2011

‘Translating strategy into talents’

A research with a tool developed to translate business strategy into talents required to achieve this strategy

Els Tijs

27-04-2011

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

‘Translating strategy into talents’

A research with a tool developed to translate business strategy into talents required to achieve this strategy

Els Tijs
S0141739

Student
Name: E. Tijs
Student number: S0141739
Master program: Business Administration, track HRM

Giraffe HR
Mentor: Msc S. Pors
Telephone: 030 – 890 53 60
Email: info@giraffe.nl

University of Twente
1st mentor dr. M. Van Velzen
2nd mentor dr. A. Nehles-Bos
Telephone: 053 - 489 49 95

Foreword

This thesis is a result of the master course Business Administration at the University Twente in Enschede. On behalf of Giraffe HR a tool is developed to translate the business strategy into the talents which are required to achieve this strategy. The title of this thesis is therefore *'translating strategy into talents'*. Giraffe HR defined different themes of expertise. One of those themes is 'talent- and organizational development' wherein this research is conducted. Subsequently, during this research Giraffe HR entered into an agreement of cooperation with Ehrm-Vision who are the developer of the Talent Motivation Assessment method (TMA method). This TMA method measures the current talents of employees in an organization. This allows us to conduct a gap analysis between the current and required talents, after developing the tool.

During this research I am assisted and guided by multiple people whom I would like to thank. Firstly, I would like to thank dr. Martijn van Velzen who gave me sound guidance during the process. He gave me well-built feedback to deepen my research. Subsequently, he was involved and showed interest in my research, the process and my experiences at Giraffe HR. In addition, I would like to thank dr. Anna Bos-Nehles for her time and effort to give critical comments regarding the research and the thesis.

Furthermore, I would like to show appreciation to Giraffe HR for giving me the opportunity for conducting this research and getting to know the consultancy-world in the area of HR. Especially, I would like to thank Sylvia Pors for her enthusiasm, honesty and support during this process. Because of her involvement and eagerness, I learned a lot regarding HR in practice and in specific talent management. In spite of her busy schedule, she always took time to brainstorm. Therefore, occasionally I experienced this research as difficult but most of the time as enjoyable.

Moreover, I would like to thank Bastian Müller of Ehrm-Vision for his time and effort to give me input for aligning the tool with the TMA method. In addition to that, I got to learn and work with the method which increased the insight regarding my own talents.

However, this does not reflect the involvement of the other employees of Giraffe HR/TriamFloat and the colleagues in the theme of 'Talent- and organizational development'. I always felt welcome in the organization and they showed keen interest in the research. Without the cooperation of all these people I would have not been able to carry out this research.

Els Tijs

27-04-2011

Management summary

This research is conducted on behalf of the consultancy organization Giraffe HR. The two research questions are: **1.** *'How can organizations translate their business strategy into required talents in order to achieve their business goals?'* and **2.** *'How can talent gaps (i.e. present versus required talent) be identified?'.* Answering the first research question means developing a tool with which the translation can be made and the required talents can be determined. The determination of the current talents of employees was necessary for answering the second research question. These current talents are measured by the Talent Motivation Assessment method of Ehrm-Vision with which Giraffe entered an agreement during this research.

For developing the tool to make the translation from strategy into talents, the designing cycle of Verschuren & Hartog (2005) is used. The six stages relate closely to each other while the goals in the first stage should be achieved after completing the last stage. The methods which are used in this cycle are documentation review, expert reviews and two case studies. The expert reviews are done with four experienced persons regarding talent management and the TMA method to guarantee alignment with the practice and the TMA method. In addition, two case studies are conducted to test the tool. The case study organizations were Servicehuis Personeel, a division of the municipality Amsterdam and the healthcare institution Merem. The tool is tested in the case studies by conducting interviews with a manager, a HR advisor and a HR manager.

The developed tool consists of three parts. The case studies showed that the first part 'preparation' is an important element of this tool. Firstly, the purpose of the tool should be determined and the selected respondents should be in line with this purpose. In addition, a suitable interviewer should be selected as the case studies showed that the role of the interviewer is of utmost importance. Furthermore, the 'adjusted CSA tool' should be sent to the respondent(s) prior to the interview. Based on this tool, the respondent assesses the 55 TMA competencies based on their importance to achieve the strategy. These results should be analyzed prior to the interview as this will be discussed.

The second part of the tool is 'conducting the interview-tool' with which the translation from business strategy to required talents is made and additional subjects are discussed. The interview-tool is developed by determining the variables and by formulating the questions. The case studies showed several faults in the interview-tool which are improved in a later stage. It is important that the goal of the tool 'translating the strategy into required talents' is achieved. Nevertheless, a significant result is that this translation should be improved by stimulating more discussion to increase the quality. A recommendation for Giraffe is to gather 4-6 people in one discussion and focus this discussion on formulating a small set of required competencies.

The third part of the tool is writing a 'final advice' for the customer based on the outcomes of the interview-tool. Firstly, a gap analysis between the current and required talents should be carried out. The required talents are determined in the interview-tool and the current talents can be achieved from the TMA portal of the organization. Additionally, based on the gap analysis and the discussions during the interview, several recommendations can be presented in this final advice. A manual is written for the consultants as guidance for making this gap analysis as a basis for the final advice.

After improving the tool, the main recommendation for Ehrm-Vision is add the tool to their range of existing instruments while it adds significant value. Additionally, it is recommended to add the tool in the portal, as this saves a considerable amount of time when conducting the gap analysis. An important recommendation for Giraffe is to secure the tool within the theme 'Talent- and organizational developments' and to explore the additional possibilities of the tool. Eventually, before launching the tool in the market it is of utmost importance to increase the involvement of the business managers and consultants of Giraffe HR in the tool. Only then will the tool be a success for Giraffe HR.

Content

1. Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a well-defined introduction to the research. The chapter starts with the identification of the motive of the research. In the second section an explanation of the context of the research is given. In the third section the TMA method is described and the purpose of the research is explained in the fourth section. The chapter concludes with the contour of this thesis.

1.1 Motive of the research

'Talent is a critical driver of corporate performance. In addition, a company's ability to attract, develop, and retain talent will be a major competitive advantage far into the future'. This citation is written by Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin & Michaels III (1998) in a report about their well-known book 'The war for talent'. Many other authors stress the importance of talent in the future, however they all approach this subject in a different way (Shikma, Van Barneveld, Latten, Zijlstra, Bontekoning, Feld & Vlasblom, 2010; Pfeffer, 2001). Pfeffer (2001) for example grants the importance of talent, however he criticize fighting a war for talent. He states that there is put too much emphasizes on the individual performance instead of team performance. In addition, organizations who maintain the mindset of 'the war of talent' tend to glorify the talents of people outside the organization and therefore downplay the talents of the insiders. Another critique about the 'war for talent' is the role of the self-fulfilling prophecy of the ones who are less able (Pfeffer, 2001). This means that the ones who are less able will become less able, because they are asked to do less. Every employee is valuable and therefore the talents of the less valuable employees should also be stimulated according to Pfeffer (2001).

This last argument of Pfeffer (2001) seems very important when the labor force is decreasing. According to Visser (2009) this is happening in The Netherlands. When there is a shortage of qualified personnel, it is even more important to value and use the talents of every employee. According to the figures (see table 1) it can be seen that the population of 0-20 years old and the population between 20-65 years old will decrease between 2011 and 2030 (CBS, 2011). However, the population will still grow during this time. This can be explained by the significant increase of the older age group of > 65 years old.

To see which influence this has on the labor force, a comparison is made between the working and not-working part of the population (see table 1). Therefore, CBS (2011) compared the age groups of <20 and >65 years old with the 20-65 years old group. In the last column of table 1 we can see that the percentage of not-working people increases in comparison to the amount of working people. This means that the seize of the labor force will decrease just as Shikma et al. (2010) and Visser (2009) stated in their articles. For organizations this means that it will be harder to attract employees wherefore every employee is valuable and every talent should be stimulated to be used optimal. Therefore, Shikma et al. (2010) and Pfeffer (2001) warn employers for focusing only on the high potentials in their organization, while they should increase the employment of the 'less talented' ones as well. In addition, the importance of talent management will grow, while those macro demographic developments influence the way organizations manage their employees and their talents.

Table 1: Population forecast in percentages

	Population	Population growth	Age 0-20 years old	Age 20-65 years old	Age > 65 years old	'Not working' (<20 and >65) compared to 'working' (20-65 years)
	Number	Number	%	%	%	%
2011	16.654.455	78665	23,5	60,9	15,6	64,1
2015	16.941.204	60116	22,7	59,6	17,7	67,9
2020	17.228.780	55016	22,0	58,3	19,7	71,5
2025	17.488.346	45638	21,3	57,0	21,7	75,6
2030	17.687.800	30712	21,3	55,0	23,7	81,9

Another important development which increases the importance of talent management on the individual level is the increasing independency of employees regarding organizations and the traditional career arrangements (Chambers et al., 1998; Shikma et al., 2010; Arthur, Khapova & Wilderom, 2005). The employees focus on opportunities that go beyond one single employer, their commitment is short term and therefore job mobility is increasing (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). The literature refers to this phenomenon as the boundaryless career (Arthur et al., 2005). These developments make it harder for employers to retain their talented employees. Therefore, Chambers et al. (1998) state that *'excellent talent management has become a crucial source of competitive advantage'.*

Following the perspective of Chambers et al. (1998) and the above demographic developments, we can draw the conclusion that talent management is very important now and in the near future. According to different authors, implementing talent management starts with the integration of the subject in the highest level of the organization (Chambers et al., 1998; Shikma et al., 2010; Michaels, 2001; Barney & Wright, 1998; Cheese et al., 2008). This integration can mean spreading a talent mindset through the organization, more awareness of which talents are available and needed, improving performance and gaining competitive advantage (Chambers et al., 1998; Shikma et al., 2010; Cheese et al., 2008).

This research focuses on the integration of talent management on the strategic level of organizations, while linking talents to the organizational strategy can lead to competitive advantage (Barney & Wright, 1998; Cheese et al., 2008). Literature suggests that translating the business strategy into required talents should be the first stage when the organization wants to be distinctive due to their human capital (Barney & Wright, 1998; Cheese et al., 2008). The business strategy gives namely guidance and steering to the business and the talents should be aligned with this strategy to support achieving these goals (Cheese et al., 2008). This research relates therefore the current talents with the required talents in an organization. The literature does not make this translation so specific to give guidance for organizations. This research fills this gap by developing a tool that guides organizations to translate their business strategy into the required talents. The focus of this research is therefore the strategic level of the organization.

1.2 Context and type of research

This research is conducted within the consultancy organization Giraffe HR which shapes the context of this research. Giraffe defines its working area by means of themes wherein the level of expertise is high. These themes make Giraffe distinctive from competitors and they give guidance to the business. One of those themes is talent management wherein this research is conducted. In the vision document of talent management is stated that the theme wants to be a leader in the market of talent- and organization development within the next three years. To achieve this objective, Giraffe wants to offer customers concrete products as a service.

Giraffe has a specific product in mind and therefore they outlined three requirements. First, the consultants of Giraffe should be able to measure which talents are present in an organization using the tool. Second, the product should make it possible to determine which talents are required to achieve the organizational goals. Third, the consultants should be able to conduct a gap analysis between the current and required talents and to formulate an advice based on those gaps. Giraffe states that these three requirements are the first essential stages when an organization wants to implement talent management, while it increases their understanding of the talents in the organization.

Starting this research, the first idea was to focus on the first requirement, to develop a tool to measure the current talents in an organization. However, after conducting significant desk research it became clear that such a tool already exists, namely the Talent Motivation Assessment method (TMA method) of Ehrm-Vision. This TMA method focuses on the individual and team level and therefore they excluded that strategic integration of talent management. The strategic integration refers to the second requirement of Giraffe and it makes the third requirement possible. The TMA method in the original setting is therefore insufficient for Giraffe to fulfill all requirements.

With this in mind, Giraffe and Ehrm-Vision discussed about a way of cooperation which is suitable and profitable for both organizations. They came to an agreement of cooperation and this means that this research adds a tool to the existing TMA method which focuses on the second and third requirement of Giraffe. In this way, a concrete product can be delivered within the theme talent management of Giraffe and the TMA method can be further developed. This agreement is, based on the three requirements of Giraffe, visualized in figure 1 below. Since the aim of this research is to design a tool, the type of research is design-oriented and it has a theoretical and practical orientation.

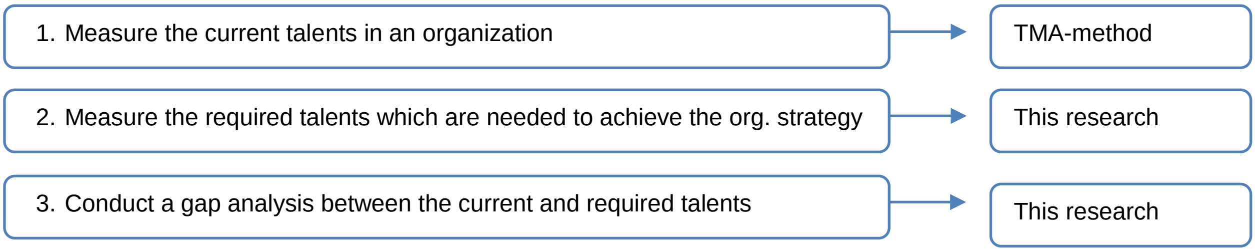

Figure 1: distinction between this research and the TMA method

1.3 The TMA-method

While the tool which will be developed in this research should relate closely to the TMA method, this method is shortly explained in this section. The TMA method consists out of three main functions: the talent analysis tool, a feedback tool and a performance profiler wherewith competency and job profiles can be composed. For this research the talent analysis tool is the starting point while this tool measures the talents of the employees. Van IJzendoorn, (2009) refer to talents as the needs which reflect the natural ability of persons. The talent analysis is therefore developed as an operationalization of the needs which are researched by Henry A. Murray (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). Ehrm-Vision states that the needs and the processes of thoughts should be measured to get to know something about a person's personality (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). This personality profile consists out of talents and motives while these have a major influence on the behavior of employees (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009).

An important element of the talent analysis is the relation with competencies. Van IJzendoorn et al. (2009) refer to competencies as the actual behavior and behavioral skills of employees. They share the vision that the extent to which those competencies can be developed, depend on the natural ability of those competencies which reflect in the outcomes of the talent analysis. The translation of talents in competencies is essential, while the TMA tool gives therefore useful insights and practical tools for the employee and the organization.

An additional perspective is that the outcomes of the talent analysis are four to five years valid while talents can change over time (B. Müller, personal communication, managing director of Ehrm-Vision, 6 December 2010). Therefore, Ehrm-Vision maintains a combination of the 'nurture and nature' discussion about talents. However, emphasize is put on the concept of 'nature' and therefore it refers mainly to the natural ability of a person (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). The perspective from which Van IJzendoorn et al. (2009) approach talents is formed by the Appreciative inquiry. This approach states that the focus should be put on the positive characteristics of an employee and not on the characteristics which are underdeveloped. In addition, Van IJzendoorn et al. (2009) state that it is not bad or good to have a specific talent while the talents are in principle neutral. However, a specific talent can become to better advantage in a specific function or role.

1.4 The purpose of this research

The purpose of this research is to develop a tool for consultants of Giraffe HR to translate a business strategy into required talents which are needed to achieve the strategy. In addition, the tool will make it possible to conduct a gap analysis between those required talents and the current talents in the organization. Therefore the following research questions will be answered: *'How can organizations* *translate their business strategy into required talents in order to achieve their business goals?'* and *'How can talent gaps (i.e. present versus desired talent) be identified?'* Answering these questions means developing a tool for the theme talent management of Giraffe HR. This research provides Giraffe a concrete product as a service to its customers which helps them to be a leader in the market of talent- and organization development within the next three years.

The tool should relate closely with the TMA method, while a requirement for the gap analysis is that the current talents in the organization are measured by the TMA method. The outcomes of the talent analysis of the TMA method form therefore the foundation of the gap analysis. After conducting this gap analysis we can draw conclusions if the organization can achieve the business strategy with their current talents and which talents they maybe additionally need. In this way, the tool adds significant value to the existing method while the strategic level is included. Without this strategic level, it is not clear what direction the organization wants to follow and what talents they need. This states that the issue of talent management in this research is approached mainly from the strategic level.

1.5 Relevance

The relevance of this research is shortly outlined above, while this research focuses on the requirements of Giraffe HR within the theme talent management. The first requirement (measuring the current talents of an organization) is fulfilled by an agreement of cooperation between Giraffe HR and Ehrm-Vision. However, the developers of the TMA-method delineate the instrument, while analyses are done only on the individual and team level. Therefore, the macro level is excluded and no relations are made between talents and the business strategy. The practical relevance of this research is therefore shaped by including the macro level in the tool which will be developed. Therefore, this research makes it possible to pursue all three requirements of Giraffe HR. In addition, this research adds a tool to the existing TMA method which can be used by Giraffe and Ehrm-Vision. For Giraffe this means that the tool in combination with the TMA method can be implemented within the theme talent management. This research will therefore make a contribution to achieve the objective of the theme talent management at Giraffe.

Besides this practical relevance, this research pursues an important scientific relevance. Literature states that translating the business strategy into the required talents should be the first stage when making an organization distinctive due to their human capital (Barney & Wright, 1998; Cheese et al., 2008). The reason is that the business strategy gives guidance and steering to the organization of the business (Cheese et al., 2008). However, the literature, for example Cheese et al. (2008), does not make this stage so specific that it gives concrete guidance to make this translation. This research develops a tool to give such guidance and therefore this research pursues an important scientific relevance.

