

January 2014

## Bridging Distance in the Talent Lifecycle

With advancements in technology and telecommunications, organizations big and small can now operate seamlessly from anywhere. This ability to work anywhere, and connect with people in all corners of the globe, has had a huge impact on how organizations find, develop, and retain the talent they need. HR leaders require a new understanding of how technology can help them bridge the geographic and demographic differences among their workforce. And organizations need to rethink their talent strategies to take full advantage of a broader talent pool. This paper will look at specific strategies for talent acquisition, learning and development, and engaging and retaining critical talent, along with the skills HR leaders of the future will require to implement them.

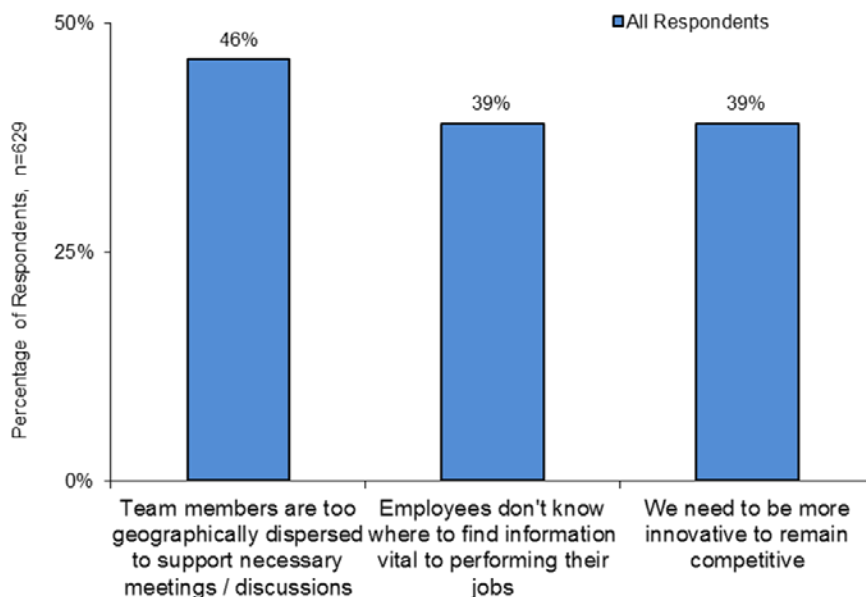
### Analyst Insight

Aberdeen's Insights provide the analyst's perspective on the research as drawn from an aggregated view of research surveys, interviews, and data analysis.

### The Challenge of Distance

Ever since Alexander Graham Bell first telephoned Mr. Watson, organizations have worked to harness the power of technology to help them communicate and collaborate across distance. Despite the advancements in technology, the challenges of distance, finding information, and fostering innovation to gain competitive advantage remain the key drivers behind collaboration efforts (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Distance Hinders Collaboration, Learning, and Innovation**



Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2014

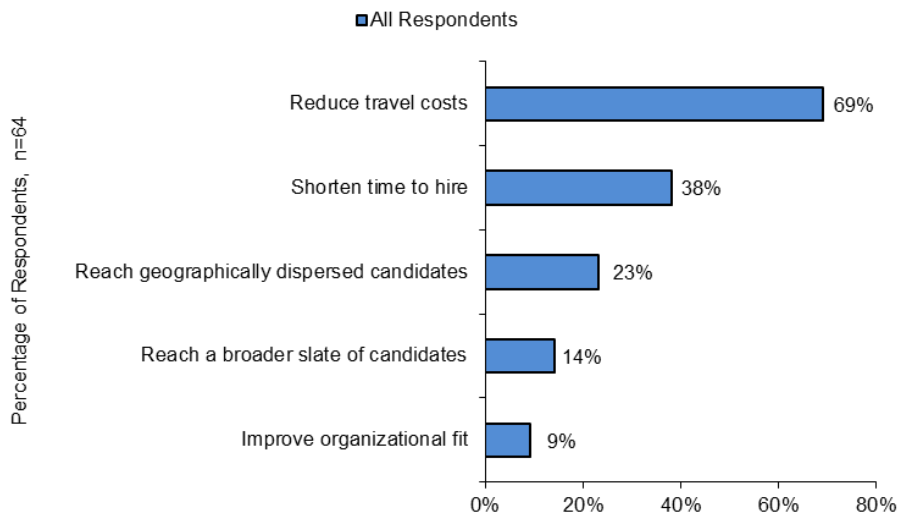
The good news is, advancements in Internet technology and the increasing ubiquity of high-speed, high bandwidth Internet connections have allowed organizations to begin to bridge this distance, and connect people to each other and to the information they require to execute and innovate.

