

HIRE FOR BEHAVIORS, NOT SKILLS

By: Kathy Gurchiek

“Success is two Things – what you do and how you do it,” said Pamela Bezona, the presenter at “Radical Hiring: Turn Your Interview Techniques Upside Down,” a workshop at the recent SHRM Annual Conference in Washington, DC.

Employers hire for skills and struggle with employee behavior, the employee development manager for Costco Wholesale in Washington State told the more than 100 attendees.

You can teach essential job functions, but you can't teach behaviors, she emphasized, calling on HR Professionals to make revolutionary changes in how they interview job candidates.

Savvy candidates today have a plethora of resources to help them prepare for the job interview, and a candidate's enthusiasm and appearance are the two characteristics that most influence hiring decisions, she said.

In addition, some interviewers are like inept quarterbacks that “telegraph their pass” by giving candidates clues to the answers they are looking for or ask questions in a way that invites candidates to invent answers. Interviewers typically have the candidate talk about what he or she did in their former or current job, not how the task was accomplished, which doesn't shed light on the candidate's behavior.

It shouldn't be surprising, then, if the new hire isn't team oriented, can't communicate or isn't self-directed, Bezona observed. He or she won't change once on the job.

Turn the process on its head

The key is to hire the right person with the right behaviors, she said. This requires knowing what behaviors are important to the position

you are seeking to fill and using skillful interviewing techniques to identify people with those behaviors.

Participants of the workshop broke into small groups to identify such things as the qualities and characteristics of good and bad employees. Among characteristics of a bad employee that people shared: someone with a poor attitude, a sense of entitlement or lack of initiative; a complainer; a know-it-all. Among characteristics of a good employee: good listener; flexible; takes initiative; is motivated; is respectful; knows when to lead and when to follow.

None of the characteristics mentioned in either group dealt with competencies, Bezona pointed out. “What we struggle with is the behavior employees exhibit when they're on the job,” not that they can't write code or work a computer, she said. “Identify the behavior essential for success for whatever position you're hiring for.”

Past performance is the best indicator of future performance, she reminded the session attendees. Drill down for details to identify predictable behavior. Listen carefully to a candidate's response.

If you are looking for someone who can adjust positively to change, when you ask if they have experienced a setback in a project, listen for how they experienced the setback. If you want to learn whether the candidate has ever had his or her routine interrupted, listen for how they dealt with the interruption. Acute listening focuses on such things as assessing the candidate's behavior, word choice, content and context of replies, body language, and facial expressions.

Source: SHRM Conference Daily – Monday, June 26, 2006

‘Past performance is the best indicator of future performance.’

-Pamela Bezona, employee development manager for Costco Wholesale, Washington

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“The true basis [of authority lies in] earnest cooperation. Since cooperation, in turn, implies such things as selflessness, devotion to common cause, generosity in attitude and mutual confidence, it is easy to see that actual unity in an allied command depends directly upon the individuals in the field. This problem involves the human equation and must be met day by day. Patience, tolerance, frankness, absolute honesty in all dealings, ... and firmness are absolutely essential.”

-Dwight David Eisenhower

BIDDING Adieu

By: Matt Bolch

As retirement parties for baby boomers become more common, employers should think through – and adopt some standards for – these observances.

Esther Riel fondly recalls her retirement party last year from privately owned Globe Manufacturing Co. in Pittsfield, N.H.

Sitting in a new recliner, clutching flowers from the company's owners and waiting for four huge cakes to be served, Riel was regaled by management and co-workers. Her gifts included the recliner, which the company later moved to her home, a set of luggage for a planned trip to Montana, birthstone jewelry and cash.

"They do [retirement parties] for everybody, so I knew what was coming," Riel says, referring to her 22-year career with the company, where she spent most of her time sewing pockets on coats. "They go out of their way," she says, adding, "I have a friend who worked for 38 years at a Library in Massachusetts, and they did nothing for her when she retired.

Globe, the manufacturer of protective equipment for firefighters and emergency workers may be unusual in that it has a written policy regarding retirements, notes HR manager Gayle Troy, SPHR. For retiring employees with 10 or more years of service, the company purchases gifts and/or gives cash equal to \$100 for each year of service. So at Riel's going-away gala, she received gifts and cash valued at \$2,200.