1.6 Outline of this research report

This thesis presents in the chapter 2 a theoretical framework. In this framework the concept talents, talent management and strategic management are defined and discussed. This chapter concludes with an explanation of the research questions and the conceptual framework. In chapter 3 the methods are described which are used to answer these research questions. In this research the designing cycle is used as a guidance for developing the tool. In addition, different methods are used in the different stages of the designing cycle. The results of those different stages of the designing cycle are presented in chapter 4. In chapter 5 several limitations are firstly described. In addition, conclusions are drawn regarding the results and the developed tool is improved. Based on those conclusions and adjustments, several recommendations for Ehrm-Vision and Giraffe are presented in chapter 6.

2. Theoretical framework

To develop a high-quality theoretical review, the focus should be put on concepts and therefore this theoretical framework is divided into the following concepts: talents, strategic talent management and business strategies (Webster & Watson, 2002). The first section therefore outlines different perspectives and a definition of talents. In addition, a comparison is made between talents and competencies. Section 2 explains several perspectives regarding strategic talent management and concludes with a description of the relation between strategy and talent. The third section defines the area of business strategies. This chapter concludes with the research questions and a conceptual framework which gives a visual presentation of the research.

2.1 Defining talents

2.1.1 Nature versus nurture

Before we start to define the concept of talents, it is important to highlight some perspectives on talents. These perspectives influence the definition of talents which will be used in this research. The first perspective focuses on the well-known discussion about nature versus nurture. These perspectives provide important discussions in the literature regarding talents, while they refer to the originating of talents and the possibilities to develop those talents (Howe et al., 1998). Van der Sluis (2008, cited in Van Beirendonck, 2010) mentions both perspectives clearly while she states that *'talents are qualities of a person which are inherited from birth or are developed in later stages'*.

Firstly, Van der Sluis (2009) states that talents are qualities which are inherited from birth. This refers to the concept of nature and therefore talents can be seen as gifts or a natural ability. Important supporters of this perspective are for example Gardner and Gagné (1993, cited in Howe et al., 1998). They state that a special ability must have a genetic ground when it is defined as a gift or an aptitude. Secondly, Van der Sluis (2009) states that talents can be developed in a later stage which refers to the concept of nurture. In this perspective, the development of talent is influenced by situational, environmental and cultural aspects (Dessing & Lap, 2004). The organization plays a critical part in developing talents while the availability of assets is essential for developing talent (Dessing & Lap, 2004). Therefore, potential and talents should be stimulated and developed to become visible to adds value to the organization (Dessing & Lap, 2004).

In a commentary on the research of Howe et al. (1998), the renowned author Csikszentmihalyi state that it is clear that '*talent involves both personal qualities based on innovate differences, and social opportunities, supports and rewards'*. Therefore, this author supports the idea of Van der Sluis (2009) that a talent should be seen as a combination of nurture and nature. In this research, the perspectives of Van der Sluis (2008) and Csikszentmihalyi (1998, cited in Howe et al., 1998) are followed. Therefore, talents of an employee are seen as a combination of innate and developed characteristics. These perspectives are in line with the TMA method while they state that talents can be developed over time. However, the emphasis is put on the idea that talents reflect the natural ability of a person (B. Müller, personal communication, Managing director Ehrm-Vision, 6 December 2010).

2.1.2 'Being a talent' versus 'having a talent'

Ta·lent **1** certain weight of gold and silver **2** natural ability **3** somebody with a certain ability
(translated from Van dale, 2011)

Besides the separation between nature and nurture, there is a major difference between 'being a talent' and 'having a talent' which reflects the third explanation in the definition above. Additionally, Van der Sluis (2008, cited in Van Beirendonck, 2010) gives a well-defined statement about the differences between 'being a talent' and 'having a talent' while she states that talents are characteristics of a person. This makes that every person has certain unique and specific talents

(Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001). On the other hand, a person can be a talent for an organization when he or she uses the talents in such a way that it supports achieving the organizational goals (Van der Sluis, 2008 cited in Van Beirendonck, 2010). In this perspective the employee as a talent adds value to an organization.

In this research the perspectives of Van der Sluis (2008 cited in Van Beirendonck, 2010) and Buckingham & Vosburgh (2001) are mainly followed and therefore focus is put on the perspective of 'having a talent'. In this research the link between the organizational goals and the required talents are central. Therefore, emphasis is put on the concept of 'having a talent' while the talents of employees should support achieving the business goals. The TMA method follows the same perspective, while it measures the current talents which employee's possess. However, following this perspective does not mean that the idea of 'being a talent' should be forgotten. For an individual, being aware of 'having a talent' and developing those talents, can be the start for 'being a talent'. Additionally, these ideas are closely linked to the idea of strategic talent management which is discussed in section 2.2.

2.1.3 Definition of talent

The perspectives which are described in the previous sections give an important input for the further definition of the concept talents. The definition and explanation of talents form an important foundation of the tool which will be developed in this research. A clear definition of talents is therefore essential, however many different definitions of talents are given. In the ancient times talents were seen as cash value and was therefore used a medium of exchange (Digital library for the Dutch literature, 2011). This explanation also reflects in the explanation of talents in the blue box. For example, people exchanged their talent to give advice about a specific problem and they got silver in return. These ideas are used nowadays as well, while employees exchange their talents in return for salary. It is therefore not surprising that this primary definition of talents returns in the definitions regarding talents nowadays. Buckingham & Vosburgh (2001) and Hodges & Clifton (2004) for example state that a talent '*refers to person's recurring pattems of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied. Talents are enduring and unique. They are almost impossible to teach'.* This definition refers to the idea that talents can be used as a medium of exchange, while they can be productively applied.

Volz & Van der Heijden (2005) state that a talent is '*a gift through which an individual can offer added value to the organization*'. In their perspective talents concern the knowledge, skills and attitude which an employee actually possesses. From a more practical point of view Cheese et al. (2008) explain that '*talent means the total of all experience, knowledge, skills, and behaviors that a person has and brings to work'*. It is about characteristics which *can* be linked to a function or role. However, an employee can have more talents than he/she uses in their function or he/she is not using all their talents on the job (Volz & Van der Heijden, 2005). For this research this last statement is important, while the match between the current talents in an organization and talents which are required to achieve the business strategy are central to this study. Cheese et al. (2008) for example state that there should be a match between the present supply of talent in an organization and the specific combination of required talents to achieve the business strategy. Therefore, an individual can offer added value to an organization when those talents are identified, matched and further developed (Barney & Wright, 1998; Buckingham & Vosburgh, 2001; Van der Sluis, 2008, cited in Van Beirendonck 2010; Volz & Van der Heijden, 2005).

A similarity between the definitions above is that a talent is specific for a person. Buckingham & Vosburgh (2001) state that a talent is inherent in each person and is therefore inseparable from that individual. In addition, Van der Sluis (2008, cited in Van Beirendonck, 2010) state that talents are qualities of a person which are inherited from birth or are developed in later stages. These ideas are in line with the vision behind the TMA method while they state that talents reflect the natural ability of a unique person (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). However, Ehrm-Vision state that talents can slightly change or developed over time (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009).

Another similarity between some definitions above is that a talent can be seen as the knowledge, skills and attitudes of a person (Cheese et al., 2008; Volz & Van der Heijden, 2005). However, there is a small discrepancy with these perceptions in comparison with the TMA method, while the TMA method refers to talents specifically as *'the needs of an employee'* (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). However, this discrepancy is small while the concepts of needs and knowledge, skills and attitudes both reflect a person's natural ability and the personality. Therefore, the similarity can be found that talents are related to the natural ability and the personality of a person (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009; Volz & Van der Heijden, 2005). Concisely, based on this literature and the perspectives in the previous sections, the following definition of talent is formulated which is used in this research:

'A talent is a developable characteristic inherent in each person through which an individual can offer added value to an organization'

2.1.4 Competencies versus talents

From the above definition, the question can be made what the difference is between talents and competencies. The literature suggests that competencies refer to the actual behavior of employees in the organizational context (Van Beirendonck, 2010; Volz & Van der Heijden, 2005; Cheese et al., 2008). It refers therefore to the function or role which the employees fulfill (Cheese et al., 2008; Volz & Van der Heijden, 2005). From this point of view Cheese et al. (2008) refer to competencies as '*a set of skills, knowledge and behavior which is necessary for an individual to perform their roles and tasks effectively'*.

These roles and tasks and therefore the competencies are defined by the organization (Dewulf, Van Meeuwen & Tjepkema, 2010). The organization determines the organizational strategy and goals. These goals should be translated into the organization. Therefore the competencies which should be present in the organization to achieve those goals are determined (Dewulf et al., 2010). From this point of view the competencies can be seen as the linkage between the organizational goals and the abilities of the employees (Dewulf et al., 2010). Additionally, when focusing on the abilities of the employees talent management is important. Therefore, the interface between talent and competency management is important in this research. This interface is visualized in the TMA alignment model in appendix 1 which shows that the ideas of the TMA method are similar to our understanding of talents and competencies.

Volz & Van der Heijden (2005) and Dewulf et al. (2010) state that it is possible to translate talents into competencies. Talents can therefore be seen as an overarching concept, wherefrom competencies can be developed. However, it is not guaranteed that an employee demonstrates these competencies when the talents are present (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). In line with this view, Beer (2009) state that a competency can be considered as a talent which is developed. A talent should therefore be used productively to be a competency. This means that a talent can be seen as an overarching concept from which an employee can develop behavioral skills which are often function related while the behavior is shown in the organizational context.

In addition, people can never achieve a top level of competencies without a natural ability or talent behind this competency (Beer, 2009; Buckingham & Vosburg, 2001). According to Buckingham & Vosburgh (2001) competency management has therefore a remedial function: '*Weakness-fixing prevents failure. Only strength-building leads to success'*. Therefore, this research focuses on talents while it is important for organizations to understand the talents behind the competencies to stimulate the employees to excel. These ideas are in line with the TMA method. They relate both concepts of talents and competencies and they refer to competencies also as the behavioral skills of employees (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). They state that when a talent and a competency are both present, the organization should exploit and strengthen that talent to let the employee excel. This is therefore in line with the perspectives of Buckingham & Vosburgh (2001).

2.2 Strategic talent management

2.2.1 Defining talent management

The perspectives about talents influence the way of organizing those talents in an organization and therefore talent management is an important concept. The subject of talent management received a significant degree of interest after McKinsey published the ‘War for talent’ in 1997 (Michaels et al., 2001). Despite this high degree of interest in talent management, there is a *“disturbing lack of clarity regarding the definition, scope and overall goals of talent management”* (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). To show the high amount of diversity within the concept of talent management, Lewis & Heckman (2006) and Collings & Mellahi (2009) described four perspectives.

The first perspective focus on particular HR practices such as recruiting and selection. Within this perspective of talent management, Heinen & O’neill (2004) state that talent management can be explained as ‘*how the organization attracts, develops, motivates, manages, and rewards its talent’.* According to Lewis & Heckman (2006), the perspective of Heinen & O’Neill (2004) is comparable with traditional HRM and they replaced the term HRM with talent management. Therefore, the term human resources is interchangeable with the term talent (Van Beirendonck, 2010). The second stream focus on the concept of talent pools. For these authors talent management is *‘a set of processes designed to ensure an adequate flow of employees into jobs throughout the organization’* (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). According to Lewis & Heckman (2006) this perspective regarding talent management has many similarities with workforce planning. The third perspective refers to the idea that every role in the organization should be fulfilled with top talent or the ‘A performers’ (Michaels et al., 2001). Therefore, organizations should manage talent pools with highly competent performance which are not related to specific jobs (Lewis & Heckman, 2006). A disadvantage is that is not desirable to fill all position with high potentials while the organization overinvests in some jobs (Collings & Mellahi, 2009).

Collings & Mellahi (2009) separated a fourth perspective which focuses on the identification of key positions in the organization which have the most influence on achieving the competitive advantage of the firm. Therefore, the starting point of talent management in their perspective should be the identification of key positions which contribute to the organization’s sustained competitive advantage (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Barney & Wright, 1998). In this perspective, they explicitly link talent management to organization’s strategy by using the frameworks of Boudreau & Ramstad (2005) and Barney (1991). In this regard, talent management is approached from a strategic level and therefore strategic talent management is of great importance. In addition, strategic talent management is of such an importance for this research and therefore it is extendedly explained in section 2.2.4.

Concisely, I can draw the conclusion that the perspectives formulated by Lewis & Heckman (2006) and Collings & Mellahi (2009) which are supplemented by others authors, are inconclusive. For example, the ideas of the well-known research Cappelli (2008) are excluded. Cappelli (2008) developed a perspective to talent management wherein the uncertainties of businesses are central. Therefore he developed the well-known talent-on-demand framework which is based on principles of supply chain management.

Additionally, the perspectives above focus mainly on the deployment of talent rather than on the underlying perspective which represents a way of looking at an employee with talents. While the concept of ‘having talents’ plays a central role in this research, the underlying perspective is of utmost importance. Creelman (2004) shortly described an interesting underlying perspective wherefore he uses the metaphor ‘*talent management is a pair of glasses with which to see the world’.* The appreciative inquiry is a perspective to approach talent management and this approach is often used as a way of looking at employees and their talents (Masselink & Van den Nieuwenhof, 2008).

2.2.2 Appreciative inquiry

The Appreciative Inquiry can be seen as an appreciative, confirmative and positive approach wherein opportunities, possibilities and the potential of employees are central. The founder of this perspective, David Cooperrider, discovered that this perspective provides much more results in comparison with thinking in problems (Masselink & Van den Nieuwenhof, 2008). Employees started for example to turn negative work-related aspects into positive thinking. Other outcomes of strengths based developments can be employee engagement, increasing productivity and self-efficacy (Hodges & Clifton, 2004). In addition, Buckingham & Vosburgh (2001) state that '*weakness-fixing prevents failure, only strength-building leads to success'*. Therefore, the perspective dissociates itself from focusing on the missing competencies of employees (Masselink & Van den Nieuwenhof, 2008). This does not mean that negative experiences should be neglected, however these do not lie at the foundation of this perspective.

This research uses the Appreciative Inquiry as an underlying perspective for approaching employees and their talents. The Appreciative Inquiry does not change HRM in an instrumental but in a fundamental way while the starting point and the mindset regarding working with talent is different (Tjepkema, 2010). In this light Bossuyt & Dries (2008, cited in Tjepkema, 2010) state that talent can be seen from a diversity perspective: every employee has talents. The Appreciative Inquiry is about identifying and recognizing those talents as a start to stimulate them. This fully supports the definitions and perspectives which are followed in this research, while emphasis is put on the perspective of 'having a talent'. In addition, this perspective is in line with the foundation of the TMA method while it states that a talent is neutral; a talent is not right or wrong. However, it can become to better or less advantage in a certain function or role (IJzendoorn et al., 2009). Due to this perspective the outcomes of the talent analysis are for example formulated in positive terms (B. Müller, Managing director Ehrm-Vision, personal communication, 6 December 2010).

2.2.3 Talent management as part of the HR strategy

For this research, it is important to put talent management in a broader framework while the translation from the organizational strategy to the required talents is central. When making this translation, the HR strategy is an important concept which should be taken into account. The reason for this is that in the HR strategy, the overall perspectives regarding human resources and talent are combined and the HR practices are clarified (Gratton & Truss, 2003). Additionally, the HR strategy reflects the decisions which should be made regarding the labor allocation process in an organization. This labor allocation process should be delivered in such a way that the organization can respond to relevant developments in the environment and the process facilitates the delivery of the greatest contribution to the competitive advantage (Bax, 2003). Therefore, talent management is an important part of the HR strategy while it is part of the labor allocation process and it represents the perspectives regarding talents of employees.

In addition, Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) state that the internal arrangement of human resources is not a part of the organizational strategy. They state that HR is of great importance for the organization, but they do not make up the organizational strategy itself because: *'a strategy is not a catchall for every important choice an executive faces'*. Therefore, the structure, processes, rewards and people are arrangements that should flow from the organizational strategy. In addition, Delery & Doty (1996) state that that strategic human resource management has its foundation on the idea that organizations formulate a particular strategy wherefore they require specific HR practices which matches their strategy.

From this point of view, we can conclude that the HR strategy should be based on the organizational strategy (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005). Gratton & Truss (2003) refer to this phenomenon as vertical alignment: '*the key circumstances are business goals and strategies. Our argument is that, in order to play a strategic role in the organization, the HR policies and practices that make up an organization's people strategy should reflect, reinforce and support the organization's business aims and objectives'.* This link between the business strategy and HR strategy is of such an importance while it makes it possible that HR interventions become a creator of sustained competitive advantage and not an inhibitor. While we draw the conclusion that talent management is part of the HR strategy, there can be stated that talent management should be aligned with the overall organizational strategy through the HR strategy. These are important relations for this research and therefore they are more extensively explained in section 2.2.4.

Gratton & Truss (2003) added two more dimensions to achieve a successful people strategy while the vertical alignment is crucial but not sufficient. The second dimension is defined as horizontal alignment, which refers to the level of individual HR practices or policy areas and the consistency among those practices. A high degree of horizontal alignment means that an organization has developed clear HR practices that consistently relate to each other. Barney & Wright (1998) state that the challenge is to develop systems of HR practices which can create a synergistic effect. This makes it harder for competitors to imitate the HR strategy while it requires investing time and energy to develop a system wherein the HR practices complement and not conflict with each other. Delery & Doty (1996) refer to this as the configurational approach while it refers to the internal consistency of the organization's HR practices.

