

Appendix 1. Basic premises of the Talent Lab Concept

The basic premises of the Talent Lab are explained in more detail below.

Basic principle 1: HRM – from repair management to talent management

In HRM, competency management was for many years the guiding concept for the development of employees and the organization as a whole. This involved bringing the employee up to scratch in certain employer-demanded competencies, based on defined functional profiles and performance standards. This usually resulted in ‘repair management’ within the limits of a fixed job specification. Current thinking in HRM embraces a development strategy that is more tailored to the individual, based on the employee’s inclination and ambition. In this kind of talent management, the important thing is to use and further develop the competencies and strengths that someone has rather than ‘repairing’ competencies that are linked to delineated functions. The motivation to learn something new, based on improvement of existing qualities, is many times greater than the motivation to modify a behavior based on a position of weakness.

Basic principle 2: Tailoring - ‘One size fits one’

If there is one lesson that we have learned in recent years, it is that tailoring is important when it comes to investing in recruiting, retaining and motivating employees and allowing them to flourish, develop and move on. People learn most effectively and efficiently in the workplace if the learning interventions and the learning climate are tailored as much as possible to them as individuals. The ‘one size fits one’ principle therefore forms the guiding theme of the Talent Lab concept. For each participant, the personal talent profile, the working environment and the combination of both are scrutinized in order to discover opportunities for optimization. In this way, one optimizes individual learning processes that can take place in the workplace or outside it.

Basic principle 3: Talent development serves working productivity

The Talent Lab is unique in its class both as a development instrument and as an investment in individual learning processes for the benefit of effective working processes and labor relations. In this respect, it must be noted that talent development is not a goal in itself for organizations, but rather a means of making the working relationship between the employee

and the employer as productive and effective as possible. The Talent Lab facilitates the achievement of that goal by optimizing the means of achieving it.

Basic principle 4: Learning under guidance

Learning can be painful. Growing pains are part of a learning process, which is why participants receive intensive guidance during and, if necessary, after the Talent Lab. This guidance is active and directing during the monthly coaching sessions, and passive and on request during the intervening periods.

Basic principle 5: Social constructivism as a theoretical basis

The entire Talent Lab uses social constructivism as its theoretical basis. This theory sees talent development as a process that takes shape through the continuous interplay between the working environment and the individual talent profile. Based on this theory, Van der Sluis has analyzed learning processes in the workplace and also studied talent development processes (see literature 2000 and 2008 below). This gave rise to the talent compass, also known as the 'onion model'. This incorporates three porous rings that reflect – from outside to inside – the *knowledge*, *know-how* and *character* of a person; these rings are surrounded by an outer skin that reflects the working and learning *climate*. By measuring and discussing these aspects, one can chart the talent profile and the climate in which the individual functions. To go into more detail, the following variables are involved:

- Character: the individual's personality profile, motivating forces, values and ambitions
- Know-how: the individual's skills, behavior and past performance
- Knowledge: subject knowledge, self-knowledge, experience of and with other companies, general knowledge
- Climate: the working and learning climate in which the individual functions.

Talent develops via these four areas. Of these four pillars of talent development, character is the most fixed and hardest to change. By contrast, knowledge and climate are the most malleable.

Literature:

Van der Sluis (2000), *Management Learning and Development*. Doctoral Thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam/Tinbergen Institute. ISBN 9051708009

Van der Sluis (2008), *Talent Management in Strategisch Perspectief* (Talent Management in the Strategic Perspective). Inaugural speech, Nyenrode Business Universiteit. ISBN 9789089800107