



INCREASING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

One of the many challenges faced by businesses in their quest to have sustainable success is the ability to attract, manage and retain high performing talented individuals. As an HR professional I have a strong belief that businesses can achieve a competitive advantage by paying attention and actively managing the relationship between the business and its people as a partnership. In a tight labour market with individuals expecting a greater return on their own investment or they will find an employer who can provide them with what they require, businesses are recognising the need to focus on getting the most out of the people they employ versus taking the approach of finding better people out there. The key to greatness is to consider employees as capital not labour and focus on the productivity of that capital by looking for people's potential, spending time developing it and ensuring there is a high level of employee engagement.

Seems simple but when you are dealing with people who have different values, attitudes and behaviours it can be challenging to align multiple stakeholder needs. Following are 6 suggested areas of focus to increase employee performance;

1. **Leadership:** critical to achieving effective employee performance is the role of the leader. The leader has the responsibility of role modeling what the business is seeking to create and inspiring employees to high performance standards based on a clear and compelling vision. A successful leader will need to have; highly developed personal and interpersonal skills, a mind set of perpetual learning rather than having all the answers and an awareness that if things are to change the leader must first change.
2. **Performance Management:** there are many systems available to support the management of performance but what's most important is the spirit of the performance management process. That is to have an open, authentic and constructive relationship with individuals, encouraging teams to work together and to understand their effect on others, to share problems, plan solutions and to cooperate willingly in dealing with issues facing the business. If this spirit is embraced the performance

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The Core Centre

28 Ross St, cnr St Johns Rd, Glebe - Forest Lodge, NSW 2037 T 02 9571 8244 F 02 9571 8122
info@thecorecentre.com.au www.thecorecentre.com.au



management process will contribute to aligning individual and business goals and greater satisfaction for all. In essence performance management is the cascading of business strategies and performance targets to individuals within the business, measuring success and providing individuals with the support required to meet and exceed performance expectations.

3. **Learning and Development:** learning must be valued and seen as; a business imperative and, enabling delivery of a business strategy. Ensuring businesses have continually capable people relies on an investment by the business and the individual. The acquiring of new skills and experience provides both the business and the individual with an opportunity for mutual benefit. To develop a business of capable individuals requires a culture of learning and innovation supported by quality learning and development practices and offerings. Access to learning and development opportunities, which can be on the job rather than an external program, are critical to attracting and retaining high performing individuals.

4. **Work/Life Balance:** whilst individuals need to take personal responsibility for their own lives research shows us that businesses can reap the benefit of adopting a 'give and take' flexible approach to balancing paid work and non work activities of individuals. Benefits include: improved commitment, reduced turnover, reduced absenteeism, greater productivity and reduced work/life conflict. To facilitate effective work/life balance requires a change in traditional thinking that length of time at work equals effectiveness and that work is best performed at the workplace. Establishing a work environment that promotes physical and psychological health of employees might require more initial effort but the rewards for all parties will be there.

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5. **Career and Personal Development:** Individuals want more than just a job they want to; feel as if their views are genuinely valued, be provided with challenging and meaningful work, feel as if they are growing and developing new and valuable skills, be appropriately recognised and rewarded for their efforts, and be provided with the opportunity for career advancement. Individuals are ultimately responsible for their own career however to retain key talent it is in the best interest of the business to align individual and business development needs and direction.
6. **Engagement:** Hewitt's Consultancy defines Engagement as the state of emotional and intellectual involvement in a group/organisation and the extent to which an organisation has captured the 'hearts and minds' of its people. Hewitt's also tells us there is a highly positive correlation between employee Engagement scores and business results. Key to achieving high levels of engagement is to understand what drives employee engagement and what action will have the most positive impact on engagement. Examples of what drives engagement are;
- Intrinsic motivation – individual derives intrinsic motivation if they feel their work delivers challenges, purpose, a sense of progress and appropriate autonomy
 - Resources – are the means available to an individual necessary to do their job well. Resources include tools, technology and information.
 - Career Opportunities – individual's perception of a favourable set of circumstances for their future with the business
 - Work Tasks – how the individual feels about their day to day work

High performance organisations would expect to see employee engagement at 65% or above, whilst those companies voted "Best Employers in Australia" average 76% of their employees being engaged.

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