

QUIET HIRING RECONCEPTUALIZED: INTERNAL TALENT MARKETPLACES AND THE FUTURE OF STRATEGIC WORKFORCE PLANNING

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Abstract

This article reconceptualizes quiet hiring as a strategic approach to workforce management supported by internal talent marketplaces (ITMs) and strategic workforce planning (SWP). As organizations face increasing pressure to adapt to rapid technological change and talent shortages, traditional hiring models are becoming less effective. Using a narrative review methodology, the study synthesizes existing literature on quiet hiring, ITMs, and skills-based workforce strategies. The findings suggest that quiet hiring, when supported by AI-driven platforms, can evolve from an ad hoc practice into a structured mechanism for internal talent deployment. ITMs enable real-time skills matching, enhance workforce agility, and improve employee career mobility. However, challenges related to governance, transparency, and equity remain critical considerations. The study highlights the importance of integrating ITMs into SWP processes to support data-driven decision-making and scenario planning. It also emphasizes the need for organizational readiness, including capability development and ethical oversight. Overall, the article contributes to both theory and practice by offering a strategic framework for leveraging internal talent in a rapidly changing work environment.

Keywords: *quiet hiring, internal talent marketplaces, strategic workforce planning, skills-based organization, workforce agility, AI in HR*

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of the modern workforce are undergoing significant transformation driven by technological advancement, economic uncertainty, and shifting employee expectations. Organizations are increasingly required to operate with greater agility, adapting quickly to changing market demands and talent shortages (Serenko, 2023). Traditional models of hiring and workforce planning, which rely heavily on external recruitment and fixed job roles, are becoming less sustainable. Instead, there is a growing emphasis on flexibility, skills-based deployment, and internal mobility. These evolving dynamics are reshaping how organizations think about talent utilization and strategic workforce management (Georgiadou et al., 2025). Within this context, the concept of “quiet hiring” has emerged as a pragmatic response to talent gaps without relying on formal recruitment processes. Quiet hiring refers to the practice of fulfilling organizational needs by reallocating existing employees, expanding roles, or assigning temporary responsibilities (Chowdhury et al., 2024). This approach allows organizations to address immediate skill shortages while minimizing recruitment costs and delays. Its relevance has grown particularly in periods of economic constraint and labor market volatility. However, despite its increasing adoption, quiet hiring is often perceived as an ad hoc or reactive practice rather than a deliberate strategic approach (Opada et al., 2024). At the same time, the emergence of internal talent marketplaces (ITMs) is redefining how organizations manage and deploy their workforce. ITMs are digital platforms, often powered by artificial intelligence, that match employees’ skills with internal opportunities such as projects, gigs, or new roles (Chowdhury et al., 2024). These systems enable greater transparency in internal mobility and support a shift toward skills-based organizations. By facilitating real-time talent allocation, ITMs provide the infrastructure needed to scale and formalize practices like quiet hiring. As a result, they

play a critical role in transforming workforce planning from static to dynamic processes (Opada et al., 2024). Despite these developments, there remains a notable gap in the literature regarding the strategic framing of quiet hiring. Most existing discussions treat it as a short-term solution rather than a component of long-term workforce strategy. This article addresses this gap by reconceptualizing quiet hiring through the lens of internal talent marketplaces and strategic workforce planning. The purpose of this study is to develop a more structured and forward-looking understanding of how organizations can leverage internal talent more effectively. By doing so, the article contributes to both academic discourse and managerial practice, offering insights into building more agile and resilient workforce systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quiet Hiring in Contemporary Organizations

Quiet hiring refers to the practice of addressing organizational talent needs without formal external recruitment, instead leveraging existing employees through mechanisms such as role expansion, temporary assignments, and internal mobility. In this approach, employees may take on additional responsibilities, shift laterally across functions, or engage in short-term projects to fill skill gaps (Vivek, 2023). These practices allow organizations to respond quickly to changing demands while maximizing the utilization of internal talent. Quiet hiring can occur informally or be structured through internal systems, depending on organizational maturity. As such, it represents a flexible and adaptive approach to workforce management in dynamic environments (Campton et al., 2023).

