

Developing Talent

An Interview with Ellyn Shook,
Senior Managing Director-Human Resources, Accenture

EDITORS' NOTE *Since joining Accenture in 1988, Ellyn Shook has held a number of leadership positions. Today, she is accountable for key Talent Acquisition, Talent Development, Learning, Employee Total Rewards, and Executive Compensation initiatives, as well as for all Human Resources activities related to Accenture's mergers & acquisitions and joint ventures. She focuses on strategies and programs to support expansion of the company's geographic footprint in emerging markets and is Co-Lead for large workforce transformation programs for senior leadership, such as Leadership Careers. She spent two years working in the company's Paris office and is a member of Accenture's Global Leadership Council, HR Executive Leadership Team, and M&A steering committee. Shook also serves on the executive committee of the board of directors of Junior Achievement of the Upper Midwest and on the advisory board of the Women in Business at Carlson School of Management at the University of Minnesota.*



Ellyn Shook

COMPANY BRIEF *Accenture (www.accenture.com) is a global management consulting, technology services, and outsourcing company that combines unparalleled experience, comprehensive capabilities across all industries and business functions, and extensive research on the world's most successful companies. With over 259,000 people serving clients in more than 120 countries, Accenture collaborates with clients to help them become high-performance businesses and governments.*

What has made Accenture so effective at attracting senior talent?

The answer lies in the diversity of opportunities we offer. We have a highly innovative careers model – Leadership Careers – that recognizes and rewards the development of specialized skills and contributions aligned with an executive's specific role.

It also helps that our executives have the opportunity to play a key role in transforming companies, organizations or communities around the world and that they are part of a global leadership team with an expansive set of skills, educational backgrounds, and geographic experiences.

One thing that sets our model apart is that our people can reach the highest levels of leadership at Accenture by becoming world-class practitioners who deliver specialized skills to clients. We capitalize

on industry expertise and a broad range of capabilities – from technology and analytics to outsourcing across a variety of corporate functions.

Is it challenging to find local talent in emerging areas?

We focus on understanding the specific skills and requirements that are necessary to be successful at Accenture. At the same time, local recruiting teams work with the global team to leverage best practices and share expertise. To address specific market needs, we couple our understanding of what it takes to be

successful with a very robust training and development program that is important for our entry-level employees as well as our most senior leaders. Last year alone, we invested more than \$850 million in employee training and professional development.

In today's technology-driven world, how do you ensure that your people prioritize client relationships?

I have a perfect example of this: With our managing director from the United Arab Emirates, I recently co-hosted a school for 500 of our managing directors from around the world. We offered plenary sessions with world-renowned speakers as well as Accenture board members, all of whom gave their views on the importance of being client-centric. There was also a week-long client simulation in which people practiced their deal-shaping and negotiation skills and their relationship building skills, and worked on their ability to lead and inspire our people.

How critical is it that your workforce mirrors the diversity of your client base?

Our people need to mirror the faces of our clients. We serve clients in 120 countries and we constantly develop our people to ensure that we are on top of our game. To help them be successful, we take our diverse people through local training and bring them together at our global training centers around the world to ensure that we are developing talent from the bottom up and the top down.

Our chief leadership officer spends a significant part of his time making sure we have the environment necessary to help a diverse staff succeed in our organization.

In order to be an effective HR function, how do you engage your local business leaders?

I spend the majority of my time working with our local HR and business leaders to understand where their businesses are headed. Our people are key to our differentiation in the market place

and we strive to have the right person in the right role in the right place at the right time. Doing that successfully requires close collaboration with our local leaders. I help enable Accenture's success in part by looking out over a longer time horizon and predicting where we need talent, how much talent we're going to need, and how we're going to either grow or hire our talent from other sources.

What opportunities exist for women within the firm?

The more than 90,000 women around the globe at Accenture deliver high performance every day, so we work to provide an environment and culture that empowers them as individuals and that allows them to define their personal approaches to success.

Our women's theme, called "Defining success. Your way," reflects our approach to making sure that we're offering individual women the tools and resources they need. One of the areas that has grown over time is our mentoring program – I have personally been a beneficiary of it.

We also just marked our ninth annual celebration of International Women's Day, with events in hundreds of locations around the world and a webinar that was available to all our people.

Additionally, we customize our training for women through courses like "Maximizing Performance – Women and Client Centricity" and "Developing High Performing Women." We also offer uncoupled resource groups like the Accenture Women's Network, which provides a global online resource for helping our women create local impact.

How critical is corporate responsibility to the culture of the firm? Is it essential in order to attract top talent?

Absolutely. Our people – and the next generation – want to be part of a company that is committed to corporate citizenship or social responsibility programs. Our corporate citizenship initiative, called Skills to Succeed, leverages a key competence of our human capital-intensive business: training. Skills to Succeed is about developing people so that they achieve higher levels of performance. We work with nonprofit partners around the world on efforts aimed at doing just that.

We rigorously track our results in that program carefully, and in 2010, we set a lofty goal of helping 250,000 people by 2015 acquire the skills to get a job or build a business. We surpassed that goal last year, so our new goal is to reach 500,000 people by 2015. ●