Like Enron, many companies have also fallen victim to the "talent mindset" myth. They often hire talented people for the wrong reasons. Even those that hire the right people often make little efforts to integrate and motivate them. Many young, new talents often become disappointed, realizing that their jobs do not always require their level of expertise, ended up not fitting in, and finally leave.

The simple truth is that high-performance organizations are not products of high-performance individuals. They are products of high-performance cultures. This is because individual employees, no matter how talented, are transient, but organizational cultures develop and pervade an organization, and endure after its people have left.

An individual's innate ability matters less in determining organizational success than the attributes of the management system in which a person works. It is organizational systems, consisting of organizational processes and social dynamics that allow people to become and give of their best. Organizations preoccupied with determining best and worst performers often downplay attributes that are critical to building cultures and the management systems that bring out the best in everyone. The "talent mindset" myth assumes that people make organizations smart. More often than not, it is the other way around through organizational learning. Organizational learning develops tacit knowledge in employees. Tacit knowledge involves knowing how to manage yourself and others, and how to navigate complicated social situations.

Increasing globalization calls for dexterity and cultural mindfulness to fully realize the benefits of diversity and global reach. The heightened business uncertainties also calls for proactive and responsive minds rather than fixed processes. The main challenge facing management is to seek hitherto unconventional ways to manage and motivate their people with distinct styles of learning, focusing, producing, and communicating.

Psychologists have found that when people are commanded for their efforts at focusing on goals, strategizing and working hard, they will be encouraged to concentrate on learning goals and strategies for achievement. This also sustains their motivation, performance and self-esteem.

A developmental approach is therefore necessary to nurture the talents of all employees as a priority, without falling into the "talent mindset" trap of excessive individualism. Research evidence on learning organizations confirms that hiring and developing individual talent is just not enough for excellent performance. The oft-quoted critique is that you can have a team where each individual has an IQ of 180 but the collective IQ is only 80. It is of little value to develop people as individuals when the other features of the workplace are not conducive to high performance.

A holistic perspective has to be applied to obtain the effective nurture of human talent. Leaders will need to form a conscious and profound understanding of human capital that requires them to incorporate and integrate insights on management skills, emotional intelligence, performance appraisal and measurement, social networks, executive mentoring, coaching, and the balance between team and individual talent, leadership style, continual real-time learning, social and cognitive psychology, communication skills, and supporting technology infrastructures.

According to an Accenture-sponsored study, a high-performance workforce is an important competitive advantage because corporate culture cannot be copied as easily as its products and marketing strategies. It recommends six imperatives used by successful companies to create a sustainable high-performance workforce:

- Do not just hire skilled workers, hire "skillable" workers;
- match talent with the right opportunities;
- measure and develop talent in real time;
- use adaptive goal setting;
- link workforce actions to strategy and results;
- focus resources and new techniques on building skills and competencies.

Achieving competitive success through people involves a fundamental mindset change as to how we regard the work force and the employment relationship. It means achieving success by working with people, not by replacing them or limiting the scope of their creativity and activities. It ultimately entails seeing the human talent as a source of strategic advantage, not just as a cost to be minimized or avoided.

It is the acknowledgment of people as the true value creator of the organization.

References


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