The HR practices such as talent management and the consistency among them are fairly important for this research. In addition, the practices should be seen as preconditions when giving an advice regarding the match between the current and required talents in an organization. However, these HR practices should be put in practice when an organization wants to achieve a successful HR strategy (Gratton & Truss, 2003). Gratton & Truss (2003) refer to this third dimension as the action or implementation dimension. This dimension is according to Gratton & Truss (2003) essential in questioning whether an organization actually delivers the HR strategy.

Concisely, for this research it is important that talent management should be seen as a part of the HR strategy. According to Gratton & Truss (2003), this HR strategy, and thus talent management, should be aligned with the organizational strategy. In addition, the HR practices as part of the HR strategy should be aligned with each other will it cause a synergetic effect and competitive advantage (Barney & Wright, 1998). These practices are important this research, while they should be taken into account when formulating an advice regarding the required and current talents.

2.2.4 Linking talents and the organizational strategy

In the previous section a first link is given between talent management and the organizational strategy through the concept of the HR strategy. Based on those relations, different authors can be distinguished who state that ties need to be made between strategy and talent (Barney & Wright, 1998; Schuler & Jackson, 1987; Cheese et al., 2008; Thorne & Pellant, 2007; Lewis & Heckman, 2006; Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Heinen & O'Neill, 2004). In addition, these ties are of great importance for this research while a translation from the strategy to the required talents is made. Therefore, this link is extendedly explained in this section.

Cheese et al. (2008) state that a strategic approach to talents is necessary to understand talent issues in relation to an organizational strategy. Therefore, the concept of strategic talent management plays a critical role and in their perspective strategic talent management means that '*all your talent related processes and capabilities need to be aligned and integrated so that they are working towards the same end'* (Cheese et al., 2008). In line with this perspective, Van der Sluis (2008, cited in Van Beirendonck, 2010) states that strategic talent management is about '*find, retain, engage and develop employees with the goal to optimalize the productivity of these employees to contribute to the organization'.* She states that the development and understanding of their talents are just a mean to reach the goal. Therefore, strategic talent management is about anchoring talent management in the strategic course of the organization (Van der Sluis, 2008, cited in Van Beirendonck, 2010). Following this perspective, strategic talent management is of great importance for this research, while links are made between the required talents and the organizational strategy.

Authors who worked indirectly with the relation between organizational strategies and talents are Schuler & Jackson (1995). First, Schuler & Jackson (1987) focus on business strategies which are determined by Porter (1985, cited in Schuler & Jackson (1987, 1995). According the environmental approach of Porter (1985, cited in De Wit & Meyer, 2004) competition is the core of the success or failure of organizations. Therefore, the market is leading and it is about the position of the organization within that market and the reactions of the organization on those markets. From this perspective, Schuler & Jackson (1987) linked competitive strategies and specific role behavior of employees. Based on Porter (1984) they distinguished the innovation, quality enhancement and cost reduction strategy.

Schuler & Jackson (1987) used the behavioral approach to relate employee behavior to strategies on the organizational level. In addition, they state that the role behaviors are assumed to be instrumental in the implementation of the strategies. Role behaviors can be defined as: *'the recurring actions of an individual appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a predictable outcome'* (Schuler & Jackson, 1995: p. 239). Therefore, those role behaviors focus on systems which are characterized by multiple roles, role senders and role evaluators (Schuler & Jackson, 1995). From this perspective it can be stated that a HR department is often the sender of role information.

Schuler & Jackson (1995) state that role information depends on and should be aligned with business strategies which are leading. Therefore, they made an explicit link between the business strategies and the role behavior of employees. For the innovation strategy Schuler & Jackson (1987) for example state that the profile of the employee role behavior should at least include: high degree of creative behavior, a long-term focus, a relatively high level of cooperative and interdependent behavior and a great degree of risk taking. For this research this translation from business strategies to employee role behavior is important, while a relation is made between the required talents and the organizational strategy.

In the perspectives above, strategic talent management and the research of Schuler & Jackson have a reactive function rather than being pro-active while they react to changing organizational strategies. Boudreau & Ramstad (2005) state however: '*HR must have a unique, talent-focused perspective for improving decision, not just a process for implementing decisions'.* Therefore, talent management should not only be able to respond to strategic changes or the environment; it should shape the strategy as well. In this perspective, Barney (1991) plays an important role while he states that the organizations unique internal resources form the starting point for determining a business strategy. In the Resource based view (RBV) he therefore examines the role of HR and the organizations sustained competitive advantage from the inside-out perspective (Barney & Wright, 1998). Therefore, the RBV goes one step beyond the research of Schuler & Jackson (1987), while the RBV make an explicit link to the talents of employees. The framework of Schuler & Jackson (1995) however ends, when the translation is made from the strategy into employee role behavior which is comparable to competencies.

Within the RBV, Barney (1997, cited in Barney & Wright, 1998) developed the VRIO-framework. This framework means that the resources of the organization should be valuable, rare and hard to imitate to achieve a sustained competitive advantage. In addition, the organization should be able to exploit the resource (Barney & Wright, 1998). According to Barney (1991) three types of resources can be divided to achieve sustain competitive advantage: physical capital resources, organizational capital resource and human capital resources. The human resources of the organizations are part of the organizational capital resources. However, more important for this research is that aspects as skills, intelligence and insight in the employees are part of the human capital resources. Therefore, in this research we follow the conclusions of Lewis & Heckman (2006) and Wright & McMahan (1992) that the talents of employees can be seen as a resource through which an organization can achieve sustain competitive advantage.

From this perspective we can conclude that the talents of the employees should be valuable, rare, hard to imitate and organizational insight into those talents to exploit them, when the organization wants to achieve sustain competitive advantage through this resource (Barney & Wright, 1998). In all four attributes the important link is made between the resources of the firm and the organizational strategy. This is of utmost importance for this research, while the RBV made an important relation between the talents of employees and the strategy of the organization.

First, talents are a source of sustain competitive advantage when they are valuable. This means that the talents of employees should enable the organization to implement the organization's strategy. For a HR department this can mean '*In which way can HR aid to achieve the organizational strategy of cost reduction?'* (Barney & Wright, 1998). According to Schuler &Jackson (1995), the following characteristics of employee role behavior are necessary when pursuing a strategy of cost reduction: 'modest concern for quality and relatively repetitive and predictable behavior'. Translating this role behavior based on the TMA method into talents, means that at least the following talents are required to achieve a strategy of cost reduction: high amount of conformity, order and structure and persistence. In addition, these talents are valuable for the organization when striving this strategy.

Second, talents should be rare among the organization's competitors. Barney (1991) state: *'some strategies require a particular mix of psychical capital, human capital and organizational capital resources to implement. One firm resource required in the implementation of almost all strategies is managerial talent'* (Hambrick, 1987, cited in Barney, 1991). This statement highlights the importance of talent in achieving sustain competitive advantage. In addition, referring to the example of pursuing a cost reduction strategy, the talents which are mentioned as valuable are probably not rare among the competitors who want to achieve the same strategy. Therefore, the required talents should be evaluated and refined to be rare. Most often, a specific combination between talents makes it rare.

The third attribute states that the talents of employees should be imperfectly imitable by competitors. This means that organizations '*that do not possess these resources cannot obtain them'* which is important for the long term (Barney, 1991; Barney & Wright, 1998). This refers often to the specific combination of talents which makes it almost impossible for competitors to obtain them. The last attribute focus on the way the organization is organized to exploit the talents of employees. In this attribute, Barney & Wright (1998) focus on HR systems and practices which should be implemented to support the employees to fully exploit their talents. This stage is of utmost importance while it is difficult to retain a specific combination of the correct talents to achieve the organizations strategy.

Concisely, important for this research is that the RBV draws an important relation between talents and the organizational strategy. This is of utmost importance for this research, while links are made between the required talents and the organizational strategy. In addition, the RBV states that the right implementation of the four attributes on itself can be sources of competitive advantage. When an organization however wants to achieve sustained competitive advantage, the four attributes should be implemented simultaneously. In this research, we focus only on the talents of employees as a resource and therefore, those talents alone can be seen as a source of competitive advantage. However, a note should be made that the inside-out perspective of the RBV is not followed in this research. The characteristics of the relation between the strategy and talents depend namely on the organization wherein the tool is implemented. Therefore, the theory of Schuler & Jackson (1995) will be important as well.

2.3 Strategic management and organizational strategies

In the previous section strategic talent management and the relation between the organizational strategy and the talents of employees are explained. However, no definition or description is given regarding organizational strategies. Such a description is essential in this research while a translation is made from the organizational strategy to the required talents. A critical evaluation and a good delineation regarding strategies is therefore of great importance. In addition, due to a small differentiation and great overlap in the literature between mission, objectives and strategy, a clear distinction is essential while the concept of strategy otherwise becomes to mean nothing (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005). To support this distinction, a figure of Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) is added in figure 2 which puts the strategy in its place in the broader organizational context.

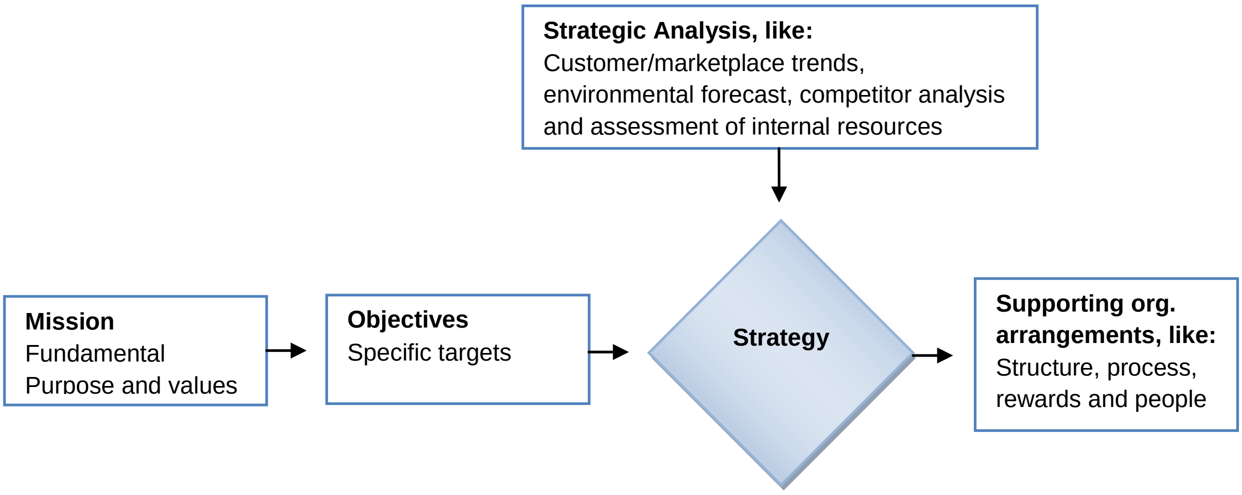

Figure 2: Putting strategy in its place (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005)

From this point of view, the concept of talents is put in the context of the overall organization and therefore organizations need to identify what type of organization they want to be (Thorne & Pellant, 2007). According to Hambrick & Fredrickson (2005) this refers to the mission statement of the organization while it reflects the values and the fundamental purpose of the organization. Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) and De Wit & Meyer (2004) state that a mission can be very concrete. It can therefore guide an organization in a particular direction, give motivation or legitimization (De Wit & Meyer, 2004). However, the mission is often too holistic wherefore it has little bearing on actual business (De Wit & Meyer, 2004). According to De Wit & Meyer (2004) the mission consists out of four elements: organizational purpose, beliefs, values and business definition. In general, this is in line with Hambrick & Frederickson, however they state that determining the business wherein they operate is part of the strategy. This distinction is quite logical while Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) state that the 'arena' wherein the organization will operate should be formulated very specifically. While De Wit & Meyer (2004) state that this element is part of the mission, it will be formulated in a more general manner. In this research, the perspective of Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) is followed, while this stage seems of such an importance that it should be formulated specifically.

Another distinction between De Wit & Meyer (2004) and the framework of Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) is the concept of objectives or vision. De Wit & Meyer (2004) state that *'a vision provides a business aim, while mission provides business principles'*. In this context a vision refers to the long-term aim and the objectives refer to the medium-term aim wherefore the vision can be seen as a broad view of the desirable future state. After formulating a vision, the details should still be determined which is done in the medium-term organizational objectives. Therefore, it can be concluded that a vision has the same function in comparison to the mission (De Wit & Meyer, 2004). Due to this reason the vision is not included in the framework. Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) did not explain why they left out the vision in their framework, however this can be a fair explanation.

The mission and objectives give guidance to the strategy while the strategy can be defined as the *'central, integrated, externally oriented concept of how we will achieve our objectives'* (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005). In line with this definition, De Wit & Meyer (2004) state that a strategy is '*a course of action for achieving an organization's purpose'* where the organization's purpose refers to the mission statement. A strategy consists according to Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) out of five parts:

1. Arenas: Where will we be active?
2. Vehicles: How will we get there?
3. Differentiators: How will we win in the market place
4. Staging: What will be our speed and sequence of moves?
5. Economic logic: How will we obtain our return?

Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) state that it is important that a strategy encompass all five elements. First, all five elements are of such an importance that a gap arises when one element is missing. Second, the elements should all be aligned with each other. Therefore, the strategy should not only flow from the mission and the objectives, but the parts of the strategy should be aligned in addition (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005).

Another important thought of Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) is that the literature provides organizations an abundance of frameworks for analyzing strategies (see figure 2: Strategic analysis). Examples of those perspectives are the RBV of Barney (1991) and the Environmental approach of Porter (1985, cited in De Wit & Meyer, 2004). These perspectives help organizations to work towards a narrow view of strategies. However, those elements should not be discussed in isolation. The framework of Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) states that the perspectives can give an organization input for designing a strategy. However, they should never composition the strategy itself while the coherent whole between those elements make up the strategy. Therefore, Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) focus on the composition of the strategy and not about the inputs to strategic thinking.

Concisely, in this research the framework of Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) is used as a guideline while this gives a clear overview of a strategy in the organizational context. As stated in section 2.2.3, the framework additionally provides space for the HR strategy as part of the 'supporting organizational arrangements'. Furthermore, the framework provides space for additional perspectives like the RBV. This is of great importance for this research, while the tool which will be developed should suit a broad range of organizations with a broad range of different perspectives.

2.4 Research questions and conceptual framework

Due to the consistency of the research, the purpose, context and type of the research should be taken into account when formulating the research question. These subjects are described in the first chapter and are already aligned with each other: the research is conducted within Giraffe HR (context) and it is a design-oriented practical driven research. A tool will be developed (type) and therefore the purpose of this research is concisely to develop a tool for consultants to make the translation from the business strategy to the required talents. The next stage is formulating a research question which is in line with the above statements and arises from the theoretical framework. There is chosen for two research questions while two concepts take an equally important position in this research: the translation from the strategy into required talents and a gap analysis between the required and current talents. Those concepts are detailed enough to be operationalized, and therefore no sub questions are formulated. The next research questions are formulated for this research:

1. *'How can organizations translate their business strategy into required talents in order to achieve their business goals?'*
2. *'How can talent gaps (i.e. present versus desired talent) be identified?'*

To get a clear understanding of those concepts and the relationship between them, a conceptual framework is presented in figure 3. The different concepts are explained in the theoretical framework above and the figure visualizes the relation between the concepts. The starting point is the literature of Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) regarding business strategies. The framework is supplemented with literature regarding HR strategies and talent management to translate this strategy into the required talents to achieve the strategy. The HR practices like competency management and recruitment are added while the literature suggests that these practices are important while they show the preconditions of the organization (Gratton & Truss, 2003). These practices are mainly important for the consultants of Giraffe HR when giving advice about the gaps between the required and present talents.

In addition, the black arrows show the pathway which should be followed to make the translation from the organizational strategy to the required talents. The grey arrow shows the position of the TMA method in this research. Gap analysis can be done between the outcomes of the tool which will be developed in this research and the existing outcomes of the talent analysis of the TMA method. In this conceptual framework there seems to be a linear process between the concepts; however in practice different feedback loops will be made. However, these paths will be different in every organization.

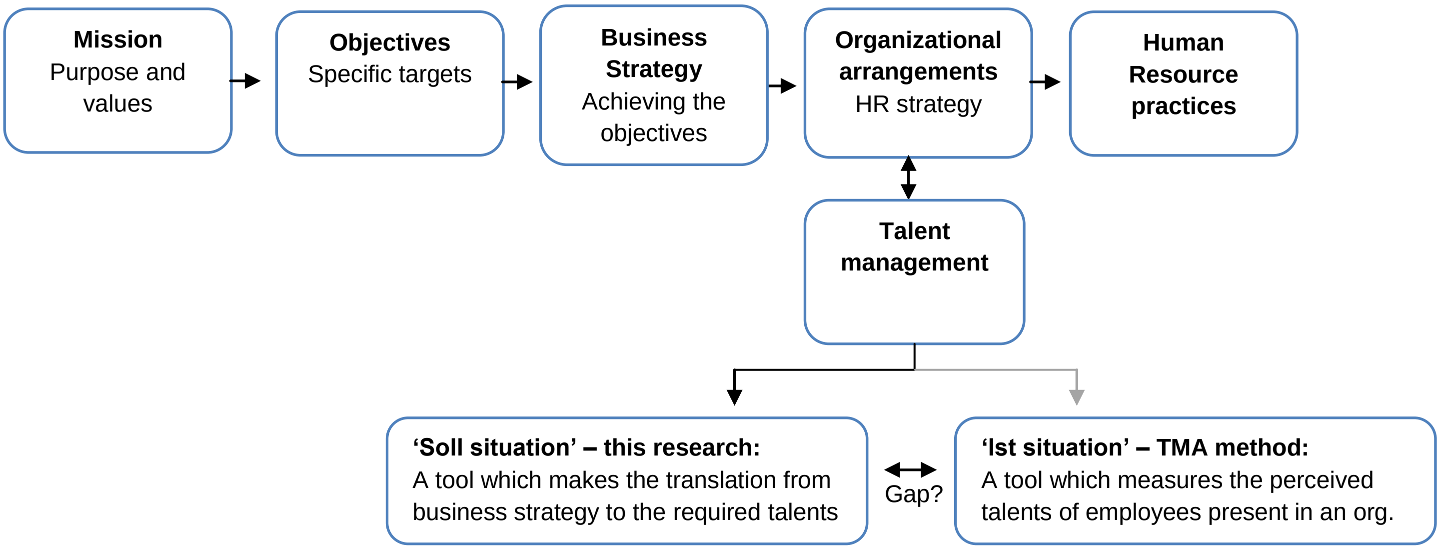

Figure 3: Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

In this chapter the methodology is explained which is used to answer the research questions. While the research questions ask for the developing of a tool, the first section explains the design-oriented research and the related designing-cycle. The methods which are used in this designing cycle are described in section 2. In section 3 the case study as a method is extendedly explained by describing the selected case, data collection and data analysis.

