

White Paper

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Solution Focus Areas:

**Recruitment/Hiring
Turnover/Retention**

To Be Or Not To Be: How To Succeed In Today's Competitive Market

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“To Be or Not To Be...”

Introduction

Nothing is more important to the success of an organization than the quality or professionalism of its staff. All too often, however, organizations approach professional development from an issue based or single minded perspective rather than from a comprehensive perspective. Creating a professional staff requires more than just a hiring process, or more than just a training program, creating a professional staff requires a *holistic or systems approach*.

Think back to your own personal experience with professional development over the years. How often did the company you worked for bring in the “Guru of the Year,” change systems or practices to support his or her approach, only to change everything around again once the new Guru came to town? How often did the company you worked for change one aspect of the professional development program without changing related aspects – only to leave employees confused and frustrated. Perhaps most common, however, how often did the company you worked for bring in a high paid consultant or trainer who seemed to know nothing about your company and whose program was misaligned, or perhaps even inconsistent with the company’s stated mission and vision?

At Rising Sun Consultants, we believe strongly that an effective program of professional staff development should always begin with an effective recruitment campaign. This is followed by a series of interrelated steps from initial interview to final job offer. Naturally, the process does not stop there. As suggested below, developing a professional staff requires an effective program of employee orientation, pre-service training, ongoing professional development, and staff evaluation.

Hiring Process

The interview and hiring process for an organization is a critical opportunity to actively communicate the organization’s culture and expectations. It is also a very important and effective opportunity to intentionally select the most appropriate individual who will support and move forward the mission of an organization. Many organizations fail to realize this opportunity and the tremendous cost of hiring and training new staff.

How often in your career did you feel that the hiring process you went through was: 1) designed to prepare you to become a member of the organizational culture you were about to enter, and/or 2) designed to match you, your skills and talents, to the most appropriate position within the organization?

It is in the best interest of an organization, as well as the potential new staff member, for the organization to do everything possible to select the right people, at the right time, for the right job. In other words, it is at the same time both cost effective and culturally sound to develop a professional hiring process for all staff that will support the positive development of an organization.

Professional Development

In order for any professional development program to be truly effective, it is essential that it be directly connected and related to the outcomes or products of the organization and that it be based on a fundamental belief system that values learning throughout the organization. More specifically, in order for a Professional Development program to be truly effective: 1) it must be directly linked to the organization’s stated objectives, and 2) the organization must create, develop, embrace, and maintain an environment rooted in life-long learning. As such, organizational training and development needs to be operationalized in a Professional Development program which is sustained, systemic, and systematic:

- A “sustained” professional development program is one which occurs over time. Professional development is not a single event, but a series of interrelated learning opportunities that supports individual growth and organizational success.
- A “systemic” professional development program is one which plays a critical role within an organizations culture. The focus of learning opportunities remains consistent and aligned with organizational goals and does not change depending on who is responsible for professional development. In other words, professional development needs to be integrated throughout all aspects of the organization and needs to remain consistent over time.
- A “systematic” professional development program is one which is developed and implemented in a methodical and intentional manner. It is directly aligned to the mission, vision, and guiding principles of the organization. Systematic professional development programs provide consistent themes across all work groups, while providing support for specific departments and individual needs.

How well integrated is your organization’s current professional development program? Is it designed as a series of interrelated learning opportunities that supports individual growth and organizational success? Is it integrated throughout all aspects of the organization and consistent over time? Does it provide consistent themes across all work groups, while providing support for specific departments and individual needs?

A core component of this integration (sustained, systemic, and systematic professional development) is a clear and comprehensive leadership model. The organizations success will rely heavily on its leaders. However, it is important for an organization to realize that leadership is no longer exclusive to "upper administration," but rather, all staff should be encouraged to become leaders.

Program Evaluation

As in all learning environments, program evaluation is a critical key to success in any organization. In order to maintain a high level of success, there needs to be continuous evaluation of the programs/strategies that the organization implements. Evaluation will inform the organization if what is being done is actually directly or indirectly leading to success.

In relation to professional development, following Kirkpatrick's (1998) line of reasoning, Rising Sun Consultants suggests four levels of evaluation to measure the degree to which learning is occurring:

- Participant Assessment (do the learners think they've learned anything)
- Knowledge/Skill Acquisition (can they pass a test on the material)
- Transfer to the Job (do they apply the learning when they get back to work)
- Return on Investment (is the new learning impacting organizational effectiveness)

Stakeholder Involvement

When was the last time someone in your organization asked you what you thought you needed in order to be successful at your job? How relevant do you feel that the training/development you are receiving is to your ability to do your job? How might you change your organization's current program of professional development in order to make it more consistent and integrated into the expected culture of the organization?

Involvement of stakeholders is an important component to assure that the professional development remains relevant. Periodic "needs assessments" need to be performed which provide significant opportunities for both employees and customers/clients to share their thoughts and ideas regarding what professional development is needed. Involving stakeholders also gains the ownership and buy-in of the constituents involved. This is a critical piece in developing an environment that embraces, seeks, and values learning.

Staff Appraisal System

In addition to area-specific requirements, all staff should be appraised in terms of their understanding of and commitment to the organizations "core beliefs," "guiding principles," or "shared values." It is essential for staff and supervisors to have an understanding about what results are expected their in their staff appraisal system in order to meet standards and what results are expected in order to exceed standards.

Each staff member must fully understand what it means for someone to exceed standards. A rating of meets standards is a very good rating. This means an employee is consistently doing a good, solid job of performing at a level expected for the individual's position. However, it must be understood by all concerned that an employee needs to consistently exceed job requirements and do an exemplary job to receive a rating of exceeds standards and whatever financial or other rewards this might bring. On the other hand, an organization must also be clear on what a rating of does not meet standards means and what the consequence of such a rating might be. If such a rating requires that an employee be reevaluated within 90 days, this should be stated up front. If unsatisfactory ratings can result in the administration asking the staff member to seek other employment, this too should be stated up front.

Summary

As suggested above, nothing is more important to the success of an organization than the quality or professionalism of its staff. Rising Sun Consultants recommends a multi-step process of professional staff development, beginning with the recruitment process and culminating in a program of effective staff appraisal.

Beginning with the recruitment and hiring process an organization has the opportunity to actively communicate the organization's culture and expectations. It is critical for the organization to do everything possible to select the right people, at the right time, for the right job.

In order for any ongoing professional development program to be truly effective, it is essential that it be directly connected and related to the outcomes or products of the organization and that it be based on a fundamental belief system that values learning throughout the organization. As such, organizational training and development needs to be operationalized in a Professional Development program which is sustained, systemic, and systematic. A core component of this integration is a clear and comprehensive leadership model.

Ultimately, as a result of ongoing professional support and development, all staff should be appraised in terms of their understanding of and commitment to the organizations “core beliefs,” “guiding principles,” or “shared values.” It is essential for staff and supervisors to have an understanding of what results are expected in order to meet standards and what results are expected in order to exceed standards. Whatever the system, stakeholder involvement, along with clear and honest communication, is the key to successful staff development.