and performance and, ultimately, increase staff commitment and loyalty (IBEC,
2017).

Recently, the concept of a traditional career is being challenged, which in turn is steering
companies toward constant learning experiences that allow employees to build skills quickly,
easily, and on their own terms (Deloitte, 2017). Further supporting this, Schwartz et al. (2013)
proffers that these new learning models are challenging the traditional concept of a static career
and reflect the decline of skills critical to the twenty first century organization. Essentially,
talent development activities should not focus solely on optimising performance for the individual employee's current role but also should encompass long term business needs (Heinen and O'Neill, 2004). Organizations should ensure a variety of development activities are available for their employees including on-the-job activities, training opportunities (Heinen and O'Neill, 2004), career development management (Yarnall, 2008; Heinen and O'Neill, 2004), succession planning (Conger and Fulmer, 2003), coaching and mentoring (Yarnall, 2011) and leadership development (McCauley and Wakefield, 2006). Ultimately, talent development should be seen as a key success factor of the organization (Berger and Berger, 2004).

Recent CIPD (2017a) research suggests that more than two-fifths (48%) of employees strongly agree or agree that their organisation provides them with opportunities to learn and grow and additionally more than two-fifths (47%) of employees are satisfied with the opportunity to develop their skills in their job (CIPD, 2017a), proving that organisations are utilising learning and development as an organisational tool. The most popular forms of training remain as on the job and peer led (CIPD, 2017a), proving the 70/20/10 training model, as outlined in Figure 2.6, remains as effective (Lombardo and Eichinger, 1996).

**Figure 2.6: The 70/20/10 Training Model**

![70/20/10 Training Model](image)

Source: Adapted from Lombardo and Eichinger (1996, pg. 43)

On the job training, as deemed the most popular learning and development option in a recent CIPD (2017a) report, on its own can increase productivity by twenty eight percent (Rock and
When combined with coaching and mentoring, however, it can increase productivity by eighty eight percent (Rock and Schwartz, 2006). Additionally, organisations with a strong learning culture are ninety two percent more likely to develop novel products and processes, fifty two percent more productive, fifty six percent more likely to be the first to market with their products and services and seventeen percent more profitable than their peers (Mallon, 2010). Their engagement and retention rates are thirty to fifty percent higher (Mallon, 2010). Further proving the importance of learning and development as an element of the overall Talent Management strategy, a recent HR Practices in Ireland (CIPD, 2018) report, lists learning and development as a top action necessary to retain talent.

2.5.2 Career Development: Rotation Opportunities and Succession Planning

Focusing on career development, Megginson and Clutterbuck (2005) argue a clear link between coaching, high performance and readiness for development. This is reinforced by a Bersin by Deloitte (2007) study which attests that there is a significant correlation between the presence of a coaching culture to develop internal talent and high levels of engagement, therefore also retention (Bersin by Deloitte, 2007). McKinsey (1997, pg. 6) sums up what is primarily needed in terms of talent development as being:

*A deep-rooted conviction, among business unit heads and line leaders, that people really matter -- that leaders must develop the capabilities of employees, nurture their careers, and manage the performance of individuals and teams.*

In reality, however, organisations can struggle to create a culture of coaching amongst its managers (Lindbom, 2007) and succession planning, in its traditional sense, is not sufficient to identify the skill gaps and prepare an aspiring leader (Conger and Fulmer, 2003). Freiberg and Kao (2008) similarly report that only five percent of organisations are confident in their managers' abilities to foster employee development across the organisation. Lindbom (2007), interestingly, cautions against promoting individuals that are not prepared for the role of manager due to the danger of losing technical capabilities and gaining a subordinate manager in one transition. Supporting this, Hansen (2011) controversially proposes that while many leaders and managers understand the importance of developing their talent, few follow through with effective delivery. Ultimately, leadership development happens most effectively in a business context, not just in training sessions (Deloitte, 2017). No matter how much
organizations focus on delivering sophisticated training programs, if prospective leaders are not immersed in a workplace that supports leadership development objectives, such efforts will likely produce limited returns (Deloitte, 2017).

Weeks (2017) notes that organisations are finding it difficult to strike the balance between identifying a mixture of internal talent and sourcing external talent for positions available and therefore lean more toward external candidates when recruiting. With just over one fifth of individuals who are considering looking for a new job motivated by promotion opportunities elsewhere (CIPD, 2017b) and thirty three percent of employees feel they are unlikely to fulfil their career aspirations internally (CIPD, 2017b), it is crucial for organisations to amplify career development opportunities for existing employees. Supporting this, recent CIPD (2018) research highlights leadership development as a top priority for organisations over the next two years.

As well as being effectively attracted to the organisation and subsequently managed and developed in a satisfactory way, the organisation needs to ensure that talent is invested in the mission and goals of the company and engaged from a personal perspective also. The following section will discuss the concept of Engaging Talent in more detail.

### 2.6 Engaging Talent

Engagement begins long before the employment contract is signed, and continues throughout the employee lifecycle as a whole (Casey and O’Bryan, 2017). From an organisational perspective, engagement is the ‘engine of the vehicle’ (Towers Watson, 2009). To give an overarching view on engagement, Konrad (2006) carves employee engagement into three areas; cognitive, emotional and behavioural. Similarly, Dash (2013) asserts that employee engagement is individual, stemming from both psychological and behavioural states. Engagement is mostly demonstrated by employees positively verbally advocating the organisation, wanting to remain part of said organisation and showing a willingness to provide extra discretionary effort to aid the organisation in succeeding (Aon Hewitt 2013, Dash 2013). Vance (2006) outlines ten main drivers of engagement, as outlined in Table 2.1, showing that engagement stems from all elements of the Talent Management strategy.
### Table 2.1 Ten Main Drivers of Engagement

<table>
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<th>Drivers of Engagement</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Pride in Employer</td>
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<td>2. Satisfaction with Employer</td>
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<td>3. Job Satisfaction</td>
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<td>4. Opportunity to Perform Well at Challenging Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Recognition and Positive Feedback</td>
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<td>6. Managerial Support</td>
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<td>7. Effort Above and Beyond the Minimum</td>
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<td>8. Understanding the Link Between the individual role and Organisational Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Opportunities for Future Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Intention to Remain with the Organisation</td>
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Source: Adapted from Vance (2006, pg. 3)

A recent Oracle (2016) report outlines engagement as the emotional journey of the employee and stresses the need for organisations to be in control of this and to change, if necessary, in order to influence the outcome. Alternatively, the Towers Watson (2013) Talent Management and Rewards Study indicates that managerial effectiveness is a top driver of engagement. Jackson (2017), however, states that engagement comes from employees knowing their company is investing both in them and in their future. There are many conflicting thoughts as to how talent is engaged (Jackson, 2017; Oracle, 2016; Towers Watson 2013), leading to the assumption that engagement can be a result of any one element of the Talent Management strategy in particular, or the strategy itself as a whole (Jackson, 2017). Ultimately, employees that are involved and engaged are seen to be more productive and motivated (Mayo, 1949).

It has been articulated via the literature that the topics as discussed in previous Sections contribute toward engagement, however, having already explored these concepts in detail, this section will focus specifically on the areas of Communication and Wellbeing.
2.6.1 Communication and Engagement

Corporate communication involves effective communication with all key stakeholders, internal and external, to maintain strong relationships and to allow for organisational success (Cornelissen, 2011; Van Riel, 2003). It has been argued that alignment is needed between all messages communicated to various stakeholder groups, employees included (Frimann and Mønsted, 2012), in order to reduce communication fragmentation and increasing organisational reputation (Balmer and Greyser, 2003). Noting that communication should be consistent, it has also been contended that the level to which an individual employee will be motivated and engaged by different factors will be dependent on their own needs and perceptions and is, ultimately, subjective, meaning communication needs to be tailored to the individual (Brooks, 2009). This is further supported by Stahl et al. (2007) who advocate the need for internal templates to allow for consistency and cohesive practices across all areas of the business. An element of flexibility is, however, also required to tailor communications to specific circumstances and local norms (Stahl et al., 2007).

Effective corporate communication is vital for building internal trust and transparency (Cowan, 2014) and linked to this is the concept of Employee Voice, a mechanism to allow for two way communication between the employee and employer and for the thoughts and opinions of employees to be heard (CIPD, 2017e). MacLeod and Clarke (2009) suggest that organisational integrity and employee voice are key drivers of employee engagement. This sense of involvement and having a say as being crucial to employees is further supported by Rayton et al. (2012) and Robinson et al. (2004). In a study conducted by Dix (2013), it is found that three fifths of employees do not feel satisfied with the amount of involvement they have in decision making in their organisations and of these respondents, only one-third were proud of their organisation.

Although the importance of a consistent and clear communications strategy for organisational success is evident (Frimann and Mønsted, 2012; Cornelissen, 2011; Van Riel, 2003), CIPD (2017d) research suggests that two-fifths of employees believe they receive very little or no corporate communications detailing organisational strategy. Corporate communication will link the Talent Management strategy to the organisational strategy, outline a vision the organisation as a whole can visualise and set expectations as to the desired outcome (Wellins et al., 2010). Overall, integration and alignment of HR aspects and communication can create
a sustainable competitive advantage for organisations (Cornelissen, 2011; Barney and Clark, 2007; Becker and Huselid, 2006). Ultimately, communication is a core aspect of employee engagement which results in increased performance, retention and wellness (Verghese, 2012).

2.6.2 Wellbeing

There is a strong link between organisational culture and the success of wellbeing initiatives (Fair and Wright, 2016). A supportive organisational culture where individuals feel valued and respected will, in themselves, exude feelings of wellbeing, whereas, organisations where there is little trust and engagement will result in lower levels of wellbeing (Fair and Wright, 2016). These organisations with high levels of employee engagement outperform their low-engagement competitors (Wiley, 2008).

Research has proven that organisations who invest in effective wellbeing programmes outperform those who do not in the market (Fair and Wright, 2016; Nice, 2009). If employee wellbeing is not supported internally, the risks associated for the employer include; absenteeism costs, presenteeism, turnover costs and the impact of potential legal action and reputational damage as a result (Lewis et al., 2014). Alternatively, if the organisation does invest in wellbeing, it will reap the benefits, including employee engagement, increased performance and ultimately increased productivity (Lewis et al., 2014). Ford et al. (2011) additionally highlight the link between the wellness of the workforce and overall individual performance, while Donald et al. (2005) determined that, interestingly, almost a quarter of the variance in employee productivity is linked to wellbeing. Even though this is the case, a recent CIPD (Sinclair, 2016) survey highlighted that only one third of respondents indicated their organisation invested in a wellbeing strategy, and only one in ten organisations have a stand-alone wellbeing strategy.

Demand for employers to claim accountability for the health and wellbeing of their employees is increasing (Renwick, 2003). In Ireland, there is a general consensus among employees of becoming healthier and these employees believe their employers should play a part in this change (Nutrition and Health Foundation, 2014). The outcome of increased employer involvement significantly strengthens both the relationship between the employee and employer as well as the relationships between employees, having a positive knock on effect on engagement (Robertson and Cooper, 2010). Fundamentally, research conducted by Towers
Watson (Fairhurst and O’Connor, 2010) concluded that highly engaged employees with high levels of wellbeing are the most productive, therefore adding most value to the organisation. Additionally, engaged employees who enjoy their work are capable of working for longer periods without risk of burn out, a term which has a significant link to lack of mental wellbeing (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

Having devised and executed an effective strategy of attracting, managing, developing and engaging talent, the final element of the Talent Management strategy is ensuring this talent is retained. While retention is not a stand-alone activity, and, as can be seen from the literature, is immersed in every other element of the Talent Management strategy, it must be discussed and explored as a topic. The following section will discuss Reward, Recognition and inevitably, the Exit Process.

2.7 Retaining Talent

Despite forty percent of organisations in Ireland experiencing an increase in employee turnover (CIPD, 2018) and these high attrition rates being a significant organisational cost, it is interesting to note that fifty six percent of organisations do not calculate the cost of labour turnover (CIPD, 2017b). Similarly, only thirty two percent of global leaders view retention as a top priority (Abbott et al., 2016). Schmidt (2016) points out a further issue in the current war for talent; HR professionals are investing a significant amount of time and effort into candidate attraction but are missing the additional pieces of the puzzle such as management, development and engagement, therefore creating an unforeseen retention issue for the future. This section will explore retention techniques and will include the sub headings of reward, recognition and the exit process.

2.7.1 Reward

According to CIPD (2017, pg. 2) research:

The concept of 'total' reward covers all aspects of work that employees value, both tangible and intangible, and may form part of an overall reward Strategy.
The elements of total reward are highlighted in Figure 2.7 and include a variety of elements in order to, ultimately, satisfy intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in the form of monetary and non-monetary reward (Watson Wyatt, 2008).

**Figure 2.7 Elements of Total Reward**

According to IBEC (2013), the concept of Total Reward, including both the financial and psychological contracts between the employer and employee, is not new. Indeed, linking this to Herzberg's (1959) theory of motivation, Vaiman et al. (2008) emphasises the need for both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as retention tools. The importance of devising an effective
reward strategy in order to both attract and retain talent is well documented (Ncube et al., 2013; Moore and Bussin, 2012; Nujjoo and Meyer, 2012; Salie and Selechter, 2012). This effective total reward strategy stems from the organisation's culture, business and HR strategies, and serves to attract, motivate and retain talent (World at Work Society, 2008). In turn, this total reward strategy engages and satisfies employees, leading to increased business performance and results (World at Work Society, 2008). Similarly, Heger (2007) acknowledges that employee engagement and retention are significantly influenced by a company’s EVP, as discussed earlier in Section 2.3.1, therefore the elements of the EVP serve to motivate, engage and retain an organisation's workforce.

There does, however, appear to be disparity in the appeal of rewards between generations, with managers facing problems in attracting and retaining younger generations due to the fact that they value work related rewards and compensation more highly in comparison to previous generations (McGinnis, 2011). Likewise, motivation and individual needs are seen to be dynamic. As soon as a need has been satisfied, a person will change their needs (Maslow, 1943). It is, therefore, necessary for reward systems to change at the speed the business is changing and to adapt to the economic climate of the time (Lawler, 1971).

2.7.2 Recognition

In recent times, it has been suggested that recognition has become one of the most critical strategic people management tools to allow organisations to attract, motivate and retain talent (IBEC, 2013) and could be the untapped resource organisations require to improve business outcomes (Garr, 2012). Essentially, recognition is fundamental to organisational success (Robbins and Carlson, 2007). In today's workplace, however, recognition is not used as an engagement and retention tool as frequently as it should be (Craig, 2017). This is due to a lack of understanding as to what effective recognition involves, the assumption that a one for all approach will suffice and lack of creative thinking around recognition itself (Heathfield, 2017). Additionally, there is a deficiency of training and support in this area (Robbins and Carlson, 2007).

Taking this into consideration, it is interesting to note that only twenty percent of respondents in a recent Bersin by Deloitte (Garr, 2012) survey disclosed that they are recognised monthly or more often. Furthermore, research by the U.S. Department of Labour (Kirdahy, 2007)
determined that an alarming sixty four percent of workers leave due to feeling underappreciated in the workplace. In addition, seventy nine percent of employees do not feel valued for their work and effort (Lipman, 2015a). Having recognition programmes in place leads to significant and diverse benefits for organisations, including thirty one percent lower voluntary turnover (Garr, 2012), a fourteen percent increase in employee productivity (Garr, 2011) and a two percent increase in operating margins (Mosley, 2009). Furthermore, recognition programmes can reinforce organisational culture and values, by rewarding actions that display these characteristics (Mosley, 2009).

