Boosting Workforce Productivity

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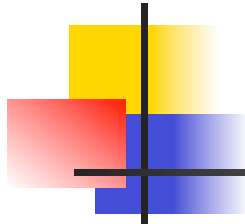Ohio State University
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Introduction

Workforce productivity:

1. The all-encompassing challenge of human resource management
2. Grows from employer/employee relationships
3. Built on foundation of trust and fairness

Also helps manager self-satisfaction

Goal

1. Call attention to opportunities for improving your workforce productivity
2. Suggest ideas for you to consider in making improvements
3. Start you thinking about a Plan of Action that fits your needs and opportunities

A caveat

1. This presentation will focus on human resource management – the people issues of worker productivity
2. Other factors can also have major impact on labor productivity, e.g., technology, physical work environment, safety, equipment, facilities, ergonomics and supplies

Overarching challenges for managers

1. Accept responsibility rather than blame employees
2. Build productive relationships with employees
3. Make fairness and trust the hallmark of interpersonal relations
4. Plan for success

Can you imagine a human resource manager succeeding with a failing grade in any 1 of these 4 challenges?

Workforce productivity defined

Products and Services Produced

per

Hour Worked

Overview of management's HR tasks

1. Create a vision of HR success
2. Develop HR strategic goals
3. Craft an organizational structure to support HR vision and strategic goals
4. Put "right" HR practices in place
5. Train and equip every worker to do their job well

Outline

Part I: Take background steps

Part II: Build strong relationships with employees

Part III: Monitor progress

Four background steps for boosting workforce productivity

1. Learn how to be a better boss
2. Design jobs that motivate and challenge employees
3. Put in place the "right" HR practices
4. Make hiring a strength

Background Step 1

Learn how to be a better boss

Introduction

- No one likes being known as a "poor boss."
- Yet many bosses suffer from:
  - Bad reputations
  - A well-known history of treating people badly
  - Lack of support
- Why?
  - *The choices they have made and continue to make!*

A note about "boss"

- Some highly effective managers take offense to being called the boss

- Alternative titles: coach, facilitator, leader, coordinator, team leader, chief, director, manager

- "Boss" in these slides because it is term most often in employees' minds

Two important facts

1. Some people have never experienced an outstanding boss!

2. Easier for some people to blame circumstances and others for their faults instead of learning to make better choices

A dozen areas of choice

1. Envision success
2. Hire well
3. Welcome change
4. Emphasize communication
5. Have clear procedures, policies and rules
6. Show enthusiasm
7. Be fair
8. Show empathy
9. Display trust through delegation
10. Continue learning and training
11. Be flexible
12. Provide performance feedback

The outcome?

MAKE MOSTLY POOR CHOICES IN THE TWELVE AREAS AND YOU WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE KNOWN AS A POOR BOSS

Background Step 2

Design jobs that motivate and challenge employees

Job design

Structuring jobs to:

- Improve employee satisfaction

- Improve efficiency

Job design facts

1. Not every person fits a job; not every job fits a person
2. The work still has to get done
3. No job is perfect
4. Job design should address the negative stereotypes of work
5. Employees prefer to have written job descriptions that make clear what the job & responsibilities are designed to be

Job design guidelines

Employees:

- Use a variety of skills
- Do a total job whenever possible
- Understand the significance of the job

Boss:

- Gives responsibility, challenge, freedom and opportunity to be creative
- Provides feedback

Background Step 3

Put in place the "right" HR practices

HR practices in preparation for hiring:

1. HR planning
2. Job analysis
3. Job design
4. Job descriptions
5. Employee handbook or written summary of key policies and procedures

Hiring practices

1. Building a pool of applicants
2. Application forms and application process
3. Evaluation of applicants including behavioral interviewing
4. Job offer

Practices to "equip" employees to succeed

1. Orientation
2. Training of new employees
3. Training of experienced employees for new responsibilities
4. Retraining

Ongoing practices

1. Safety in the workplace
2. Communication
3. Motivation
4. Conflict resolution
5. Discipline and discharge
6. Compensation
7. Benefits

A pervasive practice affecting all the previous HR practices

1. Operating within the federal and state laws affecting employment and the employer/employee relationship
2. Staying attuned to legal coverage that varies with employer characteristics
3. Adjusting to changes in the law

Background Step 4

Make hiring a strength

Success in hiring

1. No simple answer or recipe

2. Luck is not the answer

3. Planning and careful follow through on the basics lead to success

Guidelines for hiring success

1. Entire management team helps make hiring the most important HR activity
2. One manager becomes the business' hiring "expert" and leader
3. Hiring strengthens the business and addresses its weaknesses
4. Only people with a reasonable chance of succeeding are hired
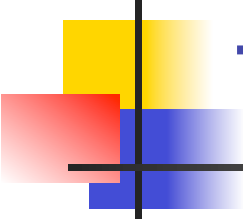5. Business and family considerations are separated to extent possible

Outline

What do employees want from their employers/supervisors?

