

'I love my job'

The forgotten factor in employee rewards

BY DAPHNE WOOLF

Benefits such as a dental plan, an employee assistance plan and flex-time are now the new minimum standard. While employees still appreciate them, they are no longer enough.

Instead, employees are looking for something different in benefits packages. They want to feel committed to their employer. They want to be engaged. In short, they want to love their job.

The rewards of employees loving their jobs flow directly towards the company. If adequately engaged, employees will be at work, do their job and go above and beyond the call of duty to do that job well.

To foster this love for the job, HR needs to incorporate four elements into the total rewards offering: share the company vision, provide leadership training, build relationships and empower employees.

Share the company vision

Employees want to know the company's vision, mission and values. They need to understand how their daily tasks help accomplish the larger goals of the organization.

Human resources can make a big impact by connecting the company's vision directly with total rewards. For example, the Canadian arm of a large global multinational company in the electronic and technology sector, with the core value "support of the environment," donates an additional 25 per cent of an employee's bonus to an environmental charity of the worker's choice.

Train future bosses

One of the greatest gifts to give an employee is a boss he likes and respects, and who likes and respects him in return. Good bosses emerge from effective leadership training.

An international bank introduced a mentoring program, based on an employee survey

about leadership.

The bank identified those employees best suited to take on the mentoring function. These individuals were given special training and had their workloads reduced to ensure they had the time to be mentors.

Build relationships

While managers often foster good relationships within their own team, employees want to build relationships with all kinds of other employees: those who do the same job in a different geography, those at the same level but in a different job, those at a senior level who can offer mentoring and those who are junior, whom they can train and encourage.

Employers might be surprised what happens when employees are invited to build new relationships. A Toronto-based pulp and paper company with 2,000 employees introduced monthly breakfast meetings with the president, limiting attendance to 15 to keep each event small and intimate. After three months, the waiting list to attend one of these meetings was seven months long.

Empower employees

Empowering employees is about giving them a voice. Odds

are employees have the answers to every challenge that exists within the work environment.

The president of a mid-sized pharmaceutical company formally consults her employees every year by asking them to analyze an actual business problem and solve it. A third party facilitates focus groups and consolidates the feedback for the president, which she communicates to all staff. Then she explains what the company will do as a result. Finally, she asks employees what next year's focus group topic should be about.

The rewards for the company? They uncover issues the executive would not otherwise be aware of.

The rewards for employees? They are empowered because they are making a difference.

Ultimately, an employee's most prized and meaningful benefit is to be engaged and committed to the company. How HR captures their engagement and nurtures it depends on HR's creativity and the will of the executives to put that into action.

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