

# HUMAN RESOURCES

by Angela Del Corpo



## *Building Employee Relations*

**T**he perception around Human Resources sometimes goes through various stages. In difficult times, HR is the axe, coming down on staff and cutting jobs. Other times, HR is the model in which you, as a business owner, look to in order to build the motivated staff that will bring your company to the next level.

Whatever the stage, HR is the stepping stone for building a culture and keeping it in check while you run your business.

Here are some ways you can get on the right track!

### **Staff Meetings**

Staff meetings are a great way to communicate goals, reiterate company policies or values, discuss company-wide issues, as well as offering an owner or manager the opportunity to motivate staff.

Depending on the culture of your organization, the format of staff meetings will really depend on personal style. You may choose for this meeting to be more casual, offering employees an opportunity to discuss challenges they may be facing.

Alternatively, you may decide for staff meetings to be a formal event, allowing only yourself or a manager to conduct a large portion of the meeting, offering employees a question period at the end of the session.

Regardless of your format, it is essential that the individual conducting the meeting have an agenda. Be sure to write down the sequence of topics you would like to discuss, even if it's a casual meeting.

Also, consider if you would like other members of your staff to present information, such as your company's HR Manager. Passing out a copy of the agenda at the beginning of the meeting will allow employees to follow your sequence. It also allows staff to make notes of items that may need to be addressed after the meeting is complete.

Also, be sure to set a time frame as to when these meetings take place. Be sure to conduct staff meetings regularly, at the same time and day of the week; such as Mondays at 10:30am. Doing this allows your employees to come prepared with questions or concerns they would like to address.

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On most occasions, staff meetings are a great way to motivate and encourage staff. These times can be used to offer an incentive or announce pertinent company events. In any case, try to make some of the meetings fun. This way employees don't always feel staff meetings are a boring but a necessary task.

### **Motivating Employees**

Motivating employees is not always a "planned" task. Motivation can be stemmed from a few areas in your business.

One way to motivate is to offer a tangible reward, incentive or gift for a goal met. How often or at what times of the year you decide to do this is your choice. Depending on your business, you may have to consider rewarding your staff as a whole (for example, if you are a small group trying to reach a sales goal), or you can reward one stellar employee.

However, whatever you decide, remember to communicate the goals to your staff so that they have an opportunity to evaluate and plan how they may reach the goal if they are so inclined to "want" what is being offered.

Another way to motivate your staff is one that's not so obvious. It's how a business owner or manager treats each member of their staff. Two examples come to mind from my own work experience.

My first example comes from an employer I worked for that operated his company in a very male dominant way. Most of the males in the company felt wonderful, often engaging in relaxing talk and coffee in one another's office. The females (there were only two at any given time) rarely got a "good morning."

How would you feel if the owner of the company you worked for came in the office, grumbled a good morning and then runs into another worker and exclaims with glee as to what a sunny morning it is? Not very good!

Thankfully, my second example is the complete opposite.

I worked for an organization that, regardless of who you were, or even if you had done something wrong in the past, you were spoken to with respect and dignity. This was evident every single day. An effort was made by the managers to be respectful.

In short, a lot of motivating staff is how they are treated on a daily basis. If, at the end of the day, they leave work feeling valued and respected, you can expect a job well done.

### **Evaluating and Reviewing Employee Performance**

Evaluating and reviewing employee performance is an important step in keeping your employees aware of the quality of work they are providing you as a business owner.

Performance reviews and evaluations can be done quarterly, semi-annually or annually. It's best to set goals to discuss and review at each meeting. By setting goals, you are giving your employees a chance to grow within their position, and potentially grow into more senior roles.

Performance reviews often come with some increase in pay. In fact, this is why most small businesses do not do performance reviews. They feel that if they review their employees, they are obligated to increase their pay. I have to admit that this is true.

However, not reviewing your employees' performance sends a message that you really don't care how they are performing and will only meet with them to discuss performance if something negative has happened. As a business owner, I would think that this would not be the kind of message you would like to send to your employees.

Therefore, delivering a performance review without the prospect of a pay increase can be difficult.

However, if you communicate with your employees and remain consistent (meaning no one gets a pay increase ever during a review), then the expectation is of performance review only and not salary review. A technicality, yes, however your employees' performance is evaluated good or bad and this is a better message.

To address the pay issue, instead you may consider an annual (or holiday) bonus to supplement instead of regular pay increases. This way you control, on an annual basis, the amount that you can financially afford to pay out to your staff. This is also a very well received gesture.

### **Social Activities**

Some business owners are hesitant to venture into this area of employee relations. But, on the contrary, this is meant to be the "fun" in your group. Sometimes running a small business means there are only three or four employees. Naturally, in a small group, you get to know one another a little better than if you were a group of 50.

***Being an open communicator and involving your staff in your goals will help you create the business you've always dreamed of!***



However, regardless of your size, as a business owner, you should decide on a few planned “social” activities over the course of a year. The best time to jot down your ideas and plan an outline is at the beginning of each year. How many you decide to host in one year is up to you.

Below are a few ideas to get you started:

- Summer BBQ.
- Holiday party.
- A dinner out with spouses/significant others.
- A day out at a theme park.
- A evening out to the theater or ballet.

Whatever you choose, plan to have fun.

Do your best to not to discuss work related issues.

This is a time for you, as a business owner, to get to know your staff. Not only will you be rewarded with a more receptive community of employees – but you will

enjoy yourself as well!

In the end, the most important thing to remember is that every day employee relations are always a task on the to-do list, even if you're not aware of it.

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Angela Del Corpo is the owner of The Organized Diva, located in Oakville, Ontario. We specialize in outsourced administrative services, including human resource assistance to entrepreneurs and small businesses.

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