

# You're

# hired!

Picking up on the theme of *The Apprentice* TV programme, TIM BRYANT examines talent needs in motor retailing with the comment: "It appears that individuals are being selected for employment based on their prior experience rather than objectively assessed abilities."

Winner of *The Apprentice* 2007  
Simon Ambrose  
(right), with Sir Alan  
Sugar.



**T**he BBC series "The Apprentice" fascinates me. A 12-week, mega 'Assessment Centre', comprising ingenious business simulation activities, each designed to extract and highlight the candidate's talents (or lack of) week after week.

Sir Alan Sugar has admitted that this year's decision was his hardest yet. His business interests are changing, and as he

moves into the real estate market, he required a different calibre of apprentice. For 2007, it was Simon Ambrose who won the £100,000 "You're hired" title.

Today, the trawl for talent that has been a feature for years in financial services has landed with a 'big bang' in the automotive sector.

Why? Because it seems as though the industry has at last recognised that the product itself

is not the sole measure of success. Behind the brake horse power and all the other features designed to entice customers comes the need for 'people power' – individuals who through their behaviour and ability enhance the product from point of sale through to aftersales.

So, is your business selecting, developing and retaining the talent that it requires?

**Selection.** First, a straightforward question: "What talent does your business need?"

We have all seen how rigorous Sir Alan Sugar's 'talent selection' activities are, but how difficult is it to land a role in your organisation? Automotive businesses need talented individuals at all levels – from dealer principals to departmental managers, customer service advisors, sales executives and

vehicle technicians.

Can you be sure that your current recruitment and assessment methods are accurately highlighting the people that you require? All too often in the automotive sector, it appears that individuals are being selected for employment based upon their prior experience rather than their objectively assessed abilities.

Assessment can feature a variety of methods – on-line selection tools that include psychometric and behavioural testing functionality, for example, and dynamic assessment centres which place candidates head-to-head in a series of ‘real-world’ business simulation activities.

**Development.** In sport, Roger Black, Olympic 400m silver medallist, summed up the effective development of talent as: “Find a talent. Provide a structured training programme and a coach. That’s it.”

It sounds so obvious, so why isn’t this philosophy common practice throughout the automotive sector?

In my experience, the main reason is the often-disjointed nature of recruitment and development. All too frequently, HR or personnel do the recruitment bit, with ongoing development left to the line manager. Inevitably, the line manager’s daily pressures always take priority over employee development.

Effective talent management therefore calls for the joining together of the key elements of selection, development and retention into a ‘Talent Pipeline’, depicted here.



Source: CIPD Change Agenda 2007

**“The critical resource of most businesses is no longer capital – that is, assets that a company owns and utilises at as high a level as possible. Rather, the critical resources are employees whom a company hires and must motivate and retain.”**

Felix Braber & Rainer Strack

**People Power: How to Measure It** *Harvard Business School*

**Talent Management.** New recruits expect to undertake a formal induction to familiarise themselves with their new company or role. They then expect to see a clear development path that engages them to learn and actively apply this learning. They value regular feedback over their performance, and businesses are moving towards ‘Performance Management’ cultures to provide this. When combined with a tailored and structured development programme the line manager – acting as coach or mentor – plays a critical part in the development of an organisation’s talent.

**Retention.** I have seen far too many organisations shrug their shoulders over staff retention, declaring that “We can’t stop people leaving if they want to go”. While this may be true, I would challenge to what lengths the organisation has gone to persuade employees to stay? Put another way, how much ‘loyalty to the company’ has the organisation instilled in its employees?

As featured in a previous CPD article (“Where does loyalty lie?”, May 2007), a much misunderstood aspect of employee loyalty is its

two-way nature. For an employee to remain loyal to an organisation, the organisation needs to demonstrate loyalty to the employee. While this sounds obvious, it’s rarely practised – “Why should I show loyalty to you? What have you showed to me?”. In a similar way to losing customers to competitors, organisations that do not consider employee loyalty to be a two-way process take the real risk of losing their critical talent too.

An effective ‘Talent Management’ strategy can ensure that all new and existing employees are consistently and effectively recognised and rewarded for their performances, leading them to declare “I enjoy working here”, and for the business to become an “employer of choice”.

In the battle for customer loyalty, ‘Talent Management’ should be the rallying cry. **MIM**

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...but what should happen next?



Find out the answer to this and other people-related challenges in ‘Lead from the Front in 2008’ written by **rts** Learning & Development Manager, Tim Bryant.

To receive your **free copy** of the presentation, please contact **rts** at [enquire@rts-uk.co.uk](mailto:enquire@rts-uk.co.uk), or by calling Gemma Pritchard on 01249 450952.

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