

# What Is Talent Management? 2026 Career Guide - Coursera

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## Executive Summary

This article, published by Coursera's editorial team, addresses the nature of talent management as a professional discipline and career pathway. The authors argue that talent management — encompassing attraction, development, performance management, employee experience, and workforce planning — represents a strategically critical organizational function with strong career prospects. Key evidence presented includes salary benchmarks sourced from Glassdoor for four role types (ranging from \$130,000 to \$168,000 annually in the US), certification pathways from the Talent Management Institute and the Association for Talent Development (ATD), and a structured five-component framework for talent management systems. The article outlines the competencies required for talent management professionals, including strategic thinking, HRIS proficiency, and knowledge of employment law. It concludes by positioning Coursera courses — specifically the University of Michigan's Managing Talent course — as appropriate entry points into the field. The piece is explicitly career-oriented and informational, aimed at individuals considering entry into or advancement within the talent management profession.

## Key Insights

1. Talent management is defined as encompassing five core areas: attracting and retaining employees, learning and development, performance management, employee experience, and workforce planning including succession planning.
2. US salary data from Glassdoor (accessed July 2025) indicates total compensation for talent management roles ranges from approximately \$130,000 (Organizational Development Manager) to \$168,000 (Talent Acquisition Manager).
3. Professional certifications from the Talent Management Institute (TMP, STMP) and the Association for Talent Development (APTD, CPTD) are presented as primary credentialing pathways, with exam fees ranging from \$499 to \$1,500 depending on membership status.

## Practical Takeaways

- Talent management roles in the US command total compensation between \$130,000 and \$168,000 annually across four common job titles, based on Glassdoor data accessed in July 2025.
- Entry into the talent management field is supported by certifications from the Talent Management Institute and the Association for Talent Development, each with distinct experience and professional development hour requirements.

## Critical Analysis

**Strengths:** The article provides concrete, cited salary data and certification details with direct source links and access dates, lending transparency to its factual claims. The five-component talent management model is internally coherent and consistent with mainstream HR literature. **Limitations:** The article is produced by Coursera's editorial team and explicitly promotes Coursera courses, creating a clear commercial bias. No independent research, academic studies, or empirical evidence is cited to support the efficacy of the talent management practices described. Salary figures are drawn from Glassdoor, which relies on self-reported data and may not reflect industry-wide averages. The content is US-centric with no geographic qualification applied to most claims. The article conflates descriptive career guidance with prescriptive organizational strategy without distinguishing between the two. Overall, this is a well-structured introductory guide appropriate for career exploration, but it lacks the analytical rigor of research-based or practitioner-validated content.

## Organizational Practice

The article describes organizations as using talent management systems built around five functional areas: recruiting and retention, learning and development programs, performance management with reward structures, employee experience initiatives, and workforce planning including succession planning. It notes that companies are incorporating social media and artificial intelligence into recruitment processes. Talent development is described as beginning at onboarding and continuing across the employee lifecycle.

## Strategic Implications

The article reflects a broadening conception of talent management as a strategic, multi-domain function rather than a purely administrative HR role. The salary benchmarks cited suggest talent management is increasingly positioned as a senior-level discipline in US organizations. The emphasis on AI and social media in recruitment points to ongoing digitization of talent acquisition workflows. The proliferation of formal certification pathways indicates growing professionalization of the talent management field.

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**Validation Status:** passed

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