

Understanding the synergy between purpose and profit

As a new year progresses, companies the world over are exploring better ways to develop and engage their staff, inculcate purposeful leadership and implement calculated management strategies. The end goal is a more efficient workforce, more effective management, an improved company culture, greater knowledge and skills, and – ultimately – better profits.



Gizelle McIntyre, director at The Institute of People Development (IPD)

In determining how to achieve purposeful leadership, one must first determine what the word “purpose” means – to the company, and its employees. The dictionary definition of purpose is “the meaning for which something is done or created, or for which something exists; and a person’s sense of resolve or determination”.

“In business, there is a clear synergy between purpose and profit,” says Gizelle McIntyre, director at The Institute of People Development (IPD). “A synergy which is often guided by meaning; that which makes employees (and what they do) feel important, or significant. By capitalising on employees’ strengths and developing the skills for them to overcome their weaknesses, positive progress is made.”

Pleasure, engagement and meaning

According to research conducted by Petersen and Seligman in 2004, a life of pleasure, engagement and meaning is directly affected by six factors. These are; courage, humanity, transcendence, temperance, justice, and wisdom/knowledge. “With this information, effective leaders should focus on engaging staff, while implementing a drive to make them satisfied with life,” adds McIntyre. “From positive emotions to engagement, positive relationships, meaning and accomplishment, staff can be driven to greater performance; and the enjoyment of their roles.”

The management role should also include work integrated learning (WIL). This can be delivered in a variety of ways, including; Just-In-Time on the job coaching, graduate programmes, internships, learnerships, and shadowing programmes. “Skilling your talent is essential,” advises McIntyre. “After a gap analysis has been conducted, a personal development plan (PDP) must be drawn up, which traditionally entails four steps.”

Personal development plan

The first is to identify the skills needed by assessing the current skills and identifying staff strengths and weaknesses. The

second step is to plan, prioritising development needs. The third step is to action and record, which entails the actual development of the skills. Lastly, management must review and reflect, determining whether the desired outcomes have been achieved. “Once the development plan is complete, management must calculate the return on investment (ROI) and adjust its strategies going forward, where required.”

Essentially, an engaged workforce is a productive one. “Engagement leads to connection,” concludes McIntyre, “and connection meets our human needs. As a result, we are more trusting, cooperative, empathetic, enthusiastic, optimistic, energetic, creative, and are more adept at problem solving. The overarching question is; what do we want our leaders to be? The answer should always be – a force that engages our employees.”

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