Troy and her HR staff query a retiring employee's co-workers, family and others for gift ideas to make each party special. "When I first started here, there were a lot of people ready to retire," Troy says. "After three or four of them, I determined we needed a policy, and \$100 a year seemed like a nice compromise." One to three Globe employees retire each year.

Troy admits that what works at Globe Manufacturing, with 387 employees in Pittsfield and 49 at a second location in Ada, Oklahoma, might not work for other companies. "Our celebrations cost very little, except for the gift itself," she says. "The personal touch throughout the process makes all the difference."

LIFETIME EMPLOYMENT

Retirement celebrations will become increasingly common as the baby boom generation nears its golden years. Holding appropriate send-offs for these milestones may become an important morale builder for employees rapidly approaching their own retirement.

For most workers, however, the era of one career-long employer is long gone. Mergers, acquisitions, consolidations, downsizings, rightsizings and waves of start-up companies have muddied what was once a clear employment landscape, creating a more mobile workforce that often expects to change jobs several times over a career.

POLICIES RARE

Many organizations take a personal approach to planning employment retirement parties, but rarely are celebration policies codified outside of government and university settings.

Retirements aren't one of our big deals. But when it happens, it's handled on a local basis by the local management group," says Dave Quint, SPHR, HR director at JRN Inc., a Columbia, Tenn.-based franchise of 165 fast-food restaurants. The company employs 3,800 workers in 10 states. "We're in the quick-serve business, and we usually don't have a lot of long-term people." But Quint recalls that one of his former employers, a family-owned lumber company in Indiana, made a big deal out of retirements, holding an annual dinner for all of its retirees and their spouses.

City College of San Francisco has both formal and ad hoc retirement events, including an annual chancellor's party for faculty, administrators and classified employees sponsored by the faculty association. Martha Lucey, dean of marketing and public information, calls the event "semi-official." Faculty and administrators receive a captain's chair or rocking chair with the college logo, and those with fewer years of service receive a crystal apple with an inscription.

Faculty and staff are often feted at department events, and some retirees who have made notable contributions are recognized at the Board of Trustees level, Lucey says. Recently retired art instructor and Art Department Chair Roger L. Baird, for example, had a revolving exhibit gallery renamed in his honor by the trustees. The key is to treat everyone equally on the basis of tenure, not performance or title.

EQUITY A CONCERN

Establishing a policy that ensures equitable observances of retirements is smart not only from an employee relations standpoint, but from a legal standpoint as well. Companies that don't treat employees equitably can be subject to discrimination claims, says Heather Gatley, E.V.P. of HR services and general counsel at AlphaStaff Group Inc., a Fort Lauderdale, FL-based HR outsourcing company.

Even considering the hassle that planning a retirement party can represent, the benefits to morale far outweigh the time and company resources expended on the effort. For retirees, a send-off party can put a punctuation mark on a fulfilling career.

Source: HR Magazine, June 2006

*Even impromptu affairs
can elicit feelings of
warmth and camaraderie
among employees.*

A “CARROT” A DAY MEANS EMPLOYEES WILL STAY...

By: Stephen Miller

If you want to attract and keep 24-karat employees, deploy the power of the “carrots” that motivate and reward, advised Chester Elton, best-selling co-author of *A Carrot a Day*.

“People are any organization’s asset, but do you make them feel that way?” he asks.

Elton pointed to research showing that 88% of North American workers cite “lack of acknowledgement” as their top work issue, while 79% leave due to lack of appreciation. “They’ll tell HR its because of money,” Elton said, because they don’t want to seem like whiners or get into a blame game. But they’re more honest with independent researchers.

While a fair compensation and benefits package “is absolutely essential to getting employees through the door,” Elton said, it’s recognition and appreciation that “get them engaged.” Additionally, engaged, appreciated workers are more productive.

A culture of appreciation makes praising employee efforts – and rewarding results – a daily occurrence. HR should make it part of its mission to teach managers how they are symbolic but meaningful, Elton advised. Simple acts of recognition can include:

- Sending a letter of praise to the family
- Remembering special days
- Granting a half-day off to spend with the kids
- Making a gift of tickets to a movie or ballgame
- Giving just a pat on the back.