Line Managers recognizing employee performance gives a significant boost to recognition and increases engagement by an impressive sixty percent (Towers Watson, 2009). This is further supported by Lipman (2015b) who suggests there is a significant link between recognition and the relationship between the employee and their manager. Individuals wish to work for managers who believe in them and recognise their contributions (Lipman, 2015a). It is clear, from the literature analysed, that recognition is an extremely powerful retention tool, however one of the common workplace conundrums is that recognition remains undervalued by management as a technique (Fox, 2016).

2.7.3 The Exit Process

As previously discussed in Section 2.3.3, onboarding is viewed as a key tool in engaging and retaining talent (CIPD, 2018; Maurer 2015). Unfortunately, the exit process, or offboarding, is often disregarded as important (Schooling, 2014). Determining why employees decide to leave should be a vital piece of an organisations strategic plan, yet many organisations miss out on this opportunity (Frase-Blunt, 2004) and according to industry research only twenty nine percent of organisations have an offboarding process in place (Gheorghiu, 2017).

Exit interviews allow for insight into turnover trends, understanding as to how these trends affect organisational performance and equally the impact these trends have on the ability of the organisation to achieve its strategic goals (CIPD, 2016b). It is important to ensure data gained from conducting exit interviews feeds into other organisational and HR practices so as to enhance future retention levels (Macafee, 2007). Few organisations, however, collect, analyse, and share exit interview data and follow up with action (Spain and Groysberg, 2016).
Ensuring a positive overall exit process is extremely beneficial as it allows for future communication between the employee and employer (Schweer et al., 2011), which is becoming increasingly important due to the current trend towards the re-recruitment of highly skilled individuals (Schweer et al., 2011). Additionally, linked to employer branding, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, a sensitively handled exit process can allow the previous employee to become a brand ambassador for the organisation, therefore protecting an organisation's employer brand (Huhman, 2016; Macafee, 2007). Alternatively, if the individual leaves on a negative note, they are more likely to utilise social media to share their negative experience (Huhman, 2016).

The way an organisation bids farewell to an employee on their last day is just as critical as the way they welcome the employee on their first, therefore enhancing the journey of the employee throughout their entire life cycle (Schooling, 2014). It is vital for organisations to view offboarding as a significant piece of this employee lifecycle (Gheorghiu, 2017). Most organisations, during the current war for talent, are becoming more aware of the need for captivating attraction and retention strategies (Maurer 2015), however, the criticality of an offboarding process is yet to be realised (Schooling, 2014).

Evidently, retention techniques are not stand alone but are knitted throughout all elements of an effective Talent Management Strategy. As outlined by a strategy developed by Oracle (2012), six key practices that will aid in retaining talent include: improving the Line Manager's ability to manage, providing goals and feedback to employees, employee empowerment and succession planning. In addition, a recent CIPD (2017a) report outlines that the most common step taken to improve employee retention was by increasing the opportunities available for learning and development opportunities, followed closely by an improved induction process and improved benefits. This, again, reinforces the theory that retention, similar to engagement, is not stand alone but is a product of a dexterous Talent Management Strategy (Schweyer, 2004). The following section, ultimately, concludes the literature review.

2.8 Conclusion

The above chapter explored the area of Strategic Talent Management as a concept, deciphering from the literature a definition of the ideology and ultimately exploring five major themes recurrently appearing throughout the literature. The chapter additionally illustrates how these
themes interlink and are connected to the overall Strategic Talent Management concept. The following chapter will discuss, in detail, the research methodology chosen for the study.
Chapter 3: Methodology
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the research methodology utilised while conducting both primary and secondary research. The chapter explores the linkages between the literature and research, as well as the impact of additional factors affecting the choice of research design employed. A research methodology utilising grounded theory was undertaken for this study, and a qualitative approach was adopted, specifically utilising semi-structured interviews in order to explore industry thoughts and norms.

3.2 Rationale for the Study

The Irish economy continues to be the fastest growing in Europe (Kelpie, 2018). Additionally, Ireland has an education system that is amongst the best in the world (OECD, 2016) and is home to significant list of global leaders in various high tech industries including Biopharmaceuticals, Pharmaceuticals, Medical Devices and ICT (IDA Ireland, 2017). Ireland’s reputation for competence, adaptability and innovation has been constructed over the last 40 years and consequently, in 2017, Ireland was announced as the best country in the world for attracting foreign direct investment for the sixth year in a row (Taylor, 2017).

While this background is optimistic, the industries mentioned are dependent on a consistent talent pipeline and it cannot be denied that employers in Ireland are currently facing a war for talent (Keogh, 2017). The demand for talent is already at crisis level and this demand is predicted to increase for the foreseeable future (Keogh, 2017). The Biologics sector in Ireland, as an example, has recently experienced unparalleled investment and, as a result, will potentially require a supplementary 5,000 highly skilled professionals over the next 5 years to support this expansion (The Expert Group on Future Skills Needs, 2017). Focusing on the existing skills shortage, this poses both a challenge and an opportunity for companies in the Life Science sector. The volume of open roles within the Irish Life Science industry have increased by 50% since 2010 (McGuire, 2017) and the return of the counter offer (RTE, 2017) suggests the choice STEM candidates have but also the pressures on companies to retain top talent (McDonnell, 2018).
While attracting top talent is a critical business activity, the focus on talent is becoming more strategic (Lawler, 2017). With the relentless pressure to attract highly skilled STEM employees, HR is also focused on retention and succession planning (CIPD, 2018; Lawler, 2017). The ‘Employee Experience’ and the ‘Consumerization of HR’ (Meister, 2016; Schooling, 2014) are topics regularly debated in the employment marketplace. Workplace futurist Jeanne Meister (2016, pg. 2) described the Consumerization of HR, noting:

*The new objective is to create one employer brand which provides a seamless experience for current employees, potential employees, and consumers... to create the type of memorable employee experiences we associate with extraordinary customer experiences.*

Ultimately, the most progressive organisations now consider employees as customers and partners, therefore generating value through their people (Aghina *et al.*, 2018; Moss Kanter, 2011). In response, a holistic approach to Talent Management is necessary, optimising the employee journey by considering how people are attracted, managed, developed, engaged and retained (Whelan and Carcary, 2011).

### 3.3 The Research Question, Aims and Objectives of the Study

The research question is the core of the thesis (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). It allows for focus on the study, determines the methodology to be used and directs the system of inquiry, analysis and reporting (Coghlan and Brannick, 2014). The research question of this study is; To what extent is Strategic Talent Management understood and properly utilised in the Life Sciences sector in Ireland?

An aim is a broader statement of intent, it indicates the intent of the study (Zuber-Skerritt and Perry, 2002). The overall aim of this study is to gain a better understanding as to the concept of Strategic Talent Management and to subsequently assess whether Strategic Talent Management is properly understood, and utilised, within the Life Science sector in Ireland.
An objective, alternatively, outlines a step that is needed in order to complete the study, or achieve the aim (McKay and Marshall, 2001). Objectives should be S.M.A.R.T.; Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely (Doran, 1981). The objectives of this study are;

1. To research literature in order to gain an overarching understanding of Strategic Talent Management and compile a thorough literature review which will form the basis for questioning in empirical research.
2. Conduct interviews with Senior HR Professionals within the Life Sciences sector in Ireland to gain an insight as to how Strategic Talent Management is viewed and currently utilised in industry, and assess said interviews to trend findings and ultimately compile the basis for the thesis.
3. From the interview findings, explore the reasoning behind why this understanding and utilisation is or is not present.
4. Prepare recommendations for possible further study on the topic and identify recommendations for practice.

3.4 Research Philosophy

A paradigm contains fundamental assumptions regarding the world, the part the individual plays in it and the relationship between the world and the researcher (Healy and Perry, 2000; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Researchers will function in a particular paradigm when the activities of the researcher are directed by specific philosophies and methods (Kuhn, 1962).

Ontological assumptions are assumptions made about the reality of the world, or situation, and are based on the external world having a predetermined nature and structure (Johnson and Duberly, 2000). This study aligns with Realism which bases its research on protocols and techniques, therefore testing a hypothesis (Gill and Johnson, 2002). Realism is defined by Phillips (1987, p. 205) as:

*The view that entities exist independently of being perceived, or independently of our theories about them.*
Direct realism, also known as naïve realism, depicts the world through individual human senses (Saunders et al., 2012). Critical realism, alternatively, contends that individuals do experience the sensations and images of the real world, but that these images and sensations are deceiving and usually not representative of the real world (Novikov and Novikov, 2013). A critical realist approach will be undertaken for this study so as to encapsulate a clearer and more rounded picture (Novikov and Novikov, 2013).

Additionally, this study also utilises elements of Grounded Theory which is a systematic methodology allowing for theory to be constructed by gathering and analysing data (Martin and Turner, 1986). Grounded Theory operates inductively (Strauss and Juliet, 1994) and frequently begins with a question or data gathering (Allan, 2003). As data is collected and analysed, concepts and categories are formed which form the basis of the theory (Allan, 2003). According to Ralph et al. (2015), Grounded Theory is ‘methodologically dynamic’ and studies the meaning behind the perception the subjects of the study have and also their actions (Aldiabat and Le Navenec, 2011).

3.5 Data Collection

In order to initially form an academic foundation for the study, and subsequently decipher whether the theory is aligned to industry norms, both secondary and primary research need to be conducted.

3.5.1 Secondary Research

In order to form a theoretical basis for the study, a literature review was conducted. A literature review describes, summarises and critically evaluates literature in relation to the particular research topic or problem being investigated (Fink, 2014). Overall, a strong literature review should not simply summarise existing literature but critically analyse it and identify gaps in the research (Carnwell and Daly, 2001). Shields and Rangarajan (2013) make the poignant distinction between the process of reviewing literature as the journey and literature review as the finished, complete body of work. To ensure a coherent flow of information and analysis, the topic itself was initially defined and themes emerging from this definition were subsequently explored in more detail, with various viewpoints discussed and contrasted where
possible. The literature review highlighted the linkages between each theme and the main topic, critically assessing the differences between academic literature and industry findings as highlighted throughout the literature as a whole.

The literature utilised as part of the study came from numerous sources including books, journal articles, newspaper articles, research papers of others and research conducted by professional bodies. Significant research was conducted online due to time constraints and convenience for the type of research conducted. Online academic sources such as Academia, ResearchGate and Google Scholar proved particularly useful. Library access was also utilised to qualify theoretical concepts.

3.5.2 Primary Research

The researcher, having established the core of the study, must decide how they will go about collecting empirical research and which method best suits the study in question. The methodology selected will govern the type of research that is conducted and if the findings are acceptable for the objectives of the study (Hogan et al., 2009). Creswell (2002) outlines how the elements of enquiry lead to determining the approach to and, subsequently, the design of the research process, as indicated in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1: Elements of Primary Research Enquiry**

![Diagram of Elements of Primary Research Enquiry](image)

Source: Creswell (2002, pg. 5)
As identified in Figure 3.1, in order to conduct primary research on this study, qualitative, quantitative and mixed method research tools are available to be utilised (Creswell, 2002). These methods are further explored and explained below, before highlighting and discussing the chosen research methodology.

Qualitative Research is primarily based on non-random sampling methods and subjective data in the form of thoughts, opinions or actions (Fischer, 2005). Hogan et al. (2009, p.18) describe qualitative research as:

\[ A \text{ multifaceted approach that investigates culture, society and behaviour through an analysis and synthesis of people's words and actions. } \]

Similarly, Marshall and Rossman (1999) outline qualitative research as practical, informative and stemming from the experiences of individuals or groups. Denzin and Lincoln (1994), however, contend that the term ‘qualitative’ proposes ideologies and meanings that are not scrutinised via experimentation or measured quantifiably. Qualitative research does, nevertheless, give thought and attention to the qualities of experience, something which is not analysed in depth in quantitative research (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997). Ultimately, a qualitative approach is uniquely suited to understanding an individual’s personal perception (Fischer, 2005), with the individual in question studied in all of their complexity (Flick, 1998). The qualitative method can take place in the form of in depth interviews, focus groups or observations to name a few (Fischer, 2005). Information rich participants are needed in order for the research to be valid (Flick, 1998).

Quantitative research concentrates on gathering statistical data and generalizing results across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon (Muijs, 2010). Creswell (2002, pg. 18) suggests that a quantitative method involves a post positivist approach for gathering knowledge and:

\[ \text{Collects data on predetermined instruments that yield statistical data. } \]

Data analysis is conducted with the aid of statistics with the goal of yielding an unbiased result that can, ultimately, be generalised to a larger population (Given, 2008). Findings of quantitative studies are usually easy to present, summarize and compare (Given, 2008).
Essentially, the main aim of quantitative research is to determine a relationship between one independent variable and another dependent variable or outcome (Leonard et al., 2011). Quantitative Research is primarily based on random sampling and objective data in the form of numbers and figures and structured data collection instruments are used (Muijs, 2010). The quantitative method will usually be in the form of a survey or questionnaire and will ideally have a large number of respondents to validate the findings (Leonard et al., 2011).

Mixed Method Research uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research, as described above. Neither a quantitative nor qualitative research method is better an approach than the other and, likewise, they are not mutually exclusive (Best and Kahn, 1989). Mixing qualitative and quantitative research methods can be beneficial in offering more comprehensive explanations of social phenomena (Hogan, et al., 2009), thus offsetting the potential weakness of using one method independent of the other.

Using this method involves a pragmatic approach to knowledge gathering, utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods to better understand the research problem (Creswell, 2002). This method, therefore, involves gathering data in the form of both numerical value, as well as thoughts and opinions (Creswell, 2002). A significant advantage of mixed method research is triangulation, where an ideology is approached from different perspectives so as a clearer understanding can be obtained (Johnson et al., 2007). It can, however, be difficult to utilise one method by simply drawing on the findings of another (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Likewise, it can be uncertain how to solve discrepancies that appear when interpreting findings (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998).

Each of qualitative, quantitative and mixed method approaches are an appropriate way to answer a particular type of research question, therefore it is crucial that the researcher understands which of the above methods best suits the study in question (Hogan et al., 2009). Based on the research topic and the analysis of types of empirical research above, the researcher has decided that qualitative research methods, in the form of semi structured interviews, would best suit the needs of this study due to its ability to allow for an in depth understanding of the topic to be obtained.
3.6 Semi Structured Interviews

Qualitative research methods best suit research questions, similar to the question asked in this particular study, that are focused on how certain processes or structures are interrelated due to the fact that the researcher is quite interested in how opinions and thoughts are developed and expressed (Hogan et al., 2009). For the purpose of this study, semi structured interviews will allow for the researcher to keep an open mind, therefore allowing concepts and theories emerge from the primary research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This allows for an inductive approach to theorizing and conceptualizing (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Table 3.1 highlights the reasoning behind why qualitative research is utilised in primary research to answer a particular research question. It highlights the required inputs to allow for the research to succeed, as well as the ideal outputs in order for the analysis to be synthesised (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

Table 3.1 The Requirements and Ideals of Qualitative Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Qualitative Research</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Curiosity and Reflexivity</td>
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<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Viewpoint</td>
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<td>Outcome</td>
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<td>Sample Size</td>
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<td>Context</td>
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<td>Analysis</td>
<td>Synthesis</td>
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Source: Adapted from Bryman and Bell (2015, pg. 24)

For this study, qualitative research, in the form of semi structured interviews, will involve engaging a number of information rich participants in order to gain a greater and detailed understanding of the context. Five in depth semi structured interviews with a cross section of Senior HR Professionals from various multinational organisations within the Life Sciences sector in Ireland will form the basis of the empirical research for this study.
An interview, formal or informal, is a conversation between individuals where questions are asked and answered (Kvale and Brinkman, 2008). An in depth interview allows for a skilled interviewer to gain insight into the thoughts and opinions of a particular individual in relation to a specific subject (Kvale and Brinkman, 2008). While a structured interview has a defined set of questions to be explored and it is not permitted to deviate from its path, a semi structured interview is more open, following a set of themes or questions that can be expanded on should an interviewee discuss an unconsidered point (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Semi structured interviews are, essentially, a type of exploratory research where data collected is open to interpretation and is not validated by statistics (Bernard, 2000).

