You're an agency exec. You're familiar with the talent-management challenge. But what if analytics could help you predict when one of your staffers needs a growth test, a new career-path option or just a little coaching? **Tanya Lewis** talks with agencies that are applying data proactively to develop their people and, in some cases, finds it gives them an edge

Consider knowing as much or more about your employees as you do about your clients and their customers. Imagine if you could identify when an employee needs some form of development assistance and deliver it right then. Toronto-based Klick Health uses its internal communication and workflow management platform, called "Genome," to do all of these things and more.

"We're obsessed with understanding why organizations around the world know the importance of understanding their customers but understand so little about their employees," explains Klick president and CEO Leerom Segal. "Facebook, Zynga, Amazon, Netflix, Pandora are all doing a great job of understanding their customers by using an algorithm as a strategic differentiator to create a better and more engaging customer experience. We challenged ourselves to apply these principles internally."

Though Klick may be the premier industry example of using data in a predictive and proactive manner, other agencies are also applying data to talent management and development. CMI/Compas uses the Predictive Index (PI) system, which was developed in the 1950s by entrepreneur Arnold Daniels to assess workplace behaviors and drivers and provide analytics that can be used to increase job fit, motivation, engagement, satisfaction and retention.

Both agencies boast extraordinarily low turnover. Last year Klick had 3% voluntary turnover; CMI/Compas had 2% turnover.

"I think using the PI assessment contributes to people being happy in their jobs and our low turnover because it helps us focus on actively building to people's strengths and involving them it that,"
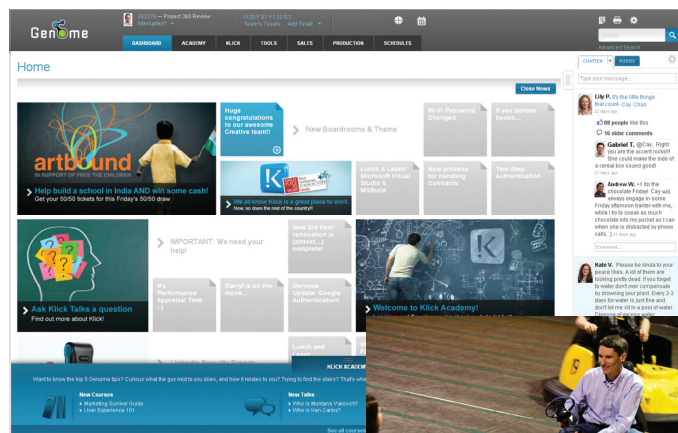
says Nancy Logue, senior director, HR at CMI/Compas.

As part of an effort to unify its approach, Interpublic Group's Draftfcb Health launched a digital platform called Performance Tracker in May to capture performance review information for all employees. Data collected will be used dynamically on a year-round basis.

"We were doing different pieces of talent management, but they were disjointed," explains Lisa DuJat, SVP, chief HR officer at Draftfcb. "We weren't living talent management every day. We made a very concentrated effort to pull all the pieces together."

Omnicom's Harrison & Star (H&S) invested in devising and implementing a pilot training program called ManTra for 12 creative and account services middle and upper-middle managers that ran from December 2010 to May 2011. Data was collected and used to help determine development needs and set goals, measure changes in participants' skill sets and assess the value of continuing the program, which was extended this year to three four-month sessions.

"It's a big investment but we felt the time was right because recruitment competition is very stiff and replacement costs are very high," says Marjorie Vincent, chief people officer at H&S. "We also really appreciate these managers and want to recognize and support them.

It's a business decision and also a cultural decision."

A 'living ecosystem' to empower people

Klick has been working on Genome since its inception 15 years ago. The platform is used to organize, manage and measure every aspect of the agency.

"We named it Genome because it's that core to our DNA," Segal says. "When employees come into work, a dashboard shows them all the numbers that are important to their job, tasks specific to them, etc. All data within Genome is available to everyone."

