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MOTIVATION AT WORK

HOW TO BOOST YOUR EMPLOYEES' PERFORMANCE

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CHARTERHOUSE-

A view from the Top

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What is the biggest challenge you see in your industry now?

In Singapore, the biggest challenge in any industry is recruiting good talents and reducing turnover. We have a very tight labour force, so it is always a challenge to find very good people to fill key positions. This is particularly so in the higher education sector where we have to field our key academic hires from a pool of global talent in very specialized and niche areas of expertise.

Who has impacted you most in your career and how?

Human resources is not for the faint-hearted—HR practitioners have to make difficult decisions in difficult times, and manage the complexity of the 'human' in an organisation to ensure that 'people' objectives are aligned with organisational goals. Having been in HR for the last 20 years, I have learnt to be resilient. What has impacted me most in my career is not one single event, but a series of events. One significant project was a major wage-restructuring exercise that I had to manage at a security services company. We had to transit about 4,000 employees to a new wage scheme without impacting their morale and national security. It was a highly complex project that involved the ministry, workers, and other government bodies. Through very careful planning and execution over a period of about three years, we successfully executed the project. This had a major impact on my career as I had to learn to manage key stakeholders, while at the same time ensure that the morale of the workers remained intact. Had this project failed, it would have affected national security.

What is one misconception people have about your industry?

I moved from the security services to the university sector four years ago. It's a different ballgame working in the higher education sector. The people that you deal with are more complex and sophisticated and one needs to have sufficient tact and diplomacy when managing a highly educated workforce. People tend to think that in the higher education sector, the workload is lighter and pace is more relaxed and slower, but the truth is far from it.

Tell me the difference between good and exceptional.

When you run an efficient HR function, you are good. This means that you provide a high level of service delivery to your internal clients and you have an excellent turnaround time for most of your key HR services. To be exceptional, HR professionals have to move beyond the next step. You have to be very proactive, and work with your key clients and stakeholders to provide solutions to difficult problems and anticipate the needs of your clients before they even arise. A good example would be during my tenure with a security services company when there was a very high manpower requirement at one time. We had to mount thousands of workers in a key project within a very short timeline, and I knew that our traditional recruitment approach would not work. My team brainstormed and came up with the idea of setting up a professional recruitment agency within the company that operates like a business, with set targets and incentive schemes for recruiters. The agency took off within six months, and was so successful that not only did it recruit thousands of workers for the key project, it also provided a continuous stream of labour for the other internal business units. It gave the organisation a key competitive advantage as a result of this innovative idea.