The rise of quiet hiring is driven by several key factors, including persistent talent shortages, increasing cost pressures, and the need for organizational agility. In competitive labor markets, finding and onboarding external candidates can be time-consuming and expensive, making internal solutions more attractive (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). However, quiet hiring is not without criticism, as it can lead to employee burnout, unclear role expectations, and perceived inequities in workload distribution. Some critics argue that it may be used to avoid proper compensation or formal recognition of expanded responsibilities. These misconceptions highlight the importance of framing quiet hiring as a strategic and transparent practice rather than an exploitative one (Campton et al., 2023). When implemented thoughtfully, it can enhance both organizational performance and employee development.

Internal Talent Marketplaces (ITMs)

Internal Talent Marketplaces (ITMs) are digital platforms designed to match employees' skills, experiences, and career aspirations with internal opportunities such as projects, roles, or assignments. These platforms are typically built on advanced technological foundations, including cloud-based systems, data integration tools, and machine learning algorithms (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). By centralizing information about workforce capabilities and organizational needs, ITMs create a more transparent and accessible internal labor market. Employees gain visibility into opportunities beyond their immediate roles, while organizations can deploy talent more efficiently. This represents a shift toward more dynamic and fluid workforce structures (Kumar, 2025).

A key feature of ITMs is the use of artificial intelligence to enable skills-based matching between employees and opportunities. AI algorithms analyze data on employee competencies, performance, and learning history to recommend suitable roles or projects. Compared to traditional talent management systems, which are often hierarchical and job-based, ITMs emphasize flexibility, real-time matching, and employee-driven mobility (Tenakwah & Watson, 2024). Traditional systems typically rely on managerial decisions and static career paths, limiting responsiveness to changing needs. In contrast, ITMs support a more decentralized and data-driven approach to talent allocation. This transformation enhances both organizational agility and employee engagement, positioning ITMs as a critical enabler of modern workforce strategies (Kırcı, 2024).

Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP)

Strategic Workforce Planning (SWP) has evolved significantly from its traditional focus on headcount forecasting to a more sophisticated, skills-based approach. Historically, organizations planned workforce needs by estimating the number of employees required for specific roles. However, this approach is increasingly inadequate in environments characterized by rapid technological change and shifting skill requirements (Atiq et al., 2025). Modern SWP emphasizes identifying and developing critical skills rather than simply filling predefined positions. This shift enables organizations to better anticipate future needs and adapt to evolving business conditions (Daraojimba et al., 2024). The integration of data analytics and forecasting tools has further transformed SWP into a more proactive and evidence-based function. Advanced analytics allow organizations to model workforce scenarios, predict skill gaps, and assess the impact of different strategic decisions. These capabilities enhance

alignment between workforce planning and overall organizational strategy (Jooss et al., 2023). By linking talent management with business objectives, SWP supports long-term competitiveness and resilience. Moreover, the incorporation of systems like ITMs enables real-time adjustments to workforce plans, bridging the gap between strategy and execution. As a result, SWP becomes a dynamic and continuous process rather than a periodic planning exercise (Hamouche et al., 2023).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative, conceptual approach using a narrative literature review to explore the reconceptualization of quiet hiring within the context of internal talent marketplaces (ITMs) and strategic workforce planning (SWP). The narrative review method is appropriate as it enables the integration and interpretation of diverse academic and practitioner sources across multiple domains, including human resource management, organizational strategy, and digital transformation. Relevant literature was identified through academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, using keywords including “quiet hiring,” “internal mobility,” “talent marketplaces,” and “strategic workforce planning.” The selection focused on recent and high-impact publications to ensure relevance to current organizational practices. In addition, industry reports and white papers were included to capture emerging trends and practical insights. The collected sources were then categorized based on key themes to support structured analysis.

