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NETWORK INTELLIGENCE: Trust and Talent Alliances

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Theme: Trust and Talent
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I am happy you gave us the opportunity to write on a topic related to trust and talents. Truth be told, I as a bright member of gen Y, used to be a job hopper in my early years. I don't know if I was young and stupid, or I was clever and rebellious. I was just searching for MY perfect and trustworthy place in the business world. The place I'm going to fall in love with. Today I want to tell you three stories for three talented people in my life. That's it. No big deal. Just three stories. Trust me.

1. *Connecting the Dots: Trust and Turnover*

The first story is about connecting the dots. Diana is a Forbes awarded employee, who received a double salary offer from an international gaming company to head one of their teams. She refused it. She remained head of department in a small local company that funded her MBA and that gives her the job freedom to be her "weird self". Does she regret what she has done? I doubt so.

Leaders today talk a lot about trust, talents' retention, and the business value of empowering employees to be brand ambassadors. In stable times, companies grew larger to leverage economies of scale and process improvement. In that era careers were considered nearly as permanent as marriage and progressing in one's career was like riding an escalator, with predictable advancement for those who followed the rules. Then the world changed, both philosophically and technologically. The companies had to focus on hitting short-term financial targets to boost stock prices (and some of them still continue doing it). Economic crises replaced long-term investment with cost-cutting and measures like "rightsizing", development budget freeze, etc. And erosion of talents' trust to the workplace, especially among Gen X and Y has flourished. The damage inflicted on employee trust by years of enforced layoffs also known as involuntary turnover, pay cuts, is to be yet overcome. The employees have been encouraged to think of themselves as "free agents", seeking out the best opportunity for growth and changing jobs, whenever better offers beckoned. With nearly half (48%) of employers in the 2014 Global Talent Management and Rewards Study reporting an increase in hiring compared to last

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year and more than one-third (35%) indicating that turnover rose during the same period, it is critical to develop a clear perspective on what it takes to retain and engage talents. Well-equipped high performers show tendency to leave their current job for another organization. Turnover of this kind of employees causes substantial costs associated with recruiting and re-skilling, and hidden costs associated with difficulties completing projects and in team unity (Chen, 2008, 23). A global study by Stephen Covey showed that high-trust organizations return three times the total return to shareholders than organizations with low trust.

Even more so, trust is needed in periods of change and turbulence. For example, when a significant change is announced in an organization, the announcement creates uncertainty that often leads people to reject or block the change. It is particularly clear in such cases that direct orders are inadequate for ensuring new behaviors; for real change to be implemented the degree of perceived uncertainty must be offset by an increase in trust.

Though she is a representative of Gen X, Diana has been with the company for the last ten years in its good times of 180% profit increase and its turbulent moments of layoffs, salary cuts, budget freeze. Now Diana is managing an outplaced division of a company specialized in game design. Most of the company former employees are current subcontractors in that company and partnering with it on different projects. Their trust make them still work for the company as freelancers, entrepreneurial partners, second time employed in the company colleagues. They work together beyond the company limits of its legal form, achieve mutually beneficial results, share common ideas and beliefs.

So, let's connect the dots: the business world needs a new employment framework that facilitates mutual trust, mutual investment, and mutual benefit. An ideal framework encourages top performers to develop their personal networks and act entrepreneurially without becoming job-hoppers. Employment is a win-win partnership, a mutually beneficial deal, with explicit terms between independent players. The employment alliance is the framework managers and talents need for the trust and investment to build powerful businesses and careers and, thus, help them build the future.

2. Love and Loss: Trust and Employee Motivation

My second story is about love and loss. At the age of 36, Mary had a brilliant mind-challenging career as a Vice President of an innovation company. After many years of IVF attempts she also managed to deliver twins – a boy and a girl. Alas! She gained her life-work balance. Her happiness and joy were unspeakable. In Bulgaria the paid maternity leave lasts for two years and the new love of Mary meant the loss of her much loved job action for a year or two. Though Mary has developed a successor to replace her for the maternity leave absence, on the sixth month Mary started part-time working for the company projects and supported her team tasks distantly from home. Mary had to split her time between babies and tasks. Does she regret it? I doubt so.

Motivation is an important element to consider when exploring the underlying factors behind talents' behavior based on trust. To remain viable in an environment characterized by change and uncertainty, organizations must understand the motivations of their workforce and especially their pool of talents that their future business relies on. There are intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) motivations.

