TOTAL TALENT MANAGEMENT: A UNIFIED WORKFORCE MODEL FOR EMPLOYEES AND CONTRACTORS

Interview by **Roberta Lospinoso**

English translation of the original article published in The Procurement magazine.

Total talent management (TTM) is a new model for overcoming the traditional fragmentation between employees and the external workforce, both in finding talent and in subsequently allocating it to projects. It brings together, in a single system, levers that are still often managed separately, such as talent acquisition, subcontractor management, scheduling and bench management.

In this interview, Angelo Centola, Chief Procurement Officer and Group Organization Director at Fincons Group, explains how organisational silos in this area create structural inefficiencies but also significant opportunities for savings, particularly in IT consultancies characterised by highly variable demand and high staff turnover across projects. The approach aims to improve flexibility, enabling a more effective response to talent demand, whether it is rising or falling.

Total talent management emerged in response to the fragmentation between employee and external workforce management. When and in what context did you begin to develop this idea?

I began developing the idea of Total Talent Management in 2014, when I was put in charge of optimising purchasing processes and rationalising the supplier base at an IT multinational, where I spent much of my career before joining Fincons.

In that context, my process optimisation work fitted into a well-established structural dynamic, in which the business's demand for new resources was met by two functions operating in parallel: talent acquisition for employees and procurement for third parties. Managing the two channels side by side revealed opportunities for greater integration and exposed inefficiencies and duplication within both procurement and HR. Above all, though, it highlighted the need for a unified view of skills requirements.

The high degree of specialisation and functional complexity typical of a large multinational made it challenging to



Angelo Centola
Chief procurement officer and Group organization director
Fincons Group

build a fully integrated model.

At Fincons, which I joined in 2022, I found an agile, entrepreneurial environment that encourages collaboration between business functions, free of the barriers of rigid organisational logic, which allowed me to turn an idea into a real operating model.

Could you describe what Total Talent Management is and which processes and activities should be governed in an integrated way, as opposed to traditional talent acquisition or workforce planning initiatives?

Total Talent Management is not a new concept in the literature. Ten years ago, at a conference organised by Staffing Industry Analysts in London, I had the chance to compare notes with professionals working on these issues.

However, that vision was still limited to integrating talent acquisition and subcontractor management alone. I have always believed that the problem was broader in scope. These functions look outwards, but another becomes essential once you widen the perspective to 360 degrees and include people already in the company in the search process: scheduling, which governs the assignment and planning of internal resources across activities and projects.

The critical point is that these three areas are normally run by different teams that rarely coordinate with one another. This creates fragmentation, potential inefficiency and the loss of significant opportunities.

The real distinguishing feature of Total Talent Management is therefore the ability of these three functions to govern the many available sourcing channels (Figure 1) as a single integrated system, improving responsiveness to external demand, increasing flexibility in managing business downturns and reducing waste across the entire value chain.

For IT consultancies, which are characterised by project peaks and highly variable demand, what inefficiencies can a Total talent management model resolve, and what concrete benefits can it generate?

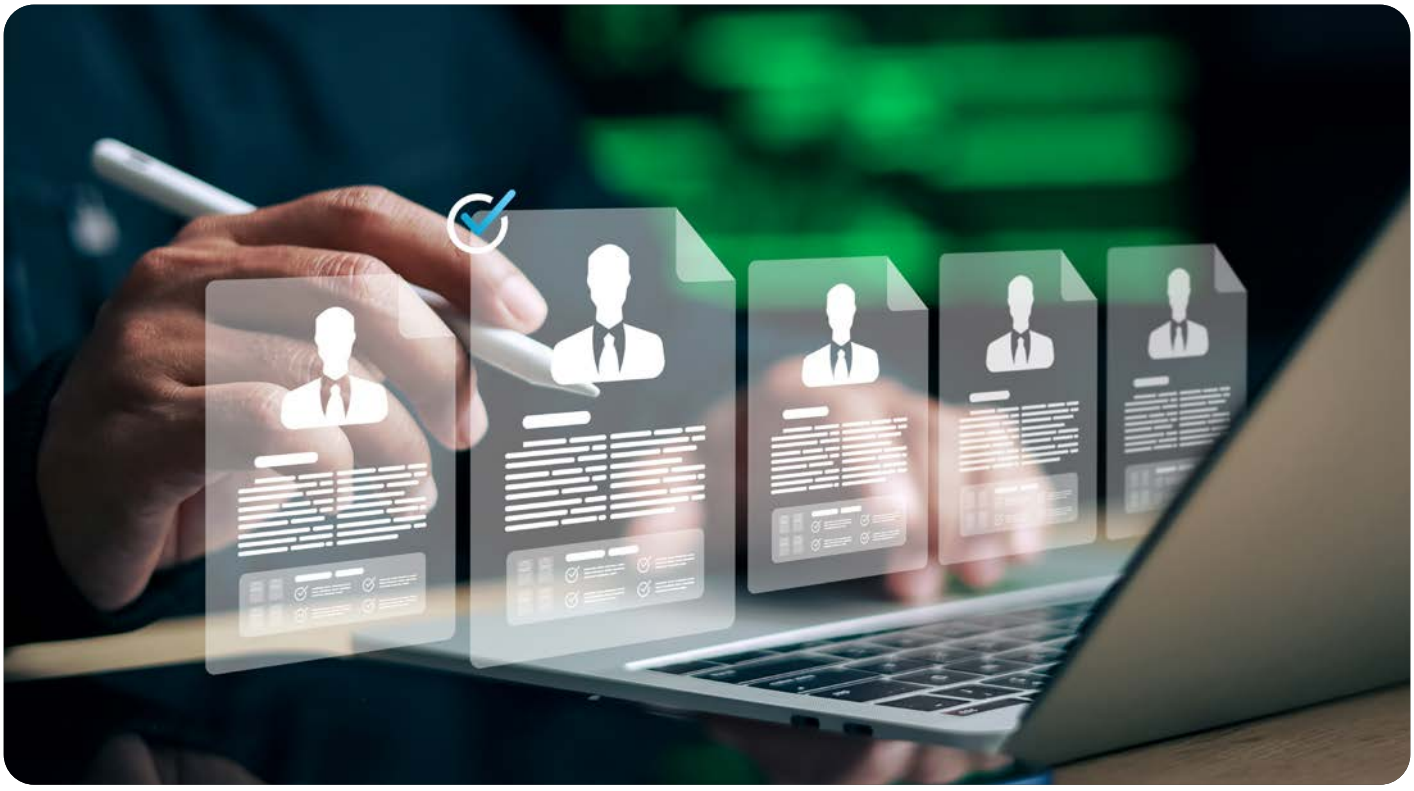
In IT consultancies, where people are the main asset, the core business is effectively a "human supply chain": professionals are identified on the market, contracted and then allocated to projects sold to clients. This model has so far been little explored in the literature, especially compared with the extensive body of research on logistics and supply chains for goods and materials.