Semi structured interviews, as opposed to unstructured interviews, are more appropriate where the researcher is exploring a specific research question (Bernard, 2000). When utilising semi structured interviews to answer a specific research question, respondents are chosen to match certain criteria pertaining to the research question (Bernard, 2000) and the interviews are conducted relatively informally with the interviewer allowing the interviewee to openly give their thoughts and opinions (Bjørnholt and Farstad, 2012). It is important that the interviewer creates a safe environment where the interviewee feels secure expressing themselves (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Equally, for the purposes of this specific study, it is imperative that the interviewee’s are comfortable that their thoughts will remain confidential (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). The interviewer must show that they value the opinions and responses of the interviewee and must not appear threatening or judging (Edwards and Holland, 2013).

For this study, semi structured interviews were utilised to interview respected HR Professionals and to explore their thoughts, examine social norms in specific organisations and, in some areas, to prompt confidential information to be discussed (Bernard, 2000). Although semi structured interviews are timely and a small sample size is used, the benefits far outweigh the negatives (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). By conducting these interviews, the researcher gains greater insight by receiving more complete answers and perhaps uncovering unsolicited observations (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999) which will further enhance the study.

3.6.1 Research Tools Used During Interviews

A number of tools were utilised in conducting the primary research for the study:
1. **Microsoft Outlook**
   Utilised for initial communication with respondents via email and to organise interviews using the calendar function. Subsequently, Outlook was also utilised to thank respondents for their participation.

2. **Microsoft Word**
   This tool was used to generate a shortlist of organisations, and individuals, to interview, create the interview question document and to transcribe interviews after they had been conducted.

3. **Apple iPhone 7**
   A voice recording application was downloaded to the Apple iPhone 7 in order to record interviews for transcription and analysis.

4. **Dictaphone**
   Similarly, a Dictaphone was also utilised as secondary mechanism to record interviews for transcription and analysis, in case the voice recording application on Apple iPhone 7 failed.

5. **Samsung Office Serv**
   Where possible, face to face interviews were conducted and this was the case for the majority of interviews carried out. Due to time and location constraints in one particular case, a telephone interview was conducted utilising Samsung Office Serv. This was recorded using the above Apple iPhone voice recording application and Dictaphone.

The rationale behind using these research tools was to allow for a structured approach to data collection so as to promote ease of data interpretation and analysis going forward and therefore aid in the generation of overall findings.

### 3.6.2 Sampling and Gaining Access

In order to collect qualitative data, a sample must be selected. For this study, a purposeful sampling method was utilised, where participants were selected based on the criteria as identified by the research question (Marshall, 1996). In this case, this involved maximum
variation sampling, where it is preferential to capture a variety of perspectives (Berg and Lune, 2004). Essentially this aim of maximum variation is to gain a greater insight into a particular phenomenon by looking at the topic from multiple angles (Malterud, 2001).

For the purpose of this study, semi structured interviews were utilised to collect qualitative data. The researcher utilised their own network and the networks of colleagues in order to reach out to participants and secure interviews. Participants were initially contacted by phone and email by both the researcher and colleagues of the researcher to extend an invitation to participate, as seen in Appendix 1. Subsequently, appointments were arranged via Microsoft Outlook, again, as seen in Appendix 1. Thank you notes were send subsequent to the interviews taking place to express gratitude and a sample of this can be seen in Appendix 1.

The scope of the research itself called for Senior HR Professionals in the Life Sciences sector in Ireland to be interviewed due to the level of knowledge and experience needed in order to sufficiently answer interview questions and provide valid insight. From a sampling convenience perspective, time constraints and access to participants came into play, however the approach remained logical, and all organisations and individuals selected matched the brief. Five participants were interviewed (60% male, 40% female) with almost an equal balance between HR Director/Head (60%) and Senior HR Manager (40%) levels. All participants represented multinational organisations in the Life Sciences sector with 20% of participants from Biopharmaceuticals, 40% from Pharmaceuticals and a further 40% from Medical Device and Diagnostics. Further insight into the profiles of respondents and the organisations they represent have been provided in Table 3.2.

3.7 Validity, Ethics and Reflection

Qualitative research is based on data that is subjective and open to interpretation, therefore the outputs are more open to questioning and analysis (Smith, 2007). Consequentially, it is crucial to ensure that the findings of a qualitative study are reliable and valid (Whittemore et al., 2001). Consistent, dependable results should be produced if the research is repeated, the results themselves should be credible and have the ability to be transferred to different contexts (Onwuegbuzie and Leech, 2007).
From an ethical point of view, data collected was maintained in line with The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) (2016/679). All participants were made aware of the data collection steps, where data was to be stored and how data gathered would be utilised. Each participant was subsequently asked whether their preference would be to be named or remain anonymous. As all participants did have a preference for remaining anonymous, it was subsequently explained that data would be kept confidentially and interviews would be coded. Recordings, transcriptions and other materials eluding to participants names and organisations were stored in a password protected file on the researcher’s personal computer, and the password was known only by the researcher. Additionally, the impact of using Grounded Theory had to be considered from an ethical viewpoint. As researchers are aware of their values and opinions and therefore are not detached from the process, they must be conscious of their own prejudice and potential of influencing the study and be prepared and equipped to conduct abstract thinking (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Chiovitti and Piran, 2003).

Furthermore, the rationale behind the study and the aims and objectives of the study were discussed with each respondent prior to the interview taking place and once explained, a further question was asked to ensure that the respondent was still comfortable in participating. It was important that the respondents were aware that an ethical approach had been undertaken and would, therefore, be more trusting of the interviewer. A predetermined interview questioning method was followed during each interview so as to standardise the process and reduce the possibility of bias.

As part of the study, the researcher undertook a reflective journal, as per Appendix 3. Reflective journals are subjective, focusing on an individual’s experience and response then, subsequently, reflecting on these (Bean, 1996). There is evidence to suggest that deep reflection, outside of an academic learning experience, can also increase an individual’s critical thinking skills and enhance self-awareness and meta cognition (Homik and Melis, 2007; Bean, 1996). Throughout the process of the study, the researcher kept note of thoughts, feelings, learning experiences and progress and, towards completion, deeply reflected on these. This greatly benefitted the researcher by allowing for new opinions and perspectives to form.
Table 3.2 Background Information on Respondents and the Organisations they Represent

**Company A**

*Company A* is a Portuguese owned global Contract Manufacturing and Development organisation, dedicated to helping pharmaceutical companies bring new and off patent drugs to market. The organisation established a presence in Cork in 2009, employing 200 staff in Ireland.

*Respondent A* is the Human Resources Director at Company A. She is educated to Masters level and has 20 years’ HR experience in a variety of industries including Business Services and Life Science.

**Company B**

*Company B* is an American multinational manufacturer and distributor of diagnostic imaging agents, and medical diagnostic equipment. The organisation established a presence in Ireland three decades ago and currently employs over 600 staff in Ireland.

*Respondent B* is the HR Manager at Company B. She is educated to Masters level and has 30 years’ HR experience within a number of industries such as ICT and Life Science.

**Company C**

*Company C* is a global Medical Device organisation, focused on upper and lower extremities and biologics. The organisation established a presence in Cork in 2015, having merged with another Medical Device organisation and currently employs 200 staff in Ireland.
Respondent C is the Senior HR Manager at Company C. He is educated to Masters level and has 21 years’ HR experience supporting a number of sectors including Life Science and Automotive.

**Company D**

*Company D* again is a multinational organisation, focused on pharmaceuticals, eye care and generics. The organisation established its Irish presence in 1994 and currently employs 1,000 staff in Cork alone.

Respondent D is the Head of Human Resources at Company D. He is educated to Degree level and has 30 years’ experience supporting Life Science, Oil and Gas, as well as other sectors.

**Company E**

*Company E* is a research based Biopharmaceutical company focused on the discovery, development and commercialisation of innovative medicines in areas of unmet needs. The company established its presence in Ireland in 1997 and currently employs over 400 staff in Ireland.

Respondent E is the Head of Human Resources at Company E. He is educated to Masters level and has 20 years’ experience in the HR field supporting the ICT and Life Science industries.
3.8 Data Analysis

According to Yin (1994), the finest piece of research is useless if it is not disseminated so that others can benefit from it. For the purpose of this study, qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews was analysed to establish patterns, features, and themes (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In order to analyse the data collected during the semi-structured interviews, pattern matching was utilised in order to compare data that has been observed (Yin, 1994; Eisenhardt, 1989). Subjectivity is expected due to the nature of the interviewees (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). Ultimately, the goal is to determine a set of specific findings that are not as generalisable as quantitative research (Bergmann et al., 2004). For this study, the extent to which Strategic Talent Management is both understood and utilised in the Life Science sector in Ireland was assessed and an inductive approach was taken (Bryman and Bell, 2015).

A large portion of the quality of the research conducted lies in the quality of the coding executed (Strauss, 1987). Coding, as part of a qualitative research method, includes utilising a word or brief phrase that applies a particular theme or meaning to a particular portion of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2008). Multiple cycles of coding should be completed in order to sufficiently code and, subsequently, interpret the data gathered (Saldaña, 2008). Easterby-Smith et al. (2002) identified a data analysis model based on grounded theory, as per Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2 outlines the process of data analysis, inclusive of coding and recoding, so as to ensure for a comprehensive understanding of concepts and themes emerging throughout the primary research which will be utilised for the purpose of this study. Throughout the analysis of the primary research outputs for this study, this involved becoming familiar with the interviews through transcription, reading through the transcribed documents, re-listening to recordings and coding themes accordingly. These codes were reflected upon in order to form concepts, which were subsequently catalogued. The transcriptions were subsequently re-coded so as to make sure elements were not ignored and the emerging themes were linked with the literature and industry norms. Once linkages were established, a re-evaluation was carried out to validate concepts and to ensure for the correct findings and conclusions to be gathered.
3.9 Conclusion

This chapter assessed the links between the literature and the findings. Detailing the methodical and philosophical approaches, this chapter discussed the utilisation of Realism and Grounded Theory as well as taking an inductive approach. In addition, the chapter explained the reasoning behind the use of semi structured interviews. Having explored the methodology to be used as part of the study and completed a thorough review of literature, the next chapter, Chapter 4, introduces and explores the findings of the study in depth.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss and critically analyse the outputs of the semi structured interviews conducted, highlighting main themes as discovered in order to form a basis for key findings, limitations and recommendations. The analysis and thematic discussion will be compared and contrasted with the literature reviewed, as per Chapter 2. The themes discussed in this chapter will include; the respondents perception of Strategic Talent Management and the importance of how and why talent is Attracted, Managed, Developed, Engaged and Retained.

4.2 Respondents Perceptions of Strategic Talent Management

As discussed in Section 2.2 of the study, the literature suggests that the theory of Strategic Talent Management remains underdeveloped due to a lack of clear definition and conceptual boundaries (Collings and Mellahi, 2009; Aston and Morton, 2005). Schweyer (2004) asserts that although organisations realise talent is their most valuable asset, the majority do not act as though Strategic Talent Management is paramount and despite good intentions have failed to create a talent first strategy. From the analysis of the primary research conducted as part of the study, it becomes immediately clear that there is a lack of understanding as to the meaning of Strategic Talent Management within the Life Science Sector in Ireland. Consequentially, when respondents were asked what Strategic Talent Management meant, three of the five respondents interviewed associated Strategic Talent Management with Development, as indicated by the following representative statement:

The capability of our people to progress in their careers and add value to the business (Respondent D).

The two additional respondents initially eluded to the fact that there is a bigger picture surrounding Talent Management than simply development, as indicated by the following statement:
It's everything from how we recruit, train, onboard, develop, structure the company, how we communicate so that individuals can see where their growth path is (Respondent A).

Ultimately, however, both of these respondents circle back to correlating Talent Management with development when further pushed on the topic by asking who is responsible for Talent Management, as summarised by the below quotation:

*It’s driven from the top, from the General Manager, which is great and would have his support to roll out his talent review and succession planning on a formal basis twice a year (Respondent A).*

This again correlates with the literature which suggests that Strategic Talent Management is explicitly not understood in industry.

Fernand (2008) proffers that before talent can be developed, motivated and retained, it must first be identified and selected. Similarly, CIPD (2017b) research attests that it is no longer enough to simply attract talented individuals. The above literature has a significant link with the thoughts of Respondent E, who notes:

*If you can’t attract them in the first place then you don’t have any talent to manage (Respondent E).*

Without this opinion and ability to see the linkages between all elements of a dexterous Talent Management Strategy, it is impossible to understand why a Talent Management strategy is needed, or to create a strategy to support this ideology. It is apparent that there is work to be done to shift the viewpoint of the industry and to promote the implementation of talent focused strategies.

Although there appears to be a perceived lack of understanding of the theory of Talent Management in industry, it can be seen from the primary research conducted that although the ‘dots’ have not joined from a definition perspective, the elements present in a dexterous Talent Management Strategy are in existence in the majority of the organisations interviewed as part of the study. The following five sub sections will explore the elements of a Talent Management
Strategy to include Attracting, Managing, Developing, Engaging and Retaining talent and the benefits of their utilisation to the organisation.

4.3 Attracting Talent

Looking specifically at Attracting Talent, this section will explore Employer Branding, The Recruitment Process and Onboarding in detail.

4.3.1 Employer Branding

When asked whether employer branding was important, and if it was carried out, in the organisation, the general consensus across all respondents was that yes, employer branding is important, but no, enough is not done from an employer branding perspective within their organisation. All respondents understood the value that a strong employer brand could add, as indicated by the below quotation:

*Brand is so important. From the get go when the job opens to the interview process – making sure the meet and greet is branded appropriately and they leave with a strong feeling of our brand (Respondent B).*

Respondents admitted, however, that branding, although value adding, was not utilised as much as it should be. Indeed, Respondent C outlined:

*We haven’t invested and developed our employer branding sufficiently and that is a problem for us when competing with some large competitors in the same business sector (Respondent C).*

These thoughts considerably contradict the literature which suggested that organisations are becoming more proactive with their branding strategies (Abbot et al., 2016), with nine out of ten organisations surveyed increasing efforts to improving their employer brand over the last year (CIPD, 2016). It is suggested, furthermore, that this eludes to the changing role of HR to encompass an element of marketing activities (Abbot et al., 2016), again contradicted by the lack of emphasis on employer branding in the organisations engaged as part of the study.
Interestingly, it becomes apparent from speaking with two of the respondents, who represent organisations present in the marketplace for a significantly longer time period than the others, that historically these organisations have a sense of confidence in the ability of the company name to speak for itself and therefore have not engaged in employer branding activities. This finding was not deliberately investigated as part of the study, nor was it a predicted outcome. Indeed, this could link to the reasoning for branding not being utilised by industry at present. There is a realisation occurring, however, that change is needed, as indicated by the following quotation:

_We think, and we might be wrong, that when our name is mentioned to a candidate, they will say they know us and that we offer good employment, good benefits and a good package. We feel, and I am talking historically, that we don't have to fight as hard to get talent as we will have to in the next five years_ (Respondent D)

Alternatively, the remainder of the respondents, who are more recent entrants to the Irish Life Science industry, are of the consensus that employer branding will have a positive impact on establishing and increasing the perception of their organisations in the marketplace, as Respondent A outlines:

_It's getting people hearing the name and then when they hear it mentioned in the locality, they have a positive impression_ (Respondent A).

