THE BALANCE SHEET

SUMMER 2010 ISSUE 2

Increase Employee Engagement

Despite the fact that more Americans are unemployed right now than at any time in the past 25 years, the ones who are lucky enough to be working report their lowest levels of job satisfaction ever. The most recent survey of employee satisfaction by the Conference Board found only 45 percent of Americans are satisfied with their jobs - the lowest level ever since the survey began.

Over $300 billion annually is attributed to the lost productivity resulting from actively disconnected workers.

What really makes employees engaged, excited to come work and motivated to do a good job? Clearly just having a job is not enough to ensure job satisfaction. A recent Duke University study indicates that purely financial incentives, such as bigger bonuses, don't always correlate with increases in productivity, motivation or creativity. So what can you do?

Improve Leadership

According to a recent survey by the Society for Human Resource Management, nearly 60 percent of respondents identified poor management as the biggest obstacle to productivity. In contrast, strong and effective leadership can increase successful implementation of business strategies - as much as 22 percent, according to a leadership benchmark study. No matter what the numbers say, it just makes good business sense to improve the range and quality of leadership skills in your organization. Here are ways to do that:

- **Teach leaders how to lead.** Most employees are

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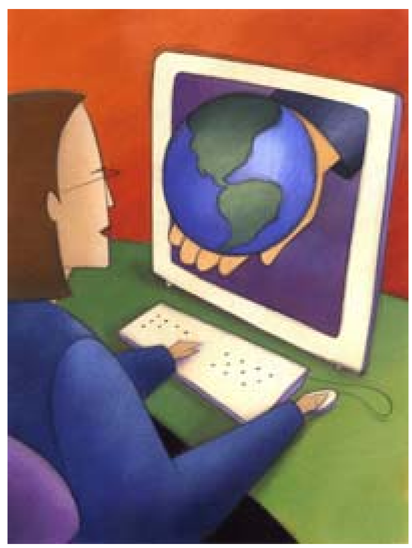
Case Study on Staying Competive



Businesses must continually change their work practices and infrastructure to stay competitive in a global market. Training staff to manage the implementation of new technology, work practices and business strategies is key. Training improves profit margins, and it can boost staff morale, promoted to leadership positions because they perform the technical aspects of their jobs well. Few ever receive formal training in soft skills such as communication, delegation and goal setting.

- Provide ongoing coaching that focuses on developing strategic thinking and providing leadership that reflects the organization's vision and objectives.
- Make good use of consultation with available experts and resources that can help your leaders get past common organizational roadblocks.

Provide Development Opportunities

In employee development, experience is the best teacher. Try delegating new responsibilities or providing challenging assignments to your employees. Ask them to chair a committee, write a draft policy or mentor a new employee. Match assignments with the developmental needs of each individual to help build new strengths. Other options include:

- Develop and support employees' involvement with appropriate professional and other outside groups.
- Use formal or informal mentoring programs to pair employees with more experienced staff members who can provide advice, recommendations and proven strategies for success.
- Include professional development as a performance goal in your evaluation processes.

Reduce Turnover

Even in a down economy, your key performers will always have other employment options. There are also signs that the economic tide is turning. According to the Bureau of Labor

communication and leadership skills, time management, and customer satisfaction. Research shows that productivity increases during times of training.

Employees who receive formal training can be 230 percent more productive than untrained colleagues working in the same role. (Smith A., 2001, Return on Investment in Training)

Training also increases staff retention, which is a significant cost savings. The loss of one competent person can be the equivalent of one year's pay and benefits! In some companies, training programs have reduced staff turnover by 70 percent and led to a 7000 percent improvement in ROI.

Situation:

Symmetry recently assisted a healthcare facility to create a culture change initiated by its newly-appointed CEO. The goal was to reduce turnover in key service areas, and improve attendance.

Approach:

All executive and front-line managers participated in a

Statistics, in the first quarter of 2009 more people quit their jobs than were laid off. Now is the time to engage your best employees, so that as the economy improves, they will stay on your team. Here are keys to reducing staff turnover:

- **Invest in training and development.** Employees who believe that their company invests in their success are more positive about their jobs, colleagues and employers.
- **Improve your management team's leadership skills.** Studies consistently show that conflict with a manager or supervisor is one of the main reasons employees leave.
- **Encourage a culture of investment.** Research supports that employees who are satisfied with their jobs are more likely to stay at them longer. People are more satisfied when they feel that what they are doing matters and is an important part of "the big picture."

SYMMETRY Can Help

For more information or assistance, please contact Symmetry at (800) 236-7905 or (414) 256-4800.

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series of facilitated sessions to operationalize the new philosophy. Managers received opportunities for skill development and honed the ability to practically apply the tenets of the newly-created culture. Additionally, internal support systems and learning communities were formed for future development initiatives.

Result:

Within four months of the newly-created initiative, managers were demonstrating the core principles with competency and initiating the roll-out to their respective staff. Morale has improved resulting in reduced absenteeism and increased staff retention. Another positive impact was seen in the reduction of staff and customer complaints. This healthcare organization is now seeing consistency, confidence, and increased engagement in its employees - clearly confirming that this culture changes is working as desired.