Talent Toolbox

THE TALENT TOOLBOX FRAMEWORK

A framework for building talent capability

The three areas, the progression model, and what a fractional Talent engagement delivers. A guide for HR leaders making the case for the work.

Fractional HR & Talent leadership
Calgary, Alberta

talenttoolbox.ca

WHAT IT IS

Executive Talent leadership, without the executive hire

Talent Toolbox is a fractional HR and Talent practice. You get the judgement and the track record of someone who has run the function at scale, for part of a week rather than all of it, and without carrying a full executive salary or waiting six months to hire one.

It is led by Alison Yarwood, who has spent twenty-five years inside enterprise Talent functions, accountable for the outcome rather than advising on it from outside. The work spans future skills, workforce transformation and leadership effectiveness: talent strategy, succession, leadership development, organizational change, AI adoption and Human and Organizational Performance.

The difference from a consultant is simple. I do the work, and the capability stays with your team when the engagement ends. You are left able to hold it without me.

RESULTS FROM THE WORK

20 to 200

Leaders covered by succession plans, 90% of critical roles supported

1,150 hrs

Productivity returned from a cross-functional AI pilot

591 risks

High-risk tasks identified, 21 critical risks controlled

25% faster

Time-to-hire, with onboarding streamlined by 35%

Figures from enterprise roles held at Trimac Transportation, ENMAX, Pembina Pipeline and Shaw Communications. Employment history, not clients of this practice.

THE FRAMEWORK

Three areas most organizations need at once

Most organizations need all three of these and have them spread across different people, or no one. The framework names them, so the work can be seen, prioritized and funded rather than left implicit.



Future skills

Knowing which skills the work will need next, and building them before the gap shows up as a vacancy.

Talent strategy · Workforce planning · Talent development · Recruiting · Talent analytics · Learning teams



Workforce transformation

Change that survives contact with the people who have to do the work differently.

Enterprise transformation · Org design · Operating models · Organizational effectiveness · AI adoption



Leadership effectiveness

Leaders who are ready before the role opens, and who learn from the work rather than blame it.

Leadership development · Succession · Human and Organizational Performance · Safety culture · Critical risk control

The three areas connect. A weakness in one is usually felt as a problem in another, which is why they are measured on one shared scale.

TALENT TOOLBOX PROGRESSION MODEL

One maturity scale, across all three areas

Every area sits somewhere on the same four steps, from Ad hoc to Strategic. It turns a vague sense of how things are going into a place on a map, and a place on a map into a direction to move. Most organizations are on Defined for the things that matter and do not know it, because a document feels like progress.

Ad hoc



It happens when something forces it. There is no clear owner, and it goes quiet once the pressure is off.

Defined



It exists on paper. There is a document, a list or a process, but paper is mostly where it stays.

Managed



Someone owns it and it moves on a rhythm. It gets reviewed, resourced and acted on, not just filed.

Strategic



It runs in front of the need instead of behind it, tied to where the business is going, and it holds without heroics.

Width carries the meaning, not colour alone, so the model reads in greyscale and to a colourblind reader. A free assessment places you on this scale in about ten minutes.

WHAT A FRACTIONAL ENGAGEMENT DELIVERS

Example: Leadership effectiveness

A worked example of what an engagement in one area looks like, from the first read to what your team is left holding. The shape is the same for any of the three areas.

Where you are now

The engagement opens by placing your leadership bench on the progression model, from the evidence rather than from a self-rating. A common starting point:

Ad hoc



Succession is a conversation that happens when someone resigns.

Defined You are here



There is a succession spreadsheet and a competency framework. Both were accurate the quarter they were built.

Managed the goal for this engagement



Named successors have development plans that are actually worked, reviewed on a cadence, and updated when people move.

Strategic



The pipeline is planned against where the business is heading, and the bench holds when someone leaves.

EXAMPLE: LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVENESS

From Defined to Managed, in a first quarter

The plan

1

Name the roles that would hurt to lose

Not the most senior roles, the most critical. For each, who could cover it in a crisis and who could hold it in two years. The blanks are the plan.

2

Turn the spreadsheet into worked development plans

For every named successor, a specific plan tied to the gap, owned by their manager, reviewed on a cadence rather than once a year.

3

Make readiness visible to leaders

A simple, trusted view of coverage and readiness for critical roles, so the board question stops being a project every time it is asked.

What your team is left holding

- A named successor, or a deliberate plan to build one, for every critical role.
- Development plans that are worked, not filed, and owned inside the business.
- A readiness view leaders trust, and the habit of keeping it current.
- The capability to run it without me. The engagement leaves capacity behind, not a dependency.

Illustrative of the work. In one enterprise Talent function, succession coverage moved from 20 leaders to 200 with 90% of critical roles supported. Employment history, not a client of this practice.

MAKING THE CASE

How to fund the work

The cost of getting leadership succession wrong is quiet until it is sudden. A critical role opens, there is no one ready, and the organization spends six months and a search fee arriving where a plan would have had it start. A fractional engagement is the cheaper side of that trade.

Three ways to engage, so the budget fits the problem

Embedded

One to two days a week, inside a live transformation or restructure. Continuity, without a full-time salary.

Advisory

A day or two a month. Senior judgement to pressure-test decisions before you make them.

Project

Fixed scope, fixed price. A defined deliverable with a date, built with your team and handed over.

The budget line

A written quote in two business days, scoped to your goals, so you have a fixed number to take into a budget conversation.

What to take to your leadership

- The one area that is the constraint, named from the free assessment rather than from opinion.
- Where you sit on the progression model today, and the specific step this buys.
- A fixed quote and an end date, framed against the cost of the vacancy or the failed hire it prevents.
- What your team keeps afterward, so it reads as capability built rather than spend consumed.

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THE NEXT STEP

Start with a free read of where you stand

Take the free assessment to find which part of your talent lifecycle is the constraint, then book a thirty minute discovery call. No material to prepare, and if the answer is that you do not need me, that is a useful outcome too.

Book a discovery call **Take the free assessment**

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