

Leveraging People Factors: The Quest For Optimising Human Performance



Today I want to remind you (and myself) that we only have four months left to prepare for the 2020 workplace. But how will this new workplace look? While it is evident that there will be more change, more technology and faster turnaround times, it is difficult to predict how the future will unfold. However, one thing is certain: While technology will be more important, people factors will dominate the 2020 to 2030 workplace. A renewed focus is needed on people factors, productivity and people performance. Human performance will be at the centre of the new world of work and organisation culture will be the strongest link in any business. Organisation culture will become the best form of competitive advantage. While you can replicate products and services, organisation culture cannot be replicated.

One of the most important aspects of organisation culture is to develop and implement a people strategy. The reality is that all organisations have production or service strategies, but many companies don't have people strategies. Organisations must have explicit people strategies and cultures if they want to create a high performance organisation culture. In essence, the people strategy enables management to answer the question how we set people up to be effective in achieving success for the business. Our beliefs, values, targets, management styles and all other aspects of people management form the building blocks of our people strategy. Therefore, the HR Director must work very closely with line management in developing and implementing effective people strategies for the organisation.

The key factor in achieving success with people strategy is the quality of the organisation's leadership. Good leaders are good people strategists, hence the need for dynamic approaches to leadership development in organisations.

An organisation's management decides on an explicit people strategy needed to optimise leadership and people for achieving business success. The people strategy highlights the people factors needed for

business performance and links directly to the business strategy. Once the people strategy is approved, specific actions are planned to create the best possible employee experience for all employees so that they can perform optimally. The notion of employee experience as recommended by David Green and Josh Bersin is the new focus for progressive companies. Good employee experience inevitably leads to good individual and team performance, which in turn, results in business performance.

A people strategy requires managers who are people-orientated. That means that managers see the value of people in ensuring that the business is successful. These managers will go out of their way in ensuring that people are engaged in their jobs. While HR Managers are specialists in people strategy, line managers who are people-orientated play a key role in making a people strategy effective. In fact, line managers should be people strategists. When they do accept and drive their role as people strategists, this also helps in creating a people-driven organisation culture, an environment in which all employees simply want to deliver their best and working with their fellow employees in optimising performance inside and across different departments, sections and divisions within the company.

In addition to committed line managers and people strategists, the HR function plays a prominent and strategic role in high performance organisations. In these companies HR is seen as a value-adding business function with a key role of ensuring that people performance is optimised at work. These companies invest significantly in their people and their HR departments in ensuring that these people strategies are implemented effectively. Highly specialised services from industrial psychologists, organisation development and change management consultants and employee wellness specialists are often used in these organisations to ensure that the people side of business receives the necessary management and HR attention, support and expertise.

It is interesting to see how organisations with explicit people strategies communicate with their employees and the broader public about their commitment to implementing their people strategy. Typically these organisations measure their employee engagement levels on a regular basis and implement progressive actions to ensure that employee engagement levels remain as high as possible. They also compare their employee engagement levels with other organisations as an active approach to benchmarking employee engagement as a source of competitive advantage.

Using a human-centred performance culture, a high level of performance maturity is created.

Organisations with the most mature performance management approaches are 4,5 times more likely to develop leaders effectively, 4,9 times more likely to manage change effectively, and an incredible 92 times higher increase of earning per share over the three-year period (Bersin, 2018 and Enderes, 2019). Companies with sound people strategies will adopt more positive and progressive approaches to employee empowerment and people management. The new SABPP people factor strategy ushers in a new period of business renewal, one that will elevate people as the most important factor in business success.

In conclusion, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is here, and we need to get ready for four imperatives: Leadership, Organisation Culture, People Factors and 4IR Technologies. The 2020-2030 era will be the most important period for people at work and society - one in which people are elevated as the top factor in business success. These are exciting times, but also a period of profound change and transformation for the HR profession and the people we work with on a daily basis. This is the time to leverage people factors and the quest for human performance.