



Sana™

Navigating the Great Talent Challenge

Roundtable
White Paper

Introduction

Over the last decade, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has increasingly looked to startups as important drivers of GDP. But as the pressure to expand and scale increases, so too does the pressure to find and retain the best talent. According to WEF's 'Mastering Hypergrowth' report, 52% of companies in hypergrowth (>40% CAGR) and a staggering 68% of companies in growth (10-40% CAGR) see talent as their greatest challenge.

To find out more about this Great Talent Challenge and how to solve it, we brought together a group of executives from some of Stockholm's fastest-growing startups.



Competing people priorities

Despite coming from different industries and business contexts, the startup executives we spoke to all shared similar Talent priorities and challenges:

01 Accelerating company onboarding to increase the productivity of new hires. If you hired 50% of your workforce within the last nine months, the difference between employees being productive after one month instead of three becomes a huge parameter for business performance.

“ We plan to onboard over 200 new employees this year; that's 30% of our workforce. So getting people up to speed as quickly as possible is vital. Imagine if somebody could be productive in one month instead of three?

02 Creating or maintaining company culture. The faster the pace of hiring, the harder it is to cement common beliefs, behaviors, and values.

03 Retaining existing employees while hiring new ones. With top performers most likely to leave organizations sooner, it's vital to focus on sustaining and improving employee satisfaction.

All executives agreed that these three priorities often compete with one another. Despite this challenge, everyone had insightful and actionable tips for how to drive progress in each area.



“ Recruiting senior managers externally often causes productivity issues because it impacts the entire team.

The challenges with external hiring are well known. External managers often experience initial distrust from their new organization. They might also have to unlearn several practices that brought them success in their previous role. Consider investing in internal hiring instead:

“ We found that promoting internal career journeys and manager promotions vastly improved our productivity measures. We're much less exposed to misrecruitments when we hire more junior people, and 'home-grown' managers typically have a much smoother transition to a senior role than external recruits.



“ In the early days, the founder is the culture, the heart of the company. But as you grow, it takes more than the founder to motivate people.

Startups eventually grow beyond their founders—a process that can be particularly tough on long-term employees who previously enjoyed close access to their most senior leader. To ensure a smooth transition, enable your employees find motivation elsewhere:

“ Having a clear structure for career development has helped us manage people's expectations but also set the requirements for success. It's been a great tool for our current stage, now that it's not as easy to talk to the CEO on a day-to-day basis.



Retention

Let your best talent experience multiple roles

“ Today's top talent wants to go on a journey—they want to try something new, perform, and move on.

The competition for the best tech talent is as fierce as ever, but one way to keep yours is by beating the external recruiters at their own game. Instead of expecting employees to have one career pathway at your company, create a culture in which your most curious people can experience multiple opportunities:

“ Many of our developers are passionate about learning and growing; they're also regularly receiving offers from external recruiters. So we've encouraged our managers to support that curiosity internally and create opportunities to switch between roles. It's helped us keep hold of some of our best people.

This article is based on insights generated from a roundtable discussion moderated by Aurore Belfrage, with participation from Linnea Bywall (Alva Labs), Julia Ferntoft (Anyfin), Maria Waddington (Epidemic Sound), Filip Lam (Klarna), Katrin Heveus (Klarna), Marina Hedman (Paradox Interactive), Peder Ribbing (Peltarion), and Anna Klingborg (Svea Solar).

