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A healthy work place culture

By Carole Spiers (Pressure Gauge)

15 June 2007

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WHAT MAKES a workplace culture 'healthy'? I am delighted to be writing my article this week from the UAE, during a visit that included speaking engagements in Dubai at The International Gathering where over 60 professional speakers ...

gathered from throughout the world, at Dubai's Knowledge Village when the local community were invited to 'Develop Their Professional Presence'; and a series of Boardroom Stress Management Briefings that analysed a range of challenges facing local businesses today, in the Middle East.

In one of my first Pressure Gauge articles I introduced the need for, and benefits of, a healthy workplace culture and I have since developed this by focusing on aspects such as effective communication and active listening.

But there is more to the creation of a healthy culture than improved communication. It really means taking an entirely fresh view of the ability of each employee and how to deploy it as effectively as possible.

Creativity

Creativity is the lifeblood of any organisation. It leads to innovation which in turn leads to competitive advantage. All too often, however, creative thinking is seen as the preserve of departments such as Sales and Marketing or R & D.

Everyone has the capacity to come up with good ideas but this means sometimes being prepared to dispense with the accepted rules of the business.

High morale

The morale of an organisation is fundamental to its success. High morale suggests a well motivated and energised workforce that is keen to succeed. Employees will be committed to meeting and even exceeding targets when morale is high and it is therefore an essential ingredient for sustainable success.

Team empowerment

It is vital for both line and middle managers to fully engage with their teams and not to spend time solely dealing with underperformance. Identifying the needs of individual managers and providing ongoing training is therefore vital if they are to be able to fulfil their role in providing effective, up-to-date, management.

Seeking to understand the reasons underlying poor performance and addressing the causes thereof, is, of course, an important part of a manager's role. However, it is necessary to ensure that performance contracts are two-way and include an obligation as to the exact role of the manager in order to enable each employee to perform his/her job successfully.

Effective management should not focus on the past at the expense of the future, and managers need to be accountable for the climate they create in their own departments. Spending more time exploring individual needs and career aspirations are key elements in securing employee engagement and also the retention of high performing staff.

Managers should review their approach to ensure that the control they exert and the performance criteria they measure encourages the behaviour and performance that they are anxious to achieve.

Empowering managers to take responsibility for staff performance review is a day-to-day responsibility. This means handling their team as a human entity; allocating roles and responsibilities correctly whilst, at the same time, encouraging the 'feel good' factor.

Praise and appraisals

Nothing can be more important than giving praise for a job well done. Regular appraisal identifies strengths and weaknesses and allows for the assessment of continuing professional development (CPD) and on-the-job training. Appraisal is a two-way process that enables the manager and employee to agree targets for performance and a plan to which to work. Whilst appraisal should be an ongoing, continuous process, it is also necessary to have a formal timetable for review, either once or twice a year.

Recognition and reward

Being personally recognised as an important element in the business or organisational process is almost as important to the person as the monetary reward on offer.

Recognition and reward should be commensurate with the task because to undervalue skills, at any level, can lead to frustration, low productivity and poor morale.

Providing benefit packages over and above the basic salary is one way of expressing recognition and enhancing reward. Bonuses and performance-related pay are great incentives for staff, at all levels. To be effective within an organisation, individuals need to be aware of the corporate goals and, where possible, to have a personal stake in achieving them.

Positive attitudes and common goals

If you think a goal is achievable then the chances are it is. Positive attitude is everything in a successful organisation.

The moment negativity creeps in, creativity and motivation go 'out of the window'.

Positive feedback from the boardroom to the shop floor will give an organisation an increased incentive in meeting its




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targets. A cohesive team will also have common goals and a positive attitude. And not only will team members support each other, but they will support the growth and success of the business as well!

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