



SmartHR

People Management Feature

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Gaining a competitive advantage through your staff

Attracting, motivating, developing and retaining high quality people with the right skills, knowledge and abilities who are aligned and 'fit' with the culture of your business and are focused on delivering results are key to gaining a competitive advantage.

There are many HR management practices that can help an organisation gain a competitive advantage. At the beginning, conduct an analysis of the job role and its design. The provision of interesting and stimulating work will lead to increased employee involvement, lower conflict and higher levels of commitment.

Having an up-to-date 'job description' identifying the tasks and responsibilities of the position, and creating a 'person specification' will help you to identify the knowledge, skills and abilities that the individual will need to be able to deliver in the role. This can then be used as the foundation for your recruitment and selection activities (and supported by any other selection practices such as psychometric testing, ability profiling etc.).

Organisations can identify business-specific and/or job-specific competencies and use these to underpin their selection process and the subsequent management of their people e.g. embedding the competencies within the organisation's performance management/appraisal process.

Employees should know and understand what the organisation's vision, core values and business objectives are, and how they can individually play their part in achieving business objectives. Corporate objectives can be cascaded down through the organisation via the 'performance management process' and help to emotionally engage people towards delivering results.

Ongoing coaching, feedback, guidance and evaluation of performance are essential. Your organisation's performance management process should enable an effective two-way discussion that reviews past performance as well as focusing on future performance, setting specific realistic but challenging objectives to be achieved – together with measures of success. It is a continuous process and shouldn't be seen as a once a year event.

Your reward and recognition systems should be effective and motivating. Employees should feel motivated to achieve high levels of performance and be recognised for doing so. Rewards should be seen as timely and tied to effective performance.

A well structured 'induction programme' can help a new employee to settle into the organisation quickly and give a positive first impression.

Identifying any training and development needs and putting in place a structured 'training and development plan' with appropriate solutions will help to bridge any skills gaps identified and focus on enhancing skills for both current and future performance.

Effective leaders and managers should encourage staff to develop their full potential and capability. Development should be a continuous process. Knowledgeable and well trained staff will help you to deliver high levels of service to clients, and in turn help you to retain clients and attract new business.

Targeted 'succession planning' activities can be used to develop people into identified roles within the business for its continued future success.

Communication should be effective, and actions taken to minimise conflict and create an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.

In a competitive environment, people make a difference. The way they are managed impacts on the organisation's productivity, profitability, flexibility, service delivery, reputation, and ability to attract and retain clients – all of which contribute to gaining a competitive advantage. Effective people management practices should be an integral part of an organisation's business strategy and support the achievement of business objectives; building a highly committed, engaged, flexible and accountable workforce with a 'can do' approach.

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