Creating the best work culture

The work culture is the key to high performance.

More important, influencing the work culture is a manager's best opportunity for creating high performance. "Culture" is a 24-hours-a-day training program that exists inside any organization. It's teaching and influencing all the time. Sometimes it's teaching what we like it to teach, and sometimes it's not. It's very difficult to "swim upstream" against the culture.

For example, you can teach value added and long-term relationships all you want, but if the work culture is really about short-term, adversarial relationships with clients, that's what you're going to get--that plus a lot of confusion.

The best of all possible worlds is a consistent, positive, reinforcing culture--and good sales managers are discovering that the best way to leverage their efforts is to manage the culture. After more than 10 years of research, we've come up with five factors that are critical to creating and maintaining a high-performance work culture. Listed in order of importance, they are:

1. A Shared Sense Of Mission Or Purpose. It's the culture equivalent to purpose. It answers the questions "What's expected around here, what do we do, and why do we do it?" If the only answer that you have is "making money," be prepared for your people to ask for as much as they can get for doing as little as they can. On the other hand, if you've taken the time to establish a mission--and especially if you've taken the time to involve your people in the process--that larger sense of mission will help

people focus on achieving their part of the mission.

2. Clear And Attainable Goals. People

perform best when they have specific goals. Goals that are reachable yet that stretch them. Don't tell people what to do, or how to do it, but give them the map, the destination, and sometimes the general direction in which to start.

3. Frequent Objective Feedback. People learn quickly and work well when they are told how they're doing. Debrief and summarize every joint call you make. Don't assume that people know how they're doing or know what you think. Lead with positive information first, but always be honest, objective, and specific. Help your people learn from every selling experience.

4. Positive Rewards For Appropriate Or Approximate Performance. Selling is like playing tennis: Very few people get it right the first time. Sincere, positive reinforcement ("You did that really well." "You really understand this." "You're doing a great job.") helps people learn. Catch people doing something right, and tell them about it.

5. Timely Support And Help When Requested Or Needed. This is an issue of priorities for most sales managers. It's deciding what your job is. Are you there to track numbers and quotas, or are you there to support your people? Clearly, both jobs have to be done, but the job of coach is the critical job in creating a high-performance team.

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Human Resource Management (and Talent Management)

Introduction

The Human Resources Management (HRM) function includes a variety of activities, and key among them is deciding what staffing needs you have and whether to use independent contractors or hire employees to fill these needs, recruiting and training the best employees, ensuring they are high performers, dealing with performance issues, and ensuring your personnel and management practices conform to various regulations. Activities also include managing your approach to employee benefits and compensation, employee records and personnel policies. Usually small businesses (for-profit or nonprofit) have to carry out these activities themselves because they can't yet afford part- or full-time help. However, they should always ensure that employees have -- and are aware of -- personnel policies which conform to current regulations. These policies are often in the form of employee manuals, which all employees have.

Note that some people distinguish a difference between HRM (a major management activity) and HRD (Human Resource Development, a profession). Those people might include HRM in HRD, explaining that HRD includes the broader range of activities to develop personnel inside of organizations, e.g., career development, training, organization development, etc.

There is a long-standing argument about where HR-related functions should be organized into large organizations, eg, "should HR be in the Organization Development department or the other way around?"

The HRM function and HRD profession have undergone tremendous change over the past 20-30 years. Many years ago, large organizations looked to the "Personnel Department," mostly to manage the paperwork around hiring and paying people. More recently, organizations consider the "HR Department" as playing a major role in staffing, training and helping to manage people so that people and the organization are performing at maximum capability in a highly fulfilling manner.

Recently, the phrase "talent management" is being used to refer to the activities to attract, develop and retain employees. Some people and organizations use the phrase to refer especially to talented and/or high-potential employees. The phrase often is used interchangeably with the field of Human Resource Management -- although as the field of talent management matures, it's very likely there will be an increasing number of people who will strongly disagree about the interchange of these fields. For now, this Library uses the phrases interchangeably. -managementhelp.org

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