3.1 Designing a tool

3.1.1 Design-oriented research

The purpose of this research is to develop a tool for consultants of Giraffe to make the translation from the business strategy to the required talents. In addition, the consultants should be able to make a gap analysis between the current and required talents. The research and sub questions are based on this aim and therefore a practical and design-oriented research should be conducted. In the social sciences traditionally most research focuses on theory development or solving knowledge problems (Van Aken, 2004). Since the last few decades, the interest for practice-oriented research increased. In this kind of research, researchers focus on the creation of a new product or on the concept of solving improvement problems (Van Aken, Berends & Van der Bij, 2008).

Within the design-oriented research different design-cycles are developed in the literature. Van Aken (2004) developed for example the regulative cycle. This cycle follows the classic problem-solving cycle which means that a next stage should be started when the previous one has been successfully completed (Van Aken et al., 2008). In addition, this cycle is mainly content focused and it is based on the design approach (Van Aken, 2004). This design approach means that the product is realized in one go and the design-orientation relies on 'learning-before-doing' (Van Aken et al., 2008). In this manner, the researcher has an expert role. The regulative cycle consists of the next stages: defining the problem, designing (and planning) the intervention, applying the intervention and the evaluation of the intervention. Based on this cycle, the designers should develop three designs: the object-design, the realization-design and the process-design.

Verschuren & Hartog (2005) developed the designing cycle after making a systematic inventory of the design processes. This cycle arose from existing research methodology about designing and on know-how about evaluation research (Van Aken et al., 2008). Therefore, they combined the design literature from different areas of research which made the framework usable in any type of design case. The cycle can be seen as a merely development approach while the end product is realized step-by-step and the design-orientation relies on 'learning-by-doing'. The researcher fulfills a more process or facilitating role to lead the process of designing (Van Aken et al., 2008). In addition, the focus within the designing cycle is put on the process steps and not on the content of the stages. The literature refers to this as the iterative process which requires flexibility in shifting between stages (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005; Van Aken et al., 2008). They distinguished six stages within this designing cycle: first hunch, requirements and assumptions, structural specifications, prototype, implementation and evaluation.

In this research a combination of design and development approaches is used while different ideas about the tool exist before starting the process of designing. However, based on these ideas the instrument cannot be designed in one go. Therefore, there will be learned through the process and adjustments will be made during this process wherefore the iterative process is predominant. According to Van Aken et al. (2008) this combination of design and development approaches is often used. While the iterative process is predominant the designing cycle of Verschuren & Hartog (2005) is used in this research. The cycle gives good guidance through the process of designing and it includes a combination of empirical and evaluation research. This will give a good balance between the process of designing and the content of the product. However, this balance should be monitored closely while the designing cycle reflects merely the developmental approach (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005). Concisely, the designing cycle can be used as a complete roadmap for designing the instrument for this research when monitored closely.

3.1.2 The designing cycle

As stated above, Verschuren & Hartog (2005) distinguished six stages in the designing cycle:

1. *First hunch:* This stage is about the first idea and initiative about the product which results in a small set of goals that should be realized when the product is designed.
2. *Requirements and assumptions:* Based on the goals of stage 1, different requirements should be formulated to fulfill the demands of for example future users. A distinction is made between functional, user and contextual requirements. Additionally, assumptions should be developed which refer to what qualities the users and context should have in order to use the product.
3. *Structural specifications:* This is the most complex stage of the cycle, while the product gets its first form. Therefore, the structure and characteristics of the product will be developed based on the goals, requirements and assumptions of stage 1 and 2.
4. *Prototype:* The fourth stage is about the realization of the design into a prototype which includes the complete design and it should be useful for empirical evaluation. Therefore, all structural specifications should be present in the prototype.
5. *Implementation:* In this stage the prototype is put into practice preferable in a real-life setting which corresponds with the assumptions from stage 2.
6. *Evaluation:* The evaluation is the last stage in the designing cycle to check whether the goals are achieved and to which extent the designed product leads to the preferred new situation.

An important aspect within this cycle is the evaluation part. According to Verschuren & Hartog (2005) evaluation is *'to compare separate parts of a designing process with selected touchstones or criteria (in the broadest sense of the word), and to draw a conclusion in the sense of satisfactory or unsatisfactory'*. According to Verschuren & Hartog (2005) the designer should be very critical regards the utility and satisfaction of the stakeholders. To satisfy the product to a set of criteria, the iterative process should be followed. This means that evaluation takes place after and within every stage of the designing process and not only in stage 6 (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005). The designers go therefore, at least mentally, back and forward through the stages to improve the designed product. Within the designing cycle, Verschuren & Hartog (2005) make a distinction between plan, process and product evaluation. The method which is used for evaluation in the next section, like expert reviews, depends partly on this distinction while it determines the area of evaluation.

3.2 Methods

While designing the tool, several methods are used which relate to the different stages of the designing cycle (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005). These methods are summarized in table 2 below. In this section the methods desk research and expert reviews are explained. In the next section the method of the case study is described. In the previous section, we mentioned that evaluation is an important part of the designing cycle. While the expert review and case study are methods of evaluation, evaluation is not mentioned separately as a method. Evaluation is part of every method due to the iterative process which is followed in this research. However, in appendix 2 a summary is added wherein evaluation-questions are included based on the ideas of Verschuren & Hartog (2005). These questions were a helpful tool during the process.

Table 2: overview of the designing cycle (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005) and methods used in this research

Stages	Methods
1. First hunch	Desk research and expert review
2. Requirements and assumptions	Desk research and expert review
3. Structural specifications	Desk research and expert review
4. Prototype	Desk research and expert review
5. Implementation	Case study
6. Evaluation	Evaluating the case study

3.2.1 Desk research

Desk research is used in four stages of the designing cycle. It is a term which is often mentioned when using secondary sources (Dooley, 2001). Therefore, data is used from earlier researches to discover for instance trends and developments regarding specific subjects (Dooley, 2001). In this research three different types of desk research are carried out. Firstly, desk research was conducted to retrieve information about Giraffe HR, their objectives, themes and business. This kind of desk research was mainly important in the first stage of the designing cycle, while it gave a first impression of the research and the context of the research.

Secondly, a literature review was conducted about the most important concepts in this research. In such a review different theories, opinions and studies are compared to write a critical review (Dooley, 2001). Concepts which are critically reviewed were talents, strategic talent management and organizational strategies. A tabular review is used for some parts of the literature review to summarize the results from different studies (Dooley, 2001). This kind of desk research was mainly conducted in the second stage of the designing cycle.

Thirdly, a literature review was conducted for developing the tool (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005). First of all, the possibilities and requirements of the tool are determined and discussed. After this inventory, the first structural specifications are distinguished based on literature. In this stage the tool gets its structural form on paper and therefore this stage is quite difficult. In the fourth stage the desk research is extended as the content of the tool and therefore the interview questions are developed.

3.2.2 Expert review

The results of desk research are often ambiguous, as multiple studies can give different contrasting findings (Dooley, 2001). In addition, using secondary data means taking the risk that the data is not perfectly suitable as it is often conducted for a different research with different research questions and methods (Dooley, 2001). Therefore, the method of desk research is supplemented with expert reviews. Furthermore, this research is conducted within Giraffe HR wherefore the link between theory and practice is of utmost importance as it determines whether the tool will succeed.

These expert reviews are all done in the form of interviews, as this qualitative method makes it possible to discuss the different subjects and stages (Dooley, 2001). Therefore, an open discussion was held to get optimal results from the expert reviews. According to Davis (1992) the selection of individual reviewers is often based on their expertise on the topic. Another approach is to select individual reviewers based on their knowledge of instrument development techniques (Davis, 1992). For this research the focus is put on the expertise regarding the topic, while the researcher gets advice from the university regarding the development of the tool.

In appendix 3 an overview is given regarding which experts gave their review in which stage of the designing cycle. The reviews are conducted with four different experts. Three experts were consultants of Giraffe/TriamFloat who has affinity with the TMA method and talent management. These experts are all certified in using the TMA method. In addition, the general director of Ehrm-Vision is consulted to ensure alignment with the TMA method. All expert reviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the different subjects which are discussed. Those subjects relate closely with the purpose of the expert reviews. According to Verschuren & Hartog (2005), every stage should have a specific outcome. It is important to take those outcomes into account when preparing for the expert review while the expert review supports achieving those outcomes. Therefore, the purpose and an insight regarding the context of the expert reviews are given in appendix 3 as well. In table 3, additional background information is given regarding the experts.

Table 3: background information regarding the expert

Experts	Job function	Experience
Sylvia Pors	HR consultant at Giraffe HR	Sylvia Pors is working over 16 years in different HR and HRD roles for example as manager HR organizational development. Since 2008 she is leading consultant at Giraffe HR and is leading in the theme Talent and organizational development. Sylvia Pors is a certified TMA user.
Anja Bakker	Learning consultant at Giraffe HR	Anja Bakker has more than 10 years of experience as HR manager and is leading consultant at Giraffe HR since September 2010. As HR manager she worked extensively with the TMA method and therefore she is certified to use it.
Petra Bakker	HR consultant at TriamFloat	Petra Bakker is working since November 2009 at TriamFloat. She has experience as a trainer, learning consultant and project manager and she is part of the theme Talent and organizational development. Petra Bakker is certified to use the TMA method since the beginning of 2011.
Bastian Müller	Managing director at Ehrm-Vision	Bastian Müller is a professional in the field of the organizational science and he is the managing director at Ehrm-Vision. In ten years time Ehrm-Vision developed and improved the TMA method whereby they are open to additions and improvements.

3.3 Case study

3.3.1 Case study as an evaluation method

The final method which is used in this research is the case study. In the fifth stage of the designing cycle, the prototype is put into action wherefore the case study is used as an evaluation method. In the sixth stage the results of the case study are evaluated. For several reasons we chose for the case study as an evaluation method. Firstly, in this research a 'how' research question is used which is more explanatory because it searches for an explanation of how the translation from business goals to required talents can be made (Yin, 2003). These 'how' questions are likely to lead the researcher to use methods as case studies, histories or experiments (Yin, 2003). In addition, the researcher does not have any control over behavioral events while this is not necessary according to the research question and purpose of this research (Yin, 2003). Finally, this research focuses on a contemporary event as it is possible for the researcher to interview actual stakeholders and to therefore use a variety of methods (Yin, 2003). Based on these three criteria outcomes, Yin (2003) states that a case study is the most appropriate method to answer the research question. This is in line with Van Aken (1994) as he states that a case study is the most important method within design- oriented research.

The case study should not be seen as a specific method but as a comprehensive research strategy which covers different methods, the so-called case study techniques (Yin, 2003). Yin (2003) states '*a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'.* Other characteristics of a case study are: it relies on multiple sources which often refers to triangulation and it benefits from prior developed theoretical guidelines to guide the process within the case study (Yin, 2003). In most cases the case study covers a goal-based evaluation while the method answers the question whether goals are achieved (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005; Yin, 2003). For this research this means that the tool will be tested in a real-life context which is representative for the context wherein the instrument will be used in practice (Yin, 2003).

3.3.2 Case study design

Before selecting a specific case, a decision should be made regarding the case study design. According to Yin (2003) four types of designs are available for case studies: single-case (holistic), single case (embedded), multiple case (holistic) and multiple case (embedded). A multiple case study design is preferred over single-case study designs as you have the possibility of replication (Yin, 2003). The replication logic returns in the idea that some conditions are changed in the second case study (Yin, 2003). One of the criteria of Yin (2003) regarding the case selection and case study design is that it should reflect the real-life setting. Therefore, the multiple case study (two case studies) is used in this research while these changing conditions are comparable with the practice of Giraffe HR. Examples of changing conditions are a different interviewer and less respondents in the second case study. Another advantage of these changing circumstances is the increasing external generalizability when common conclusions can be derived from both cases (Yin, 2003). In addition, while it should be possible to implement the tool in a broad variety of organizations, there is not one critical or rare case. Eventually, we chose for a holistic multiple case study design as the focus is put on the abstract level of an organization or department and not on the subunits within one organization (Yin, 2003). Therefore, there is one unit of analysis within one case study for which the holistic approach is followed (Yin, 2003).

3.3.3 Case selection

For selecting a case it is important that the case reflects the real-life setting when the tool is implemented within Giraffe HR (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, some additional requirements are formulated for the cases which are selected. Firstly, a number of employees should have conducted the TMA analyses and the results of the analyses should still be valid. Secondly, these results should be available for the researcher to conduct a gap analyze. The job function of the respondents should be at least a manager or a HR advisor. In this research we tried to follow these requirements. However, due to practical restrictions the two cases which are selected, both represent the non-profit sector.

The first case which is selected is the Service Huis Personeel (SHP) as a part of the municipality Amsterdam. SHP is a new organization set up in 2006. Since 01-01-2011 the organization is fully operational with 118 employees. The main goal of SHP is to provide the salaries for the employees of the municipality Amsterdam. SHP is the first shared service centre within the municipality. To compose the SHP, the TMA method is used as an assessment. Therefore, 37 employees conducted TMA talent-analyses between 14-04-2009 and 25-10-2010. While the outcomes of TMA method are usable for 3-4 years, they are still valid in 2011 and they were available for this research. This case is interesting for this research, because the goals of the organization will change during 2011. The goals for the first years focused on shaping the SHP. SHP is now operational and therefore the goals focus more on the future. While goals are changing, this has consequences for the employees as well as their talents.

The second case which is selected is the healthcare institution Merem. It consists of three organizations Heideheuvel, Davos and De Trappenberg wherefore with a total of 605 employees. Merem offers treatments and diagnosis for children, youth and adults with psychical, cognitive problems or other chronic health problems. These problems constrain patients in their autonomy and participation in the society. Merem used the TMA talent-analyses merely for the selection of employees. Between 10-10-2008 and 24-02-2011 35 employees conducted the TMA talent-analysis. As the results are usable for 3-4 years, they are still valid in 2011 and are available for this research. This case was interesting for this research, because Merem already uses the TMA method. Thus a gap analysis can be done. Additionally, Merem is founded in October 2010. Therefore, Merem formulated an overall strategy and this strategy can have consequences for the three separate organizations and the employees with their talents.

3.3.4 Data collection techniques and analysis

According to Yin (2003) it is preferable to have multiple sources of data collection due to the construct validity. While the interview is a qualitative source of data collection in this research, using multiple sources is even more important (Dooley, 2001). Therefore the method of triangulation is applied (Dooley, 2001, Yin, 2003). The first method within the case study is the document review to get more background information regarding the case. The document reviews therefore give input for the interview and it is not created as a result of the case study (Yin, 2003). Consequently, no specific data analysis technique is used for this data collection. We searched in both cases on the internet for background information.

The second data collection technique is the tool to determine the importance of competencies, prior to the interview. This tool is derived from an existing tool of Ehrm-Vision, the competency set analyze tool (referred to as the 'adjusted CSA tool' in the rest of this research report). The digital tool could be sent to the respondents through a test portal of Ehrm-Vision. The goal of this tool adjusted CSA tool is to get input for the interview while the competencies which are ranked are translated prior to the interview into talents. Therefore, the list of required talents to achieve the organizational strategy is available before the interview is conducted. In the interview, the list of the adjusted CSA tool can be evaluated and the respondents can change their ranking due to the questions in the interview. When more people are interviewed at the same time, the differences and similarities can be discussed to get some deeper insight.

There is no data analysis technique used in this stage, as the scores could be copied and ranked from the test portal of Ehrm-Vision. The scores are given on a 5-point scale: irrelevant, of some importance, important, very important and necessary. The competencies which scored 5 points are translated into talents which are required to achieve the organizational goals. Additionally, the competencies that scored least are taken into account while this can add a dimension for the interview.

The following chapter will explain why we chose an interview-tool, because this is a result of the third stage in the designing cycle. Therefore, in this section the focus is on the data collection and analysis of the interviews. The last data collection technique within the case studies is testing the interview-tool. As mentioned earlier, the tool is tested within two case studies. Within the case study SHP, the interview is tested with two employees: a HR advisor and a manager. This combination of respondents is chosen as we expected that the manager is more familiar with the strategy of the SHP in comparison with the HR advisor. Additionally, talent management is primarily a HR issue and therefore the HR advisor is selected as a respondent. Furthermore, this combination reflects the real-life setting of the tool quite well which is important when conducting a case study (Yin, 2003). Within the case study Merem, the interview is tested with the HR manager. Due to practical limitations it was not possible to add another manager as a respondent to test the interview-tool. The interviews are recorded as this increased the reliability of the data collection (Baarda, De Goede & Teunissen, 2005).

