CLIENT INSIGHTS

5 BEST PRACTICES FOR IMPLEMENTING COMPETENCIES

Leading change is never easy. When Tracy Piper, Director of Human Resources – Talent Management for The DXL Group and her team needed to implement competencies as a way to attract and develop talent for DXL's retail staff, she faced a common challenge: keeping the organization engaged in and supportive of the process.

Here, she shares five insights she and her team gained after successfully completing their first competency initiative.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

Piper and her team started sharing information with key stakeholders weeks before actually rolling out the competency initiative. She made sure that everyone who would be participating in the competency selection process—especially the leadership team—had time to prepare. Through email and in-person presentations, Piper communicated the expectations for each participant as well as the benefits the organization would see from a competency-based approach.

"When you hook them early and have meaningful conversations at the senior leadership level about competencies, the rest falls in place."
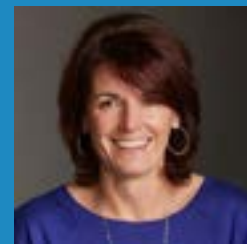
Tracy Piper, Director of Human Resources - Talent Management, The DXL Group

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MAKE ROOM FOR INPUT

While keeping people focused is challenging, Piper says that giving people adequate guidance and opportunity for providing input is key. Don't rush to consensus too quickly: let people know that different perspectives are welcome and give them time to present their rationales, ask questions, and engage in dialogue. People are more likely to take ownership of the process when they know their input is welcomed, valued, and impactful.

"We made sure people had a chance to stand up for their choices and advocate for what they believed in. It was interesting to hear everyone's reasoning behind their choices while making sure that everyone ended up on the same page."

CELEBRATE ACHIEVEMENT

The competency selection process offers an opportunity to examine job requirements from a new perspective. While the ultimate objective is to identify the behaviors that predict success at the organizational and individual level, the process itself can be very positive and enlightening. Piper made sure that in addition to focusing on the end result, she made time for employees to showcase the contribution they made to the organization.

"Participants got to talk about themselves, their own department, and the value that it brought as part of the competency selection process. People were saying, 'Wow, this department does a lot.' It was eye opening and reaffirming, and it turned out to be another way to get everyone engaged and excited."

START SMALL AND GROW SLOWLY

Rather than plunge into an organization-wide transition to competencies, Piper and her team began by focusing on core competencies—the success behaviors shared by the entire organization. Many HR teams that are adopting competencies for the first time choose to start with core competencies because they're relevant to every employee—from entry to executive level. After defining DXL's core competencies, Piper moved on to selecting and rolling out competencies for a single, high-impact job family within the organization, and then progressing to job-level competencies. This approach allows them to keep the workload manageable and gain confidence and skill as they progress.

"For job-specific competencies, we'll tackle those jobs that are going to give us the biggest bang for the buck first. In our case, we're going to create job profiles for the retail job family first, because that's where our largest population is, and that's where we'll see the biggest impact."

PLAN FOR CHANGE

When Piper began collecting organizational input, she came to realize that the competencies DXL chose today wouldn't last forever. As the company's goals and priorities shifted over time, its competencies would also need to change to ensure continued alignment and effectiveness. Piper and her team plan to re-examine DXL's core competencies and job-family competencies every few years—and have made sure people understand the need for ongoing adjustment.

"Right now, our organization is undergoing significant change and defining a new level of customer experience across our retail locations. But once that transition is over, we can see our core competencies and even the job-family competencies for retail changing to reflect new challenges."

Read The DXL Group case study to learn more about their project.
http://www.hrsg.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/HRSG-Client-Case-DXL-Group.pdf

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