



The Five Fundamentals of People Management

People Management tends to be the most difficult part of a leader's job. The responsibility of finding, selecting, training, and even changing people, positions, titles, or even their employer of record can be over whelming. Successful leaders understand the importance of people management and they further comprehend the requirements necessary to grow effective teams. The practical application of basic management functions including; conflict resolution, work flow improvements, organizational management, and basic leadership training can be seen as the defining point between successful and failing companies.

Successful businesses depend on leadership with the capability of proactively improving business conditions rather than the extreme opposite of waiting for a need to react. Mastering people management comes from experience gained through time and practice. This article is poised to provide an overview of some of those skills, including selecting, training, conflict resolution, improving workflow, and reduction in workforce.

Selecting

Selecting the right candidate for the job is perhaps one of the most important tasks an executive can do. A study by Harvard University found that approximately 80% of all turnovers stem from poor hiring. New employees represent a significant investment of time and money in a company's future. This investment comes attached with the expectation that the new hire will perform well and achieve the results expected.

One of the first steps to ensuring that the right applicant is selected is having a clear understanding of what the job entails and what skills are needed for that position. Discussing the job description with the immediate supervisor or co-workers of the open position will help build a solid foundation of what to look for in an applicant. Furthermore, creating a priority list of skills will help sort through interviewees.

Creating a standardized hiring process will ensure that all applicants are examined equally. Planned interview questions smooth the interview process as each applicant is asked essentially the same questions, providing the opportunity to blindly review candidates.

Team interviews and introductions can provide a better idea of how the candidate will fit with a company's culture and environment. Once the final applicants are selected consider giving a tour or overview of the company facilities. Introduce the candidate to various team-members.



Training

Despite their experience, new hires immediately represent the organization. Customers and clients will view this new employee as an expert on the company, its services and/or its products. Creating and maintaining a training program will ensure that each new hire is prepared to represent the company in a professional manner.

Developing a training program that will assist in bringing a new employee up to speed quickly and efficiently is the difference between employee retention and employee turnover. When creating a training program the following steps are crucial:

Assess: What do new employees need to know?

Design: What are the components of the program and how do they interact? ?

Develop: What tools or resources are necessary to train?

Implement: Can the program be delivered effectively?

Evaluate: How will the effectiveness of the training be measured?

Steven Covey suggested in his *Seven Habits of Highly Successful People* that introducing new hires to the various levels of management is a critical step in the assimilation of new employees. This activity will help layout the chain of command and provide new employees a better understanding of whom their immediate supervisor is, who to approach for various reporting requirements, and the different roles of each manager. This activity provides new employees with a greater understanding of the business culture and faster integration. The most effective training programs are collaborative efforts between management and employees. In many utilizing existing employees as resources for portions of a new hire program can provide a double benefit to an organization's people management program.

One method of getting a better understanding of what new employees need to know is having a clearly defined job description for each position within an organization. This can be accomplished simply by having each employee create a document describing their day-to-day jobs. The benefits from this activity are two pronged; first it helps an executive understand what employees are doing, and two, those documents can be used to help new hires understand their job. It is important to have a clear understanding of employee tasks as an employee without defined tasks, is a waste of payroll.



Conflict Resolution

One of the quickest ways to destroy employee morale is to allow unresolved conflicts to persist. It's a common mistake to believe that conflicts only affect those directly involved. A positive workplace environment requires the quick and effective diffusion of conflict. Ignoring the problem will only contribute to the problem.

Dr. Alessandra, a renowned business key-note speaker, suggests five ideas to utilize when trying to understand and resolve a conflict. Openness is his first suggestion. Those involved in the conflict need to share their feelings openly. Hiding the underlying problem will only delay the resolution of the problem. All parties involved should use I-statements that describe how they feel, rather than he-she-you statements that place blame. Doing so will reveal the core problem. This conflict could provide insight to an underlying company problem that necessitates resolution.

At the same time that one individual is sharing how they feel it needs to be emphasized to the others involved in the conflict or discussion the importance of empathy, or striving to understand the other person's view. Rephrasing the stated concern will help all gain a greater perspective of the situation. Allow both sides the same equality, the same amount of time and respect to express their ideas.

Have both parties express what behaviors are causing distress. Steven Covey also shared a similar insight by suggesting employees share actions that should be done more, less, or not at all. Throughout the process ensure that both parties remain open and positive about the situation. Approach the conflict as a way to better understand each other and to improve, rather than tear down.

Improve Workflow

Workflow can drastically affect company profit and productivity. A bogged down system will not be as effective and will react slower to changes. Improving workflow may require redesigning jobs or reassigning tasks to improve efficiencies. It may also demand new software or technology be added to aid improved process. There are many factors that must be considered when striving to improve workflow. For this reason many businesses look to outside firms that have the time, resources and know-how to analyze and create a model to improve workflow and procedures.



Workforce Changes

After invested time and money training employees it can be difficult to release them. In many cases management may delay firing employees hoping that existing conflicts will resolve themselves or that problem behaviors will change. It can be an emotional battle for the manager. Delaying the termination of problem employees can cause problems, but so can terminating one too quickly.

Once poor performance or an undesired behavior is recognized, it needs to be addressed immediately. Much like in the previous conflict resolution section above, describe to the employee the problem. Inform them of the consequence if the problem is not resolved or performance does not improve. Most importantly a deadline needs to be given, 30 days is typically more than enough time for the employee to sort out any problems and make measurable improvements

In every case leaders should always give the benefit of a doubt to the employee. Persistent behavior will continue, and only time is required to make the change. It's really not that difficult, identify and document the problem, render a solution, and simply remember, one way or another change will occur.

About Rosewood Partners, LLC

Headquartered in a rural East Texas town, Rosewood Partners, LLC is a unique management consulting group that builds on its small town roots of loyalty, partnership and commitment. Its team is comprised of industry specialists with centuries of combined practical hands on business experience in the areas of change management, operations management, off-site and staff augmentation services. Rosewood's leadership philosophy is drawn from actually having led teams located all over the world through corporate downsizing, merger and acquisition activities and everyday business operations.

With its down-to-earth small town roots Rosewood believes in keeping things simple. Real-life experience has granted its team members the ability to employ simplicity to solve real world business problems. The straightforward tasks that simplicity demands deliver the reward of constant and consistent results. It is this simplicity that drives Rosewood's OES methodology, Operational Excellence Simplified.



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