

## **Manage Your Staff – Top 5 Trends**

There are many new issues in human resource management. There is no question that the greatest contribution to organizational success rests with employees

In today's highly competitive marketplace, businesses are forced to address issues that pertain to keeping their most valuable assets content and productive. A robust economy, coupled with a significant portion of the workplace heading into retirement, has clearly left a deficiency. Small businesses, in particular, are having a difficult time attracting and retaining skilled help. With a greater number of companies competing for the same pool of candidates, employers have to be more creative with their offerings.

Two main issues for small businesses are limited resources for training and development, compensation and benefits. Another challenge for the little guy is the fact that they may spend the dollars to offer training, only to watch their well trained employees move on to greener pastures.

Whichever way you look at it, businesses must work diligently to obtain the employees needed to maintain organizational success.

### **Talent Management – What and Why?**

The term "talent management" refers to the strategy dealing with managing people in the workplace. It encompasses the retaining, development and maintaining of the company's workforce. Talent management is, and will always be, a top issue in human resources simply for the fact that it is critical for organizational success.

Business must have specific strategies in place to deal with every aspect of their relationship with their most valuable asset. As such, many leaders are recognizing the importance of having a sound strategy in place if they wish to maintain their competitive advantage and meet organizational objectives.. In order for employees to be productive , they must feel that their needs are being met in three key areas: job satisfaction, purpose and self worth. A good human resource management strategy will consist of systems and processes that ensure those needs are met.

Key areas to pay special attention to include:

- Aligning organizational and individual values
- Meaningful work
- Teamwork
- Safe working conditions
- Training and development
- Career advancement

Companies that demonstrate how these concerns will be addressed will have a valuable resource in maintaining harmony within their organizations.

### **Aging Workers in the Workplace – Asset or Liability**

The baby boomers are leading the societal change. While many workers are taking early retirement, an increasing number are choosing to remain at work. On both sides of the equation, there are major implications for human resource professionals. We've already discussed the impact concerning skills. The other side of the coin deals with the benefits and challenges that come with having older workers in the workplace.

There is no doubt that older workers bring a variety of skills and experience to an organization. In light of the issues surrounding shortages, older workers can be one avenue for addressing some of those challenges. They can provide training, guidance and direction to less skilled employees. Additionally, they can be valuable assets in assisting with the transfer of knowledge within the organization.

On the other hand, implications of the following issues must be addressed:

- Health and safety
- Workers compensation
- Compensation and benefits
- Skills upgrading (in a high-tech age)
- Physiological changes (vision, hearing, fatigue)
- Accommodation

While these concerns exist and must be dealt with, they are not insurmountable. Special attention to address these challenges can go a long way in obtaining maximum benefit from this valuable resource.

### **Compensation and Benefits – “Show me the ... flexibility”**

Work/life balance is the phrase de jour. As business leaders, we can't get away from it ... People want balance in their lives. At no other time has there been the variety of generational representation in the workplace as we have today. From “Boomer”, to “Generation X”, to “Sandwich” ... well you get the point.

The bottom line is that these groups each have their own unique characteristics and therefore, their own needs. Organizations need to come up with diverse compensation package that will address employee needs, while at the same time maintain fiscal responsibility. No easy task.

Times are indeed changing and so are priorities. While financial compensation is still important, it is no longer the sole criteria on which employees base their employment decisions. More and more workers are looking for flexibility from their employers. They want more time off, or time to care for aging parents. They are interested in better childcare options and the opportunity for personal development. They want employers to offer benefits that can be tailored to meet their specific needs; whatever that may be at any given time.

Companies seem to be responding. Increase in employee-focused offerings include:

- Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's)
- Flextime arrangements
- Unpaid leaves of absence
- Concierge service offerings
- Health and fitness

While these non-traditional benefits may increase benefit costs, the return on investment will definitely benefit the organization: happy, content and productive employees.

### **Progressive Discipline – It doesn't Have to Hurt**

Progressive discipline is the process for addressing employee behaviour that does not meet pre-established performance standards. Although viewed as one of the least pleasant aspects of a manager's responsibilities, it does not have to be.

By creating a clear, unbiased and consistent policy, employees will embrace knowing in advance what is expected of them on the job, as well as what to expect if they do not act accordingly. Progressive discipline is not about punishment, but rather, correcting negative behaviour and improving performance.

A unique characteristic is that it is progressive in nature, meaning the more severe the offense the increase in the severity of the discipline. The typical hierarchy is as follows:

1. Verbal warning
2. Written warning
3. Suspension
4. Termination

Meticulous documentation is critical. Many organizations fall short in this area. It's encouraged to use legal counsel when creating the policy. Often, these situations may have legal implications. Many companies run into trouble because they do not have a clear policy in place; or it is not clearly communicated to staff.

Contrary to popular belief, employees will more often than not, embrace a clear directive on performance – as long as it is consistently enforced.

As we can see, there are several factors impacting the field of human resources. What's interesting is that these issues are apt to change. That's the unique thing about human resources. It is dynamic and ever changing. Just like the people it aims to service.

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