



Human Resources Notes

“The aim of Human Resources Notes is to provide concise information on topical human resource management issues to guide effective people management practices.”
 Peter Fisher, Executive HR Consultant (THCS)

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Employee wellness cuts costs and improves employee productivity

An increasing number of employers are implementing employee wellness programmes as part of their HR strategy to optimise employee work performance. A wellness programme demonstrates an employer’s care for its employees. Employees will know that the employer is committed to their physical and mental health and that they are appreciated. Two specific business benefits of an effective wellness programme are:

1. Lower employee related costs

Healthy lifestyle habits reduce costs of absenteeism and healthcare caused by preventable ailments such as colds and ‘flu, obesity, heart disease and many chronic diseases.

2. Improved employee productivity

Higher staff morale, improved retention, better attendance, and improved loyalty are all observed benefits of employee wellness programmes, which are positive contributors to employee productivity. Other things being equal, a workforce which is the beneficiary of an effective wellness programme will outperform a comparable workforce which does not have a wellness programme.

A comprehensive wellness programme covering several dimensions of life which transcend the boundaries of the workplace must be pursued. A life of health, growth and balance is the aim. Most sources identify around 6 – 8 dimensions of wellness which must be incorporated in the programme. Here are some examples:

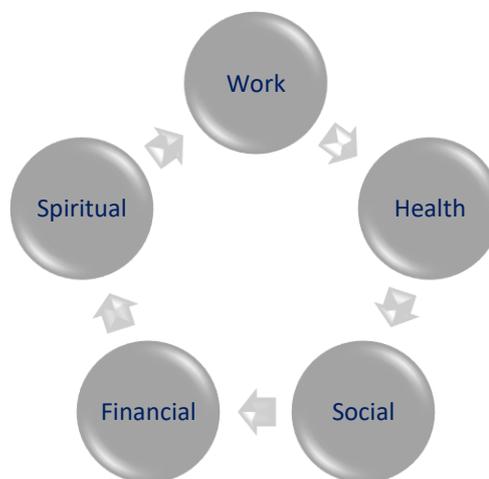


Figure 1: Dimensions of employee wellness

Work. Involves finding fulfilment in your job and knowing that it has meaning within a context of balance between work life and home life.

Health. Entails a conscious adoption of healthy habits including nutrition, exercise and sleep, to achieve and maintain a healthy quality of life.

Social. Means learning good communication skills, developing close connections with others, and creating a support network of friends and family and developing a sense of belonging.

Financial. Means being financially secure and having the knowledge and ability to manage your money.

Spiritual wellness. The ability to discover meaning and purpose which helps to establish peace and harmony in a person's life. ■

References:

1. _____ The Top Ten Reasons Why Your Company Needs an Employee Wellness Programme (Online) Available at: <http://www.wellnessquotes.com/top10-reasons-why-your-company-needs-an-employee-wellness-program.html> Accessed 14 May 18
2. Aldana, S. (2018) the Seven Best Reasons to have a Wellness Programme: benefits of Wellness
3. Dr Aldana Blog (online) Available at: <https://www.wellsteps.com/blog/2018/01/10/reasons-to-have-a-wellness-program-benefits-of-wellness/> Accessed 14 May 2018
4. Kennymore, J. Balancing Your Wellness Wheel. SHIFT Resources (Online) Available at: <http://www.nwmissouri.edu/wellness/SHIFResources> Accessed 23 June 2018
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Conducting effective selection interviews

There is a significant cost consequence if an organisation gets hiring decisions wrong. Selection interviews are the most universally applied selection method and managers need to try and maximise the value of the process. Here are seven tips for effective interviewing:

1. Interviewers must listen far more than they talk in a selection interview. A ratio of around 70% listening / 30% talking is appropriate.

2. Past behaviour is the most reliable predictor of future behaviour, so spend most of the time discussing the applicant's past accomplishments.
3. Probe an applicant's responses to questions until you have a full answer addressing all elements of a situation or task that the applicant is relating. Structure your questions to find out what action the applicant took in a real situation in preference to eliciting a hypothetical answer. If the interviewee says, "I analysed the problem and then did XYZ" it will be more weighty evidence of competence than an answer, "I would do a problem analysis and decide thereafter what action to take". Confirm the results of the action taken to verify the interviewee's action was effective.
4. Review the applicant's CV and ask questions about any warning signs e.g. many jobs in a short space of time; long career gaps. Ask if you can contact references. Get details of the relationship between applicant and person giving a reference. Past line managers are the best people to give meaningful references.
5. Avoid potentially discriminatory questions e.g. 'are you planning to have children?' Rather focus on challenges of the job such as, 'this job will involve a lot of out of town travel; is that something you are comfortable with?' Put all the job challenges to the applicant and ask for a response from the applicant.
6. You can ask, but do not attach too much weight to the answers to questions like: where do you see yourself in 3 years? What are your strengths / weaknesses? Applicants expect these questions and usually prepare answers that you would like to hear. For example, ask for a weakness and applicants will reply with something more like a strength such as "I am obsessed with achieving my targets and will work 24/7 if that is what it takes.
7. Put the applicant at ease with some ice breaker questions at the start of the interview. Did you find our offices easily? Tell me a little bit about yourself? ■

Quote:

“Diversity: the art of thinking independently together.” Malcolm Forbes

Building a talent pipeline with succession planning

Succession planning perpetuates the business by creating a supply of readily available high performing people at key leadership levels. Through its focus on employee development, succession planning is a driver of employment equity plans; it mitigates the costs of not being able to source scarce skills; and it fosters employee engagement.