According to Baarda et al. (2005) the first stage after conducting the interviews is the preparation of the data for the analysis. Therefore, the recorded interviews are typed out literally in Dutch. Additionally, the non-relevant data is omitted (Baarda et al., 2005). According to Jorgensen (1989, cited in Boeije, 2010) *'analysis is breaking up, separating or dissembling of research materials into pieces, parts, elements, or units. With facts broken down into manageable pieces, the researcher sorts and sifts them, searching for types, classes, sequences, processes, patterns or wholes'.* Therefore, the remaining data is subsequently segmented into relevant categories in an Excel-file. These categories were quite comparable with the variables of the interview-tool and therefore the variables of the interview are used as codes in the Excel-file (Baarda et al., 2005). This appeared to be very useful while those variables are explained before conducting the interviews. Therefore, the data is used to make the comparison between the explanation of the variables and the answers to control for validity: does the tool measure what it is intended to measure?

In figure 4 an example of the Excel file is added, wherein the respondents are marked in red, the answers of the respondents in purple and the variables in blue. In this manner, the similarities and discrepancies between the different answers became visible in an overview. Additionally, the most important answers are highlighted in the file. This technique structures the data and it facilitates and objectivities the analysis of the data (Baarda et al., 2005). Additionally, according to Boeije (2010) the data analysis should be relevant for the specific research. While the users of the tool should be able to present a final advice to the customer, the answers of the respondents are additionally analyzed to write this final advice.

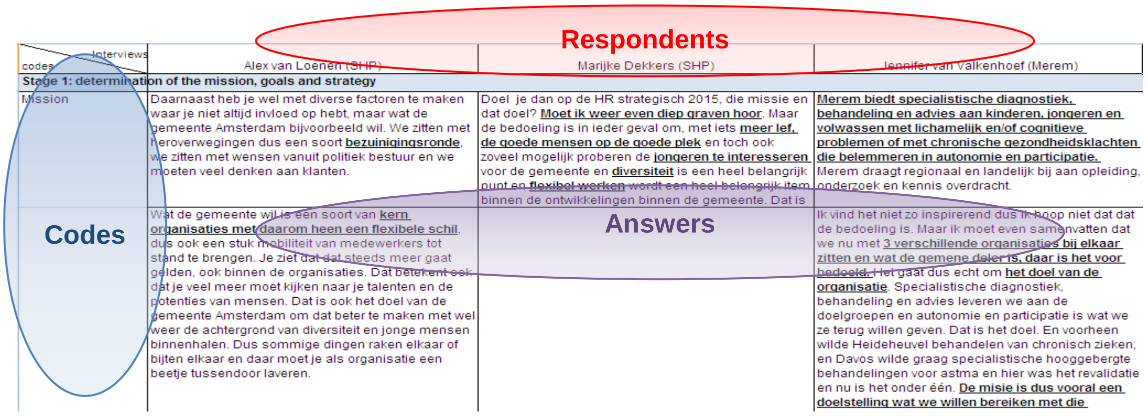

Figure 4: Example of the data analysis technique regarding the data of the case studies

3.3.5 Procedures

In the previous section we explained that some conditions between the two case studies are changed while the case studies should reflect the real-life setting (Yin, 2003). While the tool should be put into practice in different organizations with different conditions, these conditions are taken into account in the case studies (Yin, 2003). Therefore, in table 4 the procedures and the conditions of the case studies are summarized to give an overview as they can influence the results.

Table 4: Procedures case study

Documentation review	Adjusted CSA tool	Interview-tool
Servicehuis Personeel – municipality Amsterdam		
Completed prior to the interview by the researcher	Sent one week prior to the interview by the researcher	Interview with HR advisor (resp. 1) and manager (resp. 2)
		Interview was conducted by Sylvia Pors, HR consultant of Giraffe HR
	Resp 1. Filled in the tool	Respondents are interviewed separately
		In the first interview the results of the previous tool are discussed with the HR advisor. No adjustments are made to the list of competencies
		In the second interview, the results of resp. 1 according the previous tool are discussed. Resp. 2 made adjustments to the list.
		The final advice is sent afterwards and a face-to-face meeting is organized with the interviewer and the researcher
Merem		
Completed prior to the interview by the researcher	Sent one week prior to the interview by the researcher	Interview with manager P&O (N=1)
		Interview was conducted by Bastian Müller, director E-hrm Vision
	Resp. completed the tool	In the interview the results of the previous tool are discussed. The previous tool was not completed in the correct way, therefore the list is completed during the interview.
		Thereafter a final advice is sent to the respondent

4. Results

In this chapter the results of the methods used in the different stages of the designing cycle are described. After every stage, we applied the evaluation criteria of Verschuren & Hartog (2005) to be certain that the results fit the outcomes of that stage (Appendix 2). The first section presents the results of the 'first hunch' and section 2 focuses on the results of the stage 'requirements and assumptions'. The third section focuses on the 'structural specifications' which means that the instrument got its initial form on paper. The results of the fourth stage are presented in section 4 wherein the prototype is designed. The results of the case study are given in section 5 and these results are evaluated in the sixth section. In section 6 the tool is improved and the designing cycle is completed with a check whether the goals are achieved.

4.1 First hunch

The results of this stage are mainly important for achieving a clear image regarding Giraffe HR and the context of this research. Therefore, the results of this stage are already formulated in section 1.2. Repeating the main results shortly, the objective of Giraffe is to be world-famous in the area of HRM and HRD in the Netherlands in 5 years time. The objective of the theme 'Talent and organizational development' derived from this objective, as the theme wants to be a leader in the market of talent- and organization development within the next three years. To achieve this objective, Giraffe wants to offer customers concrete products. This forms the initiative for this research.

After determining the motive and context of the research, an expert review is organized with Sylvia Pors to achieve deeper insights regarding the tool. In section 1.2 three requirements of Giraffe regarding the research are formulated which were the result of this first expert review (see table 5 for the results of this first stage). After this expert review, desk research is done to determine whether existing tools already focus on these requirements and how Giraffe HR could distinguish itself from its competitors. The main result of this extensive desk research is that the organization Ehrm-Vision developed the TMA method which covers the first requirement. In addition, no other detailed tools are found regarding the second and third requirement. Therefore, based on those results this research focuses on the second and third requirements.

Table 5: Recapitalizing the results of the stage 'First hunch'

First hunch	
Process	*Results*
Desk research	Background information regarding Giraffe HR: objectives, area of business, customers, themes.
Expert review Sylvia Pors	The three requirements of Giraffe HR regarding the tool: 1. Measure the current talent 2. Measure the required talents 3. Conduct a gap analysis between the current and required talents
Desk research	Other organizations, such as Ehrm-Vision, developed instruments for the first requirement and therefore this research focuses on the second and third requirement
Expert review Sylvia Pors	Small set of goals: 1. Developing a tool which makes it possible to translate the organizational strategy into required talents to achieve the strategy 2. Developing a tool that makes it possible to conduct a gap analysis between the current and required talents, if the current talents of an organization are measured by the TMA method

Finally, we formulated a small set of goals that should be realized after designing the tool (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005). These goals are derived from the two requirements of Giraffe HR, while the tool should relate closely to the desires of the stakeholder Giraffe HR (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005). Therefore, an expert review is organized with Sylvia Pors to confirm the goals which are presented in table 5.

In the expert review we subsequently concluded that the focus is on the first goal. The second goal can only be achieved if organizations measured their current talents by the TMA method. Additionally, it is not sure if a specific tool should be developed or a manual which gives guidance through the gap analyses is sufficient. Therefore, the stages 'requirements and assumptions', 'structural specifications' and 'prototype' focuses only on the first goal of this research. After conducting the case studies, conclusions are drawn regarding the second goal of this research.

4.2 Requirements and assumptions

Before formulating the requirements and assumptions, desk research is done in the form of a literature review regarding the main concepts in this research. The result of this review is the theoretical and conceptual framework in chapter 2 and this is therefore not presented in this chapter. However, these concepts are essential for the next stage when formulating the structural specifications. Besides desk research, several expert reviews are conducted to formulate different requirements and assumptions which are based on the goals of stage 1. A distinction is made between functional, user and contextual requirements and assumptions are developed which refer to what qualities the users and context should have in order to implement the tool (Verschuren & Hartog, 2005).

The first expert review in this stage with Sylvia Pors resulted in a first list of requirements and assumptions of Giraffe HR which should be taken into account. The second expert review with Bastian Müller focused on the alignment of the tool with the TMA method. During this expert review, the idea emerged to use an additional tool to determine the required competencies before implementing the interview-tool. The so-called 'adjusted CSA tool'. The expert mentioned that it is almost impossible for customers to make the translation without the intervention of competencies while *'competencies refer to desirable behavior of employees and this behavior is more specific and recognizable for them'.*

After this review, the list of requirements and assumptions is extended and the idea of the 'adjusted CSA tool' is further discussed in the expert review with Sylvia Pors. Eventually, we draw the conclusion that the competencies should be questioned when making the translation while they are more tangible for customers. This means that competencies and talents play a significant role in the tool. While the 'adjusted CSA tool' derived from an existing tool of Ehrm-Vision it did not have to be developed. In this last expert review the requirements and assumptions are additionally aligned with the goals of the first stage. Therefore, the list is evaluated and the results are shown in table 6 below.

Table 6: Recapitalizing the results of the stage 'Requirements and assumptions'

Requirements of the tool	
Functional requirements	- Scientific foundation - Translate the org. strategy into required talents through required competencies - Aligned with the TMA method to make a gap analysis possible - Implementing the tool in a broad variety of organizations and sectors - Room for customization - Stimulate the discussion about talent management with customers - Make it possible to present an advice to the customer - Easy to use
User requirements	- Easy to use for consultants who are certified for TMA method - Tool should at least give guidance and steering to discussion
Contextual requirements	- Business for the tool - It should make Giraffe HR distinctive from competitors
Assumptions	
Future user assumptions	- Consultants of Giraffe HR or Ehrm-Vision - Certified for the TMA method - Expertise regarding Talent management - Should be able to analyze the outcomes of the interview and to make the gap analysis - Experience with conducting interviews or leading discussions
Contextual assumptions	- To make the tool a success in the market, the business managers and consultants of Giraffe HR should show involvement and confidence in the tool

4.3 Structural specifications

4.3.1 Interview-tool

The goals, requirements and assumptions in the previous stages form the foundation for the structural specifications which are formulated in this stage. In this stage the product gets its initial form wherefore the structure and the conditions of the tool are described. The main focus of this research is the tool to translate the organizational strategy into the required talents. Therefore, the main functional requirement is that the tool should make this translation possible. From the theoretical framework in chapter 2, the conclusion can be drawn that this translation starts with the determination of the organizational mission, objectives and strategy (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005). The HR strategy should flow from there and eventually talent management is a part of the HR strategy.

To translate the organizational strategy into talents, the interview as a qualitative method is the best method to use as Baarda et al. (2005) suggest that within qualitative research, the methods which can flexibly respond to the research situation are preferred. This is important in this research as the subjects are not always easy to explain in words. Additionally, the subjects are often interpreted and used in different ways by organizations. Therefore, it is important that a method is chosen which can respond to these different situations. An interview is such a method which makes it possible to respond to certain situations (Boeije, 2010; Emans, 1990; Dooley, 2001). Therefore, we chose to develop an interview-tool to make the translation.

Additionally, an interview is suitable for the determination of deeper arguments, characteristics and values (Emans, 1990). These values and characteristics are of utmost importance for the results of the interview while there can be sought to a deeper explanation of the subjects. This prevents bias while the interviewer and the respondent both talk about the same interpretation of the subject. In addition, an interview makes it possible to interpellate the answers of the respondent and asking questions differently to get a clarification (Dooley, 2001; Baarda et al., 2005). This is also necessary for the determination of deeper arguments and characteristics.

4.3.2 Determining variables

After making the decision for an interview-tool, the variables are determined as a result of the structural specifications of the interview-tool (Emans, 1990). The first stage according to Emans (1990) is identifying theoretical variables when developing an interview-tool. The variables in this interview-tool are mainly based on the literature and conceptual framework in chapter 2 which summarizes the most important concepts. Therefore, the next theoretical variables are identified: mission, organizational goals, strategy, HR strategy and talent management.

Additionally, the variable ‘HR practices’ is added based on the literature. According to the literature and the conceptual framework the variable is important, though it falls outside the direct translation from the mission to talent management. However, in the previous section the requirement is formulated that the users of the tool should be able to write an advice regarding talent management after implementing the interview-tool. Additionally, the tool should stimulate a discussion. The HR practices are an important subject which shapes the context of talent management for discussion and the report, wherefore this variable is included in the interview-tool.

Based on an expert review with Sylvia Pors, the variables culture and leadership are eventually added. The expert gave a clear argument why these variables should be added: *‘culture and leadership are two important success factors for the success of talent management’.* Therefore these variables give an important insight in the organization and talent management. These insights are useful for writing a final advice for the organization, which is one of the requirements of the interview-tool.

The next stage was ordering the variables to gather them in a small amount of stages. In table 7 the variables are ordered and an explanation is given. The explanations of the theoretical variables are defined based on the literature in chapter 2 (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005; Gratton & Truss, 2003;

Barney & Wright, 1998). The explanation of the variables culture and leadership is added due to an expert review with Sylvia Pors and literature of Miller (2006). The explanations of the variables in table 7 are of utmost importance when analyzing the results of the case studies. Based on those explanations we can conclude whether the interview-tool measures what it is intended to measure and whether the interview-tool should be improved.

Table 7: Explanation of the variables

	Variables	Explanation of the variables
1	Mission	The fundamental purpose of the organization
	Organizational goals	The determined goals of the organization for 1, 5 and 10 years
	Strategy	The way the organization wants to achieve the determined goals
2	Culture	The shared values, norms, beliefs and interaction within an organization
	Leadership	The way the managers direct and lead the employees
3	HR strategy	The way the organization wants to achieve the determined HR goals
	HR practices	The activities which are used to put the HR strategy into practice
4	Talent (management)	The way the organization defines their talents
	Talent policy and activities	The policies regarding talent management and the activities to put the policies into practice
5	Required talents	The talents which are required to achieve the organizational strategy

4.3.3 Semi structured face-to-face interview

Besides the variables which are important for the structure of the tool, some conditions for the questions are also important for developing the prototype in the next stage. We chose to develop a semi structured interview as it captures the main subjects and questions (Emans, 1990; Van der Molen & Kluijtmans, 2005; Baarda et al., 2005). These main subjects are determined to give steering and guidance for the interviewer and to make sure that the goal of the interview is achieved. This cannot be guaranteed when conducting an open interview (Baarda et al., 2005).

In addition, the interviewer is free to ask sub questions when the answers of the respondents are for example not clear (Baarda et al., 2005). Furthermore, the interviewer is free to focus more or less on specific subjects as every organization, every respondent and every interview requires a different focus. This is in line with one of the requirements in the previous section while the tool should offer room for customization. However, the interviewer should take the goal of the interview into account and therefore a semi structured interview is chosen.

The interview should be conducted face-to-face because this makes it easier to check for social desirable answers of the respondent (Emans, 1990). In addition, non-verbal behavior can be analyzed and it is easier to ask more sub questions to clarify an answer if need be (Emans, 1990). Furthermore, the subjects which are discussed require some amount of trust between the interviewer and the respondent for giving open and honest answers. The contact in face-to-face interviews is more intensive and therefore this is desirable for the reliability of the answers (Emans, 1990). While developing the prototype, the questions should be formulated open as it gives the respondent room for answering the question to his or her own interpretation (Baarda et al., 2005). In addition, the subjects that are discussed in this interview-tool are not always easy to answer and therefore the respondent should get room for giving answers.

4.3.4 Validity and reliability

Qualitative research is often a source of threats to reliability and validity due to the personal involvement of researchers (Dooley, 2001). To control the different kinds of bias, triangulation is used in this research. However, there are still different kinds of reliability and validity which can occur. The reliability is important when determining whether the same conclusions occur when implementing the same instrument within the same case but by a different interviewer (Dooley, 2001). Therefore, *when reliable methods are being used, repeated observation should lead to comparable outcomes'* (Boeije, 2010). This is of great importance for this research, as in practice the interview-tool is used by several users which reflects in a functional requirement of the tool. The reliability of the interview-tool is controlled by developing a semi-structured interview instead of an open interview and an amount of standardization of the data collection and analyzing (Boeije, 2010). For this research it is important that the main goal is achieved in every interview, independent from the interviewer who is conducting the interview. However, the researcher is free to ask sub questions to deepen certain subjects. Therefore, the conclusions will differ in every interview but the goal will be achieved. However, the involvement and the role of the interviewer will play a significant role for the reliability.

According to Dooley (2001) and Boeije (2010) validity is important in this research as this controls whether the tool or method measures what is intended. Specifically, construct validity focuses on whether the variables are measured with the specific questions (Dooley, 2001). Therefore, the answers of the respondent should be compared with the explanation of the variables in table 7 to check whether the questions measure what is intended. After conducting the interviews, these explanations are compared with the answers which are given to draw conclusions if the questions are measuring the variables. Therefore, conclusions can be drawn and construct validity can be controlled partly by improving the interview-tool.

