

# Staff 'fire' their bosses

IS that a provocative headline? To those "managers" among you who have a traditional mindset, it probably is provocative. To the enlightened "managers", it is reality. Unfortunately the enlightened ones are dearly in the minority.

I had the pleasure of being the emcee at a recent human resources summit and a number of speakers addressed the issue of acquisition and retention of personnel. Not surprisingly, the research keeps confirming that the majority of people leave their jobs for reasons other than pay. What was the number one reason given? The boss.

If at this point, some of you are about to dismiss the above, thanks for getting this far and good luck – just do not tell your people! To those willing to read on, I would suggest the following would make you think and help you keep your people. Losing good people is expensive.

Chances are your time as a "manager" is spent trying to juggle a number of balls and that is where we hit the real problem which prompted the question in my last column (TTG Asia April 27 - April 3, 2007) – What exactly are you managing? If you are managing people, recall I suggested the term manager was as dead as the proverbial dodo, and you should be spending at least 75 to 80 per cent of your time on these four areas:

- Coaching
- Motivating
- Tutoring
- Accountability

Take a few moments and write down on a piece of paper all the activities you get involved in during the average week and allocate in percentage terms the time you spend on them. You do not have to tell anyone as this is for your own reference. The average time spent on these activities is approximately 40 per cent; now we begin to understand why your people are not getting the attention they need.

Let us look at each one in turn. We will start with the premise that each of your people has their MBO's (Management by Objectives), goals, dreams, whatever your company language is. If your people have none of these, you have a real problem. Just how do you monitor your people's performance?

## Coaching

This includes evaluating your people and training them. Do you know how to coach effectively? And I do not mean that you go on a one-day training programme. A major

part of coaching is not telling people what to do. Coaching is not about criticising. Having agreed the goals or objectives, the aim of coaching is to allow your people to assess their performance on an ongoing basis.

Your role through asking searching questions is to dig deeper to challenge their beliefs, views and opinions. For example, what went well? What did not go well? How would you do it differently? What would your approach be next time? What are the obstacles? How do you plan to overcome them? How can I help? What do you need? How much better can you do?

Coaching is self discovery and should be done on a frequent basis. Consider having formal quarterly performance reviews which allows adjusting and resetting of goals according to business needs. Train each person based on what he or she actually needs.

## Motivation

This includes compensation, incentive schemes and ensuring support systems work, and I do not mean just the IT systems. You cannot motivate anyone without them motivating themselves first. Remember, while pay is an important issue, it is not the main reason which gives people the basis of their motivation. To be motivated, you need to ensure your people are aligned in the following.

- Purpose: source of motivation. Why I am doing this?
- Identity or role: expression of motivation. Identifying who you are in pursuing the purpose.
- Values: staying power of motivation. What is important in this role?
- Beliefs: energy of motivation. What do you believe about your potential?
- Capability: application of motivation. What skills do you need?
- Behaviour: product of motivation. What habits prevent you from achieving your goals?

**Mr Ray Bigger is founder and managing director of Think8, a leading coaching, consulting and training company headquartered in Singapore. He has more than 25 years of sales, marketing, people and team development experience. Mr Bigger is a former English Premier League and Football League referee. Tel: (65) 6875-0104, website: www.think8.net**



Coaching: train each person based on what he or she really needs.

- Environment: context for motivation. Does the environment reflect the person you are?

## Recruiting

This involves upgrading the skill set to attract, hire and retain talent. It does not mean waiting until you have a vacancy. You need to scan the market to see what is happening, who is happening and why it is hap-

pening. You need to rely a lot less on gut feel, otherwise you could be in for a "bad stomach ache" and utilise the array of assessment tools that are available to help you hire the right person. In addition, consider letting the people in your department interview the likely candidates! Have a welcome party for a new person. Have a review with that new person after 30 and 60 days to ensure

The second of a two-part article.

## COACHING



the settling in process is as smooth as possible.

### Accountability

This means ensuring each member of your team understands its individual responsibilities. Make it a golden rule that there should never be any excuses however reasonable they might sound. If there are problems, people must raise them up at the earliest opportunity and come armed with solutions, and not simply repeat the problem over and over again.

Involve the team even if it is not everyone's problem. Get away from a blame culture. You are working with them to ensure opportunities are identified, and problems or issues are anticipated and solutions forthcoming. This is where effective coaching plays a major part. People who are engaged with you, the boss, and the company will feel pain if a

target is missed. Being accountable should be fun and rewarding.

### Engaging

Finally, engaging with your people is all about you spending most of your time in the four areas we have covered. If you are not, reschedule your time. If it is an issue, sit down with your boss and work out a solution. If people feel valued, feel part of the team, feel they are making a contribution and fairly rewarded, they just may stay longer with you.

I will leave you with this thought. Ultimately you need to tolerate failure and tell your people that. Once they see you walk the talk, they will trust and respect you, at which point you really are a coach and not a manager. Think about it?

## MENTORING



**Q I have recently been promoted and now I find myself running a lot of meetings that I once attended as a member of the team. I believe I need to cut down on the number of meetings that we have, and at the same time make them more productive. In the past, we just seemed to sit and chat without getting anywhere. I have made some smaller changes, but this will be a larger change as meetings are almost a ritual here. Any tips please?**

Firstly, congratulations on your promotion, and I was pleased to read that you have made some small changes first before launching into something more significant. Yes meetings are costly and time consuming if muddled through.

At your next meeting, you can impose the change. However, I would engage the team in getting their input and buy the changes you want to make, so this is a double-edged sword. I am sure there will be people within your team who will support your approach.

Ask your team the following questions and keep in view that you are building trust here as well. If you are determined that this issue needs to improve, you can set the parameters by stating at the outset the "what" and give them the responsibility of "how".

- Do you need so many meetings and how else can they use their time better?
- What should the objectives of the meetings be when they are held?
- What would they like to get out of the meetings?
- What do they think work and what does not?
- Who needs to be there?



Encourage participation: do not dismiss ideas before they are fully understood.

- What should the agenda focus on – key issues or just a list of people reporting?
- Would a change of venue help – maybe Starbucks instead of the usual meeting room?
- Set clear objectives for each meeting and ensure everyone understands their role in making the meeting a success.
- Circulate an agenda in advance with the objective set against each item and for the meeting overall, the latter in big red letters at the top of the agenda.
- Encourage everyone to participate and to do that, avoid kicking ideas off the table before they are really understood. Use phrases such as "Walk us through how you see that working" or "Do you have any evidence to support that view". This discourages people from simply criticising without substantiating their view.
- Finally, commit people to the tasks they are assigned for the next meeting. Above all make meetings decision orientated and let people earn their place at meetings and not be there as a matter of right. Good Luck.

**Have a work-related issue or problem? Write to Ray (ray@think8.net).**