BY PATRICK IBARRA

THE CHANGING WORKPLACE

Insights on managing workforce challenges

Essential to a local government successfully executing its mission is the capabilities and motivation of its workforce, a workforce that is only growing in complexity and which will continue to evolve. Employees will continue to have markedly different needs and preferences based on their experiences, culture, ethnicity, and education.

Here are the questions public sector leaders should be asking themselves as they confront a work environment whose workflows and work process promise to be ever-changing:

- How can we attract, retain, and develop the best people or talent—people with the abilities that an organization is seeking?
- What innovative ways can we develop to redefine what work means and looks like so that we can develop the type of leaders and talent we need and want?
- How can we develop new ways to collaborate and innovate so that we promote employee engagement?
- How can we develop and reward our talent by incorporating new ways of learning, plus new preferences and perspectives on motivation and compensation?

Abundant Challenges

There are abundant challenges inherent in managing a workforce composed of multiple generations who have differing styles and experiences, different levels of familiarity with technology, and more. There are also the concurrent challenges that this heterogeneous, amorphous workforce represents in terms of wants, needs, and ongoing employer-employee contracts—what employees give and receive from their employer and vice versa.

As a consequence of these changes, a new work environment is continually being developed and organizations need more from their leaders, who must possess these four competencies:

Self-awareness. Has emotional self-awareness, along with an accurate self-assessment and healthy self-confidence.

Self-management. Exercises self-control, especially during stressful times. Practices humility, embraces uncertainty, takes initiative, wants to achieve and succeed, and is ever the optimist.

Social awareness. Practices empathy and has a keen understanding of the workplace culture, including advocating and endorsing healthy behaviors.

Relationship management. Inspires others, is a catalyst for change, influences positive outcomes, and develops others.

Leadership Development

Public sector organizations must focus on developing leadership and other development programs that are engaging and get employees excited about learning. Based on my experience in creating and implementing targeted learning and development programs for public sector organizations, 10 skills should be included in an organization's leadership program offerings:

1. Ability to hire well.
2. Employee development.
3. Customer orientation.
4. Political acumen.
5. Fluent in successful change management practices.
6. Ability to delegate.
7. Excellent communication skills.
8. Performance management proficiency.
9. Collaboration and team building.
10. Solid decision-making skills.

Leadership development programs are largely outfitted with instructor-led learning and training, but they should also accommodate mentoring, job

shadowing, and less-structured sorts of learning.

Skills Development for Younger Workers

Your organization's on-deck circle or bench strength, a good chunk of who are young professionals moving into leadership positions, are often confronted with managing older generations, which they were never trained to do.

According to a 2016 study completed by Association of Talent Development (ATD) entitled "Leadership Development for Millennials," there are five areas where younger workers need to succeed:

Soft skills training. It's time to discard the term "soft" as describing these skills, since they are often the hardest to learn. These include communication, listening, and relationship building.

Leadership development. Young professionals often favor employers who provide contemporary and career-changing leadership development programs. According to ATD research, high-performing organizations are more likely to have leadership development programs than low-performing organizations.

Informal learning. Emerging leaders value such informal learning as on-the-job training. They also would like managers to co-create clear performance expectations with them and then provide timely feedback.

Job rotation. This type of program involves moving to other, same-level jobs within the organization. Different functions increase employees' knowledge of the organization and require a different skill set.

Strong organizational culture. Young workers are described as having little patience with structure and hierarchy and believe they will have a greater influence on an organization's culture than it will have on them. All the more reason that curating a healthy workplace culture that appeals to all generations has become a differentiating factor between high-performing organizations and low-performing organizations.

What all these "next practices" approaches have in common is on transitioning to one that is right for the times as they are now and as they will be. The old models just won't get you there. Ask yourself: "What if we don't develop our people and they stay?'

As always, e-mail your career questions and comments to me at patrick@gettingbetterallthetime.com. **PM**

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