The analysis followed a thematic synthesis approach, where concepts and findings from the literature were compared, interpreted, and integrated to develop a coherent conceptual framework. Rather than applying strict systematic review protocols, this study emphasizes depth of understanding and conceptual development. The review specifically examines how quiet hiring is currently understood, how ITMs enable its transformation, and how both relate to evolving workforce planning strategies. Through iterative reading and cross-comparison, key patterns, gaps, and relationships were identified. This process enabled the development of a reconceptualized view of quiet hiring as a strategic and technology-enabled practice. While the methodology does not aim for exhaustive coverage, it provides a comprehensive and insightful foundation for advancing both theory and practice in this area.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Technology and Infrastructure

The effectiveness of internal talent marketplaces (ITMs) is fundamentally grounded in advanced technology and robust digital infrastructure. Central to this is AI-driven skills mapping, which enables organizations to identify, categorize, and continuously update employee competencies based on data from multiple sources such as resumes, performance reviews, and learning platforms (Hamouche et al., 2023). These systems use machine learning algorithms to match employees with relevant opportunities, including projects, short-term assignments, and new roles. This capability allows organizations to move beyond static job descriptions toward dynamic, skills-based deployment. As a result, talent allocation becomes faster, more precise, and better aligned with organizational needs (Asfahani, 2024).

In addition to AI capabilities, ITMs rely on integrated platforms and digital ecosystems that connect various HR systems into a unified interface. These platforms often integrate with learning management systems, performance management tools, and workforce analytics dashboards. Such integration ensures that data flows seamlessly across systems, enabling real-time updates and more informed decision-making (Gong & Ribière, 2023). Furthermore, digital ecosystems support scalability, allowing organizations to expand internal mobility initiatives across departments and geographies. The infrastructure also enhances transparency by providing employees with visibility into available opportunities. Ultimately, technology serves as the backbone that enables ITMs to function effectively and deliver strategic value (Kachhap & Singh, 2024).

The figure as presented in Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between key technological components of internal talent marketplaces (ITMs) and their corresponding contributions to business value. AI-driven skills mapping and opportunity matching show the highest levels in both dimensions, emphasizing their central role in enabling precise and efficient talent deployment. System integration and real-time data flow also demonstrate strong business value, highlighting the importance of connected digital ecosystems in supporting informed decision-making (Formica & Sfodera, 2022). While scalability maintains a balanced contribution, transparency appears slightly lower in technological capability, suggesting an area where organizations may need further development. Overall, the chart indicates that technological sophistication directly enhances organizational value, particularly when systems are integrated and data-driven. This reinforces the idea that robust digital infrastructure is essential for maximizing the strategic impact of ITMs in workforce management (Dongre & Kanchan, 2025).

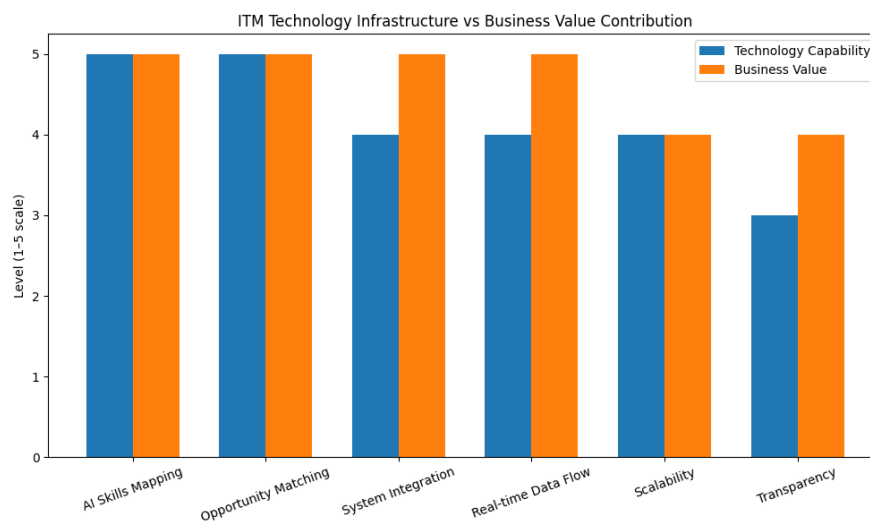


Figure 1. Comparison of ITM Technology Capabilities and Business Value Contributions

Organizational Design Implications

adoption of ITMs and quiet hiring practices has significant implications for organizational design, particularly in the shift toward skills-based organizations. Instead of structuring work strictly around predefined roles and hierarchies, organizations begin to focus on the skills and capabilities of their workforce (Kadirov et al., 2024). This approach allows for more flexible and adaptive workforce configurations, where employees can contribute across multiple projects or functions. It also supports continuous learning and skill development, as employees are encouraged to expand their capabilities. Consequently, organizational structures become more fluid and responsive to change (Căvescu & Popescu, 2025).

