

## Workforce planning

Does your business need quality employees to be successful?

Though this may sound like a rhetorical question, it's not meant to be. It's meant to be a strategic question that will provide the framework for this column. Organizations need quality employees to be successful and to have them they need to be outstanding at workforce planning, implementation and stabilization.

Workforce planning is a flexible process that adapts to business needs. It's similar to a supply chain in a factory where many drivers influence cost and quality of the final product.

Perhaps the first workforce planning question should be, "What functions will people perform and why?" From this question job descriptions, workforce numbers, compensation and management structures are determined.

Workforce planning must then move from just being an accounting activity to an organizational design and learning reality, to align the people factor to business needs.

Five core points that influence workforce planning success:

*Attracting a Workforce* – Companies are experiencing a workforce shortage. Demographic research suggests over the next five years they will be short millions of workers. The psychology of why employees come and go is mission critical for executive leaders. If I were on a board of directors today, I would have two questions for the CEO: "Why would an employee want to work and stay with our organization? Where are your facts?" Understanding the employee value proposition is important for attracting a workforce.

*Quality of Employee* – For an organization to understand what quality employees would look like there must be clear definitions (e.g., defined core competencies, experiences, training and traits). Organizations can't assume; they need to do research and due diligence to get the right facts. This ensures workforce planning includes facts for implementing a fair and defensible selection process, succession planning, knowledge transfer, capacity mapping and promotion process.

*Employee Engagement* – Having a workforce that's not engaged may in some cases be no better than having no workforce. When employees don't see or link how their assigned tasks impact an organization's success, don't believe they are doing meaningful work, see no job or career mobility or don't trust management, workforce disengagement results.

*Employee Retention* – Turnover costs are staggering. Turnover can't be eliminated, but it can be slowed down. Retention is not just keeping employees, it's also keeping quality ones. Every company has a pool of stars that are its A team. But just as important is the B team. These employees are competent in their roles, are great at following, are loyal, want to do a job, and do the majority of the work. This group needs to be recognized and acknowledged on a regular basis. They don't expect huge bonuses; however, they expect to be rewarded for good work. A paycheque is just not good enough today. Genuine appreciation, tokens of thanks and deserved perks go a long way.

*Executive Reaction* – This is actions senior management takes to address the above four points. Too many senior managers' views of what's important to a workforce are not the same as the workforce's. My advice for senior management is if you want the truth unfiltered, use external resources that can get you the facts without emotion or agenda. This will help stabilize the



workforce planning process and allow you to continue to search for ways to influence the workforce's head, heart and hands.

Workforce planning is not a static process; it's dynamic and takes continued commitment to quality. Gone are the days of employers having a large flock to pick from. Today's flock is smart; they know what they want; they know their rights; and they have clear expectations. Employers who work with employees to help them meet their expectations will have a workforce committed to meeting company expectations.

