Employees who are fairly compensated for their efforts don’t just comply – they contribute. They work beyond what is being asked of them because the company values their contributions.

2. VALUING YOUR OPINIONS

When I was a management trainee, I often felt sidelined during work meetings because I was young and looked like I had nothing to offer. These days, I always make sure that when I see new employees or interns in a meeting, I ask for their opinion and treat it as important as everyone else’s.

While hierarchy puts the structure in any workplace, it is also the biggest communication barrier. It creates a wall that makes people hesitant to share what they know due to the fear of being judged. Everyone’s opinion at work should count, down to the lowest ranking salesperson who probably knows his or her customers more than his or her office-based managers do.

In 1993, when a cabin crew member of Delta Airlines suggested taking the lettuce from their passengers’ entrees because he noticed no one was eating it anyway, management saved US$1.4mil a year later following the suggestion. The idea initially sounded absurd, but it did pay off well.

When we show that we value everyone’s opinions, we espouse a culture that your contribution, regardless if it’s tediously presented in a spreadsheet or casually shared on WhatsApp, can matter a lot. We tell people that if they know something valuable that managers don’t, we will acknowledge it, and eventually reward it too.

3. EMPOWERED TO MAKE DECISIONS ON THEIR OWN

I used to dislike teachers in school who were fond of dictating how my book report should look – the margin size, the font type, and even the book cover’s colour. I hated that because I knew I could get the job done without using the imposed templates. I graduated with this same feeling when I entered the corporate world.

While standardisation is important to ensure quality, no one wants a boss who hoovers like a helicopter and checks on everything you do for humans. The most demeaning job is to serve like a robot waiting for repeated instructions. Talented employees love what they do because they have the autonomy to execute what they need to do. When you empower a person to accomplish a task using his or her own creativity and genius, he or she becomes motivated to excel even more because that’s his or her own sweat and blood at stake.

“I trust you, and I know you will do well” is the message that the company sends when it empowers its employees. Who wouldn’t stay longer for that?

4. SEEING THEIR COMPANY AS A PLACE FOR BOTH WORK AND PLAY

We were obsessed about work-life balance years ago when we saw personal life as something to be enjoyed once we exit the office doors. These days, the enlightened ones talk about work-life integration: the process of fulfilling one’s personal needs and aspirations while at work.

On average, we spend at least eight hours of our life on weekdays in the office. Can’t we achieve at least one personal ambition while in our buttoned sleeves and collared shirts?

Yes, we can.

Your job shouldn’t only feed your wallet; it should inspire you to become a better person; for your family, for your society, or for whatever cool start-up company you dream of launching once you leave your current job.

Employees who stay longer in an organisation are those who learn new things that excite them daily. They are thankful that their organisation has brilliant senior executives who mentor or coach them. They have bosses who show them how to win negotiation with clients. They have human resources (HR) departments who are actively involved with launching unpretentious Zumba classes or charity programmes that toughen one’s personal resilience.

These employees stay because work pays off well. “Give them a reason to stay, and they will stay” is a piece of advice I always give to HR practitioners who worry about today’s competitive war of searching for sustainable talent. This often holds true in my experience. Remember that leaving and moving on to a new company is also a painful and costly process for the employee. Do you really think everyone wants to move around every year? Most of us don’t.

Humans are social creatures who yearn for stability and permanence when it comes to a sense of belonging. We will stay when we find reasons to stay. But those reasons aren’t made up individually. The organisation, more than anything else, is the strongest source of influence on employees’ happiness, engagement and success. Like a life partner, may you find the one that you can put up with, for the good and the bad, in the long term. Good luck!

By JONATHAN YABUT

www.leaderonomics.com

We all work because, more than anything else, we have bills to pay. Is your company paying you peanuts?

Traditional companies see salaries as “costs” that need to be minimised rather than investments that can be harvested in the long run. Even though there are many who are willing to take a pay cut out of desperation, the talented ones will leave for better opportunities because they know they can and should be paid more.

Research has proven this time and time again – when you pay your employees enough so that money does not become an issue at work, you have employees who worry about something else i.e. their jobs, and not their families to feed.

When money is out of the picture, people start asking more relevant questions for the organisation. They will ask, “How can we get this project done on time?” instead of “Why should I do more than what is required when the company is paying me peanuts?”

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Roshan Thiran
Chief Executive Officer
Leaderonomics

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