One of these three respondents suggested the reasoning behind branding not being utilised is due to lack of available time and prioritising other tasks as more important, which again is perhaps a credible reason for the non-utilisation of employer branding.

Remarkably, it appears that the three most recent entrants to the Life Science sector in Ireland are more engaged with actively promoting their brand than the two respondents who are veterans in the industry. Perhaps, these three respondents are more aware of the challenges facing organisations to attract talent in the ongoing war for talent, having had to recruit a significantly higher amount of staff in recent times. Going forward, with skills shortages set to increase, the two organisations who appear complacent and comfortable in their reputation speaking for itself will be behind their competitors in terms of branding and this may have a negative effect on their attractiveness as an employer of choice than those organisations who
are proactively promoting and communicating their Employer Value Proposition (EVP) in advance of this.

Further exploring the concept of the EVP, Berman-Gorvine (2018) stresses the importance of following through on the promise of an EVP, determining that the absence of this leads to lack of trust. Again highlighting this need for trust, Ready et al. (2014) advocate the need for authenticity in employer branding in order to be transparent. Throughout the primary research conducted, two of the five respondents explicitly highlight the importance of making sure the messages communicated in employer branding and throughout the EVP are backed up by the reality of the situation on site, complimenting the literature. Respondent A discussed how changing their onsite actions had a positive impact on branding, noting:

You can only change the brand if it is backed up by the reality in the site. Up until 3 years ago, our reputation wasn’t great and justifiably so. Employees didn’t get well trained or onboarded. There was a high turnover and a high turnover in the management team. It was chaotic. We have changed the actions on site, the culture is more positive, it is a better place to work (Respondent A).

Additionally, Respondent E discussed how they ensure their branding activities are authentic in order to ensure candidates that are a cultural fit are attracted, remarking:

A lot of companies (engage in branding) but its empty rhetoric. When we do it, we prefer to be authentic. It can be quite a direct and dynamic culture, so we don’t sugar coat or window dress. For that reason, we would want to make sure the people we are attracting are a cultural fit (Respondent E).

Similarly, Respondent C offers a similar opinion by suggesting that their employees are the most important ambassador of the organisation from a branding and recruitment perspective.

Again, due to the ongoing war for talent, candidates have an array of choice in the employment marketplace. Certain employers will emerge as top employers during this time, in part due to creating and communicating their employer brand. It is clear, from the literature explored and the above findings, that the messages communicated within this employer brand must be honest and translate to the reality in the working environment. If not, this will lead to retention issues
in both the short and long terms and will ultimately have a negative impact on the organisation and their brand.

Overall, it can be argued that employer branding is an important activity for all of the organisations interviewed in this study to engage in going forward. The current war for talent is raging and organisations need to be able to set themselves apart from their competitors. It has been discussed that the talent pool in Ireland is limited and as such, the respondents interviewed as part of this study are all competing for the same talent. Therefore, it is crucial to make the offering of the company magnetic (Keller and Meaney, 2017), and to follow through on this offer in order to attract, and retain, talent.

4.3.2 The Recruitment Process

It has been suggested, in the literature, that in order for recruitment and selection to be successful, it must be strategic (Brazeel, 2010; Sangeetha, 2010; Fernando, 2008). Stemming from this, respondents were asked when last did they evaluate their recruitment process. Positively, all five respondents reported that their recruitment processes had been evaluated quite recently and four of five respondents indicated that they continuously evaluate recruitment practices on an ongoing basis. This compliments the literature which highlights the need for organisations to immediately develop a robust recruitment and selection strategy (Brazeel, 2010).

Interestingly, the topic shifted unexpectedly when speaking about the recruitment process itself and a trend amongst four of the five respondents became clear. Four of the five respondents interviewed are currently operating a recruitment model that is supported either by an internal centre of excellence recruitment team or a recruitment process outsourced solution, therefore have significantly reduced Site HR activities from a recruitment point of view, as indicated by Respondent B, noting:

_We have an internal Talent Acquisition team within our Centre of Excellence partner who have to look at the global picture (Respondent B)._
It becomes apparent, however, through discussion from two of these four respondents who have recently implemented these models, that this is not without its own challenges. Respondent D notes:

> Now we have a talent acquisition services group who are our go to for recruitment. I think they are still learning their craft and I wouldn't be entirely happy with the way it is working, they don't understand our specific sector or overall company (Respondent D).

This infers a hidden cost of having a Talent Acquisition function that does not work optimally and the organisation bearing the cost of this resource and additionally having to budget for recruitment agency placement fees, who are engaged in the process due to the failure of the internal team, as outlined by the below quotation:

> From a strategy point of view, we have to build incremental cost into our budget because we are paying more to the agencies to hire our talent (Respondent B).

The above situation is not best practice and defeats the purpose of the dedicated Talent Acquisition function. Action is necessary to address this problem as it is causing significant unnecessary cost to the organisation. Perhaps these organisations need to evaluate whether their current internal models are justifiable or if change is needed.

Looking specifically at the candidate experience within the recruitment process, respondents were asked if those who are involved in recruitment are aware of the candidate experience and whether this is maximised. Three of the five respondents were not confident in the Hiring Managers and centralised Talent Acquisition teams abilities to drive this, as noted by Respondent B:

> Unfortunately, I don't think the Hiring Managers are equipped, they are not driven by the brand, they are not driven by the urgency or the speed or the experience the candidate is going through. They don't understand the dynamics of the marketplace (Respondent B).
Two of these three respondents feel it falls to HR to educate hiring managers as to the present marketplace and additionally to continuously follow up for feedback for candidates, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

Maybe we don’t do enough with those individuals to educate them. Because it’s a continuous activity for HR, maybe we forget that particular manager has not recruited for a while. It’s a nuisance because you are chasing people and its time consuming for HR (Respondent A).

Regardless, this indicates that four of the five respondents interviewed believe the candidate experience could be better optimised.

In light of the points discussed, it becomes apparent that HR is not confident in the abilities of their internal recruitment teams and hiring managers throughout the recruitment process. This finding was not intentionally explored as part of the study and was not an expected outcome. Perhaps this indicates a fear that the correct candidates are not being selected to fulfil the duties of the required role, which may have significant knock on effects on productivity and organisational success. It could be suggested that there is more to be done to promote the determination of Person – Organisation and Person – Job fit (Schneider, 1987), as indicated in the literature.

4.3.3 Onboarding

Specifically assessing onboarding, best practice suggests that onboarding should extend itself to the first year of the employees lifecycle (Maurer, 2015). Furthermore, the literature also proposes that few organisations prioritize onboarding programs, but still expect new employees to drive results within 90 days (Llarena, 2013). From the primary research conducted, it becomes clear that there is ambiguity as to the length of time needed to come up the initial learning curve. All respondents provide different onboarding timelines for various roles, a departure from the best practice as outlined in the literature. Additionally, four of the five respondents interviewed do not believe their onboarding practices are in an optimal space, noting:
One of the challenges is customising the training after the initial onboarding or induction programme for individuals. There is more work to be done there (Respondent C).

One respondent in particular highlights the danger of the technological focus of onboarding programmes, outlining that:

> With all the modern multinationals now, everything is technology based so when you get your laptop you are almost expected to configure it yourself. The support resources are not there like they used to be because we have leaned out all of those functions, so that onboarding buddy is key (Respondent B).

Franko (2013) outlines that fifty four percent of organizations see increased new hire productivity when a standardized onboarding process is in place. This resonates with two respondents in particular who believe in the link between being prepared for the new hire to join and increased productivity, remarking:

> The more supporting you are to an individual joining your business, the more effective and productive they are early on in the relationship (Respondent E).

According to the literature, onboarding is a key step to engaging and retaining talent (Muarer, 2015). Three of the five respondents align with this viewpoint and believe that strategic onboarding has a significant link to retention, outlining that:

> If you don’t get the person in the right frame of mind in the first few weeks, you usually don’t. They never properly settle into the company (Respondent A)

Worryingly, the above points indicate that although HR is aware of the importance and significance of an effective onboarding programme, efforts to ensure an optimal onboarding process is in place are not occurring in four of the five respondent organisations. In a war for talent where effective onboarding is viewed as a key retention tool, this will negatively impact the turnover of these organisations.
Interestingly, the confidence in the organisation and industry, as discussed earlier, again resonates through the responses of two particular respondents, outlining:

*Because we are a Pharmaceutical company, we don’t have that much turnover in the business (Respondent B).*

Traditionally, the Life Science industry in Ireland would have been seen as a leading employer and an extremely attractive option for candidates in the marketplace. As Ireland remains as attractive as ever for Foreign Direct Investment and opportunities in other industries become available, this confidence will not be sustainable going forward. It is crucial for organisations to develop stringent onboarding practices spanning the first year of the employees lifecycle so as to engage the employee from the outset, ensure this individual comes up the learning curve and to enhance productivity at an earlier stage in the employment relationship. It has been noted, both in the literature and throughout the primary research conducted that not having effective onboarding practices in place will lead to increased turnover (Equifax, 2014; White, 2012). It is clear from the observations above that the majority of respondents are not happy with their current onboarding practices and are of the opinion that these need to change. Not having optimised onboarding practices in place will have a negative impact on the relationship with the employee and can have knock on effects on branding and employer reputation.

A McKinsey (2012) Global Institute study has predicted that employers in North America and Europe will demand eighteen million more third level educated workers than will be available in 2020. This will lead to one in ten necessary roles not being filled (McKinsey, 2012). A sobering statistic and proving the need for further optimisation of attraction practices in a war for talent that is predicted to intensify.

**4.4 Managing Talent**

This section will explore the Management of Talent, focusing on Leadership Capabilities, Performance Management and fostering a Coaching Culture.
4.4.1 Leadership Capabilities

The literature suggests that defining good leadership talent can be difficult, as elements of this ability eludes definition and differs per organisation (Michaels et al., 2001). It is also proposed that efforts to define and develop managerial and leadership talent can be achieved by creating a thorough organisational competency model (Brownwell, 2006; Boyatzis, 1982) and developing a matrix of behavioural, technical and leadership competencies (Zheltoukhova and Weeks, 2017). When asked how leadership competence and success is assessed within the organisation, three of the five respondents interviewed outlined that this was evaluated during performance management, as indicated by the below quotation:

*As part of performance management, there are periods in the year where they have to sit down and have a performance and development conversation (Respondent E).*

From researching and from knowledge of the industry, this assessment through performance management indicates that a form of competency model is utilised to assess competence and success. It is unclear, however, how detailed this model is and whether it includes a full matrix of behavioural, technical and leadership competencies. Indeed, only one respondent indicates their use of behavioural competencies only in performance management.

Additionally, four of the five respondents indicate that they gauge managerial and leadership effectiveness by the success of their individual teams, as discussed by Respondent D, noting:

*The primary criteria would be the ability to achieve success through others. Team leaders here have to understand that they have accountability for people, it's a very fundamental expectation. Those people can make you look really good, or really bad, depending on how you manage them (Respondent D).*

The above is indicative of the need for strong leaders within the Life Science sector, again correlating with the literature that suggests people do not leave organisations, but leave managers (Buckingham and Coffman, 1998) which was also, explicitly mentioned as the opinion of two respondents in particular.
Interestingly, one particular respondent mentions the lack of leadership assessment undertaken by the organisation in the past, noting:

*We promoted from within without a proper assessment of the individual skills and capabilities (Respondent B).*

This, therefore, proves a link between managing and developing talent as this lack of leadership assessment has had a knock on effect on organisational and succession planning, leaving the organisation without appropriately developed resources for current opportunities, as discussed in the below quotation:

*Are we filling from within? No. Unfortunately, we don’t have the skillsets within. From a middle management layer, some of those folks have gone through the interview process for some of these Senior positions and they haven’t made the grade. What’s the reason for that? We haven’t had that focus or investment in development of our talent or leadership pipeline over the past number of years (Respondent B).*

Additionally, the literature suggests that an organisation should adopt a specific leadership style which promotes engagement, therefore empowering their employees (CIPD, 2014). Interestingly, when probed on leadership capabilities, only one of the respondents mentioned the leadership style in their organisation.

*Here, leadership are at the bottom of the chain and everyone else is above us. We are here to ‘unboss’, meaning we are empowering our people by not telling them what to do, letting them get on with their role. Servant management concept where the leader is in a position to serve the needs of the people out there doing the job (Respondent D).*

This leads to the perception that leadership style is not well defined within the organisations studied. If leadership style is not well defined and communicated, this will have a detrimental impact on the ability of leaders to drive the vision and mission of the organisation as well as effectively manage and lead people. This significantly impacts employee engagement (CEB, 2014) and competitive advantage for the organisation (Caligiui, 2006), as suggested in the literature.
Due to the growing global trend of devolving HR responsibilities to Line Management (Larsen and Brewster, 2003), and the viewpoint of HR Professionals in Ireland that this devolution has so far been ineffective (CIPD, 2018), it is therefore more important than ever for leaders and managers to be equipped to support Talent Management strategies (Larsen and Brewster, 2003). When asked whether they were satisfied with the skill and ability level of their managers, and if their managers were equipped to deploy a Talent Management Strategy, four of the five respondents answered no, with Respondent A noting:

No. It's a work in progress (Respondent A)

This significantly correlates with the literature and is worrying. Linked with the discussion as per Section 4.3.2 of the study, it is clear that HR lack confidence in their Line Management. All respondents do, however, mention that they have put in place, or are currently implementing, an action plan to negate these lack of skills and ability, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

We haven’t had that focus or investment in development of our talent or leadership pipeline over the past number of years. So, you are in a business who are in a growth phase, your primary focus is on the business HR probably did the HR piece of the work and didn’t have somebody focusing on the OD side of things. I have now hired somebody from an OD perspective who is going to help and support me to develop that piece (Respondent B).

This shows the willingness of HR to counteract the lack of skills and ability, giving Line Managers the opportunity to build the trust of HR and the organisation.

4.4.2 Performance Management

According to the literature, performance management reform is necessary, led by a shift away from a rule and planning based system toward a simpler and faster model driven by feedback from all participants (Cappelli and Tavis, 2018). Essentially, more of an emphasis is needed on continuous feedback and coaching, and reducing the focus on appraisal (Armstrong and Taylor 2017). Interestingly, when asked to define their current performance management models, four
of the five respondents interviewed described annual models that utilised weightings and scores in the forms of numbers and colours, as noted by Respondent D:

*It's very robust, though old fashioned because we have chosen to remain with the standard calibration and ratings process whereas many more companies have dispensed with the forced distribution curve (Respondent D)*

This significantly contradicts the literature which suggests the readiness of organisations to embrace performance management reform (Kinley, 2016).

Additionally, the literature highlights that many of the organisations who have appeared to step away from the annual performance appraisal continue to hold an end of year conversation (Cappelli and Tavis, 2016; Baer, 2014), to cement what has been discussed frequently over the course of the year (Armstrong and Baron, 2015, Hutchinson, 2013). The fifth respondent interviewed as part of the study has embraced performance management reform, stepping away from the forced distribution curve. This organisation, however, continues to hold an end of year discussion to formalise the conversations that occurred throughout the year, as highlighted by the following representative quotation:

*We are a no rating based system. What we are driving for is manager employee communication on a continuous basis so that there are no surprises or no horrible formal end of year review that you are dreading going in. You should feel comfortable going in pretty much knowing what the outcome is going to be (Respondent B).*

This overall lack of readiness to reform performance management systems could be linked to the traditional nature of the Life Science sector. This sector is historic, having established in Ireland in the sixties, and is highly regulated and rule driven. As a result, change can be difficult when documentation is highly controlled. Additionally, many of these organisations are part of a global network, therefore cannot make local changes easily. That being said, the literature has suggested that organisations in this sector have initiated performance management reform (Nisen, 2015), therefore change is not impossible. Likewise, the literature suggests that although it is clear that change is necessary and a move from traditional performance appraisals is imminent (Rowland, 2011; Dries and Pepermans, 2008), there is limited evidence to suggest a solid replacement (Gifford, 2016). The fear of the unknown, or not knowing how to progress
past the current weighted performance management system, could be a root cause of the complacency within the Life Science sector.