4.4 Prototype

In this section the results of the fourth stage of the designing cycle are described. This means that a prototype of the interview-tool is developed based on the structural specifications in the previous section. The first step within this stage was to formulate high-quality questions. Therefore, the open-questions in this semi structured interview are based on the variables in table 7 with the use of desk research and multiple expert reviews. These questions are evaluated multiple times by the expert reviews with Sylvia Pors, Petra Bakker and Anja Bakker as it is a functional requirement that the tool should be easy to use by consultants. Therefore, the questions should be clear and unambiguous.

In table 8 the main questions are summarized which relate to the different variables. In appendix 4, the interview-tool which is tested in the prototype is added. In this appendix, some sub questions are included which give the interviewer additional ideas and guidance. However, the main questions are most important while the goal of the interview can be achieved with the answers on those main questions.

Emans (1990) stated that before formulating questions, it is important to notice difficult variables for operationalization. The first difficult variable is ‘organizational strategy’. According to an expert review with dr. Martijn van Velzen the organizational strategy could be seen as the latent variable. The sub questions focusing on the arena, vehicles, differentiators, staging and economic logic of the organization should be seen as manifest variables (Hambrick & Frederickson, 2005). The latent variable is not directly observed and the manifest variables are (Dooley, 2001). Therefore, it is better to ask the manifest variables through which the latent variable is measured.

The variable ‘HR practice’ also needed more considerations as different HR practices should be used in the interview-tool. This variable was however not difficult to operationalize as considerable literature is written about the best HR practices. Additionally, expert reviews with the three consultants of Giraffe were done and therefore they could evaluate the comprehensive list of HR practices.

After formulating the questions these are ordered (Emans, 1990). The questions should firstly be ordered by subject. These are the five stages which are mostly ordered based on the theoretical framework in chapter 2. As mentioned earlier, the variables ‘HR practices’ and ‘culture and leadership’ are added. The variable ‘HR practices’ is added after the determination of the HR strategy, as the literature suggests that the HR practices should flow from the HR strategy (Barney & Wright, 1998). The variable ‘culture and leadership’ is added after the determination of the organizational mission, goals and strategy while the culture and leadership is determined on the organizational level as well. After ordering the questions by subject, the questions within a subject are ordered. Based on the requirement that the tool should be usable for the future users, these questions are ordered based on an expert review with Sylvia Pors.

Table 8: Variables, questions and sources

Variables	Question	Sources
Stage 1: Determination of the organizational mission, goals and strategy		
Mission	Can you describe the mission of the organization?	Hambrick & Frederickson (2005)
Organizational goals	What are the organizational goals for next year, over 5 years and over 10 years?	Hambrick & Frederickson (2005) Barney & Wright (1998)
	To which extent are the organizational goals translated in the organization?	De Wit & Meyer (2004)
Strategy	In which area will the organization be active?	Hambrick & Frederickson (2005)
	What factors make your organization distinctive in comparison to other organizations?	Barney & Wright (1998) Hambrick & Frederickson (2005)
	What is the timeline for further distinguishing the organization?	Hambrick & Frederickson (2005)
	How will the organization obtain their returns?	Hambrick & Frederickson (2005)
Stage 2: Culture and leadership		
Culture	How do you describe the organizational culture?	Expert review
Leadership	How do you describe the style of leadership within the organization?	Expert review
Stage 3: Determination of the HR strategy and practices		
HR strategy	How do the employees contribute to achieving the organizational strategy?	Barney & Wright (1998)
	What contributes HR to achieving the organizational strategy?	Gratton & Truss (2003)
HR practices	How is recruitment and selection applied to put the HR strategy into practice?	Gratton & Truss (2003) Expert review
	To which extent are activities like training and development applied to put the HR strategy into practice?	
	To which extent are there career opportunities for employees and are employees aware of those opportunities?	
	How can you describe the HR cycle of appraisals and to which extent contributes this cycle to achieving the HR strategy?	
	How are employees rewarded (or not rewarded) for certain behavior?	
	To which extent are those HR activities aligned with each other?	
Stage 4: Talent management		
Talent (management)	What is the definition of talents within the organization?	Expert review
	To which extent are the interpretations of the TMA method regarding talents, competencies and the organizational strategy recognizable for the organization?	TMA method
Talent policy and activities	To which extent has the organization a policy regarding talent management?	Thorne & Pellant (2007)
	Does the organization distinguish specific target groups for talent management?	Thorne & Pellant (2007)
	Which HR activities does the organization apply specific within talent management?	Thorne & Pellant (2007)
	To which extent supports the organizational culture talent management?	Expert review Thorne & Pellant (2007)
	To which extent supports the style of leadership talent management?	Expert review
Stage 5: Translation to required talents		
Required talents	To which extent do you know which talents reflect those competencies?	TMA method
	Discussion to achieve a definitive list of 'required competencies and talents'	Expert review

Eventually, the lay-out of the interview-tool is developed. This is important as a functional requirement of the tool (formulated in section 4.2) is that the tool should be easy to use for consultants. Not only does the way of asking questions effect the usefulness of the tool, but the lay-out can contribute to this requirement as well. Therefore, different lay-outs are discussed during the expert review with Sylvia Pors. The result of this expert review is the lay-out of the interview-tool in appendix 4.

4.5 Implementation

4.5.1 Documentation review

In this section the results of the case studies are presented while the prototype is put in to action. The results are presented by method and within those methods the two case studies are described separately. The first method is the documentation review where background information regarding the case studies SHP and Merem is searched on the internet.

The information regarding SHP gave us insight in the goal of the shared service centre and the position within the municipality. In addition, a job description was found wherein the core competencies of the municipality Amsterdam were formulated. These competencies were useful as we could check whether these competencies were taken into account by filling in the adjusted CSA tool and when answering the questions.

Before the interview of Merem, a small amount of information is found on the internet. Most of the information is found on the website of Merem and the three separate organizations. This information gave mostly insight in the foundation of Merem and the cooperation between the organizations. In addition, a job description is found where the core values of Merem were included. We could check in the interview whether the respondent took those values into account.

4.5.2 Adjusted CSA tool

One respondent of SHP completed the adjusted CSA tool prior to the interview. In the interview it became clear that the respondent made an interesting distinction between managers and employees without manager tasks. In the interview the respondent explained these differences and described which results belong to which group. Therefore, the required competencies which the respondents ranked with 5 points where translated into required talents and the separation between managers and employees is made (table 9 – the complete list appendix 7). The core competencies of the municipality Amsterdam were not taken into account when completing the adjusted CSA tool.

Table 9: required competencies and talents SHP

Required competencies	Required talents
Employees	
Attention to detail	Order and structure
Coaching	Social empathy and helpfulness
Flexible behavior	Purposiveness and pragmatism
Initiative	Energy and ambition & challenges
Integrity	*No link with talents*
Managers	
Managing	Dominance and responsibility & leadership
Developing employees	Social empathy and helpfulness

The respondent of Merem completed the adjusted CSA tool two days prior to the interview. The competencies which are ranked with 5 points are translated into talents. The respondent however, misunderstood the goal of the tool as it was not clear if she had to assess the competencies based on the organizational or departmental strategy. Therefore, the tool was completed for the second time at the end of the interview (table 10- complete list in appendix 7). The respondent is familiar with the TMA competencies and she read the meaning of the competencies two days before the interview. Therefore, the risk of bias in misinterpreting the competencies was quite small. Furthermore, the respondent took the core values of Merem into account when completing the list with competencies.

Table 10: required competencies and talents Merem

Required competencies	Required talents
Focus on Quality	Order and structure and variety
Innovative power	Pragmatism, independent thinking and energy
Developing employees	Social empathy and helpfulness
Customer orientation	Social empathy, helpfulness and sociability
Cooperation	Sociability and helpfulness
Integrity, social awareness and self development	*no indication*

4.5.3 Interview-tool

In the previous chapter it is explained that the interviews are typed out literally for the data analysis. This data is the result of the implementation of the interview-tool. In appendix 5 a short summary is presented of the answers of the respondents of SHP and Merem regarding the different variables. This summary is based on the most important citations of the respondents. These citations of SHP and Merem are presented in one table while conclusions can be drawn in the next section to what extent the variables are answered by the three respondents.

4.5.4 Gap analysis

After the interviews and the data analysis, the current talents of the employees of SHP and Merem are analyzed. These results were downloaded from the TMA-portal of the specific organization. Those current talents are additionally related to the required talents which were the result of the interview-tool. The result of this gap analysis is presented in table 11 for SHP. Eventually, a final advice of Giraffe HR is written for SHP and Merem where conclusions are drawn. While some competencies of the TMA method are not translated into talents, they are taken into account when drawing conclusions. As an example, the (Dutch) report regarding SHP is added in appendix 6.

Table 11: relating the current and required talents SHP

Required competencies	Required talents	Talent scores	Required competencies	Required talents	Talent scores
Employees			Core competencies SHP		
Attention to detail	Order and structure	5,9	Initiative	Energy Ambition & challenges	5,8 5,7
Coaching	Social empathy Helpfulness	5,3 6,4	Result-orientedness	Purposiveness Ambition & challenges Pragmatism	5,4 5,7 6,1
Flexible behavior	Purposiveness Pragmatism	5,4 6,1	Customer orientation	Social empathy Helpfulness Sociability	5,3 6,4 7,0
Initiative	Energy Ambition & challenges	5,8 5,7	Cooperation	Sociability Helpfulness	7,0 6,4
Integrity	*No link with talents*		Learning ability	Persistence *Capacity analysis*	5,4
Managers					
Managing	Dominance Responsibility & leadership	9,0 7,5	Developing employees	Social empathy Helpfulness	6,0 5,5

4.6 Evaluation of the case studies

The results regarding the testing of the prototype are evaluated and those results are presented in this section. The evaluation is the last stage in the designing cycle to check whether the goals are achieved and to what extent the developed interview-tool meets the requirements. Before evaluating these goals and requirements, the different stages of the prototype are evaluated.

4.6.1 Preparation

A proper preparation is essential for the success of the entire tool to making the translation from strategy to talent. A good preparation of the interviewer makes it possible to anticipate and deepen certain subjects. In addition, the preparation insures that the purpose of the tool fits the respondents who are interviewed and the mutual expectations can be managed. For example, in the case study of Merem the job function of the respondent was manager HRM. Her function made it quite difficult to answer the questions regarding the organizational strategy as the organization is founded in October 2010. In this case the purpose of the tool was to make the translation from the organizational strategy to the required talents. Therefore, this purpose did not fit the role of the respondent. The conclusion can therefore be drawn that the first stage in the preparation should focus on determining the purpose of the tool. After determining this purpose, the next stage should be to search for the right respondents to achieve this goal.

The method of documentation review should be used in the future as it is essential to get the first input for the interview while for example the core competencies were a helpful contribution. However, we concluded that the chosen method of documentation review is not enough to cover this whole stage of preparation. Besides the determination of the purpose and the right respondents, the purpose of the TMA method should be determined as well. Which TMA-tools does the organization use and which employees conducted the TMA-talent analysis? Based on those results we can draw the conclusion that the documentation review should be carried out. However, the purpose of the tool, the right respondents and information regarding the TMA talent analysis should be determined in addition.

Besides the documentation review, the adjusted CSA tool is sent to the respondents as a preparation to the interview-tool. One respondent mentioned that the goal of this tool was unclear which made the results unusable. Therefore, it is essential that the purpose of the adjusted CSA tool should be explained unambiguously. However, for explaining the purpose of this tool, it is important to determine the organizational purpose regarding the implementation of the entire tool to translate the strategy to required talents. For example, is the entire tool used to translate the organizational or departmental strategy into required talents? Or is it used to get involvement for talent or competency management within the management team? This overall goal influences the purpose of the adjusted CSA tool.

In addition, it should be clear whether the respondent should make a distinction between managers and employees when completing the adjusted CSA tool. This is done differently in the case studies. The results show that both options are possible while including the distinction adds another level to the interview. Regardless of which option is chosen, it should be clear for the respondents whether or not they should make this distinction. This choice whether an organization adds or excludes this separation depends on the purpose of the implementation of the entire tool.

Regarding the results of the adjusted CSA tool it became visible that the respondents found it hard to differentiate between the competencies (see appendix 7 for an overview). The 55 competencies are on average divided as follows: 9 times the score 5, 17 times the score 4, 16 times the score 3, 5 times the score 2 and 1 time the score 1. These results show that the competencies are ranked overall quite high. An explanation can be that the respondents were asked to make a clear differentiation between the competencies but they were not forced to make this distinction. In the interviews it appeared that making this distinction was not easy and that is why they did not differentiate much within the adjusted CSA tool. Overall, we can conclude that the adjusted CSA tool should be improved but the results are useful before entering the interview. This means that the translation from organizational strategy to required talents will be made through the concept of required competencies.

4.6.2 Conducting the interview

Before we proceed to check whether the intended explanations are given regarding the variables, some overall evaluations can be presented regarding the testing of the prototype. Firstly, Emans

(1990) mentioned that the goal of each question and variable should be clear for the interviewer and the respondent. During the testing of the prototype within Merem, it became clear that when a clear and convincing introduction was omitted the consistency between the stages and questions was missing. This is a disadvantage for the respondent but also for the interviewer when he is not prepared properly.

Therefore, it became clear that the preparation of the interviewer is an essential stage when implementing the tool. It was known beforehand that the role of the interviewer is essential and therefore some assumptions regarding the users are formulated in table 6. However, after testing the prototype it became clear that an essential user assumption is missing. Namely that the user should be familiar with the interview, the structure and questions. This should be a central element of preparing an interview which was not done properly during the case study Merem. A good preparation on part of the interviewer makes it possible to anticipate and deepen subjects and this element was lacking in that case study.

Additionally, the role of the interviewer appeared to be very important when giving the respondent room to answer the questions to its own interpretation. However, the interviewer should be in a position to anticipate as well. In the case study of Merem, the interviewer knew the organization quite well and he could therefore steer the questions. The next citations of sub questions are presented to illustrate it: "*but the mission is particularly a description of the goals of what you want to achieve with the people?'* Answer is: *yes. So it is a familial culture?* Answer is: *Yes.* Van der Molen & Kluytmans (2005) state that it is good to summarize the answers of the respondent by repeating in your own words what the respondent said. However, in the case study of Merem the questions were new information. Therefore they had the character of sub questions but were used as summaries. According to Van der Molen & Kluytmans (2005) these kind of summaries or sub questions should be avoided as they lead to too much steering.

The next stage in evaluating the interviews is to check whether the questions are answered like intended. Additionally, it is about the variables, if they are operationalized in the right way (Boeije, 2010). In table 7 an explanation is given of the variables. These explanations are in this stage related to the answers which are given in the interviews. The first variables are the mission, goals and strategy. The variable 'mission' is clearly explained in the case study Merem as the fundamental purpose of the organization is described. However, SHP focused more on some specific characteristics that should be taken into account in the coming years like *'an economic cutback and increasing the efficiency'*. However, this does not reflect the fundamental purpose of the organization. The 'organizational goals' are described clearly in both cases. Remarkable is that the time specifications of 1, 5 and 10 years are not reflected in the answers. SHP specified their goals in short and long term.

The questions behind the variable 'strategy' should measure the manner in which the organization wants to achieve the determined goals. Therefore, the respondent should make a link with the previous variable 'goals' by answering the different manifest variables. Firstly, not all manifest variables are questioned in the case studies as they did not match with the non-profit sector. Secondly, the respondent of Merem answered the questions quite superficially and with uncertainty as it was not quite clears what she was asked. Additionally, SHP repeated the short term goal. Therefore, the conclusion can be drawn that there was not a right fit between the manifest variables and the case studies. For that reason, the latent variable 'strategy' is not explained like intended.

Secondly, the variable 'culture' should give an overview regarding the shared values, norms, beliefs and interaction within the organization. The case studies show that a part of this variable is explained like intended while the respondents have their own interpretation of the concept 'culture'. The answers gave a good picture of the culture of the organization, however they could be more extensive. The variable 'leadership' should get an explanation of the way the managers direct and lead the employees. All three interviews gave clear answers which were in line with the explanation of the variable. An example of a citation in this variable is: *'Most important however, is that they* [managers] *motivate and stimulate the employees to keep on going. They are social-minded but have a certain objectivity as well'.* Therefore, the variable 'leadership' is measured like intended.

In the third stage, the variable 'HR strategy' is not answered like intended as a link should be made with the HR goals. However, these HR goals were not asked in the interview and a question regarding the HR strategy is added as a sub question. Remarkable is that the respondents however, focused in their answers on the HR goals except for the HR strategy. An example of a citation in this regard is: *'I wrote a plan for HR with some priorities which I try to translate into the organization'*. Therefore, the HR goals are determined instead of the HR strategy while the strategy focuses on the way the organization wants to achieve those HR goals.

The questions regarding the HR practices are answered quite like intended. Much information is given regarding the HR practices, however the link with the HR strategy is not made while this relation between HR practices and HR strategy is asked explicitly in every question. This can be caused by bias on the previous variable, while the questions regarding the HR strategy were not clear or not answered. We linked quite a lot of variables with each other. However, those relations were not always clear and understandable. Eventually, for the case studies it was easier to focus on the HR practices because that is their daily HR business than on the relation with the HR strategy. The questions in this variable should be evaluated as they do not measure the intended variable 'HR practices' exactly.

The variables in the fourth stage focus on talent management. The next citation makes it clear that the first variable 'talent' is answered like intended: *'I define competencies more as the behavior which we require from the organizational point of view. Talents are motives and drivers from within the employees'.* In addition, the answers were quite in line with the definitions of the TMA method which is logical while both case study organizations work with the TMA method. Additionally, the second variable 'talent policy and activities' is explained like intended. However, the two organizations did not have a formal talent management policy and therefore it was important for the interviewer to anticipate with sub questions. The talent activities emerged in the first case study, even when they were not formalized by the top of the organization.