The lack of a dedicated culture around the subject means that a number of inefficiencies go unaddressed, even though they are very real. Talent acquisition and procurement frequently end up working on the same requirement without coordination, creating duplication and waste.

Figure 1



For every resource request from the business, TTM responds by launching a search across a wide range of integrated sourcing channels.



In addition, managing the channels separately produces avoidable costs, often linked to searches that might prove unnecessary with full visibility when resources are scheduled to be released from internal projects. Another example of the benefits of using the various levers together concerns the management of demand peaks. Here it becomes possible to combine talent management methods, with a significant impact on costs and timescales, for example by moving internal resources onto new market opportunities while simultaneously launching searches for their replacements. The same applies to an unexpected drop in business volumes, which can be handled by terminating third-party contracts early on other projects to make room for the internal resources affected by the downturn.

TTM requires strong integration between different departments, processes and tools. What role do the various functions involved play, and which governance model do you think is most effective in making this approach sustainable over time?

Governance is the most complex issue, because a lack of dialogue and integration can occur not only between functions but often within the same function too.

To make this model sustainable, two fundamental elements are needed.

The first is cultural: the functions must be willing to give up some of their autonomy in order to work in a truly integrated way.

The second is technological: you need to put the right infrastructure in place, even though no single solution on the market covers all the processes.

From a corporate governance perspective, two alternative models can be adopted: creating a unified division that brings all the functions concerned under single leadership, or developing robust, well-defined processes capable of governing the entire flow end to end, regardless of organisational structure.

At Fincons, we initially took the first route, setting up an integrated division to speed up adoption of the model. Then, once the operating mechanisms had stabilised, we gradually shifted towards a process-based approach, ensuring the model's sustainability and scalability over time.

How are you taking this journey forward at Fincons, and you already seen tangible benefits?

At Fincons, we have embarked on a gradual integration process, aimed at overcoming the fragmentation of processes and systems. Along the way, we have connected the HR and procurement systems, digitalised scheduling, integrated the Vendor Management System and begun implementing SAP SuccessFactors as our core HR platform. This is a first step towards a more cohesive digital ecosystem that supports the



integrated management of human capital and suppliers.

In parallel, we are building a data platform that aggregates data from the various systems, providing a unified view to support decision-making. Although it is not yet fully operational, this approach has already delivered concrete benefits thanks to the integration of information flows. Since 2023 we have achieved annual savings of around €3 million, largely from a greater ability to meet the demand for new resources to staff new projects.

In this way, we have significantly reduced one of the main problems facing IT consultancies: missed revenues, i.e. the loss of new business opportunities for lack of available resources. The economic benefits have also been significant thanks to ending relationships with third parties in favour of allocating employees who are free of project commitments. Finally, integrating the processes has made it possible to drastically reduce duplicate or unnecessary activities, improve bench management and scale back the overall effort involved in finding talent.

How can artificial intelligence be a decisive accelerator of Total Talent Management? And looking ahead, what will be the main challenges for procurement in managing the external workforce?

AI is a fundamental accelerator of the TTM model. Today, many processes still rely on rigid systems in which managers have to enter structured requests that are often incomplete or imprecise, leading to constant back-and-forth between the business and HR/procurement.

Moreover, profile searching still relies largely on recruiters working manually on tools such as LinkedIn, which takes significant effort and scales poorly. AI could radically change these processes, for example by introducing natural-language interaction. Managers will be able to state their need directly, and the system will interpret it, refine it and match it in real time against the availability of internal and external resources.

In future, AI will be able to draw on the company's entire information base and quickly suggest alternative solutions based on how the skills required match those of available resources, across all sourcing channels (employees, talent pipeline, subcontractors, freelancers, etc.). AI will not replace decision-making but will make it faster and better informed, leaving the final evaluation of the options to specialists.

As for the next challenges for procurement, the central issue will be the growing flexibility demanded by the labour market.

The boundary between employee and contractor as we know it today will gradually blur, with the market moving towards engagement models defined by the lifespan of projects. In this scenario, procurement will have to undergo a professional and cultural transformation, taking on an increasingly leading role in talent sourcing alongside HR.