

## **RECRUIT, TRAIN, RE-TRAIN AND RETAIN**

“Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not; it is the first lesson that ought to be learned; and, however early a man’s training begins, it is probably the last lesson that he learns thoroughly.”

**(Thomas H Huxley (1825 – 1895), English biologist and supporter of Charles Darwin)**

What does it cost, in terms of time, effort and money, to recruit someone to a company? It depends entirely on the position within an organization that you are seeking to fill; the level of responsibility and accountability, the level and amount of decision-making required on a daily, weekly or monthly basis; the level of interaction with customers and suppliers and with possible future customers or providers; and, whether or not a prospective candidate fits the profile and culture of the company, in terms of bearing, manner, appearance and presentation and whether there is a need for the person recruited to be able to represent the company in the media.

It also depends, to a lesser extent, on the required, and increasingly more often that not perceived, level of experience and knowledge including professional, academic or vocational qualifications deemed necessary to do the job. I say that because for reasons best known to themselves many companies and organizations have raised the level of expectation of candidates to sometimes unnecessary levels and possibly based on the fact that academic qualifications, in some countries, appear to have been reduced so that people are seen not to fail examinations and thereby the results are devalued.

What does it cost to train someone to not only work for a company but also to take their skills, knowledge, and previous experience and train them to meet not only the demands of that organization in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and output but also in culture, reputation, structure and social and ethical values?

I pose the questions because, after more than a decade, possibly two or three, of the use of such management fads as downsizing and delayering, or the removal of levels of middle and junior management and supervisory positions, followed by additional fads such as business process re-engineering and resource re-alignment, or reducing the number of employees to the perceived amount of work required of them, and the outsourcing, off-shoring or simply exporting of jobs to countries with lower labour and overhead costs, many younger people simply will not remain in organizations that are seen to use and abuse their knowledge, labour and effort and will be on the ‘look-out’ for better opportunities on a regular basis.

The fact is that advertising employment opportunities, either in the general media using broadsheet and tabloid newspapers, specialist and professional magazines, high-street recruitment companies or simply using electronic recruitment sites is a very expensive business if you do not carry out the filtering process in the most sensible manner and by the right people, which incidentally is not the human resource or personnel department, conduct the right interview processes and procedures, by the people who will actually be employing and managing, to select the optimum candidate or candidates for your company.

Further, no one can move into an organization and immediately begin to contribute to the success and future of the company without first spending time being shown how the company functions, the general management and organizational structure, any outlying business areas and responsibilities and being provided with the necessary and relevant training on appropriate equipment and systems to enable them to begin to fit into the section, group, division or management structure.

It is estimated that, sensibly and depending on the level of responsibility of the position, it takes anywhere between 2 and 6 months before a 'new boy' understands the workings of an organization and the demands of his job. So, it does not pay anyone to expect too much, too soon from any new member of staff unless they have actually had dealings with an organization and already know many of the people who work for the company, even then they will not fully understand and appreciate general nuances between your company and their previous employment.

And, once someone has been recruited, trained and received guidance and instruction on the way that business is conducted and is contributing to the success of an organization, it is even more costly if that person decides, for reasons best known to themselves, to leave for another company.

People leave companies and organizations for a variety of reasons not least being remuneration and general levels of pay and re-imburements for the position they hold, and sometimes this is a result of using or employing "performance-related pay" schemes where people doing the same or a similar job are paid widely differing levels apart from length of service increases. Perhaps additional payments such as travelling expenses or payment for time spent away from the office on company business or reimbursement for items of clothing or apparel ruined whilst on company business. You might be surprised that sometimes it can be those silly, niggling extras that in fact become the 'straw that breaks the camels back'.

It could even be that the induction and training provided by the company or organization was not useful or helpful and may even have confused the requirements of the position. As the Greek philosopher Plato suggested,

"Ignorance of all things is an evil neither terrible nor excessive, nor yet the greatest of all; but great cleverness and much learning, if they be accompanied by bad training, are a much greater misfortune."

**(Plato (427 – 347 BC), Greek philosopher and author and student of Socrates)**

Of course it could be for purely personal reasons and circumstances perhaps associated with commuting distance and time to and from work, the amount of time spent at work or the loss of a life/work balance, especially when there are young or younger children in a family. In which case, and bearing in mind the cost of advertising, recruiting and training a replacement and if the person is a valuable employee, is it possible to re-negotiate their employment contract and find some way of meeting their need for more flexible work time or work patterns or even level of responsibility? Or, can they be retained and re-trained for another section or even re-deployed to another section of the company nearer their home?

There is another reason why people leave companies and organizations and it is down to the relationship between employees and direct line managers or even management at one level above. It is possible, for example, it could be a personality clash or that a particular manager employs all the wrong techniques when managing and directing his section or group, or, there might be other people in the section who make life difficult by their attitude and approach or, the equipment provided for the required tasks is either wrong or insufficient to enable the task to be carried out to the satisfaction of the employee.

For an organization to function efficiently and effectively there must be internal systems of communicating management directives, guidance or instructions and companies must understand that we all respond in different ways to those orders. Given the way in which all forms of discipline have gradually disappeared from society, particularly during school days, and the increasing importance placed on everyone knowing their rights it seems that many, particularly younger people, appear to resent the very notion of any kind of authority and even object to being told to do something. Sometimes it could simply be a personality clash or the way in which an issue is handled, nonetheless, if people do not like the way in which they are dealt with they are likely to leave.

That is why it has become necessary, paramount even, for companies to spend time and effort discovering why people leave to see if there is any kind of pattern for people leaving and to make an effort to determine whether or not anything can be done to get them to change their mind, and more especially if the person or persons leaving have provided valuable contributions to the company.

So, it is important to arrange a 'leaving interview', to be conducted by a manager who is not employed in the section or group, and well in advance of the proposed date of leaving, so that the information gleaned during discussions can be sensibly addressed and analyzed to see whether or not a particular pattern emerges. It is paramount not to seek to find fault or apportion blame or question commitment and loyalty, to explain that the leaving interview is confidential and that it is being done to enable the company to understand how they might improve their internal procedures.

It is very possible that the professional, vocational or academic qualifications demanded for the job in the original advertisement were far too high, which increasingly appears to be the case, and some employees might feel undervalued, underused or may even feel insulted if and when they discover they are not being used to their best ability. Or perhaps the professional, academic or vocational level of experience demanded was not high enough in which case some employees might struggle to fulfil the tasks required of them.

It is also possible that for one reason or another, the people who did the initial screening and sifting of the Curriculum Vitae applications, Mary, Melanie, Matthew, Jimmy or Jemima in the human resource department, was not given a clear and concise brief on the overall candidate requirements and in fact dismissed and committed to the WPB (Waste Paper Basket) candidates who were, possibly and for example assumed to be too old when in fact they were more suitable for the position.

This particular scenario appears to have become the norm over the last decade and many companies are missing out on recruiting and retaining people with knowledge and experience in favour of sticking to a very narrow age bracket, if academic studies and reports are to be acknowledged and accepted, for recruitment purposes.

Whatever, when things do not work out and someone is recruited for the wrong reason, the wrong position, at the wrong time or at the wrong level it is important to be able to recover the situation, redress the balance and make greater effort to do things better next time for the fundamental reason that advertising, recruiting, interviewing, training and replacing employees is an increasingly expensive business.

(1760 words including quotations)

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