Assessing performance management from an additional perspective, the literature highlights the importance of an effective performance management system which plays a part in goal setting, monitoring progress, learning and development activities, succession planning and feedback (Gifford, 2016). When respondents were asked if the performance management system was linked to other HR processes, the consensus amongst four of the five respondents was that it is not integrated as much as it should be, as indicated by the following quotation:

*Managers may not be sophisticated enough to understand what needs to be done with the outputs of the performance management system (Respondent C).*

Again, this links to the lack of confidence HR have in the skills and abilities of their Line Managers in deploying a Talent Management Strategy. As Line Managers are driving the majority of the Talent Management activities, the lack of confidence HR have in their ability is perturbing.

4.4.3 Coaching Culture

According to the literature, promoting a culture of coaching is important at all levels within an organisation to develop the skills of the employee and to enhance their ability to lead and guide internal and external interactions at various levels (Pullen and Crane, 2011). Respondents were asked if their organisations foster a culture of coaching and the responses were mixed. Two of the five respondents are confident in their organisations efforts at promoting a culture across the board, as indicated by the following representative quote:

*We would be very conscious in the development action plans to assign a coach or mentor. It can be either. We have global mentoring programmes where mentors and mentees are identified from different sites (Respondent D).*

The remaining three of the five respondents, however, promote coaching but from middle management level upwards only, as highlighted by Respondent C, noting:
Last year, we made a conscious effort to have all people managers complete a coaching programme aimed at creating an empowered group of employees and it has succeeded to some extent (Respondent C).

Cognisant of Respondent C’s opinion that this coaching programme has succeeded to some extent, it is interesting to note that the three respondents who promote coaching from middle management level upward are at the beginning of their coaching journey. Two of these three respondents represent organisations that are more recently established in Ireland than the others. Respondent A discusses the impact of having less experienced Line Managers on coaching, noting:

In QC, we have team leads with very little experience and the work is very task focused.
We have a new QC Director now who is trying to bring coaching in (Respondent A).

As these more recent organisations in the sector would have established and recruited heavily for their teams more recently than the other respondents, there is a strong possibility that they will have promoted their middle managers from within, therefore having managers who are earlier in their careers and not as experienced. These organisations note that they face the challenge of sustaining the learnings from training their managers in coaching practices, as notes in the following representative quotation:

We are now facing the challenges in sustaining the learning process (Respondent C).

Apart from facing challenges in sustaining learnings, there are other disadvantages to having a less experience group of middle managers. Their ability to deploy the activities necessary within a Talent Management Strategy being one. These organisations have a long journey ahead in building the knowledge, skills and abilities of their managers. This again links to the lack of confidence HR have in their Line Managers.

As highlighted in the literature, a Bersin by Deloitte (2007) study found significantly high correlation between a coaching culture and increased business performance and overall retention. Respondents were asked if they believe that a coaching culture can feed into an increase in retention and organisational performance and four of the five respondents view there to be a correlation, proving a strong link between the literature and industry norms.
Respondents introduced some interesting thoughts and opinions in this regard. As well as increased retention and organisation performance, Respondent A highlighted the strong link between coaching and development within her organisation, noting:

*Yes. It is reflected in the number of rotations and promotions we had this year. We had 29 people either move laterally or upward. 29 out of 214 is a high proportion of people (Respondent A).*

Additionally, Respondent B argues the importance of the presence of coaching in the total reward package available to employees, showing a robust connection between coaching and retention, as highlighted in the following representative quotation:

*Absolutely. I think anywhere where you can see it drives your employee engagement, is where you make investment in employees. It’s not all about the compensation package, it’s about the total package and how individuals feel the company is taking care of them, making an investment in their future (Respondent B).*

End to end Strategic Talent Management, as noted in Chapter 2, is crucial to attract, manage, develop, engage and, above all, retain a high performing workforce (Whelan and Carcary, 2011). The above respondent opinions show the linkage between the presence of a coaching culture and development, engagement and retention, therefore proving that elements of a Talent Management Strategy interlink and the importance of a dexterous Talent Management Strategy overall, which correlates with the literature.

One respondent in particular admits he does not see a link between coaching and retention, noting:

*Can I link coaching and mentoring with retention? I’d be bluffing you if I said I could (Respondent D).*

Linked to this, two particular respondents make the extremely valid point that although organisations invest in coaching, individuals may still leave the business, as noted in the following representative quotation:
Sometimes, you will make that investment and you will lose those people because you make them marketable for other organisations and you may not always have the depth of opportunities available (Respondent B).

In an employment market where the war for talent rages, these points are extremely relevant. Some organisations realise they are being utilised as training grounds, and that either employees will move on as soon as they have learned and developed to a certain extent, or other organisations within the industry will poach their talent. Without coaching, however, it becomes more difficult to develop internal talent, leading to the lack of capability in the leaders of tomorrow and decreasing the availability of positions for internal promotion, posing future issues for both the development and retention of talent. In Section 4.2, Respondent E noted that you will not have any talent to manage if you cannot attract them. Likewise, if managers cannot manage talent, there will not be any talent to develop.

4.5 Developing Talent

This section will explore the Development of Talent, investigating learning and development as well as career progression opportunities and succession planning.

4.5.1 Learning & Development

The literature argues the importance of ensuring a variety of development activities are available for employees (Yarnall, 2008; Heinen and O’Neill, 2004). The most popular forms of training remain as on the job and peer led (CIPD, 2017a), proving the 70/20/10 training model, as outlined in Figure 2.7, remains as effective (Lombardo and Eichinger, 1996). This correlates significantly with the thoughts of industry with five of the five respondents mentioning this 70/20/10 model as being utilised, as indicated by the following representative quote:

*We draw from the 70/20/10 model. 70% on the job, 20% coaching or mentoring – which doesn’t necessarily have to be within the organisation, it can be gaining other exposure externally. The 10% is the formal learning. We see value in all of those but try to stay away from the default and lazy approach of leaning on courses (Respondent E).*
Interestingly, Respondent E notes the organisations approach of utilising on the job training as well as coaching and mentoring rather than leaning solely on formal learning. This shows concurrence with recent literature which suggests that the concept of a traditional career is being challenged, which in turn is steering companies toward constant learning experiences that allow employees to build skills quickly, easily, and on their own terms (Deloitte, 2017). The literature also suggests that, essentially, talent development activities should not focus solely on optimising performance for the individual employee’s current role but also should encompass long term business needs (Heinen and O’Neill, 2004). Similar to Respondent E, Respondent C also mentions this shift away from formal learning, moving towards more experiential learning, noting:

*There is a natural tendency for people, when they sit down to do a career development plan, to say that they need to do a Masters, or Diploma. In actual fact, we are saying yes, that is legitimate, but what about joining a project team or taking on more ownership of tasks? People are now responding to those challenges because it’s not all about the formal learning, it’s about the on the job training and I think coaching goes some way at addressing this also because you are trying to change people’s behaviours (Respondent C).*

Overall, learning and development is an area that appears to be largely well dealt with in the five organisations represented in this study, with opportunities for on the job training, coaching and formal education. This is not a major revelation but one that is welcome. Learning and development is quite a traditional activity of the HR department and one that should be well established and in existence in all organisations. As mentioned, the literature suggests that alongside changing careers, learning and development needs to revolutionise. As indicated by the above representative quotations, it becomes clear that HR is preparing itself for this change and allowing for training focused on the longer term business needs, as opposed to focusing solely on the current role of each individual. This links further with career development and succession planning, preparing top talent for their future within the organisation.

Interestingly, although learning and development is an area that is done well for employees, this does not correlate to building the knowledge and abilities of Line Managers in deploying Talent Management strategies. Perhaps organisations assume that when talent reaches managerial level, their abilities should be at a level to support activities supporting personnel,
however, as indicated through the literature and the primary research, this is not the case. Action is needed to increase the support to Line Management in order to increase their effectiveness and to improve overall organisational success.

4.5.2 Career Development Opportunities and Succession Planning

McKinsey (1997) argues that Talent Development stems from the belief by Senior Management and Line Managers that people are important. These leaders must be passionate about the development of their people. In reality, however, organisations can struggle to create such a culture amongst its managers (Lindbom, 2007) and succession planning, in its traditional sense, is not sufficient to identify the skill gaps and prepare an aspiring leader (Conger and Fulmer, 2003). When asked if there was a succession plan in place with their organisations and what this consisted on, all five respondents mentioned they have a plan in place which relied on the 9 box grid as a tool to map top talent, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

_We have an annual Talent Management programme where we get managers to rate their employees against certain criteria. Based on this, they are given a position on a nine box grid. From there, we identify who we consider to be top talent for succession planning and their development would be accelerated_ (Respondent E)

The initial responses of all five respondents in this regard were extremely similar, leading the researcher to believe this may be the company line, therefore further probing and analysis of all areas of the primary research was necessary to uncover additional information.

As per the literature, Lindbom (2007), interestingly, cautions against promoting individuals that are not prepared for the role of manager due to the danger of losing technical capabilities and gaining a subordinate manager in one transition. This caveat also appears in the opinions of industry leaders, proving correlation with the literature, as indicated by the following quotation:

_We are very conscious of the fact that there is a huge difference between a technical leader and a people leader. Not everybody is naturally gifted at leading people, or being technical_ (Respondent D).
Similarly, Respondent C highlights the challenge of losing technical knowledge when career development and succession planning is not managed correctly, noting:

We have consciously promoted people from within because of the skills vacuum for roles here. As a consequence, we didn't have people with the right skills to backfill those roles quickly because there is a long developmental cycle to acquire some of the technical knowledge (Respondent C).

Weeks (2017) notes that organisations are finding it difficult to strike the balance between identifying a mixture of internal talent and sourcing external talent for positions available and therefore lean more toward external candidates when recruiting. The reason behind why the literature suggests this is the case may be provided by Respondent B, who notes:

The challenge comes when you actually realise we believe we might have a succession plan but we haven't looked at the skills of those folks. The succession plan is just logical in that this person is next in the pecking order, but he or she may not have the required skills to succeed (Respondent B).

This opinion is perturbing. If the organisational norm is that the logical succession plan is whoever is next in line, if this employee is told they are being overlooked due to a lack of skills, this will cause disengagement and, ultimately, a retention issue. Although it is correct and fair that the person with the appropriate skillset should be successful, the organisation norm and the perceived right of the individual must be considered as a factor. Respondent D also eludes to this perceived right and sense of entitlement, noting:

I think there are colleagues that have a huge expectation or sense of entitlement that everything will be handed to me, including promotions (Respondent D).

Interestingly, this sense of entitlement appears in the responses of respondents that represent organisations more established in the sector in Ireland. This does not seem to appear in the organisations more recent to the industry, as highlighted by the following representative quote:

One of the issues we have on a site just shy of 200 people is the lack of opportunity for development. We can't invent jobs for people (Respondent C).
Perhaps, therefore, this links back to the sense of overconfidence in the traditional Life Science sector in Ireland. Indeed, employees within the longer established organisations appear to have a similar overconfidence to the organisations themselves.

Hansen (2011) controversially proposes that while many leaders and managers understand the importance of developing their talent, few follow through with effective delivery. Freiberg and Kao (2008) similarly report that only five percent of organisations are confident in their managers' abilities to foster employee development across the organisation.

Businesses will talk to it. Do we walk the talk? There are certain points in a company's journey that they will look at development from a strategic point of view. You will look at your strategic business plan over a three to five year window and you will look at the resources and the skills that you need as part of your resource planning for that. Do you honestly and truly make the investment in talent early in that journey? I haven't seen it (Respondent B).

This, again agrees with the literature which suggests that organisations are struggling to create a culture of development and succession planning amongst its managers and the traditional view of succession planning is not sufficient to develop the leaders of tomorrow. It is apparent, in the responses of the respondents as interviewed, that employee skills have not been developed to support the businesses as they grow. This links back to the lack of confidence HR have in their Line Managers abilities, this time from a developmental perspective. This lack of available development could also have a knock on effect on retention.

4.6 Engaging Talent

This section will consider the Engagement of Talent, specifically examining communications and wellbeing.

4.6.1 Engagement and Communications

As suggested by the literature, corporate communication involves effective communication with all key stakeholders, internal and external, to maintain strong relationships and to allow
for organisational success (Cornelissen, 2011; Van Riel, 2003). Effective corporate communication is vital for building internal trust and transparency (Cowan, 2014). When asked whether they feel employees are more engaged by having a clearer sense of organisational goals and financial situation, all five respondents mentioned the significance of this, as highlighted by Respondent E, noting:

*There is nothing worse than being in an organisation where you are doing your job and you don’t realise the impact of your job or how it contributes to the overall. We want people to be directly connected and have a sense of purpose and know why they are doing why they are doing* (Respondent E).

The responses show the commitment organisations have to making information readily available for their employees. Although the importance of a consistent and clear communications strategy for organisational success is evident, CIPD (2017d) research suggests that two-fifths of employees believe they receive very little or no corporate communications detailing organisational strategy. When asked about their current communication models, three of the five respondents debated the need for constant improvement of communications strategies, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

*With communications, you can always do better. You can do it again and again and still have people saying I never knew that* (Respondent D).

Similarly, Respondent A emphasises the importance of communication being face to face and the risk of ineffective communication if this is not conducted, noting:

*Communication needs to be face to face. Otherwise, we are diluting the information as it reaches various audiences* (Respondent A).

It appears that the disparity here between the literature and viewpoint of employers is whether or not the employee has heard the message communicated to them. The possibility being that this message has been diluted having been passed through various management layers on its way to the employee and the impact is lost in translation. To counteract this, three of the five respondents mentioned the importance of having an internal resource dedicated to
communications, and have recently created new roles to support this, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

_In terms of employee communications, we have been more proactive and progressive and we are also looking to support that with a new role that has been established in the international organisation around employee communications (Respondent C)._

Having this internal focus on communications shows that these organisations are serious about communications reform, and are putting the resources and tools in place to support this. Although this role can be perceived as a luxury, rather than a necessity, its justification shows its importance in today’s marketplace.

Interestingly, two of the five respondents interviewed mentioned the impact patient focused communications can have on employee engagement and the need to strengthen the messages around the mission and vision of the organisation, as indicated by the following quotation:

_There is also a patient focus element which is quite powerful. We have had patients come to site who have said but for you and this tablet, I would not be here. It helps our employees buy into what we are doing, which is saving lives (Respondent D)._

These patient focused communications are quite specific to the Life Science sector and the output of this is extremely tangible and worthwhile, ultimately showcasing the organisations ability to save lives and the role each employee plays in this. The impact this can have on employee engagement is significant. These organisations should also be utilising this from an employer branding and EVP perspective, highlighting the impact individuals can make within these organisations, and the sector as a whole, therefore strengthening how organisations can optimise how talent is attracted and retained going forward.

4.6.2 Wellbeing

There is a strong link between organisational culture and the success of wellbeing initiatives (Fair and Wright, 2016). A supportive organisational culture where individuals feel valued and respected will, in themselves, exude feelings of wellbeing. (Fair and Wright, 2016). These organisations with high levels of employee engagement outperform their low-engagement
competitors (Wiley, 2008). Two respondents in particular were particularly animated when discussing wellbeing and mentioned the importance of having a positive culture promoting wellbeing in the workplace, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

_It’s important people feel good coming into work in the morning. Then you provide the right environment, support, leadership, coaching, canteen..._ (Respondent B).

