

## Staff Engagement through Managing Employee Expectation

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Managing employee expectation has become more critical in today's fast moving environment. An expectation can encompass behaviors, feelings, policies and attitudes (Desimone and Werner, 2012). In fact, managing employee expectation begins at the recruitment stage, where job responsibilities and remuneration (if possible) are supposedly stated in job advertisements regardless of the methods used (be it through conventional, electronic media or word-of-mouth).

It seems, however, that only a handful of employers are willing to mention the remuneration offered for interested job applicants. It is highly imperative that job advertisement to highlight as much as practical major job responsibilities and expected outcome (in general) for the position intended to hire. Wanous (1976) indicated that recruiting practices often result in recruits having inflated expectations of their jobs and organizational life.

Once the potential candidates were shortlisted for interview or other form of assessments, the job expectations together with the possible returns and rewards should be highlighted to the chosen individual(s). Apart from recruiting the most suitable candidates to fill up the vacant position, the panel of interviewers must also distinguish or at least make an effort to understand their future employee's expectation. Irving and Meyer (1994) stated that any discrepancy between what newcomers expects and what they encounter would cause an effect to the job holder.

Citing an experience as one of the panel of interviewers before, such expectation is very crucial to reduce the possibility of turnover (Porter and Steers, 1973), low staff motivation, breach of psychology contract or industry dispute at a later stage. As for the potential employees, they need to be given a general but realistic job preview especially on their job responsibilities and expectations.

An example is provided as follows:

In an interview, a potential electrical technician was notified to attend to a specific task due to faulty machinery which causes an interruption of work which was impossible to foresee. Such incident may cause work related accident, actual or threatened, and thus, required a need for *overtime work*\*, if his service is required and within the ambit of Malaysia Labor Law. Similarly, he needs to be made known on the guarantee and possible returns for such inopportune nature of the job.

*\*The employer is advised to include overtime clause in their contract of employment, should there is a need for regular overtime when necessary and employee should not unreasonably refuse to perform overtime.*

Once the potential candidate agrees to accept the job offer, a more in-depth job preview is expected during the orientation program. However, a huge number of organizations did not pay much attention to orientation program. No doubt, employee orientation is not part and parcel legislation requirements; but it is an integration process between newly recruited staff and the organization. It is a process to provide an access to the newly recruited employees on basic information about the organization, details of the job responsibilities including expected outcomes, organization cultural, line of authority, used of personal protection equipment (PPE) and the lists goes on.

There is no standard rule of thumb on how to conduct orientation, but if possible the orientation needs to be conducted soonest, after the employee report to work. In some industries, due to the nature of work, orientation must be conducted before the employee is allowed to perform their duty, including safety briefing.

For employee orientation program, it must cover general information (such as welcoming remarks, business information, company policies, familiarization with organizational cultural and other relevant general information), HR information (such as staff's entitlement, job description and relationship with other departments, immediate superior, peer and subordinate (if any), benefits assigned to the positions, possible career development, employee handbook (if any), claim procedures and other relevant procedures) and specific/departmental information (expected assigned job responsibilities and outcomes, especially during probationary period, personal protection equipment required, training provided and line of authority).

Thus, managing staffs' expectations must not stop here. A new set of expectations need to be made known to both parties after the probationary period. Staffs' expectation's can be renewed, relearned or even restructured during appraisal review. Appraisal review should be one of the best platform to define the organization's expectation towards the employees and vice versa, identify their potentials, discussion on practical personal development plan, expected and possible rewards if manage to achieve the targets/KPIs set, apart from only emphasizing on past performance.

Managing employees' expectations from career development perspective are even crucial in today's organization. One of the examples related to managing employees' expectations in career development is as follows:

*Mr. A is one of the excellent performers in the Company XYZ. His current position is Assistant Safety Officer. He aspires to be a qualified Safety and Health officer in two years' time. He just finished his safety and health certification course a month ago. As a HR practitioner, you need to work together with his immediate superior to manage his expectation. It is important to be open and willing to share the actual information with Mr. A. As an employer, failure to do this will cause Mr. A to feel demotivated if his two years aspiration goes down the drain.*

*Inform Mr. A on the number of examinations that he must go through and success. Failure in any of the required two times in a row will forced him to re-sit for the course again. Also, he needs to have solid and related industry working experience before he can submit his application to the Department of Safety and Health in Putrajaya, Malaysia for further assessment.*

In conclusion, managing employee expectation will not be a success if the practice of transparent communication between the employer and employee is not applied in an organization. At the micro level, the collaboration between operational and human resource departments plays a crucial role to ensure success of such determination. Indeed, the human resource practitioners need to have sufficient business acumen, familiar with know-how mechanism and understand the job competencies well, before able to provide such consultation. Failure to manage employees' expectation up to reasonable level will bring more harm to the organization.

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