Managers should survey their employees to learn how they would like to be rewarded, “so they don’t give Starbucks cards to non-coffee drinkers,” he noted. However, to create a culture of recognition where carrots are pervasive, managers may have to confront their “vegephobia” which often consists of:

- Fear of getting too familiar
- Fear of wasting their time
- Fear that praise will lead to a request for a raise
- Fear of playing favorites.

These are usually not legitimate concerns, Elton said, noting that sending out the message that “our top performers will be rewarded” is exactly what you want to communicate. As for being time-consuming, “how long does it take to handwrite a note? About 90 seconds.” It takes maybe a few minutes to call an employee’s colleagues around to present a token of appreciation” – unless the employee has indicated to keep such recognition private.

For relatively small investments, the proven results of unleashing carrot power – higher retention rates; greater sustained productivity; and a more committed workforce – makes the effort pay back in spades.

Source: *SHRM Conference Daily* – Monday 6/26/06

CURRENT SEARCHES

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CONFLICT IS GOOD?

Avoiding conflict is one of the most common ways to become a hostage to it. Ironically, if you avoid conflict, your brain is actually working correctly. At the primitive level, our brain is hardwired to avoid conflict. The mind’s eye tells us “conflict could be dangerous.” However, it is important to rewire our brain so that we can learn to step toward conflict instead of stepping back and away from it.

Conflict occurs as a natural, and inevitable, part of human relationships. It can stimulate us to search for a basis of compromise and cooperation. It is possible to use conflicts to teach and develop ourselves. Conflict is also a major stimulus for curiosity and creativity. With this mind-set, conflict is positive. It is a process to be managed so that the destructive potential is converted to a positive outcome.

Conflict reflects energy and is a potential source of commitment to a team and an organization. Teams become high performing because they are able to have intense arguments or constructive fights and because they maintain the emotional bonding involving rules of respect and engagement and focus on common goals and the positive outcome. To create an environment of cooperation, a



“win-win” attitude is essential for effectively managing conflict. It involves finding the best solutions to a problem while maintaining the relationship through the emotional bonding.

Handled well, the differences that arise between people will lead to creative problem solving and successful deepening of those relationships. When

we address a conflict and take action to resolve it, it has a positive effect; there is a better result and a better long-term relationship ...

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

From the Desk of Deb Gallant - "Employee Retention"



DEBORAH L. GALLANT

Effective hiring and retention go together; they complement each other. If both are done well, they produce what every company needs; first-class human assets. However, the act of retention is often ignored until its too late. Keeping the “winners” is extremely important. Most companies surveyed by the Center for Organizational Research had turnover rates in the 15 to 20% range. How do you stay away from this large percentage? You keep your employees satisfied enough to make them believe their needs will be better met at your organization than anywhere else.

“How?” The solutions to employee retention are complex, but the application of tactics to address the issue of retention in individual organizations is often simple, straightforward - and effective. Give them what they want. “What do employees want?” The same things they have always wanted - challenging and stimulating work, fair pay, the tools and resources needed to do their

jobs, recognition for work well done and involvement in the decisions that impact their day to day lives at work.

The problem is that, in a labor market where it is increasingly difficult to attract and retain quality workers, competition between employers is fierce. Suddenly just addressing the basic needs of employees and recognizing their efforts isn't enough. This is where new innovative benefits may come into play. Our clients are now offering “the extras” such as on-site daycare services, dry cleaning and laundry pick-up/delivery services, shopping services, pet care and pet insurance, as well as on-site exercise facilities/showers among many others.

Retention essentially begins (and *ends*) with the Managers. Supervisors should keep an open line of communication with their employees. Ask them, “What will it take to keep you working here?” “What would make you go?” Managers must mentor and challenge their employees, and they need to identify and encourage each employee’s career growth and development. It is important to recognize and appreciate your staff.

Keeping employees happy can be simple and inexpensive: be supportive of each employee’s work/family balance, create a casual dress day (i.e. jeans on Friday), offer flextime, telecommunication and job-sharing policies. All this can create a positive, supportive and preferable working environment. With these tools, you can become the “employer of choice.”
