Future Management Trends

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ABSTRACT

During last years the vast majority of reports say that the way we work in future will be different. We have to be more flexible, we will must take seriously in account the value of qualifications, the work will be based on tuning in to the talent, and will have the ability of a business ready to change. We are in the process to meet social and environmental demands being placed of qualifications, upon us. We are also in the process of taking in account another key theme which is metrics and this will play a very significant role in the sustainability of the organisations. As organisations switch their focus from surviving to demonstrating business value, metrics will play an increasingly important role in keeping management informed about project performance and its impact on the bottom line and customer service. This paper looks at the way your work patterns and methods will change in the near future.

Key words: Flexibility, Tuning, Qualifications, Talent Management.

1. Introduction

It is important that employers are prepared to be more flexible about when and where work is performed, they can significantly reduce the commuting endured by their employees. If they are also prepared to embrace technologies such as video conferencing, they can save the cost and time of business travel, improve business results and add to their green credentials. We know that transport is one of the major causes of carbon emissions, and that it is mainly associated with people at work, both commuting and business travel. We have people travelling to see others face-to-face when there are technologies available that can substitute for a high percentage of those meetings and save wasted time as well as carbon. The office technology allows people to work at a distance and communicate effectively without travelling. So why do we still insist that people travel to work and in many cases sit at a desk all day when they could do much of their work from a distance electronically? “Up to 50 per cent of jobs can be done from home – more if we include the 20 per cent of us who spend some part of the week working at home. We expect retailers to operate extended hours, but we still have a high percentage of information workers on a 9 to 5 Monday to Friday routine. The problem is bad management. The new focus on global warming should be a wake-up call to employers to review their working practices. If employers can replace half of their face-to-face meetings with audio or video conferencing, they will save the time and cost of unnecessary travel and find the time spent in meetings reduced. But to do this, managers will have to step outside their comfort zone of watching over people while they work and empower employees to manage their own work pattern.

In any organisation there is a limit to the flexibility for employees without the business suffering. Even so it’s good business sense to offer all employees the right to request flexible working now and not be forced into it by some future legislation. Flexible working is seen as the key to overcoming these problems. Key recommendations are, that the employers should make their staff aware of flexible working options, discuss them and train their managers to deliver them. If the employee can show that his or her job can be done with a different pattern of work, why wouldn’t every employer offer this to every employee? By definition, giving all employees the opportunity to work flexibly will only be done if the job doesn’t suffer and the employer can define and monitor this. Poor managers do not trust their employees to manage their own time and place of work; they want to show they are in control. Good managers will genuinely empower their employees and give them the freedom to manage their own work-life balance. In the end it comes down to trust between manager and employee.

2. Qualifications

Most managers become by accident. One could hardly accuse engineering managers of being under qualified. Indeed, most are recognised in their particular area of technical expertise, but when it comes to management qualifications, far fewer have sought the opportunity to hold a MBA or become officially accredited. This discrepancy between skill sets where the perceived importance of recognising sector knowledge outweighs formal managerial qualifications, happens in many industries. Graduates emerge from university with a technical discipline and, as their individual experience grows, so too does their role and responsibilities. They take on a position in management and are expected to inspire and motivate individuals in their team, not to mention managing budgets and implementing business plans designed to drive the organisation’s strategic goals. Many of these new managers have to fulfil this role with little in the way of professional development to help build the skills needed to be a good manager. As a typical engineer’s career progresses, many find themselves taking on this role of an ‘accidental’ manager. It’s a phrase that describes individuals who have reached the level where they are leading a team as a result of proving their technical abilities, rather than their skills to manage effectively. There are, as with any discipline, elements of management that can, and should, be learned on the job. But for managers to feel confident and be successful in the long-term, experience should go hand-in-hand with continuous professional development. Giving managers the opportunity to undertake management qualifications will not only expose them to best practice management techniques, but also give them confidence in their abilities which, on completing the course, can be officially recognised and accredited. Put a value on it. Besides the tangible benefits of management qualifications in terms of employment, career prospects and financial rewards, there are wider personal benefits to undertaking a course of this nature. In addition to the transferable benefits offered by generic management, it can also be beneficial for engineering managers to focus

