

## **Building a Winning Team-Part 2**

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This is Part 2 in our three part series on professional and progressive personnel practices. In Part 1, we explored recruitment, screening and the selection process for building a winning team. Our focus here, in Part 2, is on retaining quality employees, while Part 3, in our next issue, will look at key components if you are terminating an employee.

Through the selection process you've assembled a winning team. Now it is up to you to make the members a cohesive unit, focused on your goals including excellent service and financial success.

A fundamental part of retaining quality staff is creating an environment, a culture if you will, that supports and acknowledges staff's contributions. To do so it's important to understand what quality staff are looking for from their employer. We surveyed hundreds of staff, and here's what we found is what they want and what will contribute to greater employee satisfaction and productivity:

### **12 ESSENTIALS FOR BUILDING A WINNING TEAM**

1. Ethically sound business principles and quality patient services.
2. A consistent and fair management style.
3. Policies that are friendly, frank, fair and firm, consistently applied and clearly explained in writing.
4. A pleasant and harmonious work environment with minimal stress.
5. Adequate facility, instruments, tools, equipment and supplies.
6. A competent, supportive and compatible staff.
7. Assistance in learning to become more skilled, develop communication skills, making decisions, taking initiative.
8. Clearly defined job responsibilities and expectations.
9. Recognition as an individual. Knowing that their efforts are being appreciated.
10. Adequate compensation and benefits.
11. Performance feedback.
12. Worthwhile staff meetings.

From these foundational premises, here are key components for effectively managing staff:

- Employees normally respond best to firm and equitable treatment. Have written personnel policies to assure fair and consistent treatment of all employees.
- Staff morale often reflects the business owner's attitude. If you project a positive outlook, they are likely to respond the same way.
- Avoid becoming involved in the private lives of those you supervise. However, if a problem affects an employee's work, it needs to be dealt with and promptly resolved.
- Have a written job description for each position. Train employees accordingly and know how each employee is doing. Conduct performance appraisals regularly to ensure good communication and mutual understanding.
- Administer holiday, vacation pay and all other employee benefits in a systematic and equitable manner.
- It is the manager's responsibility to ensure good working relationships by disallowing any comments or actions that could be construed as disrespectful or could otherwise create an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment.

Remember that the employment relationship is a two way street-not just one where the employee works for you, but one where you work with the employee. Good, sound leadership is an absolute necessity for the productive growth of a business. Effective leadership requires that you manage your workers so that the job is done in the safest, least expensive and most effective way possible.

Additionally, the mutual interest of both employer and employee can best be served by living these principles:

- Recognize that compensation due any of us is in direct proportion to the quality of service we provide
- Pay wages equal to or slightly higher than the average paid in the community for comparable work
- Hire quality people by using methodical and effective hiring techniques
- Observe and record individual progress and reward meritorious performance
- Avoid any violations of anti-discrimination laws in hiring and in all phases of the employer/employee relationship
- Observe and follow established problem resolution procedures
- Maintain reasonable hours of work, good employee benefits and the best possible working conditions.

### **Managing Performance: Employee Performance Reviews**

Performance reviews ensure that employees clearly understand your expectations and how you perceive their performance. The first step is to create clear, written job descriptions. Be sure each job description provides a listing of essential duties as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), along with the job's performance requirements, responsibilities and expectations.

Written job descriptions help:

- Prevent lawsuits
- Increase productivity

When you hire someone, introduce him or her to your review process by completing two performance evaluations in the first 90 days, one after four weeks and a second after 11 weeks. This approach compels you to observe the new employee's performance closely, an important step since for legal and managerial reasons it's better to let someone go during the orientation and training period rather than later. (As an aside, to help avoid undermining your "at-will" employment prerogatives, don't use the word "probation" to describe this time period.)

Use our "**New Employee Progress Report**" form to help you identify issues you should evaluate in these new-hire review meetings, including job knowledge, dependability, attendance record, attitude, and cooperation. Our regular "**Performance Appraisal**" form covers a variety of additional issues.

Nothing you say in a performance review should come as a surprise. So use daily opportunities to advise employees of their progress. Remember that feedback need not be just negative—in fact, you should look for reasons to give compliments. As a general rule, positive feedback can be given in front of others, while negative feedback should be given in private. Make notes and place in the employee's file as reminders for later use when preparing their performance review.

1. Decide on clear, objective expectations for the job.
2. Communicate expectations to the employees involved.
3. Let employees know how they are doing.
4. Document employees' performance, especially disciplinary measures.

Your notes help assure that you base your formal review of the employee's performance on incidents that happened throughout the year and not just on recent events. And it's hard for an employee to claim that they didn't know about a particular situation if you put a note about your conversation in his or her file.

### **An Incentive Program**

As noted earlier, a fundamental part of retaining quality staff is supporting and acknowledging individual and collective contributions. Compliments and performance appraisals are easy ways to support and acknowledge staff individually. One of the best ways to collectively acknowledge and reward staff is through an incentive program. Essential elements of a good incentive program are:

1. A capable and motivated staff. Without a committed staff, no incentive program is going to work successfully.
2. The objective(s) must be attainable and every participant must have a chance of earning rewards.
3. The program must be clearly defined in writing.
4. Do not change the rules midstream
5. Pay earned incentives promptly.
6. Establish methods for periodically measuring the effectiveness of the program
7. Conduct final evaluation and analysis of the program.

### **In Summary**

Take care of your employees and they will take care of you.