Transforming the Organization: Building an Effective Employee Development Program

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ABSTRACT

Utilities that successfully deal with the impact of workforce issues, including employee and leadership development, succession planning, and knowledge retention, will be much better equipped to deal with the challenges ahead – increasingly stringent regulations, higher customer expectations, management and employee changes, aging infrastructure needs, technology pressures, security concerns, economic constraints, and more.

KEYWORDS: Employee Development, Employer of Choice, Strengths,

INTRODUCTION

The utility industry is facing a major generational change in the next ten years as the Baby Boomer generation retires. To compound matters the next generation is made up of a significantly smaller workforce. The majority of utilities are only now beginning to realize the challenges that lay ahead of them. A significant workforce crisis is looming and utilities need to prepare for it.

Utilities that successfully deal with the impact of workforce issues are those organizations that have created a workforce that feels passionate about what they do. The utility that has created an Employer of Choice culture is the organization that people want to be a part of. In an Employer of Choice, employees are activity engaged in what the organization is about, in its purpose. An important component of being an Employer of Choice is a comprehensive employee development program; a program that builds on an employee’s strengths and passions in both their work and personal lives. Regardless of the focus, work, home or play, excellence is only possible with an actively engaged heart.

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

The Employee Development Planning process begins with a “person-type” assessment that assists the employee in identifying their strengths and relating them to what the organization needs to meet its strategic objectives (Figure 1). A facilitated approach is then used to discuss employee strengths, both work related and personal, and guide the process of developing the
employee’s personal development plan. The process asks three basic questions:

- In your approach to your work, what do you consider your strengths to be?
- In what areas in your work could you be more effective?
- Given where you want to go in your career, what strengths will you need to add or develop in order for you to accomplish your goal?

To identify an employee’s strengths they should consider the following:

- Talents – things they were born with. These are naturally recurring patterns of thought, feeling, or behavior that can be productively applied.
- Knowledge – what they have learned. The facts and lessons learned in life.
- Skills – also learned. Skills are the steps of an activity. The provide structure to experiential knowledge.

In the planning process it is important to build goals around “SMART” goal setting. Plans should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound.

The plan is then reviewed with the employee’s supervisor on a quarterly basis. Employee development and leadership development are brought together to support the utility’s mission and overall success.

Summary

An effective employee development program should build a high-performing workforce with the competencies necessary to drive success and sustainability and meet the organization’s strategic goals. A successful employee development program allows a utility to be consistent with what they hire people for, train them in, what the utility measures their performance against, and develop leadership potential.