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"Quotes"

"There is a human capital crisis in the...government. Not only are we losing the decades of talent as civil servants retire, we are not doing enough to develop and nurture the next generation of public servants."
~Daniel Akaka

"I think the thing that makes them a good team is that the role players know their roles and they excel in their roles."
~Mike Bethea

"Increased investment in infrastructure and continued investment in human resources are needed to better leverage...strong capital availability and solid research and development capacity."
~David Buchholz

*"Corporate success is directly linked to an organization's ability to effectively implement a...talent management strategy. ***We readily continue our support...to ensure that talent continues to drive successful business results."*
~Jeff Carr

"If you cry 'forward', you must without fail make plain in what direction to go."
~Anton Chekhov

"We always welcome the feedback and the level of interest."
~Rich Dalrymple

"The more specific and measurable your goal, the more quickly you will be able to identify, locate, create, and implement the use of the necessary"

Dear Friend,

Do You Offer...?

I'd just stepped away from my desk, and was in another part of the office, when I heard the phone ring. Unfortunately, I was too far away to get back in time. Oh well, that's why we have voicemail.

Sometime later, I collected the message (and, boy, do I wish I'd sprinted to the phone). The caller had been referred by a colleague (good sign). Here was the new director of a demanding program that was about to bring aboard two new people, and the desire was get them off to a good start by enlisting external leadership coaching support. The whole notion was to focus in on these new folks as leaders as well as to build into the substantive sides of their roles...right from the beginning. This director wanted to increase their likelihood of success as individuals and vital players in the organization. Excellent thinking! So, needless to say, I returned the call...quickly.

Investments in staff members may seem to be luxuries, but they're really not. In many respects, these are the most profitable investments one can make in a business or organization. And so, in this month's edition of **EA Insights**, we examine the human investment. Ultimately, everyone benefits.

All the best,

June

June Melvin Mickens
Executive Advantage, LLC

The Most Profitable Organizational Investment

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As leaders contemplate ways to strengthen their organizations, thoughts often land on improving technology, growing market presence, or increasing revenue. Now, while all of those are important, and can contribute to a stronger and more impactful organization, in many respects they miss the boat.

Perhaps the most profitable investment an organization can make is an investment in its people. A commitment to staff members -- the people who are the lifeblood of the business -- can create an environment in which people are engaged fully, thrive professionally as well as personally, and serve as effective and compelling ambassadors for the organization.

So what forms can commitment take? Here are three examples.

Help staff members understand organizational direction and how they fit in it.

Although some leaders like to play things close to the vest, only providing snippets of information on a need-to-know basis, such an approach is counterproductive to say the least. If you want a collaborative environment, one in which people are invested and actively involved in creative thinking and problem-solving, people have to see and understand the big picture.



For that reason, it is imperative that organization leaders are clearly mapping out direction. ("Here's where we're going.... This is why that's important.... Here's an overview of how we're going to get there....") This isn't a one-time speech; it becomes a continuous reminder -- a rallying cry, if you will -- that keeps the team focused and moving together, with the overarching mission in mind.

Additionally, it's critical to help each arm of the organization understand how it fits into accomplishing that mission. There are times when it's much easier for certain parts of the organization to connect the dots between what they do and organizational goals than it is for other company arms. However, though performing different roles, each business unit is critical to success, and leaders must help people to make the connection at the unit level. But, it doesn't stop there; then, unit leaders have to drill down to the importance of each individual. It's only when each person sees himself or herself as an integral part of daily work that full

engagement occurs -- that is, engagement that results in people voluntarily going above and beyond, filling gaps, taking initiative, and being independently accountable.

Provide staff members with resources to do the jobs they were hired to do. There's nothing more frustrating than being hired to do a job and not having what you need to get that job done. We've all been there at one point or another, and it certainly doesn't leave you loving the experience.

Okay, with that said, I also recognize that, in tough economic times, we're all strapped for resources. However, as leaders, one of the worst things you can do is to set folks up for failure. So, a continual reality-check is in order. There are things we'd all just LOVE to accomplish, but are those plans and ideas realistic given the current situation...whatever that is? Healthy stretch goals are important to institute in order to encourage and motivate; however, what's being asked of people also has to be within the realm of what's possible.



So, that may mean not setting targets that you clearly won't have the resources for your team to meet. It may mean investing in continued formal and informal skill-building and development opportunities so that you are positioning people to be equipped to do their jobs. And, it may mean, allowing for creativity (within appropriate bounds, of course) so that people can devise practical, and sometimes unconventional, approaches to reach goals, especially when resources are tight.

Encourage staff members to meet individual goals as well.

Although people may sign on with you because they believe in what you do, the reality is that there has to be some level of mutual benefit for them to stay. It's the old "What's in it for me?" notion. So, leaders can't get so absorbed in their own efforts and legacies that they forget that the people around them also have aspirations. Believe it or not, as you help people meet some of their goals, you'll end up reaching more of your own.



Consider compensation. This isn't just about salary. Though salary is important, think about total compensation -- insurances, leave, flexible schedules, etc. These are all aspects of compensation that can be built into a package to enable staff members to meet personal needs or achieve personal goals.

Give ongoing feedback and support. Once upon a time, I remember going in to talk with a supervisor to get a sense of how I was doing. The response I got was, "Don't worry. I'll let you know when you're not doing what I need you to do." So much for feedback and support! Folks shouldn't have to wait until they mess up to receive comments. And, a sure way to lose people who are looking for a collegial, interactive atmosphere is to make them function in a feedback vacuum. While full-fledged performance reviews on a weekly basis aren't realistic, nuggets of interaction sure may be.

Offer ongoing professional and personal development opportunities. If you've ever been blocked from pursuing a new role (one for which you were qualified, that is) or if you've ever been denied cross-training or coaching because you were too critical to your current team, you know the taste it left for you. Too often leaders, unsuspectingly, do themselves a disservice by holding on so tightly to a talented, trusted staff member that they actually thwart growth and opportunity. In the long run, it backfires; they end up losing the person as soon as the chance to escape arises. What these leaders don't realize is that, by supporting relevant growth opportunities, they allow staff members to explore new areas, to bring new ideas back to the team, and to join them in fostering an environment of innovation and development that attracts, more than repels, desired staff members.

So, are you are you at a cross-roads? Do you need to make that pivotal investment for your organization? Don't overlook the people who drive your organization's engine.

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"I love feedback; I like to know when I hit something. Usually you know yourself, but you like to see that smile on the director's face."
~Skeet Ulrich

"If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings and put compensation as a carrier behind it, you almost don't have to manage them."
~Jack Welch

resources for its achievement."
~Charles Givens

"I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving."
~Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr.

"We are making substantial progress in implementing several core management initiatives, including strategic management of human capital..."
~Russ Knocke

"Success is steady progress toward one's personal goals."
~Jim Rohn

"Human capital is a core corporate asset, just like financial and physical assets. As such, it must be managed the way companies manage other assets. This requires thinking strategically about how to invest in human capital, and figuring out how to optimize and measure its return."
~Allan Schwyer

"It was a great way to examine what I do and to receive appropriate feedback in order to become an even better and more complete educator."
~Sharyn Stein

"More than ever, staff are looking for professional development and career advancement on the job, though perhaps within a compressed time schedule that allows them to get home to their families."
~Patrick Sullivan

About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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