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FINDING AND KEEPING CRITICAL STAFF IS A STRATEGIC MATTER

Or

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF KEY STAFF REMAINS HIGH ON THE AGENDA FOR EMPLOYERS

or

FINDING AND KEEPING PEOPLE IN THE BUSINESS REMAINS A CONSTANT CHALLENGE

We have over the past months faced many frustrated clients lamenting the difficulty of finding and keeping quality people in the business, largely around employment equity and internal development of scarce skills such as Engineers and Accountants.

We have frequently engaged with Executives on how to attract and retain the critical skills where talented employees are being head hunted on a regular basis.

Our experiences have brought out a few key principles in this tough area of human resource management:

The matter cannot be dealt with on a piecemeal basis; there are too many variables, and too many short term needs.

Whatever solution is determined, there are positive and negative consequences – the decision must be based on what consequences the particular organisation can best live with.

We have repeatedly been returned to three aspects of a solution, and will return to each in further articles. To position, however, here are the issues we have needed to address.

Firstly attracting the right people; It is short-sighted to suppose that people move only for money, or that they last out the interviewing process purely because of it. Good people want personal recognition, and the opportunity to make a difference. Most importantly they need to feel proud of their decision to join your company. Your brand as a supplier and reputation as an employer is central to attracting the right people.

Secondly, selecting the right people; the company must take care to choose the type of person that will add value, both technically and by their fit in the team. Competency

based assessments in isolation from the addressing the fit of a person in the culture and zest of the organisation is short-sighted and dangerous. The best technical skills will make no difference to the company if that resource cannot work with other employees. We have dealt with far more complicated labour relations issues over fit than over competency.

Finally retention! We have learned that people are attracted by money, but are retained by a sense of worth and accomplishment. It is important for an organisation emotionally to invest in its resources. Management style, organisational structure, and constant communication around status, intentions and performance assist to bring people into the organisation's psychological boundaries.

And, of course, physical incentives. A mix of short-term and long-term financial and non-financial incentives, especially at middle and senior levels, provides essential motivation for retention.

In conclusion, a market related remuneration, and a clearly structured short (to motivate) and long-term (to retain) incentive scheme, is a necessary but not sufficient condition to attract and retain staff.

This must be supported by a visible and energetic programme of personal development and psychological inclusion, so that they also are experiencing their work as motivating and attach this to their relationship with their team.

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