Human Resource Initiatives

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Human resources (HR) has evolved; initially, the role began as a clerical function. In the 1960's it morphed into the personnel department, which involved dealing with payroll and employee records. As the country became a global economy, the personnel department became human resources. Today the human resource department is a powerhouse in many organizations and heavily relied upon for various business needs.

Some of these initiatives deal with managing employee communication, best practices for employee behavioral assessments, diversity training, employee benefits, and post-pandemic planning (Valentine et al., 2020). When implementing these initiatives, there are questions the HR department needs to consider. How will employees receive these? Will it change the company's culture, and do these initiatives fit with the organizational goals set in place?

Managing Employee Communication

Businesses need to create a positive culture within the organization, requiring effective employee communication. The HR department can accomplish this through training in interpersonal communication. A training program that focuses on communication between management and colleagues dealing with realistic examples increases positive interactions.

The training program needs to offer opportunities for discussion and interaction among participants; furthermore, action plans need to be developed so each member can apply what they learned (Hynes, 2012). The HR department also manages employee communication through technology. Technology has allowed for many types of communication platforms to exist such as, emails, instant messaging, social media, and texting on mobile devices; therefore, creating communication concerns and challenges in a workplace environment that need to be addressed. Company's need to mitigate employee misconduct, prevent hacking, ensure

productivity, and inhibit the loss of proprietary information by monitoring employee's electronic communication.

One way a company can monitor their employee's communication through technology is by installing specialized software. Employees may not receive monitoring software well and feel a lack of trust from the organization, so it is crucial for the HR department to communicate its use and how it can help to improve interactions among staff members (Valentine et al., 2020).

For employee communication to be managed effectively, policies and procedures need to be created to guide everyone. HR professionals need to develop these policies, but they need to communicate them to employees, obtain a signature of understanding, monitor interactions, and enforce them. If an employee violates the procedures in place for communication, disciplinary actions must be taken by management and the HR department (Valentine et al., 2020).

Channels of communication need to be effective. If HR and management communicate regularly with workers effectively, then employees are more engaged and have a more positive outlook towards their work. Regular communication invites people to get into a healthy dialog, and giving feedback aids in a culture of sharing ideas and knowledge (Lawler, 2021).

To improve employee communication, the HR department needs to mitigate misunderstandings by not overusing jargon or technical terms. The HR department needs to set the tone, and they need to be accessible to all employees. It is crucial for HR to use multiple channels to distribute administrative messages to reach employees well within the expected timeframe. Receiving feedback from employees on various communication strategies is essential to ascertain success in the workplace (Lawler, 2021).

Best Practice(s) for Employee Behavioral Assessments

Behavioral assessments of employees are essential for a company to perform but can be tricky to apply. HR managers need to think about what ethical or legal issues can arise from a behavioral assessment? Also, how will applicants or employees react if asked to complete a behavioral assessment?

The HR department can conduct an employee behavioral assessment during the interviewing process of a potential new hire. A behavioral interview allows the HR personnel to ask how the candidate behaved, performed, or even handled a problem in their past work environment. Asking this type of question during an interview indicates how well-matched the individual is for the open position. A situational interview is another type of behavioral assessment which contains questions of how the candidate might handle a situation that is specific to their job (Valentine et al., 2020).

A legal issue to consider for behavioral assessments is making sure they fall within the Equal Employment Opportunity Act guidelines. Despite proper behavioral assessments being conducted, adverse effects and unintentional discrimination may occur. Companies can avoid legal issues by vetting their behavioral assessment tests through a legal and ethics committee. It should also be reviewed for is quality, validity, and reliability of the questions; furthermore, the assessment needs to be free of any sexist language and bias (Lange & Houran, 2015).

For a pharmaceutical or security company, one employee behavioral assessment that is legal and permissible is obtaining a polygraph; however, it is often used to determine if any theft or loss has occurred within these organizations. Polygraphs should be voluntary, and any employee subjected to having it done ought to end the test at any time (Valentine et al., 2020).

Diversity Training

Diversity training is crucial in any company; it is in the best interest of the HR department to facilitate its success. Implementing diversity training aims to minimize discrimination, improve acceptance, avoid lawsuits, and increase people's understanding of various cultures and lifestyles (Valentine et al., 2020).

Diversity among employees also includes age, sex, culture, religion, and educational background. Diversity training can benefit learning, boost creativity, and increase fairness; therefore, a great deal of time and effort from the HR department is essential when formulating a successful program. A study found one barrier to a lack of success in a diversity training program is inflexible communication patterns. Part of why this barrier exists is from the trainers themselves, who ignore or inadvertently reinforce it since they have their prejudices and beliefs on the subject matter (Gebert et al., 2017).

Another barrier is employees frequently say what they believe they should rather than what their thoughts or feeling are on the matter presented (Gebert et al., 2017). One way to combat this is to have frank discussions with trainees, ensure their employment is not at risk, and ask provoking and sometimes uncomfortable questions (Lawler, 2021).

HR and management need to understand an employee's underlying belief if success is gained from the training program. Diversity training programs need to encompass tolerance, reflect one's values, inclusivity, and promote equality and fairness (Gebert et al., 2017).

Employee Benefits: Competitive Advantage

Organizations are continuously looking to acquire talent with the education, experience, and skills that coincide with their business needs and objectives. A company can obtain talent through their employee benefits; however, they need to have a competitive advantage over other

businesses in their industry and look to poach an employee from their competitors (Lawler, 2021).

Companies obtain a competitive edge by providing benefits such as adoption assistance, first-time homeowner incentives, paid time-off for volunteer work, flexible scheduling, student loan repayment programs, and education and career advancement opportunities. These employee benefits help employers obtain top talent and ensure worker retention; furthermore, they help build a positive attitude toward the organization (Stemmle & Hampton, 2020).

Employers can offer other benefits to obtain a competitive advantage by providing low-cost benefits such as life insurance, legal services, health savings accounts, or wellness programs (Lawler 2021).

COVID -19: Post Pandemic Initiatives

Four out of five workers worldwide have been affected by lockdowns and measures to stay-at-home from government officials. With vaccines being introduced to the public and people are being vaccinated, companies are starting to think about having employees return to the office.

Executives and the HR department need to understand the difficulties this may bring, such as employees preparing to return to previous routines and accepting a new reality. This kind of change may be difficult and worrying for many employees (Schwartz & Scoble-William, 2020).

A critical strategy for HR is to reflect on what has worked before the pandemic and what they have learned about the disease. Before bringing employees back into the office, HR needs to reinforce the company's commitment to well-being. It will be essential for HR and managers to re-engage employees and drive business outcomes (Schwartz & Scoble-William, 2020).

The biggest post-pandemic initiative companies need to implement is flexibility. Some employees will return to the office, while others will continue to work remotely. A hybrid workforce will be deployed for most company's which will involve employees working from home most of the time but come together for various job functions. Organizations need to be flexible and rethink a more dispersed workforce and workplace priorities (Lawler, 2021).

Conclusion

HR needs to consider many facets in business when implementing initiatives to meet a businesses' objectives. However, they must respect an employee's rights and provide equal opportunity among all their workers. A company's success depends on managing employees' communication, offering employee benefits that have a competitive advantage, providing accurate and reliable behavioral assessments, instilling diversity in training sessions, and delivering a post-pandemic workforce solution.

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