Another key implication is the decentralization of talent decisions, where authority over workforce allocation is distributed beyond traditional managerial hierarchies. In ITM-enabled environments, employees can actively participate in seeking opportunities, while project leaders can identify and select talent based on skills rather than position. This reduces bottlenecks associated with top-down decision-making and increases the speed of talent deployment (Ayanponle et al., 2022). However, decentralization also requires clear governance frameworks to ensure fairness and consistency. Without proper oversight, it may lead to unequal access to opportunities or decision-making biases. Therefore, organizations must balance flexibility with structured governance to optimize outcomes (Madanchian, 2024).

The figure as shown in Figure 2 illustrates a clear transformation in organizational design as firms move from traditional hierarchical structures to ITM-enabled, skills-based models. The ITM-enabled organization consistently scores higher across dimensions such as flexibility, decision decentralization, employee autonomy, and learning and development, reflecting a more adaptive and dynamic workforce system. In contrast, traditional organizations show lower levels in these areas, indicating rigidity and reliance on fixed roles and centralized control (Serenko, 2023). Notably, governance control remains relatively strong in both models, though it slightly increases in ITM-enabled systems to balance the risks associated with decentralization. The chart highlights that while ITM adoption enhances agility and empowerment, it also requires deliberate governance mechanisms to maintain fairness and consistency. Overall, the figure emphasizes that modern organizational design is shifting toward a more fluid, skills-driven, and participatory model enabled by digital talent platforms (Georgiadou et al., 2025).

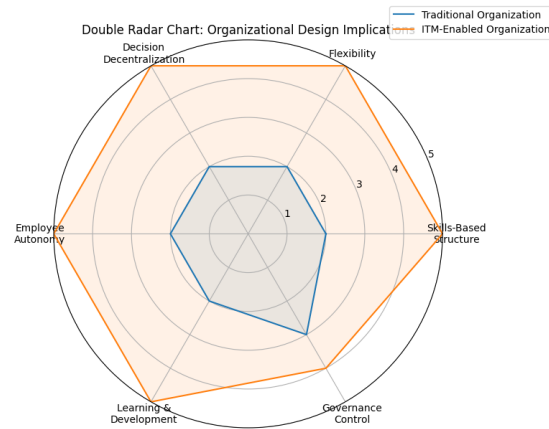


Figure 2. Double Radar Chart of Organizational Design Transformation: Traditional vs ITM-Enabled Models

Employee Experience

Internal talent marketplaces significantly enhance employee experience by expanding opportunities for career mobility and skill development. Employees gain access to a broader range of roles, projects, and learning experiences that may not have been visible in traditional organizational structures. This increased transparency empowers individuals to take greater control over their career paths and pursue opportunities aligned with their interests and strengths (Chowdhury et al., 2024). Additionally, participation in diverse assignments can accelerate skill acquisition and professional growth. As a result, ITMs can improve employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention (Opada et al., 2024).

Despite these benefits, there are also potential risks associated with ITM-driven systems that must be carefully managed. Employees may experience workload overload if additional assignments are not balanced with existing responsibilities. There is also a risk of inequity, where certain employees receive more opportunities due to visibility, network effects, or algorithmic bias. Furthermore, lack of transparency in how opportunities are allocated or recommended can lead to perceptions of unfairness (Vivek, 2023). These challenges highlight the importance of designing ITMs with clear guidelines, equitable access, and transparent processes. Addressing these risks is essential to ensuring that ITMs contribute positively to employee experience (Campton et al., 2023).

