

People – still an important resource

By Dr Norman Marr

The operating environment in the supply chain network is increasingly competitive, and in an attempt to raise efficiency and effectiveness, many organisations are employing ever-improving technology in their logistics systems – but such investments mean there is a continuing need to upgrade human resources.

Human resources are still one of the organisation's most flexible resources to cater with the unexpected in the supply chain. The impact of human resources on the success of the supply chain can be seen through ability, motivation and organisational culture.

Motivation

Motivation is the willingness of staff at all levels to exert high levels of effort into the activities for which they are responsible. Such high levels of activity can be maintained by the provision of rewards – not always financial. For some employees, the feeling of being valued may well produce as much loyalty and motivation as a financial reward. The willingness of an employer to invest in an employee will produce loyalty through motivation. The increased pressures at all points in the supply chain mean that the starting level for employ-

ees should be at a higher level. Consequently, the education and training of employees should be set at a level appropriate for the job.

Everyone is important

To get employees to recognise the importance of their particular job, it is necessary that they are shown its importance. Undergoing training and education courses, seminars and workshops will show them the importance of their direct functions, but also the effect of their functions on other operations throughout the supply chain.

The information about the impact on other functions must be at a level of language with which the employee can cope. The delivery system again should be appropriate to the level of the employee. The understanding of all the functions by all employees should also include interdependency of all internal functions and the impact of decisions on internal supply chain effectiveness and efficiency.

Interdependency

This interdependency of internal and external functions goes beyond the functions within the supply chain to include supporting areas such as accounts and marketing. As a consequence, it is important employers include

logistics and supply chain education and training for all areas of the organisation.

To ensure the supply chain is successful with both internal and external functions integrated, there are two key areas to recognise: communication through all the levels of an organisation and between all stakeholders within the supply chain to avoid suspicion and mistrust; and education at all levels which serves several purposes, including helping staff to feel wanted and encouraging them to take ownership of corporate policies and strategies.

Career path

Such widespread learning should be available on a career path to enable employees to take steps up the ladder to suit themselves, after advice from a training manager or supervisor. The outcome of the steps up the career path should be highly motivated, committed staff at all levels.

It is important to recognise that staff at the direct customer interface can, either by accident or design, derail all corporate

policies and plans. Highly committed staff will deliver the levels of customer service needed for corporate success.

The career paths available are set for employees at different levels. Within each path will be starting point material, including on-the-job training backed by part-time college studies. Should the employee choose the next step, then more on-the-job training in a different department/operation can be offered. This process may continue for a number of operations.

A different career path may stem from an academic qualification and follow some academic education coupled with practical experience. The individual path will depend on the person's choice and also corporate availability. New Zealand has made great progress in developing suitable career paths over the full spectrum of supply chain management which consider the importance of international business.



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