Built into Genome is a tool called "Gene Sequencer" that understands the specific experience of all 260 employees, given the data generated by each person's constant interaction with the platform. Thus, it's able to identify what Segal calls "teachable moments" and trigger another tool called Klick Academy, which provides appropriate resources—ranging from what could be considered traditional e-learning classes to short videos.

"We don't believe in a one-size-fits-all training intervention that happens once a year," Segal explains. "We look at these precise teachable moments. For example, if during someone's workflow to complete any job they're about to use a competency they haven't used before, the system recognizes that and at that time acts as a coach suggesting training interventions. It's a very personalized training experience."

Genome also helps reduce or eliminate such administrative tasks as filling out timesheets.

"To the extent we can let the tool do it, we do," Segal says. "So the human gets to be the approver, not the task monkey. Our talent is at their best when they're spending their time on strategic and creative output and making decisions—not filling out forms."

Previous page (from top): a screenshot from Klick Health's Genome system; a game of "Whirly ball" at a Klick company outing. This page (from top): a team meeting at CMI/Compas; a monthly group workshop for Harrison & Star's ManTra program; employees enjoying a moment of down time at the Draftfcb coffee bar

Klick also practices "digital Darwinism" with Genome and never forces anyone to use any of the development tools provided. The idea is that non-useful tools won't survive.

"We try to create technology people will love," Segal explains. "Then they'll use it because it helps them. This is a living ecosystem of tools that exist to empower our people and help them develop as fast as possible. If it ever stops evolving, that would be at odds with our goal."

All employees at CMI/Compas take the PI assessment when they're hired. Logue says the PI system was created to measure workplace behaviors, aptitudes and styles. Results are delivered in three graphs, which Logue has been trained to interpret.

"It's very data-driven and helps you get your head around the soft skills," Logue says. "The first graph shows who a person is by nature. The second shows how a person feels they need to adapt based on their environment. The third tells me what I might expect based on the first two. It helps uncover a person's strengths so we can play to their strengths."

Everyone at the agency can see all PI assessment results. Though assessment results help the agency "across the board," Logue notes they're particularly helpful for team building and for individual development. Information revealed by the assessment can be tied to competencies, thus it also helps Logue be more specific in matching development needs to training programs.

"We use it when forming new teams and with well-established teams," Logue says. "When you're forming a team, you want diversity of thought, and this helps you scientifically understand that. It creates self-awareness and helps people determine how they can adapt their style to be more effective with other team members."

In the past, Draftfcb had conducted performance reviews at

HR file: Staffers share their stories

Karin Cook, *VP/associate creative director, copy, Harrison & Star*

CAREER CHALLENGE "I was a long-standing leader on a big brand, and I wanted to expand my therapeutic experience and work on a variety of different accounts. The challenge was to figure out how to pull back from that business in a responsible way so I could take on additional opportunities."

STRATEGY "The ManTra pilot provided delegation coaching and an hour a week with my coach to talk about the challenges. The solution was to break down silos between the consumer-side writers and professional-side writers. After bringing them together as one team, they started working across the two sides. My managers...went to bat for me with finance and account services."

RESULT "The team is more cohesive, more reliant on each other, and less reliant on me. It's ultimately better strategically for the brand, and frees me up to take on more new business opportunities. It also gave each writer on the team new opportunities… I've learned a ton this year—both from a management standpoint and in terms of expanding my own expertise. I have two children, so being able to find solutions that make everyone more efficient translates into better work-life balance."

Tim Hawkey, *managing director, executive creative director, Area 23*

CAREER CHALLENGE "I'd been with Draftfcb about 10 years. I came here as a copy supervisor. I wanted to be part of a company that had more of a vertical management system, because I wanted to mature as a manger and leader…When I got to the SVP/creative director level, my excitement started to plateau. In early 2011, I noted that I felt pretty dissatisfied, unchallenged, underutilized and under recognized; that I didn't feel like I was living up to my true potential."

