

Care and Feeding of Excellent Employees

by Michael A. Sand, Sand Associates

The topic of hiring and keeping excellent employees is an important one in these recessionary times. In most organizations, we spend too much time hiring and firing both average and below average employees.

Let us concentrate on hiring and keeping excellent employees and therefore minimize the time spend with others.

Hiring

Before hiring, think carefully of what characteristics the ideal employee would have. Begin of course with a detailed job description. Rank order it by the amount of time you expect for each task.

Make a list of specific traits you would expect of the ideal employee. Some positions require extraordinary patience; some do not. Some require managerial skills; some require the ability to work with individuals of different skills and interests.

Probationary Period

Make sure to have a clear probationary period, perhaps three months but no longer than six months. Since it is difficult to find excellent employees, you want to immediately be able to terminate employees if you have made a bad judgment.

Review Meeting

When you have hired an excellent employee, schedule a meeting with him/her a month to six weeks after they have begin to work. Be prepared to change the job description at the recommendation of the employee. Stress those parts of the job that the employee performs exceeding well.

Task Lists

Every excellent employee can draft a measurable, meaningful task list. Depending on the particular position, it might be a monthly or a quarterly report. The tasks will of course be changed as events change, but the task lists should be kept current.

Supervision

Excellent employees need excellent supervisors. The supervisor and the employee should meet on a regular basis, usually weekly. They would review the employee's work. The employee would tell the supervisor what assistance is needed. This might include a request for professional development. It might include requests for direction from the agency's board. It might include requests for assistance such computer or other technical assistance.

Problem-Solving

Make it clear to the employee that the entire agency will provide support. But the employee must clearly express his/her ideas, interests and recommendations in a timely manner. Often, a regularly-scheduled staff meeting is an excellent place to discuss problems that arise.

Thanks

Make sure to thank the excellent employee again and again. Thank them orally when they have completed an excellent task. Give them opportunities for professional advancement. Pay them as much as you can to minimize the chances of their leaving for a better-paying position.

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