BUSINESS COMMENT

Setting the standard: Hiring and training tools for your business

EDC

Learn to lead and they will follow

By Kevin Leahy

Executive Director Clatsop Economic Development Resources

Some people just don't like managing or supervising people. Others seem to have a knack for it and enjoy it immensely. Can the art of managing people be learned or is it something we are born with? Like most skills, it can be learned. Most small businesses start out with the founder personally doing just about everything. If the business is successful at some point it becomes necessary to build a team and this, for a lot of people who have started a business, often becomes a real challenge.

Hiring best practices

As an employer, you want to hire and retain employees most qualified for the positions within your company. To do this, you need to define who you are looking for and what's expected of them once they are on board.

Policy standards are a must. Begin with a personnel manual that explains your policy for hours, overtime, fringe benefits, sick leave, annual leave, training, dress code, personnel reviews, grievances, termination and retirement. Every employee should have his or her own copy of this manual. In addition, consider giving every job applicant a copy for review.



OREGON SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER NETWORK **2020 Economic Impact** AMERICA **Clatsop SBDC**

Through our work with SBDC clients in our region, we help create new jobs and improve the economic vitality of Oregon. Here are our Center's 2020 economic impact numbers.

Capital Infusion to Local Businesses \$4,322,930 **Training Provided Counseling Services Provided to Local Businesses** 335 69 **Clients Counseled Events** 882 2,380 **Counseling Hours** Attendees 1,306 Start-Ups Existing Businesses **Contact & Prep Hours** Jobs **New Businesses Sales Increase** 9 \$2,390,777 Started **Client Demographics** 213 201 15 Created Retained Women Minority Hispanic Veterans

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Each position within the company, including your own, should have a job description that outlines responsibilities and duties and includes a list of the position's objectives with specific and measurable goals. Each description should include reporting relationships. The job description provides you and the employee a clear road map for the expectations of the position, from the standpoint of both workload and expertise required to accomplish the job.

Job application forms for your company should be simple and focus on relevant employment history, including names of supervisors and references you can contact. Provide space for the applicant to summarize career accomplishments.

At the interview stage, you want to learn as much as possible about the person's job skills, work ethic and personality. Ask specific questions that require more than a yes or no answer. The more dialogue, the more you learn about the applicant. More information will help you to make an informed decision.

Always check references. Competent and friendly employees make a positive statement about your business to customers. An applicant who interviews well and has a sterling resume may not be the ideal fit for the job. References will validate your impressions, and expand on areas not covered in the interview. This is also a way to learn more about potential weaknesses as well. What a reference says or does not say gives you clues as to the character and skill of your candidates. Take all of this information into account before you form your final opinion of a given candidate.

Build the right team and you will win every time

Here are a few things which should be kept in mind. The key to building a long term and effective organization is balance. The business team also must be built and organized such that the people on it complement each other. The small business owner needs to develop and encourage an atmosphere of cooperation and teamwork mostly by example. The work environment should inspire enthusiasm. Maximizing the contributions of employees through faceto-face leadership and positive feedback will enable the business to compete more effectively.

The business owner must always remember that most working groups are surprisingly quick to detect insincerity. Consistency, avoiding intrigue and being non-political are good habits to get into. It is important to remember that communication is a two-way process. The business owner should follow the principle of "challenge up, support down." In other words, be a good listener who allows and encourages employees to contribute ideas and opinions before an issue is decided. Maintain a true open door policy. Hold regular meetings and use the meetings to tell people how they stand, how the business is doing and what the plans for the future are. On the other hand, maintain discipline! Letting anyone get away with doing a poor job for a long period of time just to avoid confronting them is a serious mis-



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take. And always, always remember how important the employee team really is to any business.

In our Clatsop Community College Small Business Development Center advising appointments, we find too often not enough time and energy is spent in hiring, retaining and growing the right staff, and the results of this are low morale, poor sales, high turnover, weak customer service and customers that won't come back into your business again.

Make the human resource function a top priority, and you will reap the rewards of a loyal staff, fun (but professional!) work environment, increased sales and peace of mind for you when you are not physically at your place of business. The value of all that for you as the business owner or manager is immeasurable.

Kevin Leahy is the executive director of Clatsop Economic Development Resources and Clatsop Community College Small Business Development Center.