on a specific area of management which will be relevant to them in their daily working lives. One example of this might be project management. Engineering managers often find themselves responsible for co-ordinating and managing programmes or projects, so in selecting a relevant qualification, they should consider one which is tailored to nurturing and applying these skills in real workplace situations. The qualifications are most useful only when applied in practice and the organisations can play a key role. The organisations must give the chance to managers who have gained skills through qualifications the chance to use these new capabilities. Organisations might consider offering managers new projects which test and develop their new skills in view of supporting their newly qualified status.

3. Talent management

Talent management is very important factor in our days and will become more challenging in the near future. Across the globe companies of all sizes are having to face the fact that in tough times survival and success depend on attracting, developing and retaining key staff. Companies are realising that their future prosperity depends not only on natural resources or even on financial capital, but as Fortune Magazine noted recently, on human capital. Finding and developingmanagement talent is becoming a tougher challenge for businesses of all sizes. Ambitious smaller and medium sized companies recruit senior managers from larger concerns. The challenge of running even a small but growing company, and the prospect of stock options can have more appeal than waiting for promotion in a big firm.Obviously the talents that Microsoft or IBM look for in their employees are different from those needed by engineers, consultants, retailers or banks. Perhaps the most extraordinary is that of Steve Jobs, CEO of computer manufacturer Apple, who hires people with an “intriguing background and extraordinary tastes”, for example artists, poets and historians. Their magic, according to Jobs, is that they have exposed themselves to “the best things that humans have done and then brought those things into their projects”. Job’s original Macintosh team was a “marvellous mix of artists and engineers. Their aesthetic interests were as strong as their technical interests”. A recent study by management consultancy Accenture has found more than two-thirds of executives are deeply worried about the threat of not being able to recruit and retain the best talent. The survey of more than 850 top executives from the US, UK, Italy, France, Germany, Spain, Japan and China found worries about talent management were growing, with 67 per cent this year putting it second only behind competition as the key threat, up from six out of ten last year. Globalisation was a growing issue for the executives surveyed. More than half said they were concerned or very concerned about the impact of the global economy on business. A fifth said their organisations were not adequately equipped to succeed as global enterprises.

Talent is a fundamentally new factor of production for any business altogether more volatile, dynamic and transformational than those described in conventional economics. A human capital strategy is essential to support your organisation’s strategic goals”.

4. The management communication language

The problem with communication is often the reason for misunderstandings between people, relationship issues, loss of productivity at work, and much more. Miscommunication on the unconscious level is something that very few people know about, but most people do it. If business language is being commandeered by those who believe that, for example, the phrase “the core functionality of this process” says something that “what this does” fails to convey – and who, moreover, think it not only appropriate but necessary to use such terminology what does that say about the business world’s ability to speak to the community at large? In any case there are some words such as ‘diarise’. Diarising something is a much swifter process than putting it into a diary, so just think of all the precious time the word saves. Diarising is a common enough verb now – it’s in the New Oxford Dictionary – but it’s only one of a number of coinages wrestling over the same basic meaning. Although the clumsy ‘calendarise’ has all but disappeared, there’s a new verb on the block: to ‘outlook’. ‘Outlooking’ is diarising with software; software that was once restricted to those within reach of a desk, but is now available in a handheld format. So we ‘outlook’ meetings, to underline the fact that we are not deskbound, and do not rely on notes scribbled in biro, but are high-tech, up to speed, and likely to start BlackBerrying each other at the drop of a SIM-card. Just as one leadership manual after another pretends that management is a form of jungle warfare, requiring Rambo-like survival skills, so a certain machismo creeps into business language, and terms like ‘firefighting’ are deployed to describe what, more often than not, amounts to writing a few emails or taking a phonecall Action-words proliferate, and nouns become verbs: we task things. We parameterise them. We dialogue. And because it’s imperative always to be out in front, we take things that already exist and put a twist to them to show how innovative we are. Not all of this is bad in itself. Languages need to grow if they’re to thrive, and coinages that are a genuinely creative response to hitherto unremarked concepts, or a pithy summing-up of an existing problem, are to be welcomed. ‘Up to speed’, ‘cutting edge’, ‘state of the art’ – all of these fell strangely on the ear on first being heard; all are nowfirmly embedded, and need no gloss. And if there’s one thing we can say with certainty it’s that many of the terms evolving right now round the water-cooler – see? – will be part of everyday speech ten years down the line.