The figure as shown in Figure 3 presents a balanced view of employee experience by mapping perceived value against organizational risk within ITM-enabled environments. The upper-left quadrant highlights the most desirable outcomes—high value with low risk—where career mobility, skill development, and engagement are enhanced through transparent and well-managed systems. In contrast, the upper-right quadrant shows that while ITMs can deliver high-value outcomes such as rapid growth and increased visibility, they may also introduce risks if not properly governed (Liu-Lastres et al., 2023). The lower-right quadrant emphasizes critical challenges, including workload overload, inequity, and lack of transparency, which can undermine trust and employee satisfaction. Meanwhile, the lower-left quadrant reflects traditional, stable roles that carry low risk but also limited developmental value. Overall, the figure underscores that maximizing employee experience in ITMs requires careful balancing of opportunity and governance to ensure benefits are realized without introducing significant risks (Kumar, 2025).

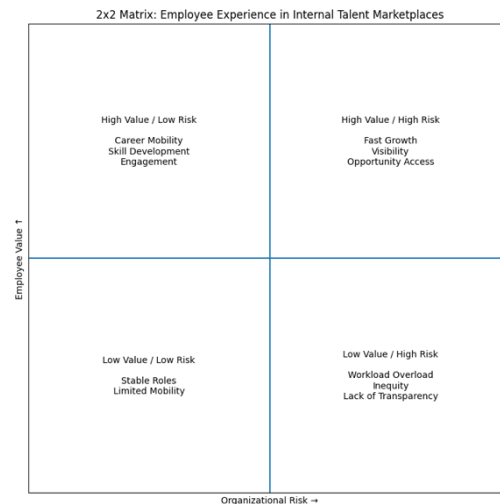


Figure 3. 2×2 Matrix of Employee Experience Outcomes in Internal Talent Marketplaces

Implications for Strategic Workforce Planning

The integration of ITMs and quiet hiring practices has profound implications for strategic workforce planning (SWP), particularly in the transition from job-based to skills-based planning. Traditional SWP models focus on filling predefined roles, often relying on static forecasts and limited flexibility (Tenakwah & Watson, 2024). In contrast, skills-based planning emphasizes identifying critical capabilities and dynamically allocating talent based on evolving needs. This approach enables organizations to respond more effectively to changes in technology, market conditions, and business strategy. It also reduces dependency on external hiring by maximizing internal talent utilization (Kırcı, 2024).

Moreover, ITMs provide real-time workforce visibility and enhance organizational agility by offering up-to-date insights into employee skills, availability, and performance. This allows HR leaders to make more informed decisions and adjust workforce strategies proactively (Atiq et al., 2025). The integration of ITMs into SWP processes also supports advanced scenario planning and internal mobility forecasting. Organizations can simulate different workforce scenarios, identify potential skill gaps, and plan targeted interventions such as reskilling or redeployment. By embedding ITMs into strategic planning, organizations can create a more responsive and resilient workforce system. Ultimately, this alignment strengthens the organization’s ability to achieve long-term strategic objectives (Daraojimba et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study reconceptualizes quiet hiring as a strategic workforce practice enabled by internal talent marketplaces (ITMs) and aligned with modern strategic workforce planning (SWP). Rather than viewing quiet hiring as a reactive or cost-saving tactic, the analysis demonstrates its potential as a structured mechanism for internal talent optimization. By leveraging AI-driven platforms and skills-based approaches, organizations can enhance agility, improve talent utilization, and reduce reliance on external hiring. At the same time, the study highlights the importance of integrating governance, transparency, and employee-centered practices to ensure fair and effective implementation. The findings emphasize that technology alone is insufficient without corresponding organizational and strategic alignment.

Furthermore, the integration of ITMs into SWP represents a significant shift toward more dynamic, data-driven, and skills-focused workforce strategies. This transformation enables real-time visibility into talent capabilities and supports proactive decision-making through scenario planning and internal mobility forecasting. However, challenges such as skills gaps, organizational resistance, and ethical risks must be carefully managed. The study underscores the need for continuous capability development, cross-functional collaboration, and robust governance frameworks. Ultimately, organizations that successfully align quiet hiring with ITMs and SWP will be better positioned to build resilient, adaptable, and future-ready workforces.

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