

Leadership: Employers can do better in 2017

The New Year is often a time of short-term commitments to healthy living; fitness and eating better. Gymnasium's are full for one month and become emptier and emptier after that. Businesses cannot afford short-term commitments, and with Mauritius underperforming in the region, how do we lead a sustained change for performance in 2017?

Driving Key Performance Indicators

Key performance indicators (KPIs) remain in vogue. This is where you isolate the five or six key measureables that underpin your business performance. KPIs often fall into four categories, financial, process, people and customer. A typical customer KPI might include 'increase customer loyalty by X%'. Each KPI is then broken down into specific, performance actions for specific managers/teams. These actions could number up to twenty or thirty specifics for each KPI and are identified as essential to delivering the desired KPI. For increased customer loyalty, the actions might include introducing tailored messages and offers via social media, improved satisfaction rates in handling complaints and a more exciting customer-events program.

If you achieved in your organization using such a strategy in 2016, then you will know how to drive for the next level of performance. Some organizations are now starting their KPI process with stretch-goals, in order to work creatively for new solutions; involving talents, freeing up the shared thinking-zone to permit novelty and invention that may deliver something between conventional growth and outstanding growth. Having found innovative solutions, the remaining process is the same as above. Involvement of key people galvanizes performance, so why not do more to leverage the human dimension of performance too?

This year, think about linking your performance rewards with performance actions? Rewards based on overall business profit is tired and a system that is too remote from individual effort and performance; it is better to reward people when they are absolutely certain what their specific contributions actually were! When we do that, they know exactly how and where to perform in 2017! Make your reward system 50% behavior-based performance like GE does. Include behaviors like inclusivity, team-working, emotional-stability, good listening and supporting of co-workers. Make sure to grade and measure these and reward accordingly. Stimulate human-to-human factors by reward them specifically. Then, watch trust, team-work and customer satisfaction rise!

People KPIs

In some global organizations, there is a reversal from the recent growth in people-centric management. It is sad to learn that disposability of talent is seen as a simpler and more cost-effective strategy than developing and keeping people at work. Additionally, there is a rapid change in worker-loyalty everywhere. It is now common for a young manager to have 6 or 7 jobs in ten years. This mobility of talent also drives lower investments in people. After all, why invest in our people if they will leave anyway? This is, of course, is a self-fulfilling prophecy; neglect your people and even the irreplaceable people will leave. Increasingly, the Millennials also want the best tasks, higher status and more money before many of them are ready to perform adequately. Those drivers in Millennials also urges them to move elsewhere to try their luck! So, how do we keep and develop our talent?

Most of us know that creating a trusting, loyal team drives performance. But rarely do we take measures on what creates the bottom-line performance in human terms. Maybe it is time to do so? Some executives do not have the experience or know-how to achieve high-performing teams and do what they always did, hoping for the best, just like last year! But, as 2017 dawns upon us, know that the trend for lower people-loyalty continues. Fail to act, and your team will wither. Indeed, some of the key organizational traits that you took for granted, and are most proud of, will wash away with those people before next Christmas. Then what?

Loyalty & Talent

Ask your people why they take time off and what aspects of their lives create conflict between the demands of home and demands of work. If you do this, you may find some surprises. Here are expressions explaining why people cannot be at work, or are less effective when at work:

- Faulty white goods
- Buying food
- Picking up the kids
- Be home to eat with the kids before they go to bed
- Sort out cell-phone and tablet technical issues
- Walk the dog
- Hair-cut
- Gymnasium.

Now, ask yourself if you could start a process of development that would make working with your organization easier, so that many of them would work longer and harder to perform, would you do that? One Pennsylvania company started this process over a decade ago. They now supply the following support measures at work and have loyal, hard-working staff; they make exemplary profits too.

- Subsidized service that repairs white goods (pick up house-keys and return them afterwards)
- Shopping deliveries made to work
- Staff restaurant with free meals for family, so all can eat together and the staff member may go home later
- Technical service at work for technology
- Bring your dog to work (provided your immediate colleagues have no issue)
- Barber/hair-dresser coming into work
- Gymnasium for staff and immediate family.

They also provide a window of phone/time at work for dealing with 'home' stuff out of 'core' work hours. All behavioural norms, including staff contracts, are stated in the positive – what we want, rather than what we do not want.

We cannot all go to this extreme, but a movement towards 'taking care' coupled with a fair performance/behaviour review/reward system will transform any organization, yours also!

For example, you may not be able to supply a gym, but you could arrange a special group discount at a gym convenient for your workers. You may not want barber/hairdresser facilities in your workplace now, but you could arrange a corporate deal with a local provider. Family meals with a few set-menus could also be negotiated (and subsidized) with a local restaurant too. It is not that hard to take simple steps to make your people feel like you care about them.

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When we talk about customers, we say, “give them what they want”. To keep and enhance corporate performance we now need to say, “make our people’s lives easier and reward them for specific performance actions and appropriate behaviors”. Make 2017 your year for leadership!

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