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*Welcome of the forth issue of our regular continuous learning newsletter. The focus of in this issue deals with how leaders can effectively support organizational internship programs to build their future talent pool and actions that they can take to build employee morale and trust.*

## **INTERNSHIP** *programs & future* **TALENT**

Organizations are often reluctant to employ fresh graduates because they lack the required experience. However in an environment where good talent is hard to find and limited, the reality is that organizations have no choice but to leverage every opportunity they have to develop their current and future talent. Internship programs provide this opportunity and further provide leaders access to new raw knowledge and talent that is not constrain by prior experience and industry norms and is eager to learn and prove their worth.

The identification of suitable candidates for internships can be done through proactive or reactive methods. A proactive method is one where leader takes the initiative to communicate with targeted educational institutions to form partnership programs. Alternatively they could react positively to request received from students directly or through their learning institutes. Examples of initiatives undertaken by organizations to identify and invite interns include the use of career fairs, industry seminars, working with campus career centers and recruitment drives.

Internship programs should start with the leader clearly defining what the objectives they aim to achieve. Without goals interns end up picking up work that no one else wants to do. Ideally internship programs should be designed around specific projects that may be completed within a period of three to six months. The project should be one where it requires the combined resources and intellect of the organization and the intern thus providing a mutually developmental outcome. Clear objectives enable a better matching between intern and organization.

First impressions are critical and all administrative issues should be clarified and taken care of prior to the first day the intern reports to work. Administrative issues include items like designated work area, basic information to help them fit into the work environment and arranging the appropriate network access and briefings on security and safety guidelines and practices.

The entire internship program should be designed to include five key components of orientation, training, clear job descriptions and performance expectations. A mentor should be provided and in addition to competitive compensation rates during the internship, a one off recognition award could be issued where performance justifies it. The entire internship program should have a formal process in place to monitor progress and to gather feedback from both the intern and the superior.

Upon completion of an internship program a closing report addressing the positives and areas for improvement should be prepared. The organization should also be open to the option of offering the intern a suitable full time employment opportunity upon graduation or even offer a scholarship for further study and research where appropriate.

## **Morale & Trust...**

### ***Essentials for effective leadership***

Morale and trust are core workforce characteristics that effective leaders concern themselves with. Low morale and levels of trust transcend age, income and organization levels and have negative effects on organization performance, resulting from absenteeism, high turnover, sabotage and other disciplinary issues.

Morale and satisfaction are two different issues. Employee morale is how an employee feels about the company they work for while job satisfaction is more about how the employee feels about the role they perform. Morale has more to do with an employee's attitude toward the organization, as such leadership and management practice has a major impact on it. Quick fixes do not help solve low morale problems in the medium to long-term and the solution lies with improving leadership quality. The rest of this article provides a process to improve employee morale.

- **Step 1-** Start by getting to know current morale levels and this can be done using a cross sectional study covering different functions and levels.

- **Step 2-** Share the findings of the study with employees and leaders and work with them to develop improvement plans. When sharing the findings ensure that you address both the positives and negatives, providing a balanced perspective. Do not be afraid of bad news and be honest. These are critical components to build trust which contributes to improved employee morale. Further leaders need to show that they empathize with employees on the impact changes in their workplace and lifestyle have on the employee.
- **Step 3-** Develop an action plan to manage the deployment of specific improvement actions.
- **Step 4-** Measure behaviour to identify if progress is being made

This simple four step process will provide structured approach to organization leadership efforts to improve morale.

Trust is critical to building moral and six general principles should be kept in mind when leading and managing for high morale: first build trust by being close to the ground, second tell the truth about what is happening, third be willing to truly listen to problems from employees, fourth follow through and solve issues and fifth show genuine interest with what is happening in people's lives that you lead and sixth spend time to build relationships within the team and across teams.

Simply whether an employee trust their superior boils down to whether they believe that what their superior is doing and the decision being made has taken into consideration their well being. Specific actions that leaders can take to build trust in the teams that they lead and manage:

- Define and practice values daily during problem solving, decision making and communication;
- Train and translate values into meaningful actions on the job that employees can use to evaluate their behaviour against;
- Ensure consistency and involve employees;
- Manage communication taking into consideration timing, frequency and method and measure levels of trust and take actions to improve.

In summary most people want to go to work in an environment that they can identify with as a result of similar values. They want to work in an environment where they are able to perform, be recognized and build good relationships. Leadership and management efforts focus on building morale and trust go a long way in provided these workforce needs.

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