

Valuing Your Most Important Asset



Friday, October 9, 2009

By Adriana Rosales

One of the most common mistakes most high level executives and business owners make is failure to demonstrate recognition towards the contributions of their hourly employees.

In brick-and-mortar operations oftentimes the group that is the most effected is the group that interacts with the public the most — your retail staff. This group is often the same group that interacts the least with company executives. And while you might read this and say, that you don't do this, I ask you to think about how many times you have called your sales associates and retail shift supervisors "clerks."

In fact, how many meetings have you sat through in which you continuously use that word to describe a retail employee or any other hourly employee? What about your recruitment and screening processes? Have you invested any time in setting parameters and metrics for your hourly staff? How much time do you spend on an interview? How much time does your store management staff spend managing performance coaching and development of your retail associates? Are you the kind that pulls the trigger at the first sign of adversity? If so, take a moment to think about how much money that is costing you. A bad employee or turnover cost you on average three times their annual salary. So if you consider that the average sales associate can make between \$6.50 an hour and \$12 an hour in retail, you are talking about a minimum of \$40,560 a year in sales you are losing to an employee you pay \$6.50 an hour.

Consider the following: your retail associates are your brand ambassadors. Their actions provide a snapshot of your organizational culture. So when you care about what they do and that is clearly translated in your operating procedures and general employment practices, they demonstrate that in their actions. Employees that are challenged, have a sense of purpose and enjoy their work environment portray that not only in their productivity levels but in their interactions with the customers they speak to.

The fact that you might take pride in your work and you have high standards for your organization is not sufficient to obtain results from associates if they do not feel valued. Loyalty from an associate will take you a long way. All it takes is for you to acknowledge the importance of their contributions to your organization by ensuring that you recognize that they do important work for you. After all, they are a revenue-generating source.

Acknowledging the importance of a position within the organization begins with your recruitment of staff. If you demonstrate to the public that not only will you ensure that every person that applies for a position receives an answer from your company, whether positive or negative, that demonstrates to them that even though the position is not high ranking, you took the time to let them know that you are not interested and they can move on.

Once past the initial gate, your interview and on-boarding process introduces your business practices to the candidate. The amount of time spent telling the candidate about your company and the job they will complete tells the candidate whether or not you will make an investment in training and developing them, or if you are just seeking a warm body.

If you conduct an interview and simply ask if the candidate can work the assigned schedule and then say, "you're hired," the message you are sending is that you do not care enough about the level of service your customers get and therefore the person providing the service is not important.

On the other hand, if you take the time to learn about the candidates prior work experience, ask questions that are directly related to the line of work they will do and introduce them to the work environment by providing them with a tour of your store and telling them about the training process once hired, you allow the candidate to make an informed decision about coming to work for you.

Once expectations are laid out for the candidate and they know that their work is important to you, all they need to do is follow the road map you have already set for them in your processes, procedures and training programs once you hire them.

You might ask yourself if this is truly achievable in the adult industry. The answer is yes! You just have to invest in your people. You have to be consistent in communicating the direction you want the company to go in. This means every one of your employees knows your mission, walks the mission and executes the mission daily.

If you say you are going to provide the best retail experience for your customers, you establish customer service guidelines, develop a training program that educates your employees on how to accomplish that, regularly assess the tools available to complete the task and support and reinforce the behavior. And then, you follow up and ensure it is happening.

Coming to work for an adult retailer has some stigmas, but when you take the time to ensure you have the right person working for you, they tend to love their jobs. And think about it, why wouldn't they? They get to provide others with information and products that will provide them with pleasure.

[-] close window