Not only do businesses support email and file sharing, many also support instant messaging, and, increasingly, video communications across the Internet. Aberdeen’s recent Enterprise Social Collaboration study found that 54% of the responding organizations supported desktop file sharing and 42% supported video collaboration capability. Video is becoming increasingly important as its quality and accessibility rise. What used to be the stuff of science fiction — seeing others face-to-face across great distances instantly — is now part of how we conduct business. But as organizations begin to explore these technologies, they raise talent issues not only in terms of how individuals spend their time, but how talent decisions are made. In the following sections of this report, we will look at how collaboration tools and video specifically help organizations drive better results for talent acquisition, learning and development, and engaging and retaining key talent.

### **Talent Acquisition — Faster, Better, Cheaper**

The use of video tools for talent acquisition has been a hot topic in recent years. Aberdeen’s March 2013 report on [Video Talent Acquisition](#) found that 32% of organizations were investing in video interviewing, compared to 21% of organizations in 2012. And Figure 2 below illustrates some of the reasons why.

**Figure 2: Talent Acquisition — Why Video Tools Matter**



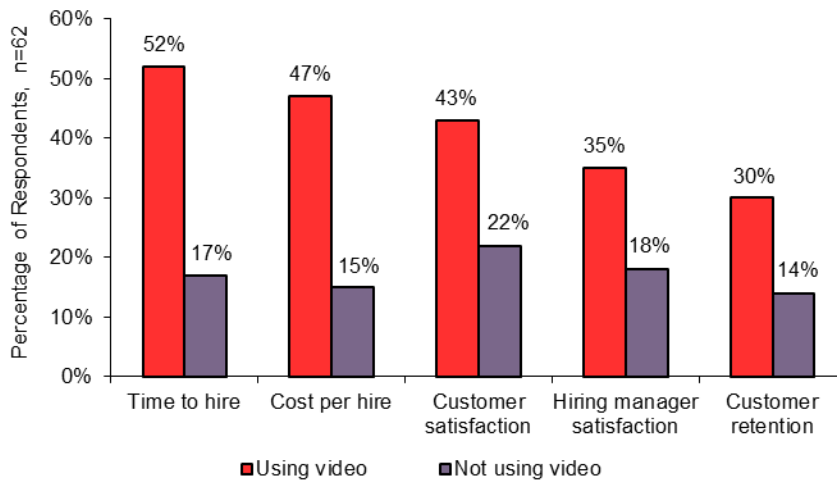
Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2014

Talent acquisition is a critical process for organizations. It is an important inflection point in which organizations have the ability to ensure that they have the talent required not only to execute on today’s business strategy,

but to lead the organization into the future. But it is also a costly process — in terms of real dollars and the time required to interview and onboard new talent. Tools that can help organizations make better decisions around hiring are of keen interest today.

There are two important sides to the video talent acquisition coin. One is to provide hiring managers and other hiring decision-makers with the most complete picture of a candidate. Finding ways to connect these individuals more quickly, and in the least costly way, is important, while preserving the opportunity for candidates to make their case and connect. And, video talent acquisition tools can also bring together hiring decision-makers to help them collaborate on the decision itself. As shown in Figure 2, organizations are looking to video tools to reduce travel costs and hiring cycle time, while also casting a wider net for talent. This is the Holy Grail of recruiting — hire better quality talent, do it faster, and bring down the cost. As illustrated in Figure 3, video delivers on this promise, yielding 35% greater year-over-year improvement in time to hire, 32% greater reduction in cost per hire, and a host of other improvements.