Additionally, the literature suggests that engaged employees who enjoy their work are capable of working for longer periods without risk of burn out, a term which has a significant link to lack of mental wellbeing (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). Respondent A highlights the pressure on employees working in the Life Science sector and therefore the importance of managing the wellbeing of their staff, noting:

*Being a contract manufacturer, we do have tough times where we need people to work a night shift or crazy hours. We need to make sure we are minding these people and that these times are brief periods and not sustained. It’s a challenge for us as an organisation where we demand a lot from people but we get it because we have the loyalty and commitment and they do know they can put up the hand and say stop when they really need to* (Respondent A).

Linked to the above, the literature underpins the need for employee wellbeing to be supported and highlights the associated risks if this is not the case to include; absenteeism costs, presenteeism, turnover costs and the impact of potential legal action and reputational damage as a result (Lewis et al., 2014). Respondent B highlights the impact of the absence of wellbeing activities on the organisation, noting:

_*We come from a culture here of very high overtime and very high absenteeism because we were not managing this effectively. We have managed in 2017 into 2018 to bring those down from double digits where they should never have been* (Respondent B).

The thoughts and opinions of Respondents A and B significantly correlate with the literature in relation to wellbeing. By maintaining the wellbeing of employees, the knock on impact on performance and discretionary effort is clear. This feeds into the overall goals of a Talent
Management Strategy which ultimately aim to increase the productivity of the workforce by attracting, managing, developing, engaging and retaining employees.

Demand for employers to claim accountability for the health and wellbeing of their employees is increasing (Renwick, 2003). The outcome of increased employer involvement significantly strengthens both the relationship between the employee and employer as well as the relationships between employees, having a positive knock on effect on engagement (Robertson and Cooper, 2010). When asked whether a wellbeing strategy was in place, Respondent A highlighted this as a necessity, noting:

*We see it as something we need to be doing. We won’t necessarily gain brownie points doing it but we will lose points if we don’t* (Respondent A).

It is this honest support given in the form of a genuine, organisation tailored wellness programme that serves to motivate and engage employees, therefore maximising the discretionary effort provided by the employee when necessary.

Interestingly, from a wellbeing perspective only two of the four respondents interviewed appeared to be truly passionate about the topic of wellbeing, and appeared to be doing more to promote this as a key element supporting business success. This leads to the belief that the industry needs to do more to promote workplace wellbeing, especially when there is an employee expectation that employers should be investing in these activities. The idea of wellbeing is a modern ideology in comparison to other tools, and perhaps there is a lack of comfort with the tool within the industry at present. The topic of wellbeing can be contentious, with a large portion of people still afraid to speak openly about wellbeing. The positives of doing so, however, have been highlighted by Respondent A, noting:

*It lets people know we care about them and improves the quality of wellbeing conversations outside of the formal events* (Respondent A).

Perhaps organisations are not yet equipped to broach the subject and have these wellbeing conversations, highlighting again the absence of supporting processes in place and the lack of confidence HR have in their Line Managers abilities, this time from a wellbeing perspective.
HR could well be at fault here for not providing the necessary support to their Line Management, as indicated by the above lack of genuine interest in wellbeing activities.

4.7 Retaining Talent

This section will scrutinise the Retention of Talent, specifically analysing reward, recognition and the exit process.

4.7.1 Reward

Revisiting the literature, it is suggested that total reward, as opposed to traditional reward, is utilised to satisfy intrinsic and extrinsic motivators in the form of monetary and non-monetary reward (Watson Wyatt, 2008) and Vaiman et al. (2008) emphasises the need for both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards as retention tools. Respondents were asked what their current reward systems entail and strong correlation with the literature becomes quickly apparent with four of the five respondents interviewed describing their reward packages in terms of total reward as opposed to solely monetary focused, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

*Salary is important and people always want more of this, but interestingly what has served us very well over the last number of years is the type of work people get to be involved in and if they find this exciting and engaging. That is a huge component of retention and so is manager quality (Respondent E).*

In a labour market where the war for talent is raging and organisations in the Life Science industry in Ireland are in heavy competition with each other for a limited pool of talent, it is important that organisations think of reward in a total capacity in order to attract and retain talent, as opposed to focusing solely on the salary. Interestingly, Respondent E highlights the type of work the individual is involved in as motivator in terms of reward, which again correlates with the literature and can be seen outlined as part of total reward as per Figure 2.7. As the respondent organisations are part of the Life Science sector and the work they do ultimately saves lives, using opportunities for career advancement that will have an impact on the lives of patient would prove extremely motivating, linking significantly with attraction and engagement as well as retention. Similarly, Respondent E makes the linkage between the need
for a strong relationship between the employee and their manager as part of the total reward package. This further links with the management of talent and the ideology that people leave a manager, not an organisation (Buckingham and Coffman, 1998), posing not only a potential impact on retention but also how the individual is managed, if this relationship is not present.

Further assessing the literature, Heger (2007) acknowledges that employee engagement and retention are significantly influenced by a company's Employee Value Proposition (EVP). Worryingly, the respondent organisations do not appear to be clearly communicating their EVP, as indicated by Respondent C, noting:

There is a disproportionate focus on the actual bonus pay-out and we have some work to do on communicating the intangible benefits. All of those benefits are inclined to be ignored, or unappreciated. (Respondent C).

If this EVP is not clearly defined and communicated, both internally and externally, there will be repercussions both from an attraction perspective and a retention perspective. This EVP is a strong part of the Employer Brand, highlighting both why a candidate should join an organisation and why an employee should stay. Without this clarity, candidates will not have a full understanding as to what is available to them, from a reward perspective, before they join the organisation and therefore cannot make an informed decision when an offer is made. Likewise, when the EVP is not defined, it is more difficult to remind current employees of the benefits they have while working with the organisation. Thus, an organisation may lose out to their competitors in terms of the attractiveness of their organisation in the marketplace and, additionally, may face retention issues by not reminding their employees of the positive points in their existing employment relationship.

The literature suggests that motivation and individual needs are seen to be dynamic. As soon as a need has been satisfied, a person will change their needs (Maslow, 1943). It is, therefore, necessary for reward systems to change at the speed the business is changing and to adapt to the economic climate of the time (Lawler, 1971). When asked whether the needs and wants of employees are considered when designing or reviewing reward packages, only two of the five respondents interviewed outlined that they do consider the employee needs and wants, as indicated by the following representative quote:
There has been a lot of work done by our benefits team to benchmark best practice. We have some core benefits and some flexible benefits. People can buy additional annual holidays, receive gym membership reimbursements and there are more benefits coming this year, such as car insurance offers. Some benefits were taken out, like life assurance, where the benefit was not being used, and we invested the money elsewhere (Respondent B).

Again, referring back to the competitiveness of the market and the ongoing battle for talent, it should be a top priority of organisations to listen to the voice of their employees and to aim to satisfy their needs from a retention perspective. This would further benefit the attraction of new talent to the organisation by adding additional elements to the EVP. Alarmingly, this is not the case with three of the five respondents remaining complacent in terms of the benefits on offer within their organisations. Perhaps this links back to the overconfidence of the Life Science sector in general, as previously discussed, with these organisations believing the reputation of the industry and the organisation will assist them in attracting and retaining talent. Going forward, these organisations will be behind their competitors as the war for talent strengthens and therefore will be at a disadvantage in attracting and retaining talent.

4.7.2 Recognition

In recent times, it has been suggested that recognition has become one of the most critical strategic people management tools to allow organisations to attract, motivate and retain talent (IBEC, 2013) and could be the untapped resource organisations require to improve business outcomes (Garr, 2012), therefore is fundamental to organisational success (Robbins and Carlson, 2007). Interestingly, when asked how retention is utilised internally, respondents highlighted the need to be cautious when recognising, as highlighted by Respondent E, noting:

*If you do too much of it, it loses its significance and it becomes expected.* (Respondent E)

This caution appears to be linked to the impact of recognition among three of the five respondents. Additionally, these respondents elude to the fact that their Line Managers are not educated clearly enough in terms of recognition and common recognition practices. Although this references the lack of confidence HR have in the ability of their Line Managers, perhaps
this has a root cause in the absence of processes in place and the lack of training and education provided to Line Managers by HR on recognition.

In today’s workplace, however, the literature suggests that recognition is not used as an engagement and retention tool as frequently as it should be (Craig, 2017). This is due to a lack of understanding as to what effective recognition involves, the assumption that a one for all approach will suffice and lack of creative thinking around recognition itself (Heathfield, 2017). When asked how important recognition is within the organisation, all five respondents placed a heavy emphasis on the significance of recognition as a retention tool, which contradicts the literature, as highlighted by the following representative quotation:

*It's now a metric that I report on each week for the Senior Management Team. I report on number of recognitions year to date and if this number is stagnant, we start asking questions (Respondent C).*

Two of the five respondent organisations have put a metric in place around internal recognition, showing that the industry is becoming serious about recognition. This is an extremely positive outcome and the disparity between the literature and industry in this case is quite welcome. By taking recognition seriously, these organisations are explicitly showing the value they place in their employees, which will have a knock on effect both in terms of engagement, as an individual will feel valued, and therefore positively impacting retention.

As the literature suggests, Line Managers recognizing employee performance gives a significant boost to recognition and increases engagement by an impressive sixty percent (Towers Watson, 2009). This is further supported by Lipman (2015b) who suggests there is a significant link between recognition and the relationship between the employee and their manager. Individuals wish to work for managers who believe in them and recognise their contributions (Lipman, 2015a). When asked whether a lack of recognition would be a factor in an individual deciding to leave the organisation, four of the five respondents make a linkage between recognition and the relationship between the employee and their manager, as indicated by the following quotation:

*People do argue against it, but to a large extent, people do leave the manager. It is a big factor. You will see it in the exit interview (Respondent A)*
Interestingly, this again links back to the lack of confidence HR have in the skills and abilities of their managers. Believing that their Line Managers are a significant factor in the reasoning behind employees leaving their organisations is worrying. As is the lack of apparent action taken to address this issue. This lack of confidence in Line Management will not only have an impact on how talent is attracted, managed, developed, engaged and retained but also on the overall performance of the business. This is a critical issue that needs to be addressed.

4.7.3 The Exit Process

According to the literature, the exit process, or offboarding, is often disregarded as important (Schooling, 2014). Determining why employees decide to leave should be a vital piece of an organisation's strategic plan, yet many organisations miss out on this opportunity (Frase-Blunt, 2004) and according to industry research only twenty nine percent of organisations have an offboarding process in place (Gheorghiu, 2017). The primary research conducted, however, significantly contradicts the literature. When asked if an offboarding process was in place, and how this was utilised, all five respondents indicated that they do have a robust exit process in place and four of the five respondents noted that this process is utilised appropriately, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

*Everyone is looking for talent and if you have good talent, you want to keep it. If there are reasons prompting these people to move, you want to know so that you can address them (Respondent E).*

This disparity is welcome and positive. In a time where the war for talent is rife, organisations in the Life Science sector should be doing their utmost to understand why an individual would leave and equally try their best to address these issues so as to allow for increased retention going forward. These organisations cannot afford for their turnover rates to increase, due to the STEM talent shortages in the employment market.

Additionally, the literature argues that ensuring a positive overall exit process is extremely beneficial as it allows for future communication between the employee and employer (Schweer *et al.*, 2011), which is becoming increasingly important due to the current trend towards the re-recruitment of highly skilled individuals (Schweer *et al.*, 2011). Interestingly this trend of re-recruitment is also prominent throughout the primary research, a finding which was not
expected prior to completing the interviews. When asked if it was important to maintain a positive relationship with an individual until the day they leave, four of the five respondents mentioned that there would be a strong possibility that these individuals may return to the organisation in the future, as highlighted by the following quotation:

*In a lot of cases, we are very open to the fact that these people may come back and work with us again (Respondent A).*

It appears that this trend toward re-recruitment could be linked to the fact that the Life Science industry in Ireland is quite small, with many individuals crossing paths multiple times over their careers in different organisations. Interestingly, three of the five respondents interviewed cautioned against ‘burning your bridges’ in the Life Science sector, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

*In Cork, the industry is but a village so you are always going to meet with people you have worked with previously so there is no point in burning bridges (Respondent E).*

Alarming, this eludes to the small talent pool available in the Life Science sector in Ireland. In an employment market where talent shortages are endemic in all sectors, this puts the Life Science sector at a severe disadvantage. This, coupled with the lack of secondary school students choosing STEM subjects poses a threat to the future of the Life Science sector in Ireland.

Additionally, linked to employer branding, as discussed in Section 2.3.1, a sensitively handled exit process can allow the previous employee to become a brand ambassador for the organisation, therefore protecting an organisations employer brand (Huhman, 2016; Macafee, 2007). This is reflected heavily throughout the primary research with five of the five respondents indicating that they view previous employees as a vital piece in the advocacy of their employer brand, as indicated by Respondent D, noting:

*We will ensure everyone leaving the site will leave with a feel good factor as you never know when the paths will cross again. These people are ambassadors in the community for us (Respondent D).*
Similarly, the literature outlines that the way an organisation bids farewell to an employee on their last day is just as critical as the way they welcome the employee on their first, therefore enhancing the journey of the employee throughout their entire life cycle (Schooling, 2014). Again, the primary research highlights the importance of this, linked again to the positive representation of their employer brand, as indicated by the following quotation:

*It's like the recruitment process, it begins with the handshake at reception. They deserve respect until they walk out the door and even after that because that speaks volumes and will influence what that person will say about the company. It's not something that I would underestimate* (Respondent C).

It becomes quite apparent that organisations within the Life Science sector in Ireland rely heavily on word of mouth to promote their employer brands. Outside of respondents being asked specifically about their brand when discussing Talent Attraction, the only time this topic resurfaced was while talking about employees exiting the business. Proactivity in terms of building an employer brand is not highlighted as business critical throughout the primary research for three of the five respondents. This complacency will lead to a further disadvantage as the war for talent strengthens and the appeal of the Life Science sector lessens.

Finally, from an exit process perspective, four of the five respondents interviewed highlighted as part of the conversation around the exit process that their turnover levels have been quite low over the last number of years, as indicated by the following representative quotation:

*I'd argue that over the last number of years, we haven't had that much turnover* (Respondent E).

This, again, links to the overconfidence of the organisations within the Life Science sector. Although it is an achievement to maintain a low turnover level, this can lead to complacency which, as the current war for talent strengthens, is not a positive characteristic. HR needs to prepare these organisations for the challenges they face going forward during a war for talent where talent shortages are rife.
4.8 Conclusion

This chapter analysed, in detail, the outputs of the primary research in order to identify key findings, limitations and recommendations. Additionally, the chapter highlighted the main themes as discovered throughout the semi structured interviews and how these both interlink with and contradict the literature. Having explored the literature on Strategic Talent Management, identified a robust methodology to support the study, conducted semi structured interviews and analysed the findings, the next chapter, Chapter 5, will outline the key findings and limitations of the study as well as the recommendations for both research and practice, before concluding the study.
Chapter 5: Key Findings, Limitations and Recommendations
Chapter 5: Key Findings, Limitations and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the key findings of the study, as per the analysis of primary research in Chapter 4. Subsequently, the chapter will outline the limitations hindering the study and will additionally propose recommendations for both practice and future research. The chapter will end with an overall conclusion emphasizing the significance of the study as a whole.

5.2 Key Findings of The Study

This study identifies a lack of understanding of the concept of Strategic Talent Management in the Life Science sector in Ireland. As has been previously debated, although organisations realise talent is their most valuable asset, the majority do not act as though Strategic Talent Management is paramount and despite good intentions have failed to create a talent first strategy. From the analysis of the primary research conducted as part of the study, it becomes immediately clear that there is a lack of understanding as to the meaning of Strategic Talent Management within the Life Science Sector in Ireland with all five respondents creating a linkage between Strategic Talent Management and Talent Development only, from a succession planning perspective. Although this is the case, a poignant remark was made by one of the respondents interviewed as part of the study, noting:

If you can’t attract them in the first place then you don’t have any talent to manage
(Respondent E).