The variables in the last stage focus on the translation of the required talents. This variable is answered by determining the competencies and talents which are required to achieve the organizational strategy through a list of the 55 TMA competencies. However, the respondents made this translation themselves by filling in the adjusted CSA tool and changing the outcomes of this tool at the end of the interview. A disadvantage of this procedure is that the interviewer did not check explicitly whether the required competencies are in line or contrary with each other. In addition, the interviewer did not examine or discuss openly if those required competencies were really essential to achieve the organizational strategy. Therefore, in the case studies the tool is implemented to make the translation to required competencies and talents, to get into a conversation regarding talent management and to test the tool. However, this purpose is slightly contrary with the functional requirement that the tool 'should stimulate discussion'. Based on this functional requirement, this variable should be improved.

Firstly, the purpose of the tool should be formulated more precisely during the preparation. In a real situation the purpose of implementing the tool will be different because the importance of the tool will increase as the organization has a specific intention with the tool. It is more important that the added value of Giraffe should be used and highlighted much more, as Giraffe can give support by focusing the discussion on making the translation to a small set of required competencies. According to the last expert review with Sylvia Pors, this translation will be the hardest but also the most essential part. To focus the discussion when making the translation, the interviewer should highlight the contradictories between the answers. The discussion regarding those contradictories make the respondents really consider their strategy and competencies.

An example of such a contradictory which should have been discussed extensively is the case of SHP: the employees should be client-focused (is a required competency) but in the meantime the interviews show that the employees have almost no contact with their clients. Client-focused can also be interpreted as getting the salary administration on time and without errors ready for the client. However, this can be interpreted as result-oriented instead of client-focused. Therefore, a good discussion regarding those competencies and the interpretations is essential to make the right translation. This is an important result of this evaluation stage of putting the interview-tool into practice.

4.6.3 Final advice

The second goal of this research is to develop a tool to conduct a gap-analysis between the required and current talents of an organization. The required competencies emerged from the adjusted CSA tool and the interview-tool. These competencies are translated into required talents, based on the TMA translation from competencies to talents. The competencies which cannot be translated are excluded in the analysis. However, when preparing the final advice these competencies are taken into account. The current talents appear from the TMA portal of the organization.

Depending on the preparation of the interviewer, different elements should be clear before downloading the current talents from the portal. Firstly, it should be clear what data from which employees should be used to determine the current talents. Do you need the TMA analysis from managers, not-managers or from both groups? In the last case, which employees are managers? Who left the organization, which means that you should exclude those from the analysis?

After determining the right TMA talent analysis, the mean scores for every talent should be calculated. A result of the case study is that calculating the means takes quite some time at this moment, as those means should be imported from the portal in an Excel document. Besides the means, some more results should be calculated to give the customer a complete overview of the results. An example of such an overview is added in table 12 for four talents.

Table 12: Example of the scores which should be calculated for the gap analysis

Talent name	A1	A2	L	H	Mode								
Emotional balance (average = 5,5)					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Self-esteem	8,5	5,8	2	9	0	1	1	3	5	6	10	4	7
Respect	3,5	4,7	2	8	0	3	9	5	5	11	3	1	0
Need for support	3,0	5,8	1	9	1	1	3	3	5	13	2	6	3
Stress management	7,0	5,8	2	9	0	2	3	5	5	8	6	7	1

Legend: A1= average managers, A2 = Total average, L= lowest, H= highest, Mo= mode

The gap analysis forms an important foundation for the final advice of Giraffe to the customer. From the case studies and the expert review it became clear that this final advice should be seen as the main result of the tool. The final advice forms namely the added value for the customer and for Giraffe. Until the final advice, the customers only provide information to Giraffe's interviewer. The final advice was the first moment wherein Giraffe could show it's added value and expertise by returning information in the form of a final advice.

The next chapters form the structure of the final advice: introduction, highlights of the interviews, current versus required talents and advice. After two case studies it can be evaluated that a standardized structure saves time in developing the final advice. However, it seems a possibility that this structure depends on the purpose of the tool. Therefore, the structure can change over time when implementing the tool in several organizations. After completing the final advice, the recommendations can be returned to the respondents in a number of ways. For the case study SHP a second meeting is organized to discuss the results of the tool. In the case of Merem the final advice is sent by post. Giraffe prefers to discuss the results of the tool in a second meeting, as it offers a second face-to-face contact with the customer.

4.6.4 Overall conclusions

The last part which should be discussed is to what extent the goals, requirements and structural specifications are achieved. These results are largely based on the results in the previous sections. The first goal which is described in section 4.1 is *'develop a tool which makes it possible to translate the organizational strategy into required talents to achieve the strategy'.* Overall, we can draw the conclusion that this goal is achieved. However, in the previous section we mentioned that this stage should be improved by adding more discussion to deepen the translation. Based on a functional requirement of 'stimulating a discussion', the variable is only stimulating a conversation instead of the discussion. From the expert review with Sylvia Pors this discussion appeared essential to make a good translation. Therefore the variable which focuses on this translation should be improved to achieve the goal in an improved qualitative way.

The second goal of the tool is to '*develop a tool that makes it possible to conduct a gap analysis between the current and required talents, if the current talents of an organization are measured by the TMA method'.* In the previous section it became clear that this gap-analysis is an important foundation for the final advice of Giraffe and should therefore be conducted clearly. However, the results show that it is not necessary to develop a specific tool to make this translation. According to an expert review with Sylvia Pors it became clear that the capabilities of the future users are sufficient to make a clear gap-analysis without a specific tool. As mentioned earlier, a standard structure is developed for the final advice and the gap-analysis is a part of this. Even when the purpose of the tool and therefore the structure of the final advice changes, the gap analysis should always be carried out in the same way by calculating the mean scores on the specific talents. When the future users should conduct a gap-analysis it is therefore sufficient to follow the standard structure and tables of the final advice.

It is mentioned earlier that the functional requirement *'stimulate the discussion about talent management'* is not met completely. In addition, another functional requirement states that it should be possible to *'implement the tool in a broad variety of organizations and sectors'.* However, '*there should be room for customization'.* The tool is developed in a way that it can be used in a broad variety of organizations as no questions are added for a specific kind of organization. In addition, the semi-structured interview offers room for customization. However, the tool is only tested within non-profit organizations, so we cannot draw conclusions regarding the implementation within profit organizations. The other functional, user and contextual requirements are met. Additionally, one important user assumption is missing. The user should namely be familiar with the interview, the structure and the questions before conducting the interview-tool

In the previous section much is written regarding the (operationalization of the) structural specification. We explained that most variables are included in the interview based on the theory in chapter 2. In addition, some variables were added based on expert reviews. The conclusion can be drawn that all these should be included in the interview-tool while they are useful for making the translation and composing the final advice. Concisely, some of the questions are answered like intended. However, a number of questions have to be adjusted to get the intended results.

5. Discussion and conclusions

*Before answering the research questions, a discussion is presented in this chapter. Therefore, the limitations of this research and recommendations for follow-up studies are presented. In the second part of this chapter, conclusions are drawn regarding the research questions: **1.** 'How can organizations translate their business strategy into required talents in order to achieve their business goals?' and **2.** 'How can talent gaps (i.e. present versus desired talent) be identified?'.*

5.1 Limitations of the research

5.1.1 Case studies

The first limitation of this research refers to the functional requirement which is formulated in the first chapter: *'It should be possible to implement the tool in a broad variety of organizations and sectors, however there should be room for customization'.* Due to practical implications the tool is tested within two non-profit organizations and therefore the conclusions only apply for this sector. Therefore, the functional requirement is not completely achieved. However, the semi-structured interview offers room for customizations while the interviewer should ask the main questions but is free to put more or less focus on specific subjects. In addition, no explicit questions are added for a specific kind of organization.

Furthermore, when testing the tool the interviews were conducted with one person at the same time. In the next chapter we will conclude that the tool can have much more possibilities which should be discussed before launching the tool in the market. For example, to stimulate the discussion when translation the strategy into required competencies it is interesting to organize a meeting with 4-6 people. The limitation of this research is that this kind of implementation is not tested. Therefore, only suggestions can be done that these possibilities will be interesting for Giraffe.

In addition, the case studies should have been prepared more extensive. Firstly, there were not many organizations accessible to test the tool. Because of this practical limitation only two case studies could be chosen, both in the non-profit sector. Secondly, the level of implementing the tool (organizational vs. departmental) and the purpose of the tool were not clarified quite well. Therefore the explanation of the 'adjusted CSA tool' was not clear enough and the results could not always be used. Thirdly, due to practical limitations no influence could be exercised in finding the right respondents to achieve the goal. However, despite these limitations suitable recommendations are given in Giraffe's final advice to the customer.

5.1.2 Data analysis

The results of the interviews are analyzed by one researcher which decreases the reliability while no interrater reliability could be calculated (Dooley, 2001). However, the results of the interviews are indirectly referred back to the interviewer as the interviewer made a contribution for the final advice. In this final advice the highlights of the interview were repeated and these were recognized clearly by the interviewer while no adjustments are made. Therefore, it can be concluded that there was consensus regarding those highlights between the interviewer and the researcher. Nevertheless, the interpretations and role of the interviewer will always play a part in a qualitative method. However, this is slightly controlled by formulating main questions which should be followed when translating the strategy into talents.

Another subject which should be presented as a limitation is the translation between languages. The interviews are conducted in Dutch, the analyses are done in Dutch and the conclusions are drawn based on those Dutch results. However, the researcher translated the interview and summary of the results into English for this thesis. Therefore, there can be a slight difference between the Dutch and the English interviews. This should be taken into account when reading the results and conclusions in this report.

5.1.3 TMA method

The TMA method plays a significant role in this research as the current talents are measured by the TMA analysis. In addition, the translation from required competencies to required talents is made based on the TMA method as they relate the competencies with the underlying talents. Therefore the results of the tool depend highly on this translation. In this regard, a limitation of this research is that the TMA method does not translate all the competencies into talents (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009). This means for this research that some competencies can be required, however they cannot be translated into required talents. These competencies are not included when analyzing the required talents, although they are taken included when formulating the final advice. In addition, the translation from competencies to talents is discussable in some cases. These translations are discussed with Ehrm-Vision, however it is possible that the opinions and interpretations between Giraffe and Ehrm-Vision are not always in agreement. Therefore, Giraffe has to remain critical regarding the TMA method and the different instruments.

5.2 Follow-up studies

This research is defined and restricted in several ways wherefore a number of suggestions for follow-up studies can be presented. First, this interview-tool is tested in two non-profit organizations due to practical limitations. However, to draw conclusions regarding the profit sector, the tool should be tested in a follow-up study in this profit sector. This would be an added value for Giraffe as it refers to one of their functional requirements.

Furthermore, in the next chapter we mention that the tool can be used to stimulate the discussion when making the translation from strategy into talents. To reduce the risk of failure and dissatisfied customers, it is important for Giraffe to test this implementation before launching it in the market. Therefore, in a follow-up study it is recommended to organize a discussion meeting with 4-6 people who all completed the 'adjusted CSA tool'. A maximum of five required competencies should be used to focus the discussion and to get a maximum result. After this discussion meeting Giraffe should determine whether they should stick to a maximum number of people for such a meeting.

The subsequent suggestion for a follow-up study is based on the scientific relevance of this study. Literature suggests that when making an organization distinctive due to its human capital, translating the strategy into required talents should be the first stage (Barney & Wright, 1998; Cheese et al., 2008). However, the literature does not offer concrete guidance to make this translation. The developed tool in this research offers this guidance. Nevertheless, the tool is developed from the perspective of Giraffe who cooperate with Ehrm-Vision. This means that the TMA method plays a significant role in this tool. Consequently, making the translation is more difficult for an organization that does not collaborate with Ehrm-Vision. Firstly, they probably do not work with the TMA method and secondly, it is very difficult to reflect from within the organization on your own organization. Therefore, a suggestion for a follow-up study is to make this tool usable for every organization, without the intervention of an external (consultancy) organization like Ehrm-Vision or Giraffe.

The next suggestion for a follow-up study focus on the theory in this research. Barney & Wright (1998) made a direct link between the organizational strategy and the talents of the employees as human resources which are required to achieve this strategy. Additionally, Schuler & Jackson (1995) made a connection between the strategy and the role behavior of employees which can be seen as the competencies which are required from the organizational point of view. In this research, a combination of those theories is made while the translation from strategy into talents is made through the competencies. We have chosen for this relation while competencies are more understandable and tangible for organizations. Consequently, it is easier for organizations to think about the competencies which are required instead of the talents. Therefore, the theory of Barney & Wright (1998) and Schuler & Jackson (1995) are combined due to a practical consideration. For a follow-up study it will be interesting to further investigate this relation.

The last proposition focuses on the designing cycle of Verschuren & Hartog (2005) which is used to develop the tool. Before implementing the designing cycle, we concluded in chapter 3 that a good balance between the process of designing and the content of the product should be monitored (Van Aken, 2004; Verschuren & Hartog, 2005). The designing cycle of Verschuren & Hartog (2005) reflects merely the process of designing. Therefore, there is a risk of losing this balance and focus too much on one element. This occurred in some amount in this research which results in too much emphasis on the process of designing. Therefore, there should have been more emphasis on the content of the tool and the operationalization of the variables. Subsequently, it would be interesting for a follow-up study to evaluate the designing cycle of Verschuren & Hartog (2005) and to improve the balance between the process of designing and the content of the product. A suggestion for improving this balance is adding the concept of 'learning-before-doing' (Van Aken, 2004). When this takes a larger part in their designing cycle, the content of the tool will be thought through more extensively.

5.3 Conclusions

5.3.1 The tool 'translating strategy into talents'

In the previous chapter the process around the implementation of the tool is divided into three different stages which are presented in the blue boxes below. These stages are the preparation of the interview-tool, conducting the interview and writing the final advice. In this section conclusions are drawn regarding those stages as they are important for Giraffe when implementing the tool. The limitations in the previous section should be taken into account when reading the conclusions. The conclusions are based on the evaluation of the stages in the previous chapter. Therefore, the total process of the stages is not repeated as solely the conclusions are drawn.

1. Preparation
- Capturing the goal of the tool
- Finding the right respondents
- Preparing the interview-structure and questions
- Explaining the 'adjusted CSA tool' in a clear way

2. Conducting the interview
- Implementing the improved interview-tool wherein the translation is made from strategy to required talents

3. Final advice
- Conducting a gap analysis based on the current talents in the TMA portal
- Writing the final advice

5.3.2 Preparation

Determining the purpose of the tool and matching the right respondents to this purpose are the main steps which should be taken in this preparation stage. This is of utmost importance as the success of the tool for Giraffe depends on the input of the respondents. Giraffe is known for delivering quality and for delivering quality they depend on the respondents. Additionally, delivering this quality also depends on the role of the interviewer. Therefore, based on the results a new user requirement is added. The interviewer should explicitly be familiar with the interview-structure and questions. Eventually, the explanation of the 'adjusted CSA tool' should be in line with the purpose of the tool and it has to be formulated clearly and unambiguously before sending it to the respondent(s). These conclusions are important for the users who are implementing the tool. Therefore, these conclusions are captured in a short manual, written for the users of the tool. This manual is added in appendix 8.

5.3.3 Conducting the interview

After the preparation, the interview-tool should be implemented. Besides the variables which are discussed here, different questions are adjusted in the other variables to improve the tool. These adjustments are made visible in appendix 9 by marking the number of the question with a red color. These adjustments are made based on the results in the previous chapter. Overall, we can draw the conclusion that the variables which are added should all remain in the interview-tool as they are necessary to make the translation from strategy into required talents and writing the final advice for this translation. Based on literature in chapter 2 the following concepts are included in the interview-tool: mission, objectives, strategy, HR strategy and talent management. In addition, based on the expert reviews from practice the concepts 'culture and leadership' and 'HR practices' are added. All these concepts are necessary to make the translation from organizational strategy to required talents and to meet the different requirements of the tool.

An important adjustment in the interview-tool is that before every stage a short explanation as introduction is given regarding the subjects which will be discussed. Based on the results in the previous chapter, we can draw the conclusion that the correct introductions were mission. This made the goal of the tool unclear and an overview of the order of questions was missing for the respondent.

Regarding the content of the interview-tool, most adjustments are made to the variables 'HR strategy' and 'required talents'. The variable 'HR strategy' was not operationalized correctly as it should explain 'the way the organization wants to achieve the determined HR goals'. However, no questions were asked regarding the HR goals. Additionally, the explicit question about the HR strategy was added as a sub question. Therefore, in the improved interview-tool two main questions regarding the HR goals and HR strategy are added.

The variable 'required talents' is explained by the answers to the questions like it is intended, however it should be improved to increase the quality of the translation. In addition, regarding the expert review with Sylvia Pors the added value of the Giraffe's consultants should be highlighted and more discussion should be stimulated. Therefore, we draw the conclusion that it is important to stimulate and focus this discussion. This can be achieved by putting at least 2 but ideally 4-6 people together in one meeting. It is important to focus the discussion to get a small set of required competencies for example with a maximum of five competencies. In this stage, it is essential that the interviewer highlights possible contradictories in the answers, for example between the required competencies to achieve the organizational strategy.

Therefore, another significant conclusion is that the role of the interviewer is of utmost importance. Besides the preparation of the interviewer, it is important that the interviewer possess the right skills for interviewing. When the tool is implemented in a broader setting, the interviewer should in addition possess good skills for leading a discussion. Therefore, for the success of the interview-tool it is important that the specific user requirements should be followed. This means also following the user assumptions which is added in the previous section: 'the interviewer should explicitly be familiar with the interview-structure and questions'.

