

# Talent Management Innovations to Be Explored at the 2016 Professional Development Institute

by *Melanie Priddy*

Fall brings many things: cooler weather, grocery stores filled with tempting treats, Starbucks' delicious pumpkin spice latte, and, last but not least, excitement for the annual Professional Development Institute (PDI) in Washington, DC.

This year's PDI, to be held December 1–2 and sponsored by NALP and ALI CLE in collaboration with the Professional Development Consortium, is an opportunity for law school and law firm professionals to learn about current trends in lawyer professional development and explore key issues facing the legal industry. This year's conference is bookended by two exciting plenaries that focus on a word that we are all familiar with but are now challenged more than ever to explore: innovation.

Thursday morning's plenary, "Innovations That Inspire Action: Ideas for Talent Management from Outside the Legal Industry," will highlight some of the exciting new approaches that our colleagues in other industries are applying to their talent and performance management models. Led by Dani Johnson, Vice President of Learning & Development Research at Bersin by Deloitte, this plenary will do more than inspire us in our quests to optimize the talent development of our lawyers and law students. It will also provide an array of practical suggestions for attainable ways that we can move the needle forward.

Much of this information will be pulled from Bersin by Deloitte's *Predictions Report*. This annual research-based report, published since 2004, is full of forecasts on the biggest changes in lead-

ership, talent practices, human resources, and business trends. For 2016, some of its key forecasts relate to the evolution and availability of technology, the continued importance of transparency, diversity and inclusion as a business strategy, and year-round engagement of our workforce.

Within these key points, Johnson will focus on four topics that are near and dear to any PD professional's heart — evaluations, feedback, engagement, and diversity — and how they are impacted by these trends. Just one example is how the importance of technology and transparency for regularized feedback have combined to create the growing trend of eliminating annual performance reviews (e.g., Adobe, Deloitte, Accenture) and replacing them with feedback applications (e.g., General Electric). How can we, as PD professionals, take these exciting innovations from outside industries and apply them to ours? Our opening plenary will give us some ideas.

Friday's plenary provides a nice contrast, offering insight and overviews of the different innovative actions that our firms and clients are taking *within* the legal industry. Titled "Innovating Talent Management in Law Firms: What's New, What's Different, and What's Gone," our second plenary is led by a host of seasoned PD Professionals: Terri Mottershead of Mottershead Consulting, Ida Abbott of Ida Abbott Consulting, Susan Manch of Norton Rose Fulbright, and Scott Westfahl from Harvard Law School's Executive Education Program.

This session will be a facilitated panel discussion that addresses a series of topics related to what has changed in talent management in the legal industry and our response to those changes. These changes include the role that lawyers and other professionals play; how we recruit and whom we recruit; and our approach to promotion and compensation. Keeping pace in what we do is key to our success as PD professionals and to the success of our firms.

Having an agile workforce has become an asset that many firms tout to demonstrate their responsiveness to shifting client needs. How can firms offer a quality-tested, low-cost workforce that can expand and contract depending upon client needs? Are there opportunities to respond to this need and give lawyers the flexibility they desire while still having them maintain a relationship to the firm? And, if we are moving toward hiring a workforce that has fewer permanent employees, does reviewing a lawyer only once a year make sense? With the pace of legal practice shifting quickly and

millennials responding to more frequent, contemporaneous feedback, perhaps we need to shift our approach to more coaching, mentoring, and sponsorship that can lead to more immediate corrective actions. These topics and many more will be covered in Friday's interactive plenary.

I hope that this piques your interest in our exciting PDI plenaries. Please plan to attend and expect to go back to your firm with tools, innovative ideas, and takeaways to use in your own PD department. For more information on the full PDI schedule and to register, go to [www.nalp.org/events](http://www.nalp.org/events).

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