

KEEPING THE QUICK FISH

BY JENNY SENNECK

More money does not simply lead to greater job satisfaction and higher staff retention. Try personal development plans.



IN THE RECENT IT SALARY SURVEY RELEASED BY IT WEB, ONE OF THE INTERESTING TRENDS NOTED WAS THAT AMONGST THE IT PROFESSIONALS WHO TOOK PART IN THE SURVEY, REMUNERATION IS NO LONGER TOP OF THE LIST IN DETERMINING THEIR JOB SATISFACTION. IT IS IN FACT RATED FOURTH ON THE LIST.

Interestingly, challenge and responsibility, company culture and career prospects strike the top of the list and I strongly believe that this is not limited to the IT industry alone.

One of the biggest challenges faced by business today, across all industries, is the successful retention of staff and as is evident in the results of the survey mentioned above, offering people more money is not necessarily going to lead to greater job satisfaction and therefore less staff movement. In fact, experience shows that it is becoming more and more obvious that individuals need to concentrate on their personal development to ensure that they retain their relevance and marketability within the environment they find themselves.

In many instances, it is no longer possible for companies to offer huge incentive or performance based bonuses and staff is feeling the tightening of pockets. Companies now need to be creative in retaining their most important asset.

Due to the threatening competitiveness of business and the increased threat of job loss, it is evident that long-term personal development is far more beneficial and important to individuals than a short-term incentive bonus.

As a result of this increasing level of attention paid to the personal development of individuals, it is becoming essential for both managers and HR departments to ensure that they formulate accurate, detailed and mutually beneficial personal development plans for their employees. A quick discussion in the performance appraisal meeting is often not sufficient to justify the importance of these personal development plans.

Included in this detailed report, special attention needs to be paid to the individuals long term career aspirations, the required skills to achieve these long and short term plans, the skills gaps evident in

achieving these plans as well as specific international, regional or career change intentions that each individual may have.

In some cases, this process is more effectively conducted with outside facilitators, offering a forum for a confidential, non-threatening discussion that may not be achieved by a manager or HR practitioner within the organisation.

All the top 3 job satisfaction factors mentioned above become open for discussion in this facilitated forum. A detailed report can then be generated for the company, stating individual development plans, but also including a group satisfaction survey that is vital in understanding opinions on climate, culture, and general satisfaction of employees within an organisation. Staff feel motivated that they get an opportunity to offer their opinion on their organisation's climate and potential development.

This detailed report has further benefits. Each employer should submit a Workplace Skills Plan to their relevant SETA as this plan helps the SETA to identify the imbalances in the supply of and demand for skilled labour. The report generated through the Personal Development Plan process can form an integral part of this Workplace Skills Plan in aiding employers in identifying the gaps within their workforce. The government regards employers as key partners in the Skills Revolution and realise that without the full participation and commitment from employers the National Skills Development Strategy will fail. Again the report generated becomes of vital importance in this regard.

The details noted in the report further link very closely with the Performance Management process. "Learning how to handle professional performance discussions is excellent preparation for advancement, and having access to a detailed report on employee's Personal Development plans makes the appraisal process that much easier for both parties. The appraisal discussion is more than a simple review of job performance. It should progress naturally to a discussion of how the employee can improve and grow in the future and laying out these plans becomes straightforward if individual Personal Development plans have already been produced.

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