Intrinsic motivation is driven by the internal wants or needs of an employee, such as the need for security or autonomy; need to belong and connect; need for giving opinion and being recognized; need of feeling the significance and contribution to work; need to develop and be challenged, need of purpose and fairness. Trust relationships in the workplace involve transparent communication, fair treatment and respectful interactions between individuals. Such relationships enable cooperation among talents and their colleagues, supervisors, managers and company clients and may act as a source of intrinsic motivation.

Extrinsic motivation is the performance of an action or task in order to obtain an outcome or reward. Extrinsic factors such as work-life integration, workload, flexible working and employee benefit packages can trigger cultural changes and influence wellbeing which can lead to sustainable high performance. For example a positive working environment where employees can be positively challenged, where they thrive and grow can reap business benefits beyond the purely financial. Conversely absenteeism and presenteeism, a prolific issue for many businesses, are strongly associated with poor wellbeing. Employee motivation and wellbeing can impact the trust.

Employers can work to influence both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to provide effective work environments and increase employee wellbeing, which plays a strong role in overall engagement as a sign of trust. The prescriptive leadership and talent management advice runs the gamut, from changes in compensation structures to more flexibility in work schedules, team building and more, all aimed at encouraging employee engagement with the employer's brand. Without these drivers, reactions work against workplace objectives and can for example hinder learning of the talents and reduce achievements of the top performers. If these motivational drivers remain absent from the workplace, the result is an individual health risk and a risk to the company's financial and organizational reputation.

Old-school companies and leaders may think trust is embodied in a paycheck, but it's not. Trust is a psychological state; it equates to neurological safety in relation to others' intentions and one's environment. Talents that have trust in their co-workers and the organization they work for are likely to have higher job satisfaction. And trust is earned, like respect. Employees who trust management will also trust the company brand and motivated talents will care about the brand.

Mary cared for the company tasks and her team. She back-seated her personal interests as mother to the company needs. Sometimes life makes people take tough decisions. I'm convinced that the only thing that keeps them going is that they love what they do and trust the people they share common ideas, values and goals with. Work fills a large part of people's lives, and the only way they can be truly satisfied and motivated to proceed is to do what they truly believe is a great work.

3. Infinity: Trust and discretionary energy

My last story is about infinity. When I was a child, my “tiger” mother used to say: “There ain’t such things that can’t be done.”

In 2002, at the age of 16, Peter took a bet with a classmate of his that together with a friend he can develop his first on-line game for a three months period. He won the bet. He developed many other games from then on. And established a company that for a couple of years counted more than 100 employees from Gen Y and Z. The people trusted him, talents adored the freedom he gave to their ideas to grow.

The leader with emotional intelligence goes beyond trust and understands the need for an emotional connection with everyone in the workplace and especially with the talents. The emotional connection makes talents willing to contribute beyond the basic requirements of the job, brings discretionary energy in. Employees’ trust leads to emotional connection with the business called engagement. An environment of trust leads to top-notch performance – engagement, discretionary energy release, boosted wellbeing, and performance that is optimal, sustainable and value added.

Leaders don’t have to be best friends with talents, but do have to be sensitive and aware to the emotional tenor of the workplace. In psychology, trust is the belief that the person who is trusted will do what is expected. In organizational settings, trust may have a *positive influence* on the behaviors, perceptions, and performances of a person. If top management ignores emotional connection, no employee will trust the company and no talent will care about company brand, goals or workplace.

Certainly, it is not possible all the employees to be happy all the time in the multigenerational workplace, but happiness and engagement will be much more achievable if trust is created by humanizing the work interactions and, therefore, the company brand. Then the workforce will be a community, just like in real life, where the players are all at different stages but are working to stay more or less in synch with one another.

Attracting and retaining talent takes a lot of work and persistent effort to be better. Today’s employee may not be the talent of tomorrow but may be the talent of the day after tomorrow or the next years to come, or the next big thing, or the next economic situation. You never know. So we all need to start thinking about how to be a more human leader.

*Peter is a true believer. He is contagious with his passion for innovations, brain alliances and emotional attachment. He is infinitely hungry and foolish for the new unconventional things. “**Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.**” It was Steve Job’s Stanford University commencement day message that exploded the talents all over the world. Stay Infinitely Hungry. Stay Infinitely Foolish. Create trustworthy brain alliances.*

And I have always wished that for myself. And now, as you gave us the opportunity to write on a topic related to trust and talents, I wish that for you.

Stay Hungry. Stay Foolish.

Thank you all very much.

Words: 1951

Source:

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