

The 7 Keys To HR.

The metamorphosis of the old Personnel Department to Human Resources, has led to many more roles and responsibilities being added to the departmental list of duties. There is a definite line linking successful HR initiatives to improvements in company performance.

When a process or procedure is developed by the HR Department it is important to adhere to the 7 keys to ensure the development and implementation will be successful for both employees and the business.

- 1.Listen To Requirements.
- 2.Construct Information Team Of Specialists.
- 3.Conduct Adequate Research.
- 4.Evaluate How You're Actions Will Affect Bottom Line.
- 5.Check That Your Actions Are Lean & Cost Affective.
- 6.Gain Feedback & Alter Accordingly.
- 7.Monitor & Change As Required.

It is a fundamental requirement that any new or modified, process or procedure needs to create a positive benefit for the organisation:

1.Listen To Requirements.

Before commencing a new project, it is essential to understand exactly what the business is trying to achieve.

- What are the essentials 'need to have' that have to be provided?
- What are the 'nice to haves' (that will put the shine on the project but could be dropped if cost or time over runs become a problem)?
- What are the time constraints (is there a fixed date for completion that cannot be changed)?
- What resource constraints are there (money, people etc)

Researching the issues and interviewing those who will work with the processes is essential. Involving the Management, Directors and people affected by the introduction of the process, becomes essential so that all are striving for the same end result.

This early stage is often rushed and frequently the requirements are not fully identified and understood. If the full requirements are not identified this will result in either the development going in the wrong direction and necessitate changes to design of the process at a later date.

Write a project specification and timetable and get all parties to agree that it captures all the goals and constraints!

2. Construct Information Team Of Specialists.

Once the project specification has been agreed gather together a team of specialists to develop the project. The team should include:

- A Project Sponsor (a senior manager who can champion the project; can smooth its passage through the senior levels of the company and can sell the project to the workforce.
- A Project Manager to co-ordinate the activities of the specialist to complete project that meets the requirements on time and within budget.
- Specialists as required to complete the project.

As this stage is being progressed existing members of the workforce should be protected from uncertainty as this can lead to lower morale or employee resignation at an inappropriate time. (This is particularly important if the project will lead to lower manpower requirements). All employees need to understand how and why the business is changing, but it is important to not 'bog them down' with unnecessary information.

Once you have the agreed project specification, agreed timetable (from step 1) and the appropriate team (from step 2) for developing the procedures you must understand to effect, every step of the new process will need to be examined in detail:

- The impact on the existing workforce must not be underestimated.
- Look for untapped expertise within the organisation.
- Listen to their views, how changes will affect them.
- Ask for their thoughts on how they would like the process to work to make their job easier.

This will aid the development of the desired outcome.

3. Conduct Adequate Research.

After completing the previous two steps it is essential to undertake constant research while the process is being developed. Businesses are constantly changing, it is important to make sure that by the time you have finished designing the new process it still works effectively within the then, new environment. Spending time researching how the process can be adapted for future demands and what it needs to entail is essential at every step.

Allow time for lateral thinking as a new concept may completely revolutionise the process.

If Thomas Edison had asked what is the ideal light in 1883 he would have been told that the ideal light would

- Filled itself with oil
- Burn without any smoke
- The wick would never burn away

From the above requirements is it likely he would invent the electric light bulb?

4. Evaluate How You're Actions Will Affect Bottom Line.

There is no point reinventing the wheel, make sure that the new process will make a positive effect to the bottom line of the business. Everything that is introduced to meet business needs should either reduce the company's costs or help to increase profits.

Evaluate the process against the original process specification agreed in stage 1.

- Is the process providing the must have requirement?
- Is the process providing the 'nice to haves'?
- Is the process on time schedule?
- Is the process within the cost budget?

If the process is not providing the must have requirements:

Should the process be stopped? There is no point in spending all that time and effort and not meet the must have requirements. Stopping a project is probably the hardest decision to take but what is the point in continuing if it does not meet the requirements?

If the process is not on time schedule:

Can a time over run be accommodated?

Are more resources available to pull it back on track?

Can the specification be reduced, don't provide the 'nice to haves' to reduce the workload

If the process is over budget

Does the extra cost invalidate the need for the process?

Can the costs be reduced by not providing the 'nice to haves'?

5. Check That Your Actions Are Lean & Cost Affective.

The new processes need to be as lean as possible, this means that the cost of putting the process together, running it and the end result reduces costs and help to drive the business forward. It can positively affect employees in multiple ways e.g. saving time, saving cost, improving communication etc.

If the process is not going to drive the business forward, why bother? This said at first the procedure might not look to aid the employee but by preventing another task or speeding up another process, it might benefit and bring a significant benefit to the employee, which justifies its business reasoning for being implemented.

6. Gain Feedback & Alter Accordingly.

Once the process is established, test it thoroughly with a few employees and alter it accordingly to make sure it is still as effective as planned. The only people that will be able to tell how effective the overall result is are the employees that will be using it on a day-to-day basis.

The amount of employees you test it on and get 360 feedback from will depend on how much time and cost it has to the business. Ideally you should gain information from all employees and even ask employees to vote and comment on other peoples feedback. Knowing what another employee is thinking might trigger an ideal overall solution.

7. Monitor & Change As Required.

Businesses are constantly evolving, changing and moving forward; therefore processes need to change to keep their effectiveness. Time should be spent speaking to the employees to find how the process and policy can be altered and up-dated to keep them lean and effective. Embracing technologies, listening to employees, giving opportunities for individuals to suggest new processes without prejudice is essential for finding out how to drive the business forward.