

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING STAFF

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES HAVE NOT MADE THE SKILLS CRISES BETTER

The skills crises is as much an outgrowth of past employment policies as today's severe shortage of skilled staff. After years of enduring downsizing, outsourcing and retrenchments many employees now feel justified in selling their services to the highest bidder. Organisations are compounding this problem by getting caught in the spiral of salary increases, new perks, bonus matching and other reactive measures to attract and hold on to people with "sizzling skills". Organisations must shift the logic of it's employment strategy from treating people as a commodity to bought and sold as needs dictate, to managing employees as a critical and scarce resource to be developed and nurtured for the long haul.

COUNTER THE SKILLS SHORTAGE BY IMPLEMENTING A STRATEGY THAT IS CONSISTENT ACROSS THE EMPLOYMENT LIFECYCLE

Even if we could fill all our vacancies, more employees will be needed to meet tomorrow's requirements. In order to meet this challenge recruitment and retention policies and processes should be consistent and reinforcing throughout the employment lifecycle. Identifying qualified applicants, attracting qualified applicants, incorporating these employees into a productive environment and developing employee talent and providing career pathing. Even sustaining relationships with those who leave.

BECOME EFFICIENT AT SOURCING NEW POOLS OF TALENT

Organisations must develop tactics such as employee referral schemes inclusive of recruitment bonuses , internship programmes, partnerships with contracting and search organisation and employment agencies. These should function as an extension of the organisation's recruitment department actively seeking out the people needed and exploring innovative ways to reach them. Innovative organisations advertise in places not normally associated with job seeking such as on public transport, radio stations, the cinema and exhibitions such as design for living and home expos.

HIRE FOR LONG TERM FIT NOT SHORT TERM NEED

It is essential to base hiring decisions more on behavioural and cognitive abilities than on technical skills and experience. Technical skills are able to be taught but changing how someone thinks and acts is well nigh impossible.

OFFER CANTEEN STYLE WORK OPTIONS IN ADDITION TO ONE SIZE FITS ALL POSITIONS

The technical experience, ages, lifestyles and attitudes of employees vary so successful companies find ways to tailor to diverse needs. An approach is to offer unbundled canteen style position options that are tailored to the needs of individuals. A core job package comprising a baseline salary, basic job duties and standard fringe benefits. Individualised options could include additional job responsibilities, increased compensation, choice of flexible work options, additional training, educational opportunities and special benefits such as child care and concierge services. The goal is to tailor jobs to skills and not people to rigid job specifications.

PROVIDE INTERESTING WORK

Rewarding work is a chief determinant of whether employees stay in a job or leave. Employees are likely to stay if their work has an impact on the business. Where routine is inevitable, mix it with more interesting tasks and have a skills development plan that gives employees a goal to work towards. Provide a work process that's gives employees authority and control over the work that they do, how they do it, the reward that they receive for doing it well and the performance measures by which they are judged.

INVEST IN LONG TERM CAREER DEVELOPMENT NOT “EPISODIC TRAINING

Employee training and career development suffered badly in the era of downsizing, reengineering and budgetary cuts. Now is the time to identify the skills and behaviours needed at each career level. Retention improves where employees know what skills they need to progress and training budgets make it easy to acquire those skills. One of the most effective mechanisms for developing skills and fostering learning are coaches who take responsibility for devising employee development plans and ensuring that employees are mentored and trained in a systematic process.

KEEP KEY EMPLOYEES BY LETTING THEM GO

In a transparent environment managers know when employees are thinking of leaving. Best practice is to preserve a measure of retention by offering contracts, by allowing employees to consult in other organisations, by seconding employees to work on projects and by creating virtual teams where employees instead of having to relocate geographically can still work from remote sites as part of a team. The shrewdest companies also maintain ties with those who leave and sow the seeds for potential rehiring by doing one exit interview when someone leaves and another some months later when the true reasons for leaving can be discussed.

KEEP PACE WITH CHANGING EMPLOYEE ASPIRATIONS

There are seven key areas that employees are more likely to stay and be motivated by: compensation and reward, recognition, work itself, technology, learning opportunities, work environment and leadership. All of these should be present in the total employment package with a focus on career development for each staff member. Continually try to identify and satisfy employee expectations against each factor and benchmark against other companies. Avoid placing emphasis on a single motivating factor at the expense of the others. No amount of over compensating in one motivator can account for a lack in another.