How to Take a Personal Stake in Your Employees's Development

If you invest in the growth your company's people, the whole truly will be greater than the sum of its parts.

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Soon, 2019 will be history, and it will be time to start pursuing your goals for 2020. Your team's success over the next several quarters will more than likely depend on your ability to help individual team members achieve their own successes. Talk with your highest performers about their long-term career goals, and identify ways that you can help these individuals move closer to them. Pinpoint the skills they need to make progress, and work together to find educational opportunities – whether that means conferences, seminars, classes or additional responsibilities at work – that they can take advantage of in the months ahead.

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Perhaps not everyone on your team is eager to chase professional growth. Some of your colleagues aren't sure what they need to do in order to advance their careers; others may not know where they want to be in the next two to five years. However, there's a good chance that your team members will respond positively if you challenge them to set professional development goals and show that you're interested in helping

them meet them.

Personal Growth Means Company Growth

Many leaders fear that by investing in the development of their current employees, they're equipping them to snag better jobs elsewhere. But talented individuals want to be challenged; they expect employers to help them learn new skills and develop new capabilities. If you're not able or willing to do that, they'll find someone who is.

Simply put, companies that don't invest in their people aren't companies that smart people want to work for. Moreover, if your people aren't growing, it's very likely that your company isn't growing, either. In that case, competitors will indeed either overtake you or poach your top talent. Avoid both situations by taking the following steps heading into the new year.

1. Create a personal development plan for each employee.

Most of the factors that employees view as integral to engagement are related to professional and career development, according to the Society for Human Resource Management. Yet the employee satisfaction associated with these factors tends to be low. No two employees have the same professional vision, and many on your team will learn differently from others. With that in mind, offer a menu of development options, such as webinars, e-learning projects, books and lectures. For example, SAS, a business-analytics software and services company, offers an emerging-leadership program in addition to career mentoring, a career resource center and an academic program that aims to set recent grads up for success. This allows the company to provide options for various types of

learners and employees at different stages of their careers.

2. Enrich employees’s understanding of other departments.

Exposing your team members to the work that other teams or departments are doing is a great way to expand their understanding of their own work. Likewise, it allows you to introduce them to new challenges and possibly even help them discover new passions. Start by adding department presentations or one-on-one meetings to your new-hire onboarding. Also, highlight projects from various teams throughout the company in a monthly internal newsletter or in a weekly email focused on companywide wins.

There are plenty of reasons to cross-train employees. When team members can do each other’s jobs, your company won’t be in a bind if someone is out of the office or leaves abruptly. Just bear in mind that doing so requires a detailed plan.

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3. Encourage employees to push each other forward.

Our personal growth often depends on the people surrounding us. After all, when workers want to learn a new skill, 55 percent will turn to their peers first, according to a Degreed study. And when we’re among people who share a common objective, we tend to be more motivated than when we’re chasing goals alone. To encourage employees to turn to each other, George Brooks, co-founder of product development agency Crema, employs what he calls “craft teams,” a collection of team members with similar jobs who want to master their skill set.

Implement craft teams of your own or hold mastermind groups, which offer a forum for employees to share personal and business successes, as well as their goals. By assigning employees to small mastermind groups, you give them a peer group that’s focused on holding them accountable to the development goals they’ve set.

No one’s able to advance a career alone. Show the members of your team that you’re willing to help them meet their professional goals. Your company’s productivity and performance will reap the benefits.

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