

FOUR STEPS TO FIXING THE PEOPLE CHALLENGES IN 2014'S WORKPLACE



By Sherry Knight, President and CEO, Dimension 11 Ltd.

Surprisingly, 2014 saw Dimension 11 Ltd. conduct a large number of outplacements – people losing their jobs due to a variety of reasons. The biggest reason is based on the economic situation in the province in the natural resources and agricultural fields which has created a restructuring. Recognizing that the speed and amount of growth will drop in Saskatchewan in 2015, there are still huge needs.

Employees are becoming a rare commodity. Even immigration has changed in Saskatchewan so filling roles through this process will not be as easy as it was in the past. Let's have a look at the four biggest challenges for 2015.

Recruitment

The majority of those who have lost their jobs are re-employed. Some, however, have chosen to retire and a few have either started a business or gone back to school. This is great news for employers as it provided more individuals to fill vacant recruitment positions.

Knowing you are fighting for a smaller pool of people (and it will get smaller in the years to come), you want to think six months ahead about your needs and start preparing. Yes, I know, you don't need anyone right now and you don't think you will need anyone in the near future. Wrong! Today we are living at a time where the relationship between employers and employees are very fragile and the age of "unquestioning loyalty" is over. People today are known to leave without the requisite two weeks' notice! The reality is you should always be thinking about possible openings on your staff. The chances of people not leaving are slim – consider these common reasons why people leave today:

- Decisions to retire
- Spouse has retired
- Desire for more satisfying work
- Desire for promotion

- Desire for travel, sports, etc.
- Desire for a relocation to better climate or to be closer to friends

Retention

As discussed, the biggest challenge next to recruitment in 2015 will be retention. Many clients are beginning to make the kinds of adjustments necessary to think outside the box. Here are a few ideas to retain younger and older employees:

Younger

- Give people their birthdays off
- Provide work time off when the weather is good for skiing, surfing, etc.

Older

- Pay a premium on the retirement plan if an individual chooses to top it up while the initial payment is totally covered by employers
- A professional-grade putting green

A major element in retention is to ask your employees what they want when they go above and beyond their regular work. Having asked that of various employees, we heard such responses as: more training, time off to spend with family and verbal recognition. Interestingly, no one asked for more money.

Transfer of Knowledge

In 2015, some companies will have a minimum of 40 per cent of their personnel eligible for retirement! Add this to the fact that as much as 80 per cent of how the job is done is in the heads of those who have done it for years, and you have a potential disaster. A certain amount of knowledge is unique to each company; thus, it cannot be acquired from outside the organization.

In one case, a client hired three different employees but had no action plan to transfer knowledge to his new employees. None stayed because he did not recognize his organization's unique knowledge base needs.

Generally, staff do the best job they can do. However, often there is no training program to ensure people are doing the job in the most appropriate manner. The most effective training is orchestrated by experienced co-workers in the actual job environment who provide the "informal" training critical to a job well done!

Coaching

Thinking ahead, you are going to be moving your Gen X and even your Gen Y employees into supervisory and management roles. Are you comfortable and ready with the change this will bring? Change is their culture – they know there is not one "perfect" way to achieve success. As a generalization, these individuals are great with their technical skills. Their challenge is in leading others because they were brought up with less emphasis on face-to-face communication.

You will need to provide coaching to these "up and comers" as you prepare them to take over new roles. If you choose not to, you are setting yourself and them up for failure. It's

not worth it – you will either pay for it before or after, and usually when you pay for it after, the fact is you are paying more. Coach these younger generations in a way that you don't override but instead enable their potential.

Conclusion

The future has many bright spots. Today, we are in a time of constant change where "old tricks" don't necessarily work. If you take the time to plan and organize your needs, 2015 can be the start of a great growth spurt regardless of the slow upward movement in the GDP. Ask yourself how these four areas: recruitment, retention, transfer of knowledge and coaching will bring out and support a "culture of change" where change is constant and supported. Plan, execute and review each step of the way.

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