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Leaders - are they born or made?

Over many years discussions have raged about leadership ability and whether great leaders are born to lead or whether they develop their craft through years of learning and experience.

One thing is clear, we are all born with an inherent set of capabilities and personality traits. Anyone who has raised children will marvel at their differences from a very early age - for example, the son who being interested in animals later becomes a vet, or the perennial bookworm daughter who loves reading and writing so much she went on to be a journalist. However, something that we have recently learned from neuroscience is that our biology is not our destiny, as our brains continue to change throughout our lives.

Contrary to popular belief, the number of neurons (brain cells) that we possess does not significantly change throughout our lives. In addition, Neuroscientific research has shown that experience and education can change the number of connections made between our brain cells, altering our brain's "synaptic density" well into later life. For example, in a recent study of juggling, the brain areas activated at the beginning of the three month training period had increased in size by the end of it. After three months of rest, these areas had shrunk back and were closer to their original size. This research may well therefore help us to answer the question "Are leaders born or made?". While some leaders may well have been born with a set of capabilities and personality traits that have helped them to lead, their brains have also "learned" the necessary methods, habits and behaviours that have enabled them to become great.

Improving your management effectiveness

Most people think that they are a good manager, but how many people ask those that really matter, their staff?

Several years ago a YouGov survey polled hundreds of staff and about one third of them did not rate the performance of their manager very highly! If you are a manager, how effective are you at motivating your staff? The following pointers may prove invaluable.

- Communicate where the business is going. If you want your staff to be committed to your organisation, they need to know where they are going and why. People need to understand how their work contributes to the company's success. After all, having meaning and purpose in your work is highly motivating and rewarding.
- Set clear expectations. Be clear with your staff both in terms of 'what' needs to be achieved and 'how' it should be achieved. Setting clear goals and targets with staff can help them understand what needs to be done and keep them focused. However, it is also important to talk to them about 'how' they should go about achieving their goals. For example it is not acceptable to achieve a target but destroy relationships with colleagues or customers in the process.

- Delegate more. Try not to over control your staff's work. The more you control others work it will only encourage behaviour that necessitates control. Most people want the freedom to complete a task in the way that they think is best.
- Regularly review performance. Employees need regular feedback about their performance to improve their skills and grow professionally. Make sure you regularly sit down with your staff (at least 2 times per year), to discuss with them what they do well and identify with them what they should do differently and how you can help.
- Recognize people's efforts. Everybody appreciates being recognized for a job well done. Monetary rewards aren't the only way to thank employees for a job well done. In fact the easiest way to recognise someone's contribution is simply saying "thank you" — simple words but too often overlooked.
- Deal with problems promptly. Stay in tune to your staff so you can be proactive and resolve situations before they escalate. If you notice a change in an employee's work habits, performance or behaviour, try to resolve the problem before it starts affecting the rest of your team.

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Improving your management effectiveness Continued.

- Be firm but fair. For example, family emergencies and other unplanned events will always arise, and it's part of a manager's role to show compassion by being flexible with work hours and time off so their staff can tend to important matters. Employees always appreciate a sympathetic boss, and will repay your support for them many times over.
- Be a coach and mentor. As a manager, one of the greatest things that you can give an employee is by sharing your knowledge and experience. Showing

your employees firsthand how you deal with a task, what works and what doesn't is far more effective than just talking them through it. It takes time and effort to be a good manager. Too often during busy times when work's piling up, people forget to manage others and concentrate on their own tasks. However, employees depend on their manager's strength, guidance and support especially during tough economic times and this takes time, time to listen, time to discuss and time to coach.

Deductions from wages

***Meenken v Rigg Zschokke Ltd*—Employment Court, Wellington, November 2009. Claim for breach of Wages Protection Act 1983—unsuccessful.**

The Employment Court has held that deductions from wages ordered by Inland Revenue under the Tax Administration Act prevail over the right to wages without deduction.

The company received an Inland Revenue notice to deduct a sum of money from the employee's wages. The employee gave the company written notification forbidding it to make the deduction from her wages. Her written notice released the company from its obligation to pay her wages on the condition that the amount owed to her by the company (for her wages) was paid into a different account.

The company insisted that it must make the deduction from the employee's wages on the basis that it was under a statutory obligation to implement an Inland Revenue deduction notice or face severe financial penalty. The employee claimed that without her written consent, making the deduction would breach her employment

agreement and the Wages Protection Act 1983.

The Employment Relations Authority stated that the employee was unable to contract out of the company's legal duty to pay her wages. Besides, the money the employee wanted paid into another bank account was "simply wages under another name".

The Authority noted that section 157 of the Tax Administration Act 1994 gave Inland Revenue the power to require by notice a deduction from any amount payable to a taxpayer. The Authority concluded that the company was obliged to effect the deduction on behalf of Inland Revenue and was not in breach of the Wages Protection Act.

The employee took her case to the Employment Court, which noted that under section 15 of the Wages Protection Act, protection against deduction without consent was subject to other statutory provisions, such as section 157 of the Tax Administration Act. The Court held that these other statutory provisions prevailed in the event of a conflict. The Court concluded that the employee's claim could not succeed.

