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Employment: Increase the Strength of Your Workforce

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The Employment section did not involve the reporting or the editorial staff of The Moscow Times.



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Even in good times, organizations can not afford the costs and missed opportunities created by high turnover or low morale. In today's uncertain economy, companies especially need their employees to perform at full capacity and employees need to willingly develop their careers in such a way that they pursue the capability development that their employer needs to thrive and deliver increased value.

An effective career development process ensures that organizations have the right people with the right skills to get the job done and meet organizational objectives. It means building a talent pool able to meet current and future needs. Fortunately, for most companies, the effort doesn't require starting from scratch. Often, it means taking existing resources and figuring out how best to align them to the organization's strategy.

However, career development is not as simple as merely providing career resources and then asking employees to make choices about what they want.

Introducing a successful career development program is a multi-step process. It requires identifying the skills needed to achieve organizational goals, identifying the employees best suited to develop those competencies, then helping them in their progression and, finally, finding ways to measure success. A functioning career development system involves employees, managers and human resources personnel, each with specific responsibilities and all dependent on each other for success.

For the greatest success, companies need to institute a comprehensive effort involving both employer and employee. This requires developing a system linking the interests of the organization and the individual, creating mutual goals able to help drive the company forward and then jointly implementing these. However, perhaps the most significant role is that

of leadership. Without appropriate guidance from leaders, neither employees nor organizations will derive sustained benefit from any career development program.

We recommend the following practical steps be implemented to make career development part of an organization's fabric and thereby improve engagement and retention.

Senior leaders have to make career development a priority.

Career development requires a methodical, comprehensive system in which organizations identify their long-term goals and the competencies needed to meet those objectives, and then help employees to develop the skills required to achieve these goals through such activities as coaching, career development, mentoring, internal training, shadowing and project work.

Line managers need better training and the tools and skills for supporting career development.

Through coaching, for example, managers can develop competency in having crucial career conversations with employees rather than the performance-related discussions that are more standard. Creating an environment in which employees feel it is safe to have these discussions is vital. If they fear their manager will interpret such conversations as a sign of disloyalty, employees will not participate. To that end, organizations need to help managers understand the importance of career development to the achievement of overall goals.

Better self-assessment is of major importance.

The first step in any career development program is for employees to understand the skills they have or need to develop and how that fits with organizational goals. They can then use the information to determine appropriate roles to target and the requirements to develop those responsibilities. With effective self-assessment, employees:

• will understand what roles will better leverage their unique talents;

• be more likely to stay with the company because they'll be able to make informed decisions about the positions best suited to their talents;

• adapt more easily to change initiatives.

For high potentials, the best approach combines individualized coaching and group sessions.

Some feel stuck in their careers, while others are unsure of their next step or need further validation of their plans. Employees feel inadequately supported in their career decisions. Also the very variety of career choices causes confusion for many employees. To address the problem, provide participants with an individualized career map illustrating their value proposition and requirements for future roles and help employees learn such skills as networking and interviewing to help them in navigating the internal selection process. Following this, conduct one-on-one coaching sessions to discuss career options and develop strategies.

Companies can do more to measure return on investment.

Employers can't determine whether their career development efforts are successful without effective measurement of return on investment. They include such measurements as decreased recruitment and on-boarding costs; productivity increases; reduced mobilization time for projects; earlier identification of candidates for key roles; improved quality of career development plans; increase in internally filled roles; higher engagement levels; decreased absenteeism.

In the end, career development is about improving productivity, retention and performance. By taking steps to align employee and organizational goals, companies can ensure they'll be in top competitive form, able to meet and exceed the demands of today's difficult marketplace.

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