

## DEALING WITH ABSENTEEISM

No matter how large or small your organisation, absenteeism can be an issue. It is impossible to eliminate staff absences entirely but every business needs sufficient controls in place in order to minimise disruption and loss of productivity.

As an employer or business manager, the best place to start must be your sickness and absence records. Absences should be logged in a user friendly format. Managers need to be able to identify absence patterns easily so the days and dates and the reason for the absence need to be visually apparent. These records will help management to detect when an individual's absence has reached a point that now needs to be examined.

Employee contracts should contain clear terms and conditions relating to absence. Should an issue be raised regarding an employee's attendance, an appropriate course of action must be taken. Managers should first consider the facts surrounding the absence and then set up a meeting with the team member in question to discuss their reasons for absence.

This meeting should not be treated as a disciplinary meeting. This should be made clear from the outset (and the agenda for the meeting should reflect this). At the meeting explain that the frequency and amount of absence has triggered the company's procedures regarding absence and you wish to explore the causes. This will give the employee an opportunity to raise any issues or identify any problems at work, which may have caused the frequent absences.

If, however, the explanation for the frequent absence is deemed to be unacceptable, the individual should be informed that the company's disciplinary procedures regarding absence will be followed. If the business has a HR manager, they should be consulted at this point. If not, the disciplinary procedures outlined in the employee's contract should be followed and if necessary, an external HR consultant should be engaged in order to bring the matter to a satisfactory conclusion.



## ENSURING YOUR STRATEGY WORKS AT ALL LEVELS IN YOUR FIRM

High-level strategy gives direction to the management team of a business. However, such high level plans can often prove to be of little use to other workers within the organisation. Aspects of the strategy must be distilled down to actions and plans which will drive the various areas of the business towards the common goals outlined in the overall strategy.

It is often said that a strategy doesn't fail in its formulation but in its implementation. The key to implementing a strategy successfully is communication.

Many leadership teams, in their excitement and enthusiasm to turn their strategy into reality, fail to take the necessary steps to ensure that it can be delivered effectively by the various departments in the firm. Taking the time and energy to translate your strategic vision into operational success, demands that you focus on the following:

*Communication* - Your strategic intent and agenda should form the basis of all your communication with the business. When you make and communicate a decision, for example, you should clearly state how it will help move the strategy of the business forward.

*Resources* - Resources should be allocated on the basis of their ability to deliver the agreed strategy, and not simply reflect historic trends and decisions.

*Alignment* - The goals of the business must align with the objectives of the departments and people within the firm. Tiny differences of opinion in the boardroom can become huge divisions across the organisation, rapidly reducing your chances of successful implementation.

*People* - Your best and most appropriate people should be leading the delivery of your key strategic objectives. Not only does this increase the firm's chances of success, but it also sends a signal to the business about what management considers to be important.

*Accountability* - The individual performances, and the collective performance of the team, should be directly based on implementing the strategy.

*Measurement* - Your KPIs should mirror the strategy, as should your associated rewards and bonuses. If you are serious about your strategy you will define appropriate ways to track its delivery and effectively report on progress.

## TIPS FOR IMPROVING CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

One of the most important parts of any business is maintaining and enhancing relationships with clients. This makes the time spent on a project more enjoyable, satisfying and effective. Improved relationships also improve the chance that the firm will get referrals and future business.

*Be clear and open with client* - This is the number one guideline for a successful client engagement. Be clear and open with everything from a sales proposal through to the final contract and this will assist in developing strong working relationships which should contribute to repeat business from loyal clients.

*Get to know your client* - Relationships are better when the individuals involved take the time to get to know one another. Learn about the client's interests. You will likely spend many hours with your clients so you should take the time to build a positive working relationship with them. Make it a point to learn something new about each client in every meeting you have. Once you learn something new, keep track of that information in your CRM system or in a client file.

*Ask questions* - When we ask questions we understand situations better. Take the time to ask your client how they feel about the service so far, what other services your business could provide, etc. Ask the client about their company – showing that you are interested will help them to feel like a valuable and important client of your firm.

*Be willing to say "No."* - In many cases, clients ask us to do things beyond our capabilities or interests. When these new requests are outside the contract agreement, be willing to say no. Take time to understand both the client's reason for asking as well as your ability to deliver. Don't automatically say yes, because if you agree to something and then fail to deliver, you could risk spoiling the client relationship.

*Be willing to say "yes."* - Sometimes yes is the right answer - and only you will know when. Sometimes it is worth going the extra mile for a client. Perhaps they are very profitable or they may be a source of good referral work. If so, then it may be worth putting in the extra effort in order to gain new opportunities.

*Solve problems for your client* - Clients want value. Deliver that value to your client by solving a problem for them. Whether you sell a product or a service, using that sale to provide a solution for the client will help them to see the value that your firm offers and will create loyalty towards

## WORD OF MOUTH MARKETING

'Word of Mouth' is still one of the most effective marketing techniques, online or offline. In today's tough market, businesses are fighting for their share of sales. If you can create a reputation and get people talking, you can win new business for your firm.

The best thing about word of mouth marketing is that it doesn't cost the business any money. Instead, satisfied customers tell people about their positive experience of a business, a brand, a product or service. The key is to ensure that your current customers are satisfied.

Go the extra mile for you clients. Make them feel special – like they have purchased something that delivers real value to them. They will think positively about your business and your brand and will endeavour to tell friends, colleagues and contacts about the positive experience that they have had with your firm.

People do business with people they know and like. Many of us purchase a product or service because it has been recommended to us by a friend or colleague. If that friend or colleague knows or likes a particular product or service, you will most likely trust the firm that offers that product or service.

You can encourage your existing clients to spread the word about your brand by asking for referrals. In order to avoid coming across as desperate for a sale, take a subtle approach. Something along the lines of "We are glad you are satisfied with our product / service. We are very busy but we always welcome a referral".

The golden rule is – "ask for the business". After all, people generally want to be able to recommend someone to a friend.



DISCLAIMER - PLEASE NOTE: The ideas shared with you in this email are intended to inform rather than advise. Taxpayers' circumstances do vary and if you feel that tax strategies we have outlined may be beneficial it is important that you contact us before implementation. If you do or do not take action as a result of reading this newsletter, before receiving our written endorsement, we will accept no responsibility for any financial loss incurred.

**Please contact a member of our team if you would like to discuss any of the issues raised.**