

Employee Development

Building employee morale and enhanced value to the organization

Company growth is closely aligned with the commitment to employee development. A company that wants to attract and retain valuable people needs to participate in employee growth and development. New employees will find it rewarding to learn more and take on new challenges. Progress is a result of an organization that fosters learning and constant improvement.

Mentoring to foster employee development, helps both the new employee and the mentor. Some time ago there was case of a new employee who came equipped with technical skill in a new area. He had done research in a breaking new discipline in his master's degree studies. The mentor recognized the value of this, and he introduced this new discipline into the analyses at hand. This got the attention of management and the major customer, too. It became the new effective way of approaching a difficult analytical task. Everybody benefitted from the experience.

Additional training and employee development is beneficial to the employee and the company, whether it is in-house training or a seminar brought inside from outside expert resources. In fact, some seminars are free because they fulfill an element of the sales function of suppliers. (Sales is an educational process.) Reimbursement of employee studies at the university or seminars is a good investment because it imparts new knowledge to promising individuals, and it makes them more valuable. In addition, it makes the organization a desirable place to work. Further, promotion from within is fostered, and it demonstrates the company's faith in the abilities of the employee and its dedication to employee development.

Star performers need to be recognized by a pat on the back, but ignoring this need can be demoralizing. Performance can suffer if the employee receives no recognition for their efforts. The creative learning process can be encouraged by openness to new ideas or suggestions. Management can formalize this process with suggestion plans or with cash rewards attached for useful ideas. Cynics claim that the employees are being paid to perform without special recognition or rewards. Experience has proven them wrong.

Stages of Employee Development – looking ahead to what comes next

A. Exploration – The exploration stage is defined by routine, guided work where the employee gets help and is allowed to take initiative as he is able to do so. During this stage, the employee development is that of a self image and the employee learns what he can excel at doing.

B. Establishment – The establishment stage is defined by independent specialization where the employee has mastered certain specialties and has become significantly more productive. This is the stage of employee development where the employee can take on important organizational responsibilities.

C. Mid Career – The mid career stage is where the employee can guide others in their development. The employee knows the requirements and goals clearly and can develop and mentor others. Mentoring is gratifying to most employees as they feel that they are now able to contribute to the organization through the contributions of others.

The final stage is disengagement; the career turns to organizational direction and decision making. The manager looks ahead to retirement and acceptance of new roles. With a long view of the future, the employee and his manager can effectively plan for future development events in his career.

The Role of the Supervisor - Coaching the employee in his development is the ongoing role of the supervisor. He provides positive comment and corrective feedback. He gives organizational insights, information, and advice. He imparts good planning by teaching the discipline of goal setting and checking progress. He allots time and money for employee development. He also finds opportunity for application of new learning, which is the heart of employee development.

The supervisor allows for the employee learning curve. It takes time to learn new skills and apply them. This is not an overnight process. He engages the employee in friendly conversation, drawing him out and providing feedback. Career coaching is another facet of employee supervision.

The Role of the Employee - The savvy employee seeks out a variety of assignments, and he is willing to tackle tough problems. He will be in a position to coach others who could benefit from his particular set of knowledge and skills. He should be willing to take on varied assignments that offer different challenges and learning experiences. Goal setting and attendant planning operations should be a part of his development.

He should be called upon to conduct meetings and make special presentations of his findings. On occasion he will be called upon to participate on a large scale committee including networking with others who are working to meet company goals.