



Getting the Best from your Employees in 2010

Tony Elwin, Director of Durham Hair Studio, Auckland explains that he sits down each February to find out the aspirations of his staff and to help them achieve their personal and professional goals. He finds that the process motivates his team and gives them direction. *'If they want to take off a few weeks to go to Thailand, we encourage it. If they want to undertake further training, we encourage it. If we have a happy team, our clients see it and this is good for business and it certainly helps in terms of employee retention.'*

If you can understand the needs, desires and aspirations of your employees, you should be able to help them achieve their goals and dreams whilst at the same time improving their performance at work and ultimately influencing business productivity and profitability.

If your team is unhappy your business is likely to suffer through absenteeism, turnover, conflict in the workplace and customer complaints, all of which negatively impact on the success and reputation of your business.

Remember that your actions should relate directly to your strategic business plan. There is little benefit to you as a business owner to develop your team in areas that have no relevance to your business needs, unless of course supporting employees on personal development will positively affect them in the workplace. Keep in mind your vision for the business – if you want to grow and diversify, think about how you can develop your employees to fill the skill gaps.

There are many things that you can do to get the best out of your employees in 2010 which will benefit both you and your employees, leading to a more harmonious, high performing working environment.



Job Design

To get the best out of your employees, it's important that they feel their positions are meaningful to the business, that they have responsibility for their work and that they receive feedback to help them determine the effectiveness of their performance.

The design of a job should ensure that business objectives can be achieved by the job holder, while at the same time taking the job holder's needs and capabilities into consideration.

Is there anything that can be changed in the roles of your employees that will make their positions more challenging? Can some processes be eliminated or improved? Can the employee take on greater responsibility? What suggestions can they come up with to improve their position and place within the business?

Performance Feedback

Feedback to your employees shouldn't just be at the time of the annual performance appraisal, it should be an ongoing process which helps employees and managers to see how individuals, teams and the business as a whole are working towards the strategic goals.

In addition, performance feedback doesn't need to just be given by the boss – where possible seek feedback from other managers, peers customers and even suppliers to gain rounded, constructive feedback on how an employee (at all levels including management) is performing. View this process as a positive step to developing yourselves as individuals but also as a means of raising your game and the competitiveness of your business.

Recognition and Reward

If an employee performs well, they should be rewarded, but why would you continue to give quarterly or annual incentives and bonuses to those that don't achieve the expectations that you have stipulated or to those who are doing the bare minimum?



Bonuses, rewards or incentives given for excellent performance encourage employees to perform and aim high – don't give out bonuses for no reason as this reduces the perceived value of the bonus itself and it becomes an expectation not a reward. Janet Nixon, Customer Service Team Assistant of Bramall Construction, UK agreed that the annual bonus based on business profitability does become an expectation for some and as there are no personal or team performance indicators to attain in relation to the bonus, therefore, there is no pressure to perform to a heightened level.

In addition, Janet explained that there is currently no differentiation between the high performers and the low performers. This she says can be a de-motivating factor for her and other high performers. Show recognition to those that deliver high performance – make announcements, pin up notices, send out an email, congratulate the employee personally. Great performances should be recognised and they encourage others to give their best.

Treat your team

Every now and then, surprise a deserving employee. Perhaps a voucher for dinner or an adventure activity. These surprises could go to any deserving employee as a motivational tool, not necessarily to your top performers.

Talk, talk, talk

Make sure that you are communicating to your team and keeping them informed on developments, changes and factors influencing the business. Nothing makes employees more nervous and starts rumours flying like the feeling of being kept in the dark by the employer. Where possible get your employees to contribute and participate in discussions and decisions about the business, how their divisions run and consider their suggestions on how to improve processes and procedures.



Find out how your employees are feeling through conducting surveys. These can be enlightening in terms of helping business owners understand how employees view their workplace, the culture, the management and their role within the business.