Source : Employment Today issue 145

Train your managers to manage sickness effectively

Taking a 'sickie' is becoming easier as some employers are dispensing with the traditional requirement to phone in sick in favor of other means of communication such as text messaging. Sickness is causing organisations big problems. The key to resolving this problem is for organisations to have clear sickness policies and procedures and to train their managers to deal with the issue.

Managers need to have training to help them to understand the difference between short term and long term sickness absence. For cases of short term absence managers need to ensure that they know how to identify patterns in the individual's absences (e.g. is it always on a Monday or Friday?) and to discuss with the individual whether there are any underlying reasons for the absence. If there are underlying reasons, managers need to know how to deal with them (e.g. by referring them to occupational health).

For cases of long term sickness, managers need to stay in contact with the employee and if appropriate, visit them at home. Managers should encourage those on long term sick to remain in contact with work and if appropriate drop into work for short periods to see their colleagues. They may also need to get an independent occupational health assessment made to determine whether the individual is fit for work. When disciplinary issues arise, managers also need to have the skills, confidence and capability to discipline staff effectively.

Workforce Planning to reduce staffing pains

TOP COMPANIES who have embraced workforce planning to reduce staffing pains have seen improvements in retention, employee performance and skills availability. A recent US study found that organisations are placing greater emphasis on future workforce planning initiatives to improve their ability to recruit and to retain the talent they anticipate will be needed in the short-term and long-term future. The organisations that are being aggressive at identifying emerging job roles and missions, at implementing career acceleration and leadership development programs, have seen increases in:

- Employee performance 27%
- Employee retention 31%
- Workforce capacity utilisation 31%

Source: HR Leader, 6 May 2010

HR and Business Consultancy Services Offered

<p>Employment and Industrial Relations Provide support and advice on workplace relations and the relevant legislation that affects the employer-employee relationship. Development of employment agreements and documentation that best suits your relationship and situation with your employee.</p>	<p>Change Management A structured approach to transitioning individuals, teams, and organisations from a current state to a desired future state. Change is a part of every project we undertake, encompassing a number of techniques to achieve sustained improvement through change management.</p>	<p>Psychometric Assessments The strength and productivity of successful organisations lies with people. We use a range of assessment tools to accurately identify an individual's talents, strengths and weaknesses, and to diagnose organisational problems.</p>
<p>Performance Management Designed to be future-focused, support pay for performance programs, monitor milestones of goal achievement, and systematically improve the measured results of your employees and organisation. We facilitate the development of core organizational competencies, influence SMART goal setting, and clearly articulate expectations in order to have a measurable results-oriented tool for effective implementation.</p>	<p>Project Management Training, and resources to help organisations improve performance and deliver critical projects successfully. Project management is the discipline of planning, organising and managing resources to bring about the successful completion of specific project goals and objectives. The primary challenge of project management is to achieve all of the project goals and objectives while honoring the project constraints.</p>	<p>Process and Systems Development Professional human resource advice, policy solutions and job description writing and evaluation services. Development of employment policies and procedures and employee handbook. Provide practical guidance on administration of policies and pre-employment or post-employment duties required of the company.</p>
<p>Talent Management Developing and integrating new workers, developing and keeping current workers and attracting highly skilled workers to work for your company. Companies that are engaged in talent management are strategic and deliberate in how they source, attract, select, train, develop, retain, promote, and move employees through the organisation.</p>	<p>Health and Safety Offering both practicable and achievable health, safety and environmental sustainability solutions to suit your organisation. from a wide range of experience in health, safety, quality, environmental and sustainability (HSQE) management.</p>	<p>Professional Supervision and Mentoring A customised programme for Managers and Team Leaders to provide practical hands-on guidance as well as theoretical knowledge in relation to all aspects of management including leadership, performance management, delegation, communication & effective time management.</p>
<p>Career Transition/Outplacement and redundancy Managing change and redundancy in a fair and procedurally correct manner. Management Coaching through restructure and redundancy; Managing Change Workshops; Internal and external Job Search, CV Preparation and Interview Coaching; Budgeting and Financial Planning; On site consultation and redundancy support; Identifying the 'at risk' employee.</p>	<p>Investigations We investigate and report on the facts of a case to the person or body charged with making a decision, under the procedure relevant to the case and to the member of staff concerned. Any serious allegations or formal complaints require investigation to attempt to determine as objectively as possible the relevant facts on which decisions can be based. Ensuring that the investigation process is completed correctly enables you to make the right decision with continued support thou ought the process to reduce the risk to your company.</p>	<p>HR Audits Comprehensive report of the audit findings with recommendations prioritized, actionable work plan. Improves compliance, reviews ROI with Human Capital. Targets the organisational development and human resource practices including: Staffing and Hiring; Benefits Administration; HR Administration; Employment Practices; Education and Training; Time Off and Leaves; Health and Safety; Performance Management; Compensation; Terminations.</p>