Coupled with the lack of understanding of Talent Management in the Life Science sector in Ireland, this poses a serious threat to this sector, in an employment market where the war for talent is strengthening, amongst severe talent shortages. Ultimately, this challenge needs to be urgently addressed. Without HR having an understanding as to Strategic Talent Management, they simply cannot promote this as a way of life amongst their Line Managers.

A second key finding relates to the discovery that the elements of a Talent Management strategy are utilised in the Life Science sector in Ireland, but not in a strategic way. Subsequent
to the realisation that Strategic Talent Management is not understood in the Life Science industry in Ireland, it becomes apparent that although the elements present in a dexterous Talent Management Strategy are in existence in the majority of the organisations interviewed as part of the study, these organisational tools are not tactically utilised in order to reap benefits for the organisation. It has previously been argued that a Talent Management strategy can have an impact on organisational excellence and maintaining culture. This link is not, however, established from an industry perspective. Organisations within the Life Science sector in Ireland do not appear to make the connection that an increase in strategic planning around how talent is attracted, managed, developed, engaged and retained will lead to multiple benefits including; increased organisational performance, increased engagement and stronger leadership capabilities. Talent Management needs to become part of the organisations everyday life going forward, in order to counteract the war for talent. At present, organisations in the Life Science sector in Ireland have not learned to adapt.

Linked to both of the above key findings identified, without the ability to see the linkages between all elements of a dexterous Talent Management strategy, it is impossible to understand why a Talent Management strategy is needed, or to create a strategy to support this ideology. It has become apparent, therefore, that there is work to be done to shift the viewpoint of the industry and to promote the implementation of talent focused strategies, which will be further discussed in the recommendations for practice.

Furthermore, a prominent finding of the study outlines the lack of confidence HR has in the ability of their Line Managers to deploy a Talent Management Strategy, which poses a sombre dilemma for the industry. It becomes inherently evident in the study that HR participants do not believe their Line Management have the necessary skills and abilities to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain talent. Throughout the primary research, all five respondents elude to the fact that they do not have this trust in their Line Management at numerous points. This is a significant finding that needs urgent attention from an industry perspective. In a marketplace where the war for talent is ongoing, it is detrimental to an organisation to employ Line Managers who cannot effectively execute a Talent Management strategy, therefore impacting their ability to contribute toward organisational excellence. Interestingly two of the five respondents accepted responsibility for the shortcomings of their Line Managers and opined that it falls to HR to educate Line Management.
Following on from the above finding outlining the lack of confidence HR have in their Line Managers abilities, a fourth salient finding establishes the lack of robust processes in place to support the effective deployment of a Talent Management strategy. Four of the five respondents interviewed as part of the study indicated that their performance management models were based on archaic weighting based systems, rather than a future focused system, driven by feedback. Additionally, in four of the five cases, performance management systems did not link to other HR processes, therefore hindering the abilities of the organisation to seamlessly integrate Talent Management practices. This has a subsequent impact on the skills and abilities of Line Managers. Without robust processes in place, it hinders their abilities to effectively execute Talent Management strategies.

In connection with both of the above key findings, HR needs to take a certain amount of ownership over these issues and implement the necessary processes, strive to educate their Line Managers on the organisational tools available in order to support a Talent Management strategy, and to promote these tools internally, which will be discussed further in the recommendations for practice. Equally, the issue precedes the current Line Manager's managerial role and stems to when that individual was trained as well as the example portrayed to them by past and current superiors, further underpinning the importance of Line Leaders to be educated now, therefore protecting the future of the industry.

Finally, a fifth key finding of the study identifies a sense of overconfidence in the reputation of the Life Science sector. From the analysis of primary research, the confidence of the longer established players in the sector is noted. It becomes quite clear, over the course of the study that this overconfidence stems from the long term presence of the Life Science sector in Ireland and the historic perception of the Life Science sector as an employer of choice within the Irish employment market. The study identifies that this overconfidence has an effect on the complacency of the sector in terms of embracing change and new ideas. The viewpoint appears to be that the sector speaks for itself, therefore the perception being that these organisations do not have to engage in strategies to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain talent. This overconfidence is predicted to have a negative impact as the war for talent strengthens and HR have a responsibility to shift these perceptions. Without a thorough understanding as to Strategic Talent Management, however, HR will not be in a position to influence the necessary change.
Having explored the analysis to identify the key findings of the study, the limitations affecting the study must also be discussed.

5.3 Limitations of The Study

From conducting the overall study and compiling the key findings, a number of limitations have been identified. An initial limitation relates to the sample size included in the study. The number of respondents interviewed as part of the study is small, and smaller than had initially been gauged by the researcher. This small sample size does pose a limitation on the study, both in terms of its ability to answer the research question and the quality of the findings. As a qualitative methodology had been selected for the study, it was accepted that the results would not generate overall generalizations. Due to the availability of respondents, the length of the interviews and the time constraints affecting the study, it was necessary to make a choice regarding whether to halt the number of interviews at five with a high level of quality, or increase the number of interviews and potentially compromise the quality of the research. As the researcher places a high level of value on quality, the decision was made to keep the sample size at five respondents. Due to the nature of the size of the sample, it was necessary to take a critical realist approach when analysing and interpreting the results of the interviews to determine the answer to the research question. The limitation of having a small sample size can be overcome by future research, as will be discussed in the recommendations for future study.

A second limitation identifies that the research conducted is one sided, using a qualitative research method, in the form of semi structured interviews, in order to gather the thoughts and opinions of Senior HR Professionals within the Life Science sector on the topic of Strategic Talent Management. The study does not consider the viewpoint of the Line Manager, potentially affecting the quality of the findings, in terms of assessing the opinions of the Line Manager to be validated against the opinions of HR professionals. The viewpoint of the Line Manager could be gauged by conducting further interviews with a sample group of said Line Managers, as will be discussed in the recommendations for future study.

Additionally, the study does not incorporate surveys from an employee perspective to justify the findings of the qualitative research, therefore posing a limitation on the study in terms of the potential quality of the findings. A qualitative methodology was selected for this study in
order to gain greater insight by determining more complete answers and perhaps uncovering unsolicited observations which further enhance the study, as discussed in Chapter 3. This particular limitation can be addressed by completing a subsequent quantitative study, again as discussed in the recommendations for future study.

Finally, time constraints further posed a limitation on this study. The study was limited to a time frame in terms of a submission date which did have an impact on the study itself, hindering the depth of research and analysis. As there was a submission date in place, there was a limitation on the time spent on each chapter and activity. This poses a limitation on the span of the research, both primary and secondary. If more time had been available the literature could have been further explored and additional interviews carried out, further supplementing the study.

Subsequent to identifying the key themes emerging from the study and developing the limitations affecting the study, recommendations for practice must be developed and considered.

5.4 Recommendations for Practice

Stemming from the key findings, recommendations for practice have been identified. Firstly it is recommended that the concept of Strategic Talent Management needs to be further promoted to HR Professionals both in the Life Science and other sectors. Due to the lack of understanding of HR Professionals in the Life Science sector, shifting the viewpoint of industry and promoting talent focused strategies are extremely worthwhile activities. Perhaps CIPD could be a driver of this initiative, utilising its relationships with Universities and Institutes around the country to deliver ‘Talent Management Roadshows’ and promote the ideology within industry, with the added support from academia. Of course, there would be significant monetary cost involved in this in relation to travel, expenses, venues and speakers, estimated at €20,000, as well as the opportunity cost of not having the time or resources to drive other important initiatives. The cost, however, would be justified considering the considerable lack of understanding of the concept of Strategic Talent Management in the Life Science sector in Ireland at present.
Secondly, once Strategic Talent Management has been promoted to HR Professionals, there is a significant need for investment in training to allow for Line Managers to effectively deploy Talent Management Strategies. HR needs to take ownership over this and strive to educate their managers on organisational tools available in order to support a Talent Management strategy, and to promote these tools internally. Equally, the issue precedes the current Line Managers and stems to when that individual was trained as well as how they have been and currently are treated by their superiors, therefore Talent Management needs to be promoted to leaders and managers at all levels to ensure this is promoted from the top down. Training alone is not enough, an environment promoting the use of the outcomes of the training must be in place within the organisation to allow for success. There would, of course, be a monetary cost associated with this investment in training. From research, there are Talent Management training courses available from €3,000 per group. Maximising attendance at these courses would be key to gain value for the investment made. Additionally, the opportunity cost of focusing on Talent Management internally means taking Line Managers out of the day to day, operational aspect of the business which may hinder operational performance. This is a small price to pay to allow these Line Managers to better contribute toward organisational excellence on a larger scale going forward.

The strong need to define and communicate a clear organisational leadership style is noted throughout the study and, therefore, is a recommended action to be taken by HR in the Life Science sector in Ireland. By doing so, organisations will promote what strong leadership qualities consist of from an internal perspective and further serve to promote the need to deploy Talent Management as a way of life for leaders. Defining and implementing an organisational leadership style will allow for further development of leadership capabilities internally as future, and current, managers and leaders strive to exude these qualities. This would involve training, but from an internal perspective, therefore minimising the monetary cost to organisations by utilising their internal talent to design and deliver this training. In terms of opportunity cost, the time of a number of internal employees would be utilised to develop and deliver the training, therefore limiting their abilities to provide training in other key areas of the business. Again, this cost is justified due to the benefits to the organisation of further developing leadership talent which include allowing for a holistic Talent Management Strategy to be deployed as well as the ability to drive individual teams to better contribute toward operational excellence by maximising performance.
From the study, it becomes clear that HR Professionals in the Life Science sector in Ireland should strive for performance management reform, allowing this process to link with other HR processes. Remodelling performance management to allow for a future focused model with less emphasis on ratings and that interlinks with other HR processes is required. This allows for a better mechanism for Line Managers to manage, develop and engage their talent, ultimately having a knock on effect on retention. The monetary cost involved in this could be significant, but does not have to be. There are simple, effective models available and, with the assistance of a consultant, could be implemented at a cost of €4,000. The benefits to the company overall, as discussed, would outweigh the cost investment. By investing in performance management, the budget available to invest in other areas of Talent Management decreases, thus creating an opportunity cost. Many areas of Talent Management do not, however, need significant monetary investment and can be done in cost effective ways. The investment in this case, therefore, is extremely worthwhile.

Finally, it is apparent from the study that an investment in employer branding is necessary within the Life Science sector in Ireland, from an attraction, engagement and retention perspective. Promoting their employer brand is a key activity for the organisations in the Life Science sector as the war for talent strengthens. This will allow organisations to attract new talent to the organisation and, additionally, remind existing talent why they should stay. The monetary cost in this regard would not be significant. Most of this activity can be carried out on social media channels and via the company website, which are virtually free tools. There would be an element of investment needed in terms of online job boards and newspaper articles, however most organisations in the Life Science sector in Ireland have packages negotiated with these job boards and newspapers already. It is predicted that an additional cost of €2,000 at a maximum would be necessary. In terms of an opportunity cost, significant time investment would be needed internally to develop and deploy a strong employer branding strategy. This time investment would be extremely worthwhile considering the outcomes from an attraction and retention perspective.

Having identified the recommendations for future practice, the recommendations for future research must also be explored.
5.5 Recommendations For Future Research

Based on the key findings and limitations, recommendations for future research have been identified. Firstly, as mentioned in the limitations of the study, the respondent sample size for the study is small. It is recommended, therefore, that additional interviews with Senior HR Professionals within the Life Science sector in Ireland are conducted as part of a future study. This would be beneficial in order to further qualify the research conducted in this study and provide additional industry insight. Additionally, qualitative research amongst Line Managers within the Life Science sector in Ireland would be beneficial to further analyse the thoughts of HR professionals from an alternative perspective. Furthermore, viewpoint of the employees within the Life Science sector are not explored. Conducting either qualitative or quantitative analysis with employees within the Life Science sector in Ireland would be beneficial in comparing and contrasting the opinions of Senior HR Professionals, and perhaps subsequent perceptions of Line Managers, in the industry with the thoughts of their employees. Overall, this would lead to a more comprehensive understanding as to the utilisation of Strategic Talent Management in Industry.

This study focuses specifically on the Life Science sector in Ireland. To expand the reach and scope of the research, primary research could additionally be undertaken within the Life Science sector in geographical areas outside of Ireland as part of a future study. The benefit of doing so would qualify the findings of this study with additional research within the sector worldwide, so as to establish a broader sense of the extent to which Strategic Talent Management is understood and utilised within the Life Science sector globally.

Because this study focused specifically on Strategic Talent Management within the Life Science sector in Ireland, the thoughts and opinions of other industries are not taken into account. It is recommended that supplementary research is carried out within additional industries, both from qualitative and quantitative perspectives, in order to further qualify the key findings as established in this study. This would be extremely beneficial in qualifying the results of this study across multiple industries, therefore strengthening the argument.

While researching and completing the review of literature, five themes repeatedly emerged throughout the literature, which were discussed to a certain extent within this study. Due to time limitations and the scope of the study, a comprehensive review of literature supporting
these five themes was not conducted. Each of these five thematic areas could be adopted for further research individually. It is recommended that this is undertaken in order to learn more about, and further develop the review of literature on, each topic and, additionally, to conduct further primary research on each topic specifically.

Having completed a thorough review of the literature, established a robust methodology to support the study, conducted primary research, analysed the findings and determined a series of key findings, limitations and recommendations, the study must be concluded.

5.6 Overall Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the extent to which Strategic Talent Management is understood and properly utilised in the Life Sciences sector in Ireland. This purpose was fulfilled by extensive primary and secondary research and analysis, gaining insights from academic and industry perspectives. From conducting the study, it becomes clear that Strategic Talent Management is not understood in the Life Science sector in Ireland. Within the sector, Strategic Talent Management is perceived as being a Talent Development technique when devising a succession plan. This disparity is worrying as the employment market enters a time of incomparable talent shortages which is predicted to decelerate economic growth worldwide. In order to counteract this, organisations need to become more savvy in terms of their approach to workforce challenges and Strategic Talent Management is proposed as the necessary, agile, shift to support this. While organisations in the Life Science sector in Ireland lack the understanding of what a Talent Management Strategy is, being a serious contender in the war for talent is unattainable, significantly decreasing their ability to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain talent.

Secondly, the study established that although the elements of a Talent Management strategy are being used as organisational tools, these tools are not viewed in a strategic way, thus the overall strategic benefit to the organisation is not gained. Talent Management needs to become part of the everyday life of organisations in the Life Science sector in Ireland going forward, in order to increase engagement, improve organisational performance and counteract the war for talent. Without the ability to see the linkages between all elements of a dexterous Talent Management Strategy, it is impossible to understand why a Talent Management strategy is
needed, or to adopt such a strategy. This has a significant negative impact on the ability of organisations in the Life Science sector in Ireland to strategically attract and, ultimately, retain highly skilled STEM individuals, during a time of unparalleled talent shortages.

Additionally, it became apparent that HR professionals in the Life Science sector in Ireland have a substantial lack of confidence in the abilities of their Line Managers to deploy a Talent Management strategy and that robust processes to support the effective deployment of a Talent Management strategy are not in place. Throughout the study, it materialises, at multiple stages, that HR simply lacks confidence in the abilities of their Line Managers to attract, manage, develop, engage and retain their talent in a strategic way. In a marketplace where the war for talent is ongoing, it is detrimental to an organisation to employ Line Managers who cannot successfully deploy a Talent Management strategy and therefore not contribute toward organisational excellence. This too impacts the credibility of the Line Manager and, as reinforced many times throughout the study, it is extremely difficult to negate the effect of poor managerial skills and leadership. Similarly, not having the processes in place to support the deployment of a talent focused strategy is similarly detrimental to the ability of these organisations to achieve organisational excellence. HR have a strong part to play in the education and development of their Line Managers, and ensuring the supporting processes are in place, to resolve this issue. This development will also have a significant positive impact on increasing the credibility of Line Management both internally and externally, ultimately leading to a sustained competitive advantage for the organisation.

