Roundtable Take-A-Ways

The June 14th SATM Roundtable Meeting was held at Pershing in Jersey City, on the topic "Training for En-hancing and Maintaining Critical Competencies." The academic overview was presented by Professor Dick Reilly of the Wesley J. Howe School of Technology Management. Facilitators from our sponsor organizations were Anne Gorewitz, Director of Training for Pershing, and Tim McGovern, representing Don McIver, Director of Human Resources for ISO.

Dick Reilly emphasized that competency retention is an important consideration in view of the chang-ing role of employer-employee contracts.

- AT&T is providing tools to employees and manag-ers to assess competencies and identify skill en-hancement requirements.
- Certification to assure competency must be tied to some benefit, not just job retention -- need a posi-tive recognition for achievement.

  In some sponsor organizations, the consequences are principally negative, if competencies are not acquired/retained, while in others there are also positive consequences, such as bonuses, for the acquisition/retention of competencies.

- Alliances for virtual employee contracts are being developed to accommodate the changing nature of the employer-employee relationship.
- Reilly believes the pendulum will swing back to the recognition that a psychological contract must ex-ist. Employees will want to stay with attractive companies. Some software companies are recog-nizing this and

  offering unique benefits to promote employee re-tention.

  An AT&T survey found that there is more than one answer to how to retain employees; employees identified about 16 items (in four categories) re-lated to job satisfaction.

- Job satisfaction is not principally an HR issue -- management practices and policies (like pay!) are at work.
- A Wall Street Journal study found that open com-munication (related to organizational trust) was a prime motivator in employee retention.

  Equity (equal pay for equal work) is another impor-tant retention factor.

  As organizations flatten, promotion is not as avail-able as a motivator - ARDEC uses lateral opportu-nities as one alternative.

- To define competency, ARDEC focuses on prod-uct lines -select a person responsible for a particu-lar competency within specific product lines, and relate product needs to competency requirements.

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- Problem with competency modeling is that it lags the need (future) -- can't "shoot behind the duck." Roadmaps and partnerships are good tools to use to predict future employee needs.
- Pershing finds the use of training to be an excellent recruiting tool.
  Pershing defines development needs (for individuals) and calls them personal core competencies. These are tied back to the corporate needs (mainly related to customer contacts).
- The training organization partners with business units to provide relevant training.
- Best Foods focuses on 2-3 core competencies that are strategic to the business (provide competitive advantage). In addition, they define a larger list of technical competencies.
- AT&T has leadership competencies and technical competencies (specific to job)
  Real issue today is taking a holistic approach to retention -- need to value employees, otherwise training investments (time and money) are wasted and effectively done for another company (future employers).
- General feeling is that training is a calculated business risk – some companies are using negative motivators, i.e., requiring payback if employee leaves after training in less than a defined time.
- All measures of return on investment for employee motivation/retention are so far subjective but generally felt to be required.
- Pershing allows customers to use their Intranet-based training, including their specific courses.
- ISO is struggling with the problem of managing growth and radical change (recently converted to a for-profit organization).
  Care must be taken because employees feel threatened when job banding, training/required certification come in -- must be integrated with job needs (what is the purpose of the requirement)? Must build trust so employees recognize need for "motivational" activities such as training. Culture/history of the organization must be taken into account.
- Biggest change required is in culture -- must be really careful to recognize that change occurs very slowly. However, the general feeling is it is better to go hard and fast while being clear about any change (be honest and open about the reasons and vision).
- AT&T has seen the most significant change only since they got a new chairman (1-1/2 years ago).