



TAKE THE HEAT OFF HR – ENCOURAGE CAREER SELF-MANAGEMENT

Is tackling talent management one of your goals this year? Employees are becoming more demanding, and topping their list is professional growth and development. These are the employees you should be striving to keep. They want new challenges, interesting work, and the opportunity to develop new skills. Even if you don't have the resources to implement a full-scale career development program, you can still provide your employees with the tools and support to manage their own careers.

Provide a Dedicated Resource

This can be as simple as adding a new page to your intranet or as elaborate as a career development office. Offer as much as your budget will allow, keeping in mind that you can expand as time goes on. Include resources, referrals and tools to aid your employees in their development. With the amount of information available on the Internet, you can easily assemble a wealth of career-related articles, assessments, and planning tools. If you haven't done so already, publish your company's internal information. Organization charts, job descriptions, salary ranges, and training schedules are great resources for employees to use in planning.

Because career management may be new to your employees, include detailed instructions for using your system and a list of resources available to them in their planning. If you can't provide a career development consultant, make certain that HR and managers are able to answer any questions that may arise.

Programs & External Resources

There are several initiatives you can incorporate in your career development program. Executive Career Coaches specialize in helping organizations manage their talent more effectively. They will help your employees determine the most appropriate career path and develop the skills necessary to grow within the organization. Partner with a career coach to provide services for key employees or arrange a reduced fee schedule for employees who wish to hire a coach at their own expense.

Another effective and low-cost tool is a mentoring program. You can structure a mentoring program in many ways. An informal program that simply matches a mentor and a mentee can be incorporated into your intranet site. A more formal program may have a coordinator dedicated to pairing the participants, training the mentors and overseeing the process. Regardless of the structure you choose, a mentoring program enables an organization to leverage their existing talent to impart their knowledge and expertise to one another.

Support & Communication

For any talent management initiative to be successful, it is imperative to garner the support of management from the top of the organization down to line managers. This goal can be achieved by communicating the organizational benefits and the anticipated return on investment from the outset.

It is essential to roll out a formal communication plan to employees. They can't take advantage of your program if they don't know about it. Promote your program consistently and encourage managers to do the same. Publicize this information in your recruitment literature and on your company website, and it will attract high-potential candidates.

Encouraging employees to manage their own careers won't put a strain on internal resources and the benefits far outweigh the costs. In addition to building a pipeline of future leaders, you are addressing retention issues, meeting the demand for employee development, and making your organization more attractive to prospective employees. It's a win-win for everyone.

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