Some principles to apply in implementing a succession planning process are:

- Success of the process depends on the establishment of a talent pool from which the company can draw to fill open positions. Identifying only one likely candidate for a key position is likely to prove inadequate.
- Managers must inform employees identified as potential successors of their inclusion in the talent pool, but managers must not create unrealistic expectations by making promises regarding future promotion.
- The key to developing potential successors is to provide opportunities to practice leadership skills, combined with ongoing evaluation and self-correction. Career paths must be customised and not follow a “one-size-fits-all” path.
- Managers at each level of the process must develop their own leadership capabilities and at the same time develop the leadership of their direct reports. Succession planning and development of direct reports must be a part of a manager’s key performance areas.
- Implementing succession planning must not be treated by managers as a ‘nice to have’. It is a process to ensure the sustainability of the enterprise.

A succession planning process usually starts with managers identifying three potential successors to their positions, noting readiness, race, gender and disability status. ‘Readiness’ refers to an estimate by a manager of how close to being ready for promotion a successor is. The time is usually expressed in months or years and must be linked to a development plan for the successor. Putting employees on a succession plan and then not offering them developmental opportunities renders the process futile. Race, gender and disability information is recorded for diversity targeting.

A designated manager, who may be the Head of HR, coordinates the quality assurance and tracking of successor progression in consultation with the CEO. Psychometric assessments and previous performance review documents can provide objective information to inform the discussions involving the CEO, Head of HR and line Managers. The CEO can add and remove potential successors from the list.

Managers are responsible for meeting with each potential successor reporting to them and agreeing their development plans, which should centre on experiential (on-the-job) learning experiences. HR can assist with preparation of development programmes. Managers should use performance management and particularly monthly one-on-one meetings as the primary tool to track a potential successor’s progress against the development plan.

‘Bench Strength’ and ‘Appointment Ratio’ are good measures of whether a succession plan is adding to organisation success and sustainability. ■

Reference:

Charan, R. (2008). *Leaders at All Levels*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons

Quote:

“Seek first to understand, then be understood. This principle is the key to effective interpersonal communication.”
– Stephen R Covey

Precautionary suspension with pay pending disciplinary action

When there has been a serious misconduct incident, management must decide whether the employee involved should be suspended pending finalisation of any disciplinary proceedings. Such a suspension is on full pay and should be implemented promptly once the misconduct has come to management's attention. There does not need to be concrete proof that the employee has committed the misconduct. Information linking the employee to the misconduct is sufficient.

Not all alleged instances of misconduct warrant an employee's suspension on full pay pending a disciplinary hearing. Factors which an employer may rely on to suspend an employee include:

- The reasonable fear that the employee will interfere with the investigation;
- The employer has a reasonable concern that its business interests would be harmed by the employee's continued presence in the workplace;
- The employee's presence would affect working relationships;
- The employee has access to confidential information; and / or
- The misconduct is of a very serious nature.

Suspension is usually implemented in cases involving misappropriation of company property; fraud; assault and physical violence; intimidation; and sexual harassment.

Before suspending an employee, an employer must: give the employee an opportunity to make representations why he or she should not be suspended. The employer must consider the employee's representations and give the employee feedback regarding its decision.

Usually the terms of a suspension include the following:

- The employee must leave the organisation's premises and only get access to the premises with the prior approval of a designated manager;
- The employee must hand in access keys; confidential documents belonging to the employer; any other employer's property and the employer may temporarily remove the employee from the employer's computer network.
- The employee must refrain from contacting and interacting with fellow employees, clients, suppliers and any other work-related contacts.
- Suspension is not an opportunity for the employee to take an unplanned vacation. The employee must stay in the area and be contactable during work hours on a confirmed cell phone number.
- The employee must be available to attend meetings called by the company regarding the investigation or any other work-related matter.

The case initiator usually informs an employee of suspension on full pay. The notification of suspension on full pay must be in writing and be signed by the manager and employee. The period of the suspension is usually until the disciplinary hearing is finalised (or until management decides not to pursue misconduct allegations against the employee). Management must not unnecessarily drag out finalising the investigation.

A suspension on full pay must not prevent the employee from being able to prepare a case in response to the employer's allegations. The employee may need to meet with a representative and witnesses and/or review related documents. Management should facilitate this subject to reasonable controls.

Reference:

1. Modise, L, Kutumela, L. (2009) *Steps to Take When You Are Suspended from Work - South Africa*. Eversheds [online] Available at <http://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=6429> Accessed on 6 September 2011

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