5.Conflict Management

Successful conflict management in the workplace depends initially on the attitude, understanding and skills for first-line managers and their willingness to respond to conflict. This is clearly not an easy task; the pace of modern business and organisational change, market and customer demands and the growing complexity of work roles and tasks mean that managers have to remain in the air and need to be equipped with a large range of process and people skills.Traditionally, managers have been trained and equipped primarily to deliver results around systems of ‘performance management’, and many managers feel some trepidation when they encounter employees with issues such as personal distress, mental health concerns, work-related stress, and of course, in the demanding area of conflict prevention and conflict de-escalation. Why should managers be especially interested in the prevention, management and resolution of conflict? The answer is basically that conflict costs – and its costs are not only significant, but appear to be growing. The hidden price of workplace conflict for managers is the amount of management time (including that of senior managers and directors who may be called in) that can be tied up with complex ‘people’ complaints – valuable time and energy that would be better spent on work tasks or in creating improved quality or productivity. It has been estimated that more than 20 per cent of managers’ time can be taken up with handling conflict or differences of one kind or another and, for some industry sectors this may be an underestimate. The first and simplest rationale for the manager to take conflict resolution seriously is that, by early and skilled intervention, managers can save significant costs and resources. This saving should be measured not only in financial terms, but also in preserving individual and team morale, well-being and work satisfaction. Handling the anger Anger is the one of the most disturbing of emotions to deal with, especially when it is directed at you personally. Angry or aggressive reactions in the workplace can come from any direction – from work colleagues, managers, clients, customers, suppliers or staff in different departments. Very few people are skilled at handling anger. Most managers handle it well enough, but some deal with it poorly and bluff their way through and hope for the best. Faced with anger, people tend to: ■ get angry themselves and retaliate ■ go on the defensive and come up with excuses as to why they did what they did ■ go off on totally unrelated, tangential stories about something or other ■ blame someone else ■ say nothing, look blank and hope it goes away.

Whatever the response, any of the above will most likely make the other person even more angry or frustrated, thus escalating the bad feeling and provoking even higher levels of irritation and verbal aggression. The technique of reframing damaging, negative or poisonous language in one of the most valuable communication skills a manager can master. It is all about transforming strongly felt – but highly judgemental – language that disparages or puts people down into something more positive and constructive. This is done by leaving out the negative words and putting the emphasis on the issue they are concerned about. Almost everyone wants people around them to collude with them when they are talking about their negative feelings with someone else. We want people to aggress with us in our judgements about other people, no matter how true or untrue they might be. In our private life it might be acceptable to collude and say, “yes, so-and-so is awful”, or agree with whatever is being said. But this is not acceptable or professional in our working lives and can have damaging effects. To maintain professional standards we need to manage our communications positively by reflecting back or acknowledging what the critical person is saying whilst reframing the negative or derogatory aspects of what is being alleged. There is a fine balancing act for managers here. If you neutralise your language too much, then the speaker may feel you have missed the meaning. In such cases people will feel compelled to repeat the criticism because they will feel you have not understood them. On the other hand, if your summary of what they are saying is too negative or critical, you will lose rapport with the person being criticised, who will feel you are taking sides. If this happens, that person will in turn be likely to react strongly and escalate the conflict. The basic aim of the technique is to summarise the main issues in what someone is saying in such a way as to eliminate the negative, judgemental or irrelevant elements. It is a skill used all the time in mediation, and is one that managers can incorporate as a valuable tool for everyday conflict management. Finally, beware of where you put your attention. The elements that get your attention are the ones that will grow. If you put most of your attention and energy into the negatives of a complaint, then you will get more of that, you will evoke more of the negative, the blame and the put-downs.

