Are Your Employees Getting What They Need To Reach Their Potential?

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The most effective leaders know how to motivate their people to reach their potential. Doing so, however, takes a high level of effort and intentionality. The alternative is frustration and a desire for more motivated, driven employees.

As an executive coach, I hear my clients express frustration about how hard it is to find people like themselves. Their perception is that their people aren't as motivated or effective as they were when they were rising into leadership. This is especially true in organizations where the leaders in charge helped grow and develop the organization to a greater level of success.

I recently worked with an organization whose core leadership team has been in place for over 10 years. During that time, they grew the organization to over 100 employees and multiple levels of management. They now describe complacency among the ranks and hired me to help them increase employee productivity and engagement.

Through our coaching process, the group self-identified three common experiences they each described as key factors to their personal growth and success within the company:

1. Exposure to the big picture and how they fit into it
2. Mentoring from a more experienced leader
3. The need to stretch outside of their comfort zones

These are all key ingredients to personal and professional growth. When the organization was small, these things happened by accident and necessity.

Even the lowest level supervisors were exposed to the big picture because they were all in the early management meetings. Consequently, they were also afforded a personal, two-way mentoring dialogue with the most knowledgeable leaders in the organization. This allowed them to be exposed to the “why” behind the things they were asked to do, and it inspired them to do their best.

Additionally, early on there were fewer people and resources to handle the breadth of work that needed to be completed. In order for the team to be successful, they each had to figure out and tackle a wide variety of responsibilities. This forced them to stretch beyond the comfort of their most basic work.
As organizations grow, multiple layers of leadership are developed within the ranks. This creates more narrow job descriptions and a level of separation between front-line workers and the most knowledgeable, influential people in the organization. If the leaders aren’t intentional in providing a process to help the front line get the experience they need to grow, mutual frustration occurs. Leaders believe their employees are unmotivated, and employees believe their leaders don’t care. Nobody wins in this scenario.

My client realized their current front-line employees were not receiving the three things they had identified as being key to their own personal growth and success. Instead, they were being given a myopic job description focused on the needs of the company, with no consideration of what they would need to receive in order to grow. This wasn’t intentional, they simply had no intention to do anything different. The organization is now developing an intentional coaching process that will ensure front-line employees get what they need: the same things the organization’s current leaders received by default along the way.

The most effective leaders know that when we help meet the needs of our employees, we also meet the needs of the company. When we focus on people, we get both people and results. When we focus only on results, we sometimes get neither. As your organization grows, what are you doing to cultivate the potential of your front-line workers? Are they getting what they need? Are you intentional about making sure the core success factors that got you to where you are have not been lost?