

Attracting Top Talent

As entertainer writer Jeff Valdez once observed, cats are smarter than dogs. You can't get eight cats to pull a sled through snow! Many managers today can relate. Building a high-performing team is much like herding cats.

The sportswear industry provides a good example. Global giants such as adidas and Nike have been competing fiercely, both opening a store a day over the past two years. Such rapid expansion requires that company infrastructure expands in step. Finding additional well-qualified staff with the ability to manage the growing workforce is key.

Throughout this process, transferring management skills to a young team in a rapidly growing, competitive market presents challenges. Four ways currently used by successful companies are examined below:

1. Catch talent attention through career development - not compensation

While graduates from good universities in China have many choices, they also have high expectations. This means that only a complete understanding of their motivations will attract them to your company with the intent to stay for the medium term.

Top companies understand this new generation requires new incentives. Much like Generation Y in the US, China's own 80s Generation have a different attitude to life. While the 70s Generation are regarded as stable and hard working, the 80s Generation want to know why they should work at all!

First and foremost, this impacts recruitment plans. Only companies with very clear values, brand prestige and competitive benefits are considered a desirable place to work. Second, retention strategies need to focus on personal development more than salary incentives. Today's 80s Generation want personal development opportunities. This needs to be a part of their ongoing work plan and they will not wait around for long if they think they are not developing fast enough.

2. Communicate annual development plan

While many companies offer personal development to their staff, many programs are not clearly planned and executed. During the rush to meet market demand, many companies push personal development down the priority list. One well-known German company's top management team has not a meeting to discuss personal development strategy for over 18 months.

An annual plan offers the benefit of clearly demonstrating a commitment to employee's personal development up front. By planning a fixed number of days for personal development and putting them in the calendar, a strong signal is sent that the staff's development is important. A leading German sportswear company allocates 12 days of training for their management trainees and adds it to the calendar one year in advance. This takes away one major reason why talented people leave companies: Unrealized personal development. Now the challenge is to deliver real value to the team during these development days.

3. Focus on essential management skills


No surprise that major work has to be done on management skills. Every manager knows that even young talent lack the necessary proactive know-how to work independently. The solution is not so obvious. While training is useful to pick up hard skills, soft skills are only really learned over a longer period of time. Communication - a crucial soft skill - is an area managers commonly want to improve. But how? One essential step is transitioning from training to learning. Instead of holding one- or two-day workshops, smart managers combine work-based projects with support from trainers. In this way, a talent can apply

their new skills to a real task at hand and when questions and challenges arise. Furthermore, the trainer or coach is on hand to with solutions that will immediately add value to the company's bottom line through improved productivity.

4. Build networks and skills consistently

While a lot of attention and investment is directed towards talents, a smart development plan should not stop here. In fact if a company has adopted a learning workplace mindset. Recently trained-up talents provide the ideal way to develop more team members.

Progressive companies recognize that setting up regular opportunities for a wider range of staff to join together and learn more about each other maximizes their return on training investment. For example one globally-branded goods company holds a regular bi-weekly meeting between members of marketing, finance and sales to encourage friendships, exchange ideas and improve. Set up to run by themselves, these groups are an efficient way to build the foundation of a company that has a reputation for investing and developing its people. Successful pilots in Shanghai have since been spread to Suzhou, Beijing and Guangzhou.

With the heat for talent not likely to cool in the near future, today's successful companies are adapting their strategies to people development to include 80s Generation specific needs and shifting towards workplace learning organizations. 

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WOMAN'S HEALTH

Whether you are single, married, a mother, or preparing for a baby, your health as a woman is always an important matter to consider. Below are a few pointers to guide you along a healthier lifestyle.

- **Daily Calcium and age**
A woman in her 20s needs about 1,000 mg of calcium a day. By her 30's a woman's bones stop growing, so it's wise to build a reserve of bone and calcium that'll be needed in the future. Women in their 40's can start to lose bone density. Exercise can help and drinking milk, eating leafy green vegetables, fish.
- **Growing bones**
Gardening is a great exercise for building bone density because of all the bending and lifting.
- **Sleep stealers**
Beware of factors that rob you of a good night's sleep: caffeine, sugar, vitamin C and intense exercise.
- **Cut the caffeine**
Your chances of developing an irritated bladder can double if you're drinking more than four cups of caffeinated coffee each day. Caffeine in tea, chocolate and cola are also irritants.

If you have any concerns on woman's health, pregnancy or delivery in Shanghai make an appointment with **Dr. Ian Mahady** or **Dr. Lily Liu**, the OB-GYN doctors at **Shanghai East International Medical Center**.

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