**Figure 3: The Impact of Video in Talent Acquisition**



Year-over-year Improvement  
Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2014

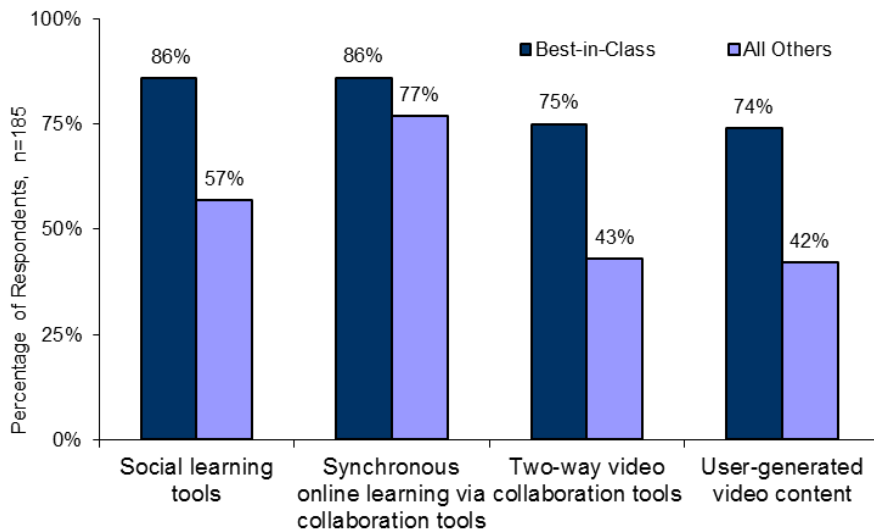
By bringing people together more easily, organizations harness the power of collaborative decision-making, and make the difficult activity of bringing together candidates and hiring managers easier and more effective. As organizations struggle to find and hire top talent, their ability to reach out to top candidates quickly no matter where they live, and create a positive candidate experience, may give them the edge when it comes to hiring the best.

## Learning and Development — Consistency and Accessibility

Once individuals are hired into the organization, continuing to integrate them into the organization and supporting their learning and development are the critical next steps. During the onboarding process and on an ongoing basis, individuals must have access to subject matter experts and content that will help them do their job today and develop as future leaders.

Aberdeen’s October 2013 *Learning* study found that the number one strategy organizations pursue to support their learning efforts is to provide a more consistent development experience throughout the organization and at all career stages. Given the geographically dispersed nature of many organizations, this can be a challenge. But once again, collaboration tools, including video, help organizations overcome these barriers. Organizations realize that learning is important, but as much as half of the learning happening in organizations today was categorized as unstructured by survey respondents. Unstructured is defined as content that learners can access at will outside of prescribed learning courses, including video, chat with subject matter experts, social learning, etc. Technology plays a critical role in supporting this kind of unstructured learning, and top-performing companies (see sidebar) are getting on board with these technologies (Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Collaborative Tools for Learning Impact Performance**



Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2014

Technology can support unstructured learning by capturing and sharing information so that consistent messages are still delivered, even though they are consumed in multiple ways. Synchronous and asynchronous collaboration are important to support learning. But one interesting trend is also the rise of user-generated video content. Organizations realize that they are made up of many experts, and top-performing companies use collaboration and video creation tools to help record, archive, and make available this critical information. This is another advantage of collaboration

### Defining the Learning Best-in-Class

In its October 2013 Learning study, Aberdeen used three KPIs to distinguish the Best-in-Class (top 20% of aggregate performers) from the Industry Average (middle 50%) and Laggard (bottom 30%) organizations, with mean performance among the Best-in-Class as follows:

- √ 83% of employees received performance ratings of “exceeds performance expectations”
- √ 78% of key roles have one or more ready and willing successor
- √ 13% year-over-year improvement in revenue per full-time equivalent (FTE)

tools that not only support learning in the moment, but create a searchable archive for the future.

