

ATN Business Sense
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Once upon a time there were some old fashioned ideas about training. On one occasion, a business owner said, it is no use training people as they might leave. True enough. But, on the other hand, what if you do not train them and they stay! Employers who still have old fashioned ideas about training will ultimately wither on the vine and fail.

You can't afford training? If that seems to be the case you need to examine your business model. Refine it and develop strategies and actions to improve profitability and update your Strategic Business Plan. Write down and include your human resource strategy and include action plans to train your people.

Your human resource strategy should also include how you treat your people. On another occasion, an accountant at an employer said an employee had used up her sick leave and as she was taking some more time when her husband had an operation, it would have to be unpaid. Enquiry revealed that the leave taken recently was to nurse her sick husband, not sick leave for herself. The employee did a good job so the managing director directed that she be given compassionate leave to help her husband recuperate and that she be re-credited with the leave previously treated as sick leave. Your human resource policy should state how you treat your people.

It is the right thing to train your people. It is really commonsense for your people, for the employer and for the community.

Leadership is complex and capable business leaders acknowledge the importance of personal development for themselves and their people. They understand the need for on-going learning and to make it part of the culture of their organisation. Some particularly enlightened organisations even allow their people to do some training of their choice even if it is not related to their work.

Some business owners control from the top when leadership is what is really required. They believe they have to be intimately involved in many aspects of the business and keep too much decision-making to themselves. As Amar, Hentrich & Hlupic wrote in the December 2009 Harvard Business Review (HBR), "leadership is not really about delegating tasks and monitoring results; it is about imbuing the entire workforce with a sense of responsibility for the business."

Another HBR writer, Washburn, quoted some recent research showing that "CEOs who put stakeholders' interests ahead of profits generate greater workforce engagement – and thus deliver the superior financial results that they have made a secondary goal." If people see their CEO as mainly focussing on maximising profits, employees develop negative feelings towards their employer. A CEO can be seen as autocratic, employees are less willing to sacrifice for the company and performance is poorer. Washburn reported research which found that "when the CEO makes it a priority to balance the concerns of customers, employees, and the community while

also taking environmental impact into account, employees perceive him or her as visionary and participatory.” People were more willing to exert extra effort and corporate results improved.

In summary, a manager’s job is to make people successful, not by being a policeman but by finding a way to energise, excite and enthuse them.

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