6. Born or made?

Despite management science being more than a century old, the world at large still thinks that good managers have the innate gift of a ‘manager’s brain’. But is that a myth? Is management an art that can be learnt from a book? We like to think that the masters of the craft are in fact masters of an art and, as with poets and painters, their gift comes from a supernatural source. Even though we are surrounded by opportunities to learn

more about the ways of management, we often tend to suppose that it is something that can’t be learnt. Oddly enough, one of the reasons that we assume good managers have innate talent is that we have read so many bad books on the topic. With legions of consultants, academics, retired directors and project managers struggling to define how to achieve good management practices, we slide into the assumption that what they are writing about is not subject to objective analysis. And yet, for every bad book there is a good one. The best fall broadly into two categories: first, those that tell you how to comply with legislation and current trends (well, we’ve all got to know the rules); and second, those that genuinely attempt to objectify what can seem like a very subjective experience. The trouble with being a manager, of course, is that you don’t have time to effectively learn how to become a better one, and so those hours grabbed in airport lounges clutching the latest offering from Prentice-Hall or Kogan Page can be time well spent, even if some of the self-improvement often feels like self-flagellation. This is fine in so far as it goes, but presumably the reason that he has listed and analysed these management flaws is so that we can learn from them. In other words, authors and educators in the field of management have an assumed starting position that the ability to manage can be learned. You may have a manager’s brain, they seem to say, but it’s pretty much the same as everyone else’s. Of course, those in the field of management science already know this. Theirs is a discipline that uses mathematical models and other analytical methods to help make better business management decisions. When you consider that some of the fields MS encompasses are logistics, resources allocation, simulations, data mining and so on, it is absurd to suppose that a manager can handle this type of material innately. Management is far more democratic today than it has ever been, with managers What does this mean? It means that the manager, in order to survive as well as succeed, must be able to keep the faith of various stakeholders who might have conflicting interests. Is this innate? Whether it is hard-wiring or conditioning that makes a good manager, the way the manager’s brain will operate in the future will be different. We moving in a process that shift towards the “working on screen culture” that will have a dramatic effect on the way we think, because “our standards of satisfaction and fulfillment may be different”. Having vast quantities of information available to us at the touch of a button, we are conditioning ourselves to ‘iconic thinking’. The result is iconic thinking, quick fixes and short attention spans. This will have an effect on the way companies are structured and will change the relationship between management and their employees. As the workforce becomes more and more distally fragmented, the notion of the traditional monolithic corporation may become a thing of the past and we may need a whole new generation of managers with different intellectual apparatus to rise to the challenges of this new incarnation of the management model. 7. Conclusions Future management trends are those management concepts or strategies, which must be taken seriously in account in order to run an organization efficiently and profitably. The new focus on global warming should be a wake-up call to all employers to review their working practices. The employers can replace half their

Conclusions

Future management trends are those management concepts or strategies, which must be taken seriously in account in order to run an organization efficiently and profitably. The new focus on global warming should be a wake-up call to all employers to review their working practices. The employers can replace half their face-to-face meetings with audio or video conferences they will save the time and cost of unnecessary travel and less time and cost spent on meetings. The managers and their organisations clearly need to work together to make sure that they are realising the full value of qualifications and achieving business success. The investment in training and development is of little value unless effectiveness can be measured at regular intervals and there is definite improvement. The role of its human resources function had to be transformed from transactional administration into a business focused and value driven business partner. The communication management language is to communicate. When this language fails to do that – when it hedges itself with self-congratulatory but meaningless babble – then business is talking only to itself. If you can remain professional and calm and clearly state the actual issues involved (rather than engaging with belittling, provocative, or tangential remarks), then you will be more likely to help people find workable positive solutions. Whether any of us feel that we were born to manage, the current business environment is undergoing such momentous changes that the only way to stay on top is by continuous learning. And, for those of us accidental managers that have management thrust upon us, we should be grateful for the 100 billion neurons in our brain that allow us to at least attempt to adapt to change.

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