### **Engage and Retain — Building Relationships through New Ways of Working**

Shortage of key skills was the number one recruiting pressure in Aberdeen's September 2013 report, *Talent Acquisition 2013: Adapt Your Strategy or Fail*, cited by 64% of respondents, up from 55% in 2011. The top two pressures cited in Aberdeen's 2013 *Learning* study were the lack of leadership talent and the lack of key skill availability in the marketplace (cited by 50% and 39% of respondents, respectively). Clearly, good talent is hard to find, so your organization can't afford to lose them once you have them.

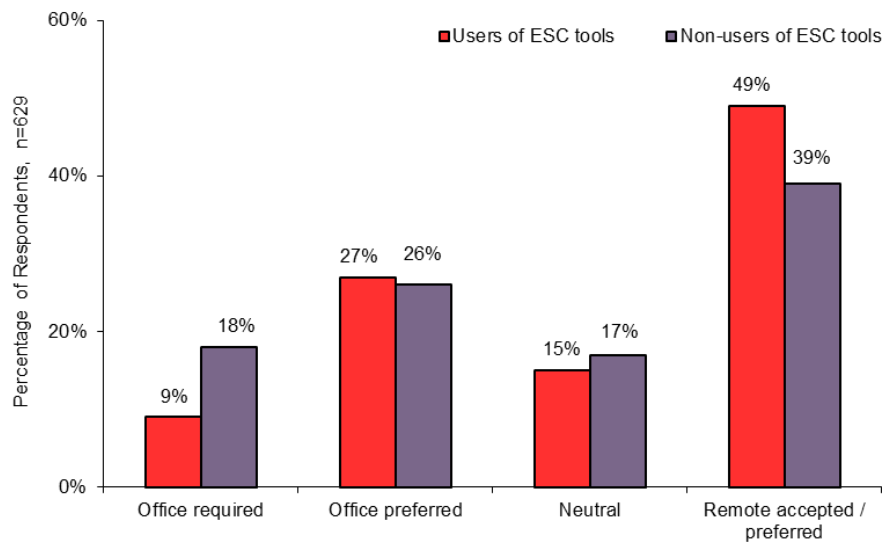
Given these shortages, organizations must not only cast a wide net when hiring, but be able to accommodate talent working from wherever they are. Organizations that have the systems and processes in place to support remote workers may retain a competitive advantage. By being able to go where the talent is, and effectively maintain productivity across the miles, they have more options in their arsenal to retain critical talent. Organizations with enterprise social collaboration (ESC — see sidebar) tools in place are 26% more likely (49% vs. 39%) to allow for remote workers (Figure 5).

**Definition: Enterprise Social Collaboration (ESC)**

For the purposes of this research, Aberdeen defines ESC as an organizational initiative where employees or partner organizations work together to accomplish business-related tasks, via user-generated (social) content creation and sharing.

Examples of enterprise social collaboration tools and processes include the use of instant messaging tools, employee profiles within a company intranet, shared knowledge bases, and internal user groups.

**Figure 5: Remote Teams with the Right Support Can Deliver Results**



Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2014

Organizations need to remain flexible without losing productivity, and ESC tools are one way to help them do that. And these organizations utilizing ESC tools see the benefit of supporting remote collaboration, with 12% greater on-time project completion rates (55% vs. 49%) than organizations

