

A BRIEF ON STAFF MANAGEMENT

While the exciting creation of a promising business surely is dependent upon the talents of its creators, the continuing success of a business lies with hiring and maintaining a properly trained staff who have agreed to serve the business within a given set of guidelines for an equitable compensation. The staff must work as a team and be dedicated to fulfilling the stated mission for which that business has been created. These employees are as valuable an asset to a firm as its capital assets, since a lack or misuse of either can essentially shut down operations and place its very existence at risk. Financial recompense for an employee's service is but one factor to acquiring and retaining qualified staff. There is an equally important need for staff to operate within a harmonious work environment and to achieve a personal degree of job satisfaction.

Throughout the lifecycle of a business, there will inevitably be changes that will need to be accommodated and mastered to the benefit of the firm. Changes in technology, changes in the needs and/or desires of the population served, and changes in economic conditions may alter the way business is conducted short term, and the way it is positioned for the future. Continuing education for staff will enable a smooth transition during times of change and ensure they consistently perform at optimum levels. Having a well-trained staff and providing the education required to maintain such, should be a high priority and will ultimately boost productivity, save money, lessen liabilities and reflect positively on the capabilities of the business as a whole.

It is important to recognize those employees who exhibit a good work ethic and steady accomplishment, and reward those who continually exceed in these capacities. Might this not only satisfy the need for job satisfaction but also set an example to other employees of what is deemed to be exceptional performance. Examples of the types of recognition might be (a) a verbal compliment in the company of one's peers (b) a written accommodation to foster one's personnel file (c) an expansion of work responsibilities showing confidence and trust in one's abilities, or (d) a one-time bonus or increase in salary as is deemed appropriate.

A harmonious work environment is also essential to the optimal performance of the workforce. Unfavorable working conditions and employee conflicts are time-consuming, nonproductive and costly. Comfort, fellowship, professionalism and respect should be promoted within the workplace at all times. However, even within the most harmonious of families, squabbles and disputes will arise from time to time between the employees themselves or between employees and their superiors. It is essential that these issues be addressed and resolved as quickly as possible and "to the satisfaction of all parties" so as not to allow a little heat to grow into a conflagration and disrupt the orderly operations of the business. If the expectations of one's duties and the parameters under which those duties are performed are clearly communicated, then an occasional reminder is usually all that is required to correct any deviation from a proper course of action.

A majority of conflicts occur when proper communication and protocol have broken down. Determining where the breakdown has occurred is only a first step. The breakdown should also be reviewed for relevance or effectiveness and altered or repaired to negate the possibility of reoccurrence. There may, however, be the occasion when an employee infraction rises to a level of a more serious form of action. In such a case, the issue must **first** be investigated, discipline found to be warranted and then dealt with swiftly within legal confines and “good sense”. Additionally, the employee should have the disciplinary action completely “and without bias” explained to him. He should be shown where his actions may have placed an undue burden on the rest of the staff, make known the corrective action and how he can once again become a valued member of “the team” and then dispense with any further mention of the incident. Remember, we are dealing with a company asset in which we have invested much. It would be in the best interest of the business to salvage and reinvigorate the asset rather than replace it.

Up until now, I have only mentioned the word Management once. Prior mention of the word would have been redundant because inherent in the title is the recognition that it is incumbent upon Management to provide an environment conducive to accomplishing the aforementioned by deed and by example. A successful Manager should be regarded as a member of the “labor team” who has the responsibility, leadership qualities, knowledge and mandated authority to direct and oversee the mission of the business as required. Operating within the confines of a budget, maintaining effective work schedules, presiding over the acquisition and replacement of equipment, negotiating service contracts, materiel management and progress reporting are just some of the duties a Manager must tend to on a daily basis. While each is as important as the other, it is all inconsequential without a qualified and compliant staff.

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