5.3.4 Final advice

After conducting the interview-tool, a final advice should be written wherein the gap analysis between the current and required talents is done. In the previous chapter we draw the conclusion that it is not necessary to develop a specific tool to make this gap analysis. However, the consultants of Giraffe should know which actions should be carried out to get the right data for making this translation. Consequently, in appendix 10 a short manual is written regarding the gap analysis between the current and required talents. This manual should be followed when determining the gaps between the present and desired talents. Therefore, the current talents and the desired competencies should be available. Those desired competencies can be translated into talents, as the TMA method for example states that a competency can be considered as a talent which is developed (Van IJzendoorn et al., 2009; Beer, 2009; Volz & Van der Heijden, 2005; Dewulf et al., 2010). Consequently, talents should be seen as an overarching concept from which competencies can be developed. In addition, this translation from required competencies to required talents makes it possible to identify gaps.

Eventually, in the manual in appendix 10 the way of handing over the final advice is also included. Giraffe prefers to hand over the final advice by organizing a second face-to-face meeting with the respondent(s). However, this can differ within every case as it depends on the purpose of the tool and the implementation process. For maximizing the results for Giraffe, it is nevertheless important to take this into account.

6. Recommendations

In this chapter several recommendations are presented for Ehrm-Vision and Giraffe HR. In the first section the recommendations for Ehrm-Vision are explained as they were an important stakeholder in this research. In the second section a number of recommendations for Giraffe HR are presented, as this research is conducted on behalf of Giraffe.

6.1 Recommendations Ehrm-Vision

The developed tool in this research adds a significant value to the existing instruments of Ehrm-Vision. The literature suggests that when making an organization distinctive due to their human capital, translating the strategy into required talents should be the first stage (Barney & Wright, 1998; Cheese et al., 2008). This stage is currently missing in the range of instruments of Ehrm-Vision. The current instruments of Ehrm-Vision focus mostly on the individual level and the relation with the job functions, tasks and areas of results (appendix 1). Therefore, the current talents of a team can be analyzed and the required competencies per job function can be determined by key persons within the organization.

Ehrm-Vision assumes that those key persons take the organizational strategy into account when determining the required competencies. Nevertheless, Ehrm-Vision did not develop a tool to determine this. This first stage of linking the organizational strategy is essential while it relates the different concepts of strategy, talents and competencies. Additionally, competency and talent management will only be successful when the chosen competencies are supportive to the strategy. Therefore, the developed tool wherein the strategy is determined and seen as the starting point for competency and talent management, adds a significant value to the existing instruments of Ehrm-Vision. Questions that Ehrm-Vision and Giraffe can answer through the developed tool are: 'Can you help us to determine which competencies or talents we require to achieve the strategy?', 'Do we have the right talents in the organization for achieving the strategy?' and 'Due to financial implications we will change our strategy, what does this means for our employees, the competencies and their talents'? The next step for Ehrm-Vision is determining whether there is a market for the developed tool. An inventory among the existing customers can help to determine this market.

Furthermore, before adding the tool to the existing range of instruments, it is important to decide which users within Ehrm-Vision are qualified to conduct the interview-tool. As mentioned earlier, the role of the interviewer is very important for the success of the tool. It requires a great deal from the interviewer, especially when a discussion with more people in one meeting should be lead. Subsequently, when there are not (enough) qualified interviewers available within Ehrm-Vision it is recommended to contact Giraffe HR. They have quite some TMA-certified and suitable consultants for interviewing and leading discussions. Furthermore, Giraffe HR has several creative methods for leading discussions such as Majibu and the moderation method which can be helpful to increase the success of the tool. Therefore, this should not be a motive for Ehrm-Vision for not adding the tool to the existing instruments and services.

Eventually, when Ehrm-Vision decides not to add to the tool to its existing instruments, it is definitely recommended to adjust the existing CSA tool and add it to the portal of Giraffe. This is important as the explanation and invitation can be changed. Currently, the explanation of the 'adjusted CSA tool' was unclear for the respondents wherefore the results were not usable. This should be avoided and can be improved by adding it to the TMA portal and standardizing the invitation and explanation.

Furthermore, the current talents are calculated by importing the scores from the TMA portal into Excel. In Excel the mean scores, the lowest and highest scores and the division of the scores are calculated. However, this takes quite some time. Therefore, it is recommended that the TMA portal allows the user to calculate these scores straight from the portal. This is probably quite a small adjustment, as this can already be done for a team of maximum 11 people. The adjustment will save the user quite some time when conducting the gap analysis and preparing the final advice.

6.2 Recommendations Giraffe HR

On behalf of Giraffe HR the tool 'translating strategy into talents' is developed. However, before putting the tool on the market different subjects should be discussed and evaluated. According to these subjects, several recommendations can be made:

1. Make employees responsible for the tool
2. Explore the additional possibilities and make decisions regarding those possibilities
3. Increase the involvement and belief in the tool of the business managers and consultants
4. Launch the tool in the market

6.2.1 Make employees responsible

After completing this research, it is important that the developed tool gets a permanent place in the organization. As a result, at least two employees within the theme 'Talent- and organizational developments' should be responsible for the further development of the tool. Those employees should be capable of exploring the additional possibilities and make decisions regarding them. In addition, one of the employees should be TMA certified as he/she has good insights regarding the TMA method. Furthermore, it would be useful if one of the employees can function as the interviewer when implementing the tool as he/she knows the additional possibilities. In this way the developed tool gets a permanent place within Giraffe HR and at least two employees are responsible for the further implementation. This is of utmost importance will the tool be a success for Giraffe HR.

6.2.2 Explore additional possibilities

Before launching the tool in the market, the wide range of possibilities of the tool should be discussed to get a good overview. In addition, the developed tool leaves room for further development and improvement of the tool. Consequently, these developments and improvements should be discussed firstly. Furthermore, some additional options can be interesting for Giraffe. Firstly, the tool can be implemented for determining the competencies which are required to achieve the business strategy. This stage is of utmost importance as competency and talent management will only succeed when the chosen competencies are supportive for achieving the strategy. Secondly, based on the correct chosen required competencies, a job framework can be determined for an organization. Additionally, based on this framework a system of compensation and benefits can be linked. In the third place, it is possible to implement performance management more extensively as assessments can be done based on those required competencies.

The possibilities above demonstrate that the tool can be used for a wide range of HR issues and questions. These questions should be explored by the employees within theme 'Talent- and organizational development' who are responsible for the implementation of the tool. However, it is recommended to discuss whether it is useful to cooperate with other themes within Giraffe HR like 'Compensation and Benefits', 'HR in Educational environments' and 'Positioning and Professionalization of Learning' to maximize the results for Giraffe. Eventually, decisions should be made by the responsible employees regarding those possibilities and the cooperation between the themes.

Furthermore, in this research the interview-tool is only tested in interviews with one person at the same time. However, as mentioned earlier it is also possible to stimulate the discussion in the last stage of the interview when making a translation from strategy to talent. In this regard, it is interesting to organize one meeting with at least two and ideally 4-6 people to discuss the required competencies. A maximum of five competencies should be used to really focus this discussion. In this regard the 'adjusted CSA tool' remains a useful option to use prior to the interview, while the respondents cannot conform easily to each other during the interview.

In addition, besides the interviewer, even the respondents for the interview should be chosen carefully. Like mentioned earlier, the choice for respondents should depend on the purpose of the goal. For example, translating the organizational strategy requires other respondents in comparison to the translation of the departmental strategy. Therefore, depending on the purpose of the tool, it is possible to get input in this discussion of several managers, HR and two employees who are seen as best performers. The competencies and talents of those two employees can in this regard be linked to the business strategy which can give an interesting dynamic to the interview.

Eventually, the tool can be linked with existing instruments or games of Giraffe/Triamfloat. They have several creative methods like the game Majibu and the moderation method to lead a discussion and to organize the interview. In addition, it is possible to develop a new method which perfectly suites this tool. However, it is important to keep in mind that those methods should facilitate the process of achieving the goal when implementing the tool. Therefore, the methods remain a mean to achieve the goal of the tool.

6.2.3 Increase the involvement

After discussing the possibilities of the tool ‘translating strategy into talents’, it is important to go one step further and focus on the following contextual assumption: *‘To make the tool a success in the market, the business managers and consultants of Giraffe HR should show involvement, confidence and belief in the tool’.* Currently, the business managers and consultants of Giraffe HR are discovering the possibilities of the TMA method and they are aware of the research which is done.

However, they are not informed on such a level that they are involved and show confidence in the tool. In addition, they did not work with the TMA method and they had consequently no experiences with the TMA method and the tool which is developed. This experience with the tools is necessary while the business manager and consultants are the ambassadors of the TMA method and the developed tool to the customers. As a result, it is important that the business managers and all the consultants conduct a TMA talent analysis. When the result of this analysis is discussed with the employee, it is important to highlight the role of the tool which is developed in this research. In this way, all the employees worked with the TMA method and are aware of the possibilities and added value of the developed tool. Eventually, their support is essential for making the tool a success and therefore Giraffe should invest in achieving their involvement.

6.2.4 Launching the tool in the market

The last recommendations for Giraffe HR is launch the tool ‘translating strategy into talents’ in the market. The following contextual requirements should be taken into account when doing this: ‘*There should be a business for the tool’* and *‘the tool should make Giraffe HR distinctive from its competitors*’. Before developing the tool, Giraffe determined that there is a business for this tool and that is why this tool is developed on behalf of Giraffe. The next stage is to clarify this market to get a good overview wherein the tool will operate.

In addition, when launching the tool it should be clear in which areas Giraffe HR will distinguish itself from its competitors as regards to this tool and the TMA method. Most important is that Giraffe can offer its customers a total package of several instruments when the developed tool is launched in combination with the TMA method. This wide range of instruments can be offered for many purposes. In addition, Giraffe can offer the instruments as well as give support and advice during the process. Furthermore, the instruments can be launched separate in the market. For example, the gap analysis can be detached from interview-tool to translate the strategy into required talents when an organization does not work with the TMA method. We recommend Giraffe to clarify the possibilities and to highlight such differentiators when launching the tool and the TMA method.

Eventually, it should be discussed how Giraffe offers the tool to its customers. The tool can be implemented when a customer has a specific question which suits the tool. However, it is also possible to present the tool as an investment of Giraffe from which assignments can be added. The final advices showed that many subjects were discussed during the interviews. Based on those subjects, different recommendations are presented which could offer interesting assignment opportunities for Giraffe.

References

Aken, J. E. van (2004). Management research based on the paradigm of the design sciences. *Journal of management studies, 41*(2), 219-246.

Aken, J. E. van, Berends, H., Bij, H. van der (2008). *Problem solving in organizations.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Arthur, M. B., Khapova, S. N. & Wilderom, C. P. M. (2005). Career success in a boundaryless career world. *Journal of organizational behavior, 26,* 177-202.

Baarda, D.B., Goede, M.P.M. de, & Teunissen, J. (2005). *Basisboek kwalitatief onderzoek: handleiding voor het opzetten en uitvoeren van kwalitatief onderzoek*. Groningen/Houten: Wolters-Noordhoff.

Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of management, 17*(1), 99-120.

Barney, J. B. & Wright, P. M. (1998). On becoming a strategic partner: the role of human resources in gaining competitive advantage. *Human resource management, 37*(1), 31-46.

Bax, E.H. (2003). *Kansrijk kiezen, raamwerk strategisch human resource management.* Schoonhoven: Academic service.

Beer, A. (2009). *Van talent naar competentie.* Retrieved November 4, 2010, from http://www.managersonline.nl/weblog/518/van-talent-naar-competentie.html.

Beirendonck, L. C. van (2010). *Dieptezicht in competentiemanagement.* Dissertation for the University of Tilburg, Netherlands.

Boeije, H. (2010). *Analysis in qualitative research.* London: Sage publications.

Boudreau, J. W. & Ramstad, P. M. (2005). Talentship, talent segmentation, and sustainability: a new HR decision science paradigm for a new strategy definition. *Human resource management, 44*(2), 129-136.

Buckingham, M. & Vosburgh, R. M. (2001). The 21st century Human Resources Function: It's the Talent, Stupid! *Human resource planning, 24*(4), 17-23.

Chambers, G., Foulon, M., Handfield-Jones, H., Hankin, S.M. (1998). The war for talent. *The McKinsey Quarterly, 3,* 44-57.

Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek (2011). Kerncijfers van diverse bevolkingsprognoses en waarneming. Retrieved, January 13, from http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/? DM=SLNL&PA=70737NED&D1=0-1,5-10&D2=l&D3=61,65,70,75,80,85,90,95,100&HDR=T&STB=G1,G2&VW=T.

Cheese, P., Thomas, R.J. & Craig, E. (2008). *The Talent Powered Organization, Strategies for Globalization, Talent Management and High Performance.* Kogan Page Limited.

Collings, D. G. & Mellahi, K. (2009). Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review, 19,* 304-313.

Davis, L. L. (1992). Instrument review: Getting the most from a panel of experts. *Applied nursing research, 5*(4), 194-197.

Delery, J. E. & Doty, D. H. (1996). Modes of theorizing in strategic human resource management. *Academy of management journal, 39*(4), 802-835.

Dessing, M. & Lap, E. (2004). *Talent management. De waarde van talent in organisaties.* Amsterdam: Pearson Education benelux.

Dewulf, L., Meeuwen, L. van, Tjepkema, S. (2010). Talent in actie: verbinden van competentiemanagement en talentontwikkeling. *Opleiding & Ontwikkeling, 6,* 10-15.

Digital library for the Dutch literature (2011). *Nieuw woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal.* Retrieved January, 13, from http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/cali003nieu01_01/cali003nieu01_01_0023.php.

Dooley, D. (2001). *Social reserach methods* (4e druk). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Emans, B. (1990). *Interviewen: theorie, techniek en training* (third edition). Groningen/Houten: Wolters-Noordhoff.

Howe, M. J. A., Davidson, J. W. & Sloboda, J. A. (1998). Innate talents: reality or myth? *Behavioral and brain science, 21*, 399-442.

Huselid, M. A., Beatty, R. W. & Becker, B. E. (2005). 'A players' or 'A positions'? The strategic logic of workforce management. *Harvard Business Review, December, 110-117.*

Lewis, R. E. & Heckman, R. J. (2006). Talent management: A critical review. *Human Resource Management Review, 16*, 139-154.

Masselink, R. & Nieuwenhof, R. van den (2008). Appreciative Inquiry. In: *Waarderend organiseren.* Nieuwerkerk aan den IJssel: Gelling publishing.

Michaels, E., Handfield-Jones, H., Axelrod, B. (2001). *The war for talent*. Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing.

Miles, R. E. & Snow, C. C. (1984). Designing human resource systems. *Organizational Dynamics, 13*(1), 36-52.

Miller, K. (2006). *Organizational communication: approaches and processes* (fourth edition).USA: Thomson Wadsworth.

Molen, H. van der & Kluijtmans, F. (2006). *Gespreksvoering: basisvaardigheden en gespreksmodellen* (second edition). Groningen/Houten: Wolters-Noordhoff.

Pfeffer, J. (2001). Fighting the war for talent is hazardous to your organization's health. *Organization dynamics, 29*(4), 248-259.

Schuler, R. S. & Jackson, S. E. (1987). Linking competitive strategies with human resource management practices. *The academy of management executive, 1*(3), *207-219.*

Schuler, R. S. & Jackson, S. E. (1995). Understanding human resource management in the context of organizations and their environments. *Annual review psychology, 46,* 237-264.

Shikma, I., Barneveld, R. van, Latten, J., Zijlstra, F., Bontekoning, A., Feld, P., Vlasblom, W. (2010). *Waarom heeft HR geen dominante plek binnen de Raad van Bestuur?* Retrieved October, 18, 2010 from www.nu.nl.

Sluis, L. E. C. van der (2009). *Talent voor leiderschap*. Presentation presented at congress of Nederlandse netwerk voor Management Development. Retrieved November, 4, from http://www.nfmd.nl/.

Sluis, L. E. C. van der & Bunt-Kokhuis, S. van de (2009). *Competing for talent.* Assen: Koninklijke Van Gorcum.

Tjepkema, S. (2010). Vertrouwen op talent. In: *Leren in organisaties.* Deventer: Kluwer.

Volz, A. & Van der Heijden, H. (2005). Competentiemanagement. In: *Leerboek personeelsmanagement.* Groningen/Houten: Wolters Noordhoff.

Van Dale (2011). *Woordenboek (Dutch dictionary)*. Retrieved January, 13, from http://www.vandale.nl/vandale/zoekService.do?selectedDictionary=nn&selectedDictionaryName=Nederlands&searchQuery=talent.

Verschuren, P & Hartog, R. (2005). Evaluation in Design-Oriented research. *Quality and quantitiy, 39,* 733-762.

Visser, R. C. (2009). Trends in talentmanagement: wetenschap en praktijk. *Develop, 1*, 14-26.

Webster, J. & Watson R. T. (2002). Analyzing the past to prepare for the future: writing a literature review. *MIS Quarterly, 26* (2), 13-23.

Wright, P. M., Dunford, B. B., Snell, S. A. (2001). Human resources and the resource based view of the firm. *Journal of management, 27,* 701-721.

IJzendoorn, E. van, Weert, L. van, Müller, B. (2009). *Van talent naar performance. Talent gericht selecteren, ontwikkelen en beoordelen.* Utrecht: EhrmVision.