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Workplace culture

By Carole Spiers (Pressure Gauge)

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IN THE high-pressure, working environment, that is today's business culture in Dubai, where time is often 'of the essence', employers need to value and to recognise all members of staff in order to obtain from each person their optimum output and to utilise everyone's abilities to the full.



The general move away from rigid, corporate (vertical) hierarchies, in Europe, has led to a new emphasis on motivational and communication skills that encourage 'enabling', rather than 'enforcing'. This requires companies to view their staff - both management and other grades - as their most important resource and to treat them accordingly. Organisations should also ensure that workplace conditions are as good as is possible, given that in a healthy environment, people work better and are more productive.

According to a recent survey from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD), one third of UK organisations have already adopted a strategy that 'brings components such as learning and development, together with aspects of the working environment, into the benefits package... It goes beyond standard remuneration by embracing the company culture, and is aimed at giving all employees a voice in the operation, with the employer in return receiving an engaged employee performance'.

Ensuring a healthy organisation involves creating a culture of trust and mutual respect, where recognition, flexibility, control, good communication, purpose and balance are all employed and valued. So what does this mean for businesses in Dubai and the UAE?

Building Winning Teams

A 'healthy' workplace culture is one where enterprise is encouraged by looking forward not backwards, where new opportunities are constantly sought, and, an environment where employees are highly motivated and hungry for success - both for the company and for themselves.

It is a culture where everyone works for the common good - for mutual improvement. A culture of inclusiveness where everyone feels they are a part of, and have a part in, the business, where everyone works towards the goal of high efficiency and excellence.

- In a healthy business culture:
- Team spirit is strong
- Employees support each other
- Staff respond willingly to effective management
- Managers are skilled and have excellent communication
- Everyone works for the common good
- Morale is high and
- Competitive advantage is achieved

Recognition and praise, where appropriate, should be 'the norm'. Managers need to be accountable for the climate they create within their departments. It is a manager's role to build a 'listening culture', to have an 'open door' policy that enables the employee to meet with him or her. With good communication 'along the line', performance and productivity will increase.

Closing the 'effort/reward' gap is another way to improve workplace culture. This means making sure that employees are rewarded for their efforts. However, this is not necessarily only a monetary reward. When employees are asked what would make them feel more appreciated, they usually say 'better communication with my manager'. When managers do take the time to recognise the work of their teams, they are often surprised at the result! It is extraordinary what can be achieved by just taking the time to say 'well done!'

Environment is also a key element - a workplace that is safe and friendly, with an indoor working temperature between 20 and 25 degrees, will contribute towards optimum performance.

Risk assessments should be undertaken to identify any known risks and appropriate action taken to minimise those. Overall, the workplace needs to feel more like a community than simply the place where they have to earn their living.

In a healthy culture, employees feel included within the overall vision of the business and will have a sense of belonging. This brings out the best qualities in all staff - making them feel that they really do want to come to work and give of their best.

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Bottom-line benefits

It enables sustainable success and growth. When organisational health is approached from a cultural perspective there is a much greater likelihood of effecting employee wellbeing (mental, physical, spiritual, emotional and social).

When employees 'feel good' they are more energetic, creative, innovative and productive - qualities that are essential to an organisation's competitive advantage. These qualities lead to an organisation that is highly productive and creative.



Staff are flexible and creative, and absenteeism is low. When morale is low, energy levels will be minimal and employees will be more prone to illness and absenteeism.

Staff retention levels are high. Employees who feel empowered and respected not only benefit themselves but are also more productive and less costly to their employer in terms of health and benefits costs.

Profitable performance is more easily achievable. Performance and productivity are ongoing challenges. Managers need to understand what motivates their teams and how to turn this into increased performance.

Key learning points:

- A 'healthy' workplace culture is where enterprise thrives!
- Team spirit and morale is strong and employees support each other
- Recognition of achievement and meeting targets should be 'the norm'
- A simple 'thank you' costs nothing but brings much!
- Money is not everything in gaining employee commitment

Carole Spiers, the UK's leading Guru on corporate stress-management and organisational change, is also a regular BBC broadcaster and international author on these major, business issues. Your questions and input on this or any related topic is welcome and she will discuss a selection of your letters or case-studies. Please write to Carole Spiers at: ktwkd@emirates.net.ae