STRATEGY "Given my self-evaluation, my manger knew to be ready to talk through these issues with me in the annual review. He was ready with key questions, some career-path options and solutions by the time we met, so it turned into a very productive conversation. The system allowed me to speak very objectively about my career goals."

RESULT "I became MD/ECD of Area 23 last summer. I have an incredible partner on the account side, so I'm not the single person in charge. The business is exploding and we just moved into a brand new office."

Chelsea MacDonald, *director, talent development, Klick Health*

CAREER CHALLENGE "About a year ago, I was manager of special projects. It was just me, my boss and a recruiting manager handling all things non-billable. The bulk of my job was handling internal mojo. In the last year we've almost doubled in size—from about 130 or 140 to 260 employees. We were bringing multiple hires a week onboard, and we couldn't keep up. We were also challenged try to keep that small agency feeling."

STRATEGY "Both challenges were identified and resolved in less than three months. Because Genome tracks our time, it was aware that I was suddenly working a lot more overtime…Agency leaders expanded our team to nine people. We also created a system within Genome called 'Chatter,' an internal social network [which] everyone can use to post pictures, comments and give each other peer recognition."

RESULT "I have an awesome team; I got a promotion; and I have the ability to focus more on talent development vs. trying to juggle a lot of balls. Chatter helps with the mojo and makes my job so much easier."

various times throughout the year. The agency also conducts a talent review in the first quarter of every year for IPG that identifies top performers and plans for succession and development.

Last year the agency began implementing a more cohesive and accountable process for meeting talent-development goals. One step was to shift to conducting employee performance reviews during the summer with all related data due in early September. The data provide a clear look at needs across departments, disciplines, and levels and will be used to build next year's training programs, Draftfcb says.

The aim is for managers and employees to be able to access information in the system, and for managers to be able to update, change, add, or delete an individual's goals throughout the year as necessary.

"The goal is to start to track success," DuJat explains. "We set goals now, they pop up in next year's performance review so we can track against them and not just put them in a file."

In Q4 the agency will add a "talent assessment," which will use the individual performance data collected to provide a better view of the organization as a whole and help with longer-term training plans.

Building managerial skills

H&S's Vincent developed the ManTra program as a retention and career development tool for middle managers, which total 126 across H&S and sister agency Biolumina.

Twelve H&S creative and account services managers went through the pilot, attending one-on-one coaching sessions (conducted by Vincent and two HR employees) and six half-day group workshops (conducted by both internal leaders and external consultants).

The pilot was preceded and followed by manager appraisal surveys completed by ManTra participants, as well as their supervisors and direct reports. The surveys rated the participant across eight parameters, under the categories of personal strengths, interpersonal skills, talent development, and managing and measuring work. Results were used to set goals in individual coaching, determine what resources would be assigned as homework, and to gauge success.

Measurement of the pilot revealed participants were more capable managers and more satisfied with their roles and responsibilities. Their direct reports felt more supported and better managed. Participants' managers believed more strongly in their managerial capabilities and potential to lead and felt more confident about succession planning.

Given these results, the agency's executive leadership council asked Vincent to continue and expand ManTra. This year 42 middle managers from across all H&S departments and from Biolumina will complete the program. Parameters of the pre- and post-program surveys were expanded to assess 12 specific managerial skills.

Since ManTra's inception, four VPs have been promoted to SVPs and three group supervisors have been promoted to VPs. Vincent is "over the moon" because preliminary results from the first 2012 ManTra group show success rates are holding compared to the pilot.

Though it may not be feasible to implement a platform like Klick's Genome at most firms, some variation of these approaches certainly could be applied. And it would seem a wise investment, given the importance of retention and development.

"Clients will always follow the talent," Segal says. "The best minds in this industry have a tremendous number of options. The role of the agency is to develop its people and create a center of gravity for the best talent. I can't think of anything that's more important than the engagement and development of our employees." ∎