Finally, a sense of overconfidence in the reputation of the Life Science sector in Ireland becomes clear throughout the study. From the analysis of primary research, the confidence of the longer established players in the sector is noted, more so than organisations that have more recently established operations in Ireland. This overconfidence stems from the traditional nature of the Life Science sector and the historic view of this sector as an employer of choice. Additionally, this overconfidence has a perceived impact on complacency, with the majority of organisations interviewed not engaging in certain Talent Management activities, such as branding, as they believe they do not have to. This overconfidence is predicted to have a negative impact as the war for talent strengthens, with these organisations not prepared for the change that is afoot. HR need to drive this change to shift this perspective and to allow for organisations to be market leaders in Talent Management ahead of their competitors.
Essentially, HR professionals, and Line Managers alike, in the Life Science sector in Ireland are missing significant pieces of the Talent Management puzzle therefore creating unforeseen issues for the future in terms of talent attraction, management, development, engagement and retention. Action is needed now to counteract this disparity in order to allow these organisations to remain as contenders in the Irish employment market as the war for talent strengthens and the shortage of talent is unrelenting. Strategic Talent Management should be the way of life for organisations in the Life Science sector in Ireland going forward, and will result in a more engaged and productive workforce with significantly higher retention rates. Ultimately this will aid these organisations in achieving organisational excellence and fostering their desired culture. The onus is now on the Life Science sector in Ireland to adapt.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Communication with Respondents

Respondents were contacted via Outlook email and calendar to invite them to participate in the study, to arrange interview times and subsequently to express gratitude for their participation and insight. Samples of these communications have been listed below. From a data protection and confidentiality perspective, the names and contact details of the respondents have been excluded from the samples. All respondents wished to remain anonymous and it was important for this anonymity to be respected.

Appendix 1.1: Communication email inviting respondents to take part in the study

To: person@company.com
Cc:

Subject: Dissertation Interview

Hi NAME,

I am currently undertaking a Masters Degree in HRM at CIT and as part of this I am tasked with completing a dissertation. The research question I have chosen is 'To what extent is Strategic Talent Management properly understood and utilised in the Life Science sector in Ireland?' and as TITLE with COMPANY, I believe your insights would be of great value to my study.

I am wondering if you would be agreeable to giving me an hour of your time, when convenient to you, to discuss the topic in more depth and I would be more than happy to visit site to meet with you.

Many Thanks NAME,
Jennifer

Kind Regards,
Jennifer O'Brien
Talent & Transformation Consultant
Fastnet - The Talent Group
Appendix 1.2: Calendar invite arranging an interview time

HI NAME,

I really appreciate you agreeing to an interview – and to let me take up some of your valuable time. Might Tuesday afternoon or anytime on Thursday work for you next week? Alternatively, the following week works for me also, if that is better for you. I am more than happy to call to site and, equally, if it suits you better to come to our offices that is an option too.

Thanks NAME,
Jennifer

Kind Regards,
Jennifer O’Brien
Talent & Transformation Consultant

Appendix 1.3: Follow up thank you email

HI NAME,

I hope all is well?

Just a quick note to follow on from our meeting last week and to thank you for taking the time to speak to me. It was extremely beneficial for me, I really appreciate it.

If there is anything at any time, please do feel free to let me know.

Thanks again NAME,
Jennifer

Kind Regards,
Jennifer O’Brien
Talent & Transformation Consultant
Fastnet - The Talent Group
Appendix 2: Semi Structured Interview Questions

To what extent is Strategic Talent Management understood and properly utilised in the Life Sciences sector in Ireland?

1. Strategic Talent Management

- What does the term “Talent Management” mean to you?
- What does the term Strategic Talent Management mean to you?
- Who do you think is, or should be, responsible for STM?
- What HR activities do you believe are involved in Strategic Talent Management?

2. Talent Attraction

*Employer Branding*

- Is employer branding important to, and carried out in, your organisation?
- Do you think there is a link between employer branding and the attractiveness of your organisation to potential employees?

*The Recruitment Process and Candidate Journey*

- When was the last time you evaluated your recruitment process?
- Are both HR and Line Managers aware of the candidate experience throughout the recruitment process? Do they try and maximise this?

*Onboarding*

- How quickly do you expect an individual to come up the initial learning curve? (and) What do you do as an employer to support this?
- Do you feel this needs to be optimised or are you happy with current onboarding activities?
- Do you think onboarding practices within your organisation have a link to turnover/retention?

3. Talent Management

Leadership Capabilities

- How do you currently assess what a successful manager/leader at Company X is?
- Do you believe the managerial skills and abilities of your managers/leaders are at the required level?
- Do you believe your managers are equipped to deploy a Talent Management strategy?

Performance Management

- Can you describe your current performance management system to me?
  (Does this system mainly review previous performance, plan for the future, or both? If necessary)
- Is the current performance management system linked to other HR processes? E.g.: Learning & Development
- Have you received any feedback from employees re: performance management system?

Coaching Culture

- Do you feel your organisation fosters a culture of coaching?
  (Is this at certain levels/ for certain positions only or across the board? if needed)
- Do you feel more could be done to promote constant coaching within the organisation?
- Do you believe that a coaching culture can feed into an increase in retention and organisational performance?

4. Talent Development

Learning & Development
- What methods do you utilise to promote organisational learning?
- How does Company X develop internal capabilities?
  (Looking for on the job training, coaching, mentoring, formal training/education…)

*Succession Planning*

- Does your organisation have a succession plan in place for key roles within the organisation?
- Are these individuals aware they are part of a succession plan?

*Rotation & Development Opportunities*

- Are there rotational and development opportunities often available within your organisation?
- How is a decision made as to the right internal candidate for promotion/rotation?
- Do you believe sufficient development activities take place within your organisation?

5. **Talent Engagement**

*Communications Strategy*

- What does your current internal communication strategy entail?
- Is this working – are all employees as aligned as possible to the organisational goals?
- Do you feel your employees would feel more engaged having a clearer sense of the organisational goals, financial situation etc?

*Wellbeing*

- Does your organisation have a wellbeing strategy in place?
- What is involved in this?
- Do you believe wellbeing has an impact on the overall engagement and motivation of your employees?
6. Talent Retention

Reward

- What does your current reward system include? (Extrinsic & Intrinsic motivators?)
- Do you feel this is sufficient?
- Does your organisation take into consideration the needs of the employees when designing/reviewing reward?

Recognition

- How are individuals and groups recognised at your organisation?
- How important do you (and Line Managers) view recognition as being?
- Do you think lack of recognition would lead to an individual leaving the organisation?

Exit Process

- Do you conduct exit interviews?
- What is done with exit interview data?
- From an overall exit process, how is an individual offboarded?
- Do you feel it is important to maintain a positive relationship until the individuals last day? Why/why not?

Based on the questions and the topics as discussed, would you be happy to be named throughout this thesis or would you prefer to remain anonymous?

Would you like to be sent a copy of this thesis, once complete?
Appendix 3: Reflective Journal

Lewis and Williams (1994, pg. 5) define experiential learning as:

Learning from the experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes or new ways of thinking.

This is certainly true of my experience while completing this thesis. By reflecting on my experience, I realise that I am reflecting on my own academic and personal journey over the past 6 months. This journey and the path I chose took me out of my comfort zone, made for memorable experiences and changed me as a person, hence allowing for me to develop new skills and ways of thinking.

Although the process was lengthy and, at times, I found it difficult to motivate myself to complete the work, on reflection, the workload was more manageable than I initially thought. Thinking further about why I believe this, I realise that my planning and organising skills benefitted me in putting together an initial plan, outlining the shape of each chapter and working through the chapters methodically. In terms of how I planned, I initially put together a plan to define and measure the scope of the study and to outline how I would go about answering the research question and achieving my aim and objectives. This allowed me to form the basis for the literature review and by conducting some initial research, the outline of my Chapter Two became apparent. On reflection, I can see that planning provided me with a sense of confidence and thus the ability to move forward with the process.

Conducting the secondary research was initially extremely interesting and exciting as I began to learn more about concepts and topics I had previously only briefly explored. As time went on and as it became more difficult to establish new viewpoints, I did become a little frustrated with the secondary research. On reflection, I realise that many of the viewpoints on a number of the areas I explored are quite similar, therefore differentiating viewpoints are simply hard to come by. Additionally, as it became clearer that there was significant disparity of definition within the literature for the topic I explored, I became a little anxious. With help and direction from my supervisor, I realise now that I need to be more accepting of situations beyond my control. I have learned not to look at this type of situation as a disadvantage, but instead to turn
this into an opportunity that can be used in a positive or more useful way. As a person, I am a perfectionist and like to be in control but on reflection, I now realise that this cannot always be the case.

Approaching the methodology, I was apprehensive and it felt like a large obstacle to overcome. Research philosophies, theories and approaches to research were new to me and something I had not explored previously during my undergraduate degree programme. Attending the Research Methodology class during the third semester of the Masters programme benefitted me significantly when writing Chapter 3. Without this class and the information I learned over the third semester, I would have been at a disadvantage writing Chapter 3. I did find Chapter 3 frustrating when learning more about philosophies and understanding these in detail as there is a significant body of information and I did not find this straightforward. On reflection, I am happy to have learned about different philosophies and approaches so as I could apply the most appropriate for my study. I understand now that this frustration increased my ability to be persistent and equally that this persistence was key when writing chapters that did not come as naturally as others.

In terms of the semi structured interviews conducted, I felt I approached these with an element of confidence, given my career history in recruitment in which I am a seasoned interviewer. The type of interview conducted, however, differed from what I am primarily used to. There was still a learning curve and interviewing Senior HR Professionals was, of course, daunting. Additionally, having completed the Meyers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) previously and knowing that I am a natural introvert, I do find meeting new people a little intimidating, especially when these individuals are established in their careers and in quite senior positions. On reflection, I feel that I eased into the interviews and became more comfortable over time, having completed each one. Additionally, I found my ability to probe transferred well from my recruitment experience. On further reflection, I am proud of stepping out of my comfort zone and conversing with senior industry professionals on an extremely topical subject. I realise this is a personal accomplishment and a new skill that I have developed.

Compiling the analysis, based on the literature and semi structured interviews, was quite interesting. I thoroughly enjoyed comparing and contrasting the thoughts and opinions of the various respondents as well as completing further analysis against the literature. At times, I will admit, I did find this chapter a little tedious. On reflection, I realise that this is due to the
fact that my interviews were quite lengthy and there was a significant amount of data to interpret and analyse. While compiling this chapter, I did feel anxious about the fact that I only had five respondents when I would have liked to have had a higher number. On reflection, I realise if I did have a higher number, I could have quite possibly had too much data to interpret, given the time frame. Additionally, I now realise that I can use this reflection in another way to benefit the study, by discussing the number of respondents as a limitation of the study overall.

Initially, I found establishing my key findings and writing my overall conclusion quite daunting. As my analysis was quite detailed and extensive, I was unsure how to approach this to establish the key findings and create an argument promoting the significance of the study. On reflection, I realise that I found this intimidating because of the significance of the key findings and the overall conclusion to the overall study. Reflecting further on this, I realise that this intimidation stems from my own lack of overall confidence. I now realise, however, that I do have the ability and the skills to assess data and create a strong argument, therefore my confidence in my own ability has increased.

When the study was near completion and it was time to compose Chapter 1, although I was tired, I began to see light at the end of the tunnel. The study started to come together for me, I felt calmer and I realised how much work I had achieved on my thesis journey. On reflection, I believe this calmness and clarity arose due my own self-awareness that I had given the thesis all of my efforts and believed that I had compiled a high quality body of work. Summarising the study for Chapter 1 brought home the brevity of the study and allowed me to recap on how much I had learned about the topic of Strategic Talent Management, and academic writing, on this journey.

Each time I began a new chapter, I commented that this new chapter was the most difficult so far. Reflecting on this, I realise now that this is a sign of growth and development. Having completed each chapter and moved forward I now understand that I was developing skills and abilities in these areas, hence why I found the following task challenging. Reflecting further, I am happy this was the case, as I realise I was challenging myself throughout the process as well as honing a new skill.
Working full time and completing a thesis simultaneously was no mean feat. Throughout the process, I tended to get absorbed in the detail and the stress of the workload. Being organised and having a structured plan in place, however, did help me. On reflection, I realise that the time I took to step back from the computer and take a moment to breathe and think increased my focus. Likewise, I realise the importance of having a strong support network for advice and guidance when it is needed. On further reflection, I now realise the support I received from my friends, family, supervisor and some of my classmates helped me throughout my journey and how beneficial this really was to me personally.

In January 2018, I was nervous about the coming semester and found the prospect of completing the thesis truly daunting. Looking back at the six months that have gone by, I realise how I have developed both academically and personally. I have honed skills including, research, analysis and report writing. I have become more confident as a person and know that I can challenge myself to achieve goals. At the same time, however, I do feel that I am suffering slightly from imposter syndrome. I cannot comprehend the idea of potentially having a hard copy of my thesis in the college library for other students to read. I wonder to myself if anyone would even read it. Reflecting on this, I believe this is the case because of the pressure I put on myself to succeed. I realise that I am my own worst critic and constantly want better from myself. I understand that this is also due to a lack of confidence. Although I have increased my confidence through this process, there still is a journey ahead. Again, I now realise that this goes back to my ISFJ personality type and my lack of ability to acknowledge my own strengths. This is something I will have to work on myself going forward and will take on board from this reflection.

On reflection, I now realise that my ability to take criticism has increased during this process. As a person, I am aware that I can be quite stubborn and as I am a perfectionist, I can find it hard to accept there are flaws in something I have worked extremely hard on. Completing this thesis was a new experience for me and, therefore, something I realised I had to be open to taking criticism on. Reflecting further on this, I realise that I immersed myself into criticism quite slowly, initially by receiving criticism from my supervisor and taking this on board. This gave me the confidence to show my work to friends and family for their input. On further reflection again, I realise this has not only increased by ability to take criticism but also my resilience, as I am quite a sensitive person.
Personally reflecting on the past 6 months, I realise how hard this process has been on others around me. There were, of course, times when I felt pressure and the workload felt significant which affected me personally and added to my stress triggers. Being stressed in myself, I now realise, has a domino effect on those closest to me. On reflection, I realise how patient my family, my boyfriend and my friends have been with me. I did make some personal sacrifices while on this journey and I now understand that these also impacted others. If I had my time again, I would ensure to make more time for family and friends and to think before I took my frustration out on them at times.

Reflecting on my experience overall, I realise, has been quite useful. As Gibbs (1988, pg. 9) states:

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\text{It is not sufficient simply to have an experience to learn. Without reflecting upon this experience it may be quickly forgotten, or its learning potential lost. It is from the feelings and thoughts emerging from this reflection that generalisations or concepts can be generated. And it is generalisations that allow new situations to be tackled effectively.}
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I firmly believe that reflecting on my experiences during the thesis process has allowed me to understand why certain situations and instances affected me and why I reacted in the way that I did. I now have the opportunity to take these reflections on board going forward and be in a position to utilise these in future situations that may arise. Furthermore, I can use the reflections to further self-develop. I have thoroughly enjoyed the journey I have made over the last six months and, on reflection, realise how beneficial it has been to me academically, professionally and personally.