

# HR Strategy Made Simple

## Article 1

### Developing the HR Strategy

I literally cut my HR teeth on the Dave Ulrich Model and was privileged to work at Edcon to witness and be a part of the successful implementation of the model by the visionary Dr. Urin Ferndale. This approach works very well in larger companies such as SAB, Microsoft to name a few that are corporate in nature where there is understanding and buy in. However, the challenges of implementing this approach in a small to medium sized road transport company where there was no centre of expertise or HR specialists or fully integrated HR Systems or support and buy in from senior management were at first glance insurmountable. I had to find a way of making it simple and easy to implement given the lack of resources available for HR at that time. Fortunately, I had just read Tony Manning's little red book on strategy and everything fell into place. I had a starting point.

The first port of call was to thoroughly understand the business, the people, the service offering and the road transport industry in its entirety. The three most important elements were speed of delivery, customer service (this determined attracting new business and increasing existing business) and rates charged.

Before compiling the strategy I asked five strategic questions:

1. To fulfil our business strategy what organisational competencies and what functional competencies do we need?
2. How can we get increased productivity from the employees and drive a high performance culture?
3. How do we build leadership capacity at all levels?
4. How do we reduce the costs of hiring and hire the correct people?
5. How do we reduce employee turnover?

I then plotted the strategy on a strategy wheel. The pivot of the wheel is alignment to the business needs through consultation and communication. Behind each of the spokes on the wheel lies an action plan with items and timelines, a planned sequence of events on introducing the delivery of the strategy as people had to become accustomed to the new approach. Central to this model as a first step is determining organisational and functional competencies to align to the business needs. The rim of the wheel which is the governance of the strategy is the policies, the culture, the leadership and the change management initiatives to introduce the model and implementation. One of the measurements of its success will be through the organisation perception survey results. A key driver is the vision, mission and values which contributes to the culture.



*Schematic representation of the HR Strategy*

The launch of the strategy took place at managerial conference where all the key stakeholders were present. Thereafter it was reinforced at subsequent conferences. It has taken 15 months to see the operationalisation of the strategy. The key stumbling blocks were an understanding and buy in to the relevance of seeing HR as a strategic business partner and offering value to the business and not as the ‘tampax and tissue brigade’ the traditional personnel function. For the first time, I fully realised the importance of having a CEO fully behind the HR function as Dr Urin Ferndale had Steve Ross. Fortunately for me the financial director was much more than a bean counter and had the clarity of vision to realise the value add of HR as a business partner. The key element in the acceptance of and the implementation of any such a model is the support of a key stakeholder who has authority of position and respect in the organisation and who has the intellectual capacity to learn and understand HR in its entirety and appreciate the **HR Value Proposition in adding to the competitive advantage of the business.**

**Next article: Delivering the strategy through a HR Service delivery Model**