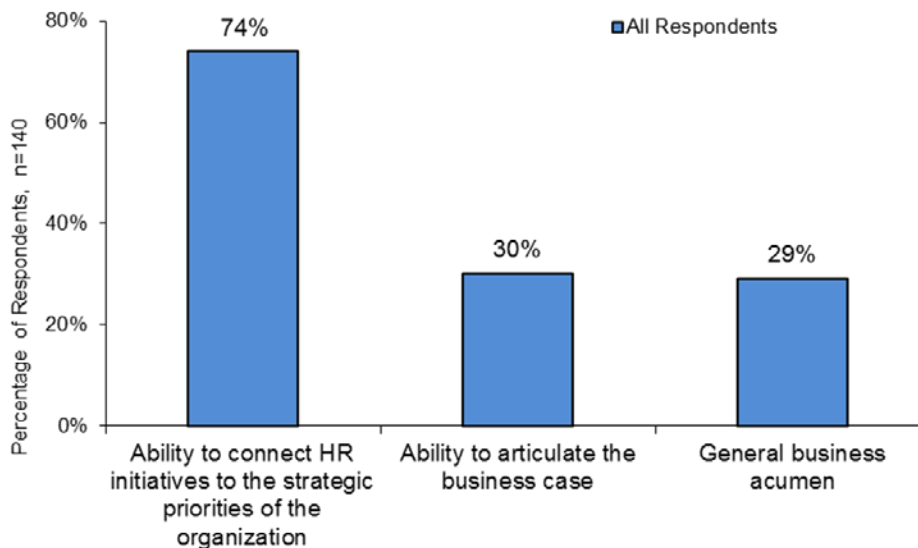
without such tools in place. As HR and talent leaders look to build the organizational design for their company, understanding how to support remote workers can be critical. Having strong tools in place to assist with enterprise collaboration can be the make-or-break difference between going after particular, geographically limited talent pools, and recruiting and retaining the talent required to support business strategy.

These tools can also help support retention. When a remote worker is hired, it can seem like a win-win. The individual gets to avoid the hassles of a geographic relocation, and often maybe working from a home office. And the organization gets great new talent. But it can be lonely out there, and managers may struggle with making connections with these new hires. Collaboration tools make it easier to stay in contact, and video tools can be extremely helpful in making the connection between colleagues. Using collaborative tools creatively can help sustain the advantage gained by organizations being able to hire talent wherever they may reside.

### **The HR Leader of the Future: Connecting the Business**

While there are many benefits to be gained from the use of social and video collaboration tools, this also represents a fundamental shift in how organizations operate. HR leaders may find themselves suddenly responsible for toolsets and policies designed to support these goals. And they may also be responsible for cultivating a new organizational culture that supports this type of technology-enabled collaboration. One thing is clear: no matter what HR leaders do in the future, they must do it with an eye on the business (Figure 6).

**Figure 6: The HR Leader of the Future is a Business Leader**



Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2014

Clearly, the HR leader of the future must be focused on the business — so supporting collaboration and communication to enable efficiency, effectiveness, and engagement is critical. And as the data has shown, helping to bring these tools to the business and supporting them has a significant impact on business results. Helping organizations hire better talent, on-board and develop them, and engage and retain them to continue to deliver results has a significant impact on business performance. Continuing to connect the dots between strategic priorities of the business and these important talent initiatives, supported by collaboration tools, is a great way for HR leaders to make their mark.

## Key Takeaways

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The geographic and demographic dispersion of organizations today presents a huge opportunity, as well as a huge challenge. Smart organizations leverage social collaboration tools to help them connect in real time, cultivate and archive insights, and connect in ways never before thought possible. Organizations looking to bridge the distance in their talent initiatives should keep in mind the following key points:

- **Collaborate and use video to cast a wide net for talent.** Organizations must go where the talent is, and creating a compelling and engaging candidate experience is critical. The use of tools like video talent acquisition can improve the quality, time, and cost to hire, and help organizations move quickly to get a return on their hiring investment.
- **Connect the dots with learning.** Learning is inherently a collaborative endeavor, and organizations must make sure that, no matter where talent resides, individuals have access to the subject matter experts and content required to do their job. Finding ways to connect and archive learning experiences will help organizations develop their future leadership talent.
- **Build the relationships that retain key talent.** Hiring talent wherever it resides is a critical first step to winning the talent war. But supporting this talent and making sure that they are integrated with the rest of the business is required for ongoing success. Helping individuals and managers connect with colleagues is critical to engaging and retaining the talent you need to move your business forward.

For more information on this or other research topics, please visit [www.aberdeen.com](http://www.aberdeen.com)

### Related Research

[Enterprise Social Collaboration: High-Power Teamwork for Better Sales Results](#); November 2013  
[Newbies to New Leaders: Closing Critical Skill Gaps with Learning](#); October 2013

[Enterprise Social Collaboration: The Collaborators' Advantage](#); October 2013  
[Talent Acquisition 2013: Adapt Your Strategy or Fail](#); September 2013

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