

Why Solving One Talent Problem Often Reveals the Next One



Talent challenges rarely exist in isolation. When you solve one problem well, it often surfaces the next one, not because the first solution failed, but because it worked well enough to reveal what was underneath it. This article explores why that pattern happens, what it tells you about your talent system, and how to use it to build toward something that lasts.

Most talent initiatives start the same way. Something breaks visibly enough to demand attention. Leaders are underperforming. People are leaving. Engagement is down. Leadership notices, budget appears, and HR is asked to fix it.

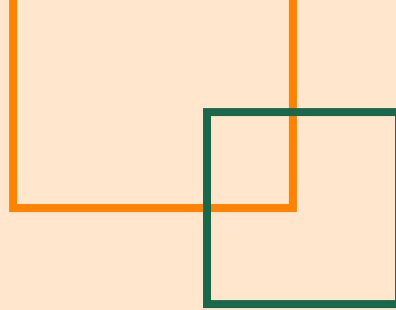
So you fix it. And often, it works.

But here is a pattern we see often in our work with HR and talent leaders: solving one problem with rigor and intention has a way of surfacing the next one. Not because the first solution failed, but because it worked well enough to reveal what was underneath it. The talent system becomes clearer as you engage with it. And that clarity, while sometimes inconvenient, is actually a sign that things are moving in the right direction.



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When the Fix Works and Something Else Surfaces

Consider a pattern that is familiar to many HR leaders. An organization notices high turnover and correctly identifies it as the priority. They bring in a partner, run a diagnostic, and discover that compensation is inconsistent across similar roles. Compensation frameworks are unclear or have not kept pace with the market or with internal equity expectations.

They build a compensation framework. Turnover stabilizes. The initiative is, by any reasonable measure, a success.

And then something new comes into focus. Because the organization is now moving toward performance-based compensation, managers need to have different conversations with their teams. Conversations about expectations. About performance. About what it means to earn an outcome in the new structure. And it becomes clear that many managers are not equipped to have those conversations well.

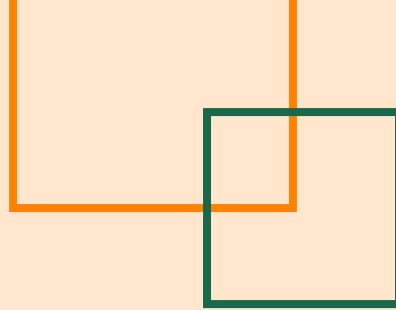
This is not a failure. The compensation work did not create the skill gap, it revealed it. The system had always contained both problems. Fixing the first one made the second one visible, and actionable.

If you want to see this pattern in more depth, we walked through a similar situation in our case study on [diagnosing the root causes of high turnover](#).



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Why Talent Challenges Are Rarely Isolated

Talent challenges feel discrete because they surface that way. Turnover shows up in a report; engagement drops in an annual survey; a leader gets feedback and it finally reaches someone who can act on it. These are real, specific problems that deserve real, specific solutions.

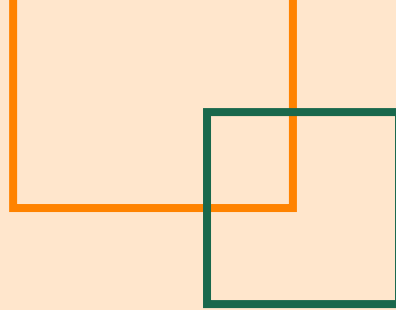
But underneath each presenting problem is a system: an interconnected set of practices, expectations, leadership behaviors, and processes that shape how people are developed, led, engaged, and retained. A gap in one area creates pressure in others. Unclear leadership expectations lead to inconsistent management behaviors, which erode engagement, which increases turnover, which depletes the pipeline. The problem you see is rarely the only problem. It is usually the one that became visible first.

This is the core insight behind the [OGC Talent Health System](#): talent health is systemic. Every entry point, every problem you bring to the work, connects to the whole.

You Do Not Have to See the Whole System Before You Start

One of the most common concerns we hear from HR leaders is something like: if everything is connected, do I need to understand the whole system before I can do anything? Do I need a comprehensive audit before I can take action on what is clearly in front of me?

No. You do not.



The entry point does not determine the value of the work. If your most urgent problem is turnover, you start with turnover. If leadership capability is the burning issue, you start there. What determines long-term value is not where you start, but whether the work is connected: whether there is a shared understanding of how solving this problem relates to the broader talent system you are trying to strengthen.

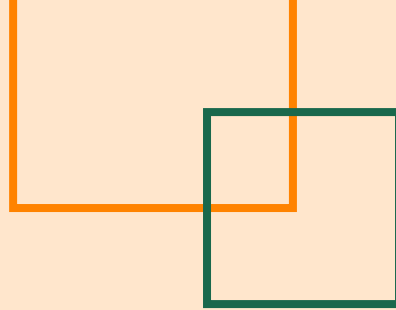
The goal is not to solve everything at once. It is to solve what is in front of you in a way that builds toward something that lasts, and to stay curious about what the work reveals as you go.

What This Means for How You Evaluate Progress

If you finish a talent initiative and find yourself looking at a new problem, that is not evidence the first initiative failed. It may be the clearest sign that it worked.

In the compensation example above, the managers who needed performance conversation training were always going to need it. The organization just could not see that need clearly until the compensation structure gave it shape. The diagnostic work, the solution, and the implementation all functioned as they should. The system became more legible as a result.

This reframe matters because HR leaders are often in a position of having to justify continuing investment in talent work. It is easier to make that case when you understand that surfacing the next problem is part of the value, not a sign that the last solution fell short.



The Question Worth Asking

When you think about the talent initiatives your organization has invested in over the last few years, which ones held? Which ones did not? And for the ones that did not hold, what was missing?

In our experience, what is most often missing is not effort or expertise. It is connection. The initiative solved the symptom, but it was not anchored to an understanding of the broader system. When it ended, the old patterns reasserted themselves because the underlying conditions had not changed. It is the same dynamic we explore in our piece on [why organizational change efforts fail before they start](#), where the gap between a well-executed initiative and lasting results almost always comes down to what was addressed upstream.

That is what a systems perspective changes. Not the urgency with which you respond to what is in front of you, but the awareness with which you do it.

If you are navigating a talent challenge right now and want to understand how it fits into the larger picture, the [OGC Talent Health System](#) is a good place to start. And if you would like to talk through what you are seeing in your organization, [we are happy to have that conversation](#).

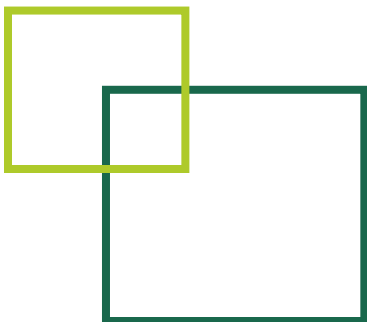
About Orange Grove Consulting

Your people challenges are more complex than any single initiative can solve.

Orange Grove Consulting helps HR and talent leaders bring clarity to their workforce and leadership systems through research-based consulting and practical tools designed for real organizations. We help you diagnose what's driving the problem, develop leaders with the skills that matter, and build talent systems that hold up over time.

We work with organizations to:

- Identify and prioritize the workforce challenges that deserve your focus
- Develop leaders with research-based competencies tied to real expectations
- Align talent systems so your investments produce lasting results



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