- Fairness
- Opportunity
- Explicitness about expectations
- Information
- Sense of being important
- Feedback about performance and how to improve
- Appreciation
- Both monetary and non-monetary rewards

What motivates the most productive and highly satisfied employees?

- Challenging work
- Access to information
- Increasing responsibility
- Involvement in decision making
- Feeling of personal accomplishment
- Recognition for doing good work
- Feeling important to the business

Manager and supervisor training

- To most employees, their supervisor is the face of the business
- "More employees quit supervisors than quit jobs"
- Outstanding experience at one level does not adequately prepare one to succeed at the next level, *e.g., best worker is not ready to be a supervisor without HR training; best supervisor is not ready to be a middle manager without additional HR training*

Building relationships

- Being thought of as a good place to work comes from building relationships with employees

- The following guidelines can help but never guarantee a good relationship

1. Like, enjoy and appreciate your employees

- Bring a positive attitude
- Understand that employees easily and quickly sense a supervisor's attitude
- Work to prevent a single employee from poisoning attitudes
- Focus on the most valued employees

2. Provide training

- Train, train, train
- Ask yourself what you enjoy doing that you cannot do well
- Treat training as an investment in people
- Expect training to save time as well as enhance productivity & job satisfaction

3. Show trust and be fair

- Show trust by delegating authority and responsibility
- Use trust to build a sense of "team"
- Create more time for management by showing trust and fairness
- Avoid bias, dishonesty and injustice

4. Catch people doing things right

- Catch people doing things right and say thank you
- Emphasize the positive day-by-day and especially during performance appraisals
- Combine talk about problems with plans for improvement

5. Develop pride

- Cultivate employees having pride in each other
- Build pride in the business
- Show outsiders that employees are highly valued

6. Celebrate successes

- Celebrate employees' successes
- Reinforce the notion: "We work together; we celebrate together."
- Use celebration to express appreciation

7. Communicate clearly and often

- Understand that employees want to communicate
- Don't wait for employees to ask
- Create communication opportunities:
  - Frequent contacts with each employee
  - Phones, radios, chalkboard, message boxes
  - Staff meetings
  - At least annual performance reviews

8. Compensate fairly

- Make the monetary compensation fair
- Provide exceptional non-monetary benefits
- Provide extraordinary informal perks

9. Promote from within

- Use promotions to recognize contributions
- Use promotions to show confidence in employees
- Show employees they have advancement opportunities

10. Make the business family-friendly

- Understand employees' family frustrations
- Anticipate family caused frustrations and pressures
- Help employees deal with their family responsibilities
- Provide nontraditional assistance

11. Be proud of advancing employees

- Be proud when employees out grow the business
- Accept the disappointment of sometimes losing outstanding employees
- Turn the loss of employees to opportunities for other employees
- Work to have each employee leave with a positive attitude

12. Deal decisively with under-performers

- **Do something!**

- Refuse to allow the problem of an under-performer to fester

- Stop the negative effects on the business, productivity, job satisfaction, employee happiness and the employees' livelihoods

Outline

Part I: Four background steps for enhancing labor productivity and job satisfaction

Part II: Build strong relationships with employees

Part III: Monitor progress

Monitoring workforce productivity and job satisfaction

- Establish standards for performance based on business' strategic and human resource goals
- Measure and report actual performance
- Compare actual performance to standards
- Take corrective or preventive action as necessary

Monitoring progress

1. Ask the tough question: Am I committed to the necessary changes?

2. Determine your current strengths and weaknesses that are affecting labor productivity and job satisfaction

3. Seek input from employees and the management team

4. Develop a plan for turning each weakness into a strength.

Questions to guide corrective action

1. What do my best employees want from their employer that they are not getting?

2. What problems and needed changes are on the horizon?

3. How can we better cultivate two-way communication with employees?

4. Which of the management team's human resource management skills need improvement?

Welcoming change

- Cherish management's change-agent role
- Accept that change is difficult for most people
- Lead by showing management's willingness to change
- Give timely information about the what, why and when of change
- Understand why employees are resisting change & then address their concerns
- Allow time for changes to be accepted

Concluding Comments

1. Workforce productivity is one of your essential foundation blocks for success
2. Workforce productivity is more a manager than worker challenge
3. Choices managers make spells the difference between excellence and mediocrity

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