

Barry Mansfield: Ford has been praised for the support and commitment it shows towards its trainees. How would you sum up the company's ethos when it comes to managing people – what's so different about it?

Dave Mack: People are our real sustainable competitive advantage. There's a very strong commitment to people

development and it is how we, as a finance function, contribute to superior business results. We are the business partners for the operating team. That's a philosophy adhered to across the organisation and something you'll always hear from us, whether you're talking to somebody in the US, Europe or South America. I think it's also important to emphasise that we are a global finance

function. We're not restricted to the UK. That's something that helps us when we're looking at some of the senior management roles, and the succession planning involved in that area.

How is Ford now managing the process of identifying and preparing suitable employees to replace the key players in finance as their terms come to an end?

Dave Mack and Terry Archer of car giant Ford, CIMA's 2007 Employer of the Year, talk to Barry Mansfield about finding the right people in the right place, at the right time.

Next in line



DM: We benefit from having a strong pool of talent not only in Europe but also across the globe. Having an effective development framework is very important to us – a good example being our individual development planning, which includes an annual organisational review, where management reviews every single finance person within Ford of Europe, ensuring the entire team's development needs are taken into consideration. We also have succession planning at all levels. Finance has around 1,200 people in Ford of Europe so you need a robust process to enable you to do that.

Terry Archer: Ford also has personnel development committees who meet on a regular basis to phase people into new positions and plan moves for people. At each level of the organisation there is a team managing this function, which meets

cover similar roles - people don't have to wait for somebody to move on in their career just to get the opportunity to try out a particular role. It is really about getting the right person in the right place, at the right time. I think that captures our philosophy very well.

But it's still more common now for larger organisations to turn to outsiders when replacing a senior manager?

DM: My own perception is people are no longer staying with the same company for long periods of time, and that's true not just of finance but also right across the board. Ford typically develops people from within, but there's no doubt that there are people with a history outside the organisation who can bring valuable experience. The most obvious example that comes to mind is Alan Mullaly, our current CEO, coming in from

'It's true that it's hard having so many stakeholders in a large company. But I think we all feel accountable and empowered to do the right thing for the business.'

regularly. So it's an established routine and not something that can fall off the radar. Together with the management, these groups work to make sure people's objectives have been deployed and that they've followed up on development opportunities.

And would you say the scale and range of your company gives you more options when it comes to training and personal development?

DM: What helps us is that, as an automotive manufacturer, we have a very broad range of disciplines that the finance function gets involved in. Examples include accounting, product development, marketing and sales, purchasing and profit analysis. If you think about the processes that come together to manufacture and sell a vehicle, it's very complex, and we have finance and business partners in every single one of those areas.

People who work for smaller companies may feel that it's necessary to hop from organisation to organisation in the search for new or different experiences. But if you work at a larger company like Ford you can go through those experiences without having to leave. There are also multiple opportunities to

Boeing. So yes, people from other industries can bring a fresh perspective and help you to work towards becoming globally competitive. Ford is lucky that we have a global pool of people to consider in ensuring we have the right person for the job.

What personal qualities does a company like Ford look for when determining backups for senior positions in the finance function?

TA: Ford likes to talk about its Leadership Behaviours, which we use in our recruitment processes, our internal development processes and appraisals, and which effectively boil down to three key areas. The first is flawless execution. We have a passion for excellence in terms of the person's business acumen, technical ability, commitment to quality and courage. Does this person question the status quo? Secondly, it's about relationships. How do they develop their employees and their teams? How do they foster teamwork and connect with their customers? The third is integrity and how the person behaves. Are they demanding the truth, doing the right thing and

CIMA award winners

In December 2007, Ford was declared employer of the year for management accountants by the profession's chartered institute, CIMA.

CIMA pointed to Ford's successful record of training employees – there are over 100 employees studying at various stages, as well as over 100 passed finalists, associates and fellows employed around the globe, including North and South America, Europe and Asia Pacific.

The Institute also highlighted Ford trainees' exceptional exam results and 89% pass rate, compared with the national average of 57%.

promoting diversity? These are the key leadership behaviours that drive a business forward.

So what exactly constitutes diversity in finance management?

DM: We've had a European finance diversity council since 2000, which is led by our senior managers within finance. They were very active in developing new initiatives around diversity, including work-life integration (i.e. wider use of telecommuting and part time working). We've also developed and run internally work-life balance workshops. People management isn't about developing people to work 24 hours a day.

Diversity isn't just about nationality. It's about how you integrate flexible working policies, external policies in terms of corporate citizenship, and building a respectful and inclusive environment. Talk of diversity can become very narrowly focused sometimes.

Is there much exchange between your different country operations as part of the development process?

DM: It's very common, yes, particularly when the developmental experiences are not available at a particular location. You may have people in Ford of Europe who'll have the opportunity to go and see how the corporate HQ works. Even within Europe there's a lot of movement across Britain and Germany, and finance are represented in our National Sales Companies all around Europe.

What is the secret to fostering a culture of accountability and responsibility in such a large organisation?

TA: It all comes down to flawless execution, communication and integrity. If you build your people and skillsets around those qualities, you can overcome the mentality of 'It's not my problem, it's somebody else's remit.' Ford has a well established process of aligning everyone's objectives. It starts with the Ford or Europe Scorecard and it then cascades through the functions and all levels of the organisation ensuring that everyone is aligned. It's true that it's hard having so many stakeholders in a large company. But I think we all feel accountable and empowered to do the right thing for the business.

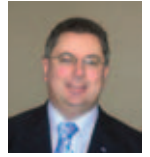
How have you benefited from your CIMA Development partnership?

DM: When we applied, we realised the framework CIMA uses in its development cycle fits in very well with Ford's processes, meaning we only had to make minor changes to become compliant. The upshot is that we can use our existing framework to meet compliance for continuous professional development, which is a big selling point for people when they are looking to join the firm. We've been closely involved with CIMA for just shy of 20 years. We have close to 100 students currently studying, so it's a very large program. It's effective for establishing the fundamentals and gives a solid grounding for people from different backgrounds, so it's proven to be a very powerful tool. ■

'People management is about getting the right person in the right place, at the right time. I think that captures our philosophy very well.'

Dave Mack

Dave Mack, Manager of Revenue Process Development within the finance function at Ford, joined the company in 1988. In the UK, he has held a range of positions across various functions including product development and marketing and sales, and most recently spent three years as purchase controller for Ford Europe, based in Germany, returning to the UK in the middle of 2007. He is a fellow of CIMA and chaired Ford's CIMA steering committee for four years until 2007.



Terry Archer

Since joining Ford in 1995, Terry Archer has held a variety of positions, including finance positions in accounting, manufacturing, marketing and sales and product development. He has also gained international experience from working in Germany and Turkey. He has chaired Ford's CIMA steering committee since 2007.

