

Free essay about human resources management: networking experience

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Introduction

Networking is a very powerful marketing strategy that helps any company to speed up success for the individual or the organization. It is about making the right connections and building beneficial relationships between a client and the company. It ensures that groups and companies meet key people who can further the organization and expand the company's sphere of influence. This is because what matters in the end is not really about who the individual is or the company, but who knows whom in the same industry. Anyone who is in sales can attest to the importance of networking. Because of so many special offers, competition, and sales pitches, maintaining personal relationships with clients allows the company to stand out and remain on top of the game. Through networking, people learn about the dynamics in the industry they belong to and easily get inside information about what's new. In reality, networking banks on relationships built along the way because people normally do business with people and companies they trust. Therefore, if anyone wants to succeed, they must ensure to continually connect with people, build new relationships, and leverage on relationships built.

I chose the topic on networking because I want to establish that there are many ways of developing one's sphere of influence - from face to face methods to online networking (Griffith). In addition, I want to reiterate the importance of networking in all aspects of an individual's life. It is not only for those who are in the field of sales, but for everyone regardless of industry one is into. Having a large network means accelerating one's personal and professional development as the people one meets can be the key to better

opportunities. It also helps in adding to one's stock knowledge considering the various types of people one meets, all of whom have different ideas to share.

Networking Defined

Networking is defined as a “ skill and a low cost method of marketing that is used to build new business contacts through connecting with other like minded individuals” (Johnson). Usually, these connections or meet ups are done through face to face meetings at events sponsored by networking groups, businesses, or any other organization. These events are often planned around an activity where attendees are given a chance to mingle and meet old or new contacts. These are great opportunities to share business ideas with others in the same industry and how they can build a mutually beneficial relationship with one another.

For most startup companies, they need all the help they can get in order to catch the attention of consumers and advertisers. Print advertising can be very expensive, that is why people and companies should leverage on what networks can do for the business. One advantage of networking is that when one makes a good impression on a prospect, the client might consider them the next time they would need their service. Face to face networking offers a first-hand view of what products and services a company offer through the sales team that represents the business. Questions and answers can easily be asked and answered, thus, results are immediate (O'Donnell).

Importance of Networking at the Workplace

I work for a company called Sibada, which is in the business of providing trainings for managers on how to run their companies. During this training, we teach them the basics of office management and administration, troubleshooting methods in cases of problems, and most importantly, how they can attract and retain their clients to increase their business revenue. While there are many online classes that managers can “attend”, including materials that they can gather and download from the Internet, having first-hand experience and face to face discussions are what keeps our clients attracted and coming back for more trainings. Thus, it is our job to ensure they get their money’s worth. Through good service and our networking strategies, Sibada has attracted a number of well-known companies that avail of our services on a regular basis. In addition, through word of mouth, we have had several clients who said one of the companies we worked with recommended us to their company. All these have been made possible by maintaining good business relationships with our customers and continually attending networking events sponsored by various companies, community groups, and those in similar industry as ours.

For my professional or career growth, networking is also important because through my exposure to various businesses and people within the same industry, work opportunities could crop up anytime and with a good reputation in the industry, I may be offered higher positions in other companies that would provide more networking opportunities, more knowledge, and improve my skills and abilities pertaining to my job and in networking, in particular (Sonnenberg).

Personal Experience

At Sibada, I train managers on how to properly run their company. I teach them the basics of office management, including Human Resources related tasks and how to attract and retain customers. In my role as a trainer, I perform some networking tasks as well considering that I meet with key people in a company and maintain good personal and business relationships with them. In this capacity, I am able to gain access to various business and career opportunities, including a good inside view of company systems and processes. It also provides me information about job leads and business referrals that prove to be beneficial for me and Sibada, because we are able to reach out to as many possible clients as we can. Companies that avail of our services include business schools, business owners, bankers, and others who are in similar industries. Because I work with them as their trainer, my network expands as well especially when they end up as happy and satisfied customers and they recommend our company for others' training needs. In terms of challenges, my role as trainer requires in-depth knowledge or background of the company prior to the actual training. For one, I cannot provide a one-size fits all kind of training for all companies because I have to consider what systems and processes the client have and design a training plan for them. Otherwise, what I will provide is a very general view on how to run a company, which of course, is what they do not need. Therefore, my role requires that I provide our clients an option to their current set up so they can manage the business in a more effective and efficient manner, one that would allow them to provide good service to their own clients and employees while at the same time, reaping high return of investment.

As an example, one of our clients approached us to handle seasonal training sessions for their retail business. Considering that some companies, especially those in the retail business, need to add temporary workers depending on season (for instance, Christmas season where there are plenty of shoppers), we helped them identify training needs and options for their temporary workers. However, we dealt directly with department managers, not the temporary workers. Therefore, what we taught the company is that since they have an idea as to when they will be having more customers, their training plan must be prepared on a yearly basis to accommodate changes in schedules or be able to foresee possible issues that might affect their business. This means preparing the managers ahead of time before the need for temporary workers happen.

Another challenge is in gaining understanding of the client's financial systems because some do not want to share their methodologies with Sibada. This is very important especially when they come to us for help in determining and analyzing the success of their processes. Therefore, what we recommend clients is to establish metrics that would determine whether they were able to save time and money, including metrics for newly recruited temporary workers that would determine if they performed according to standards or exceeded expectations. In addition, we help them in determining whether they were able to reduce risks, lowered their overhead costs, and met anticipated production requirements. In all these, when we are able to address their issues positively, clients are satisfied and either they return to us for additional services or recommend us to other companies.

As a trainer, I am not in a position to make decisions for the company but I am allowed to make suggestions on how to improve clients' situation. In most of the cases I handled, the actions that I took were the right ones for the needs of the company. Therefore, I can say that my recommended actions indeed help improve the clients' situation. In the event that there was a negative result in recommendations I made for companies, I would have proposed to revisit the initial discussions we had with the company in order to determine which part of the planning failed in order to improve or avoid the situation from happening. For instance, in the case of the company that hires temporary workers, failure in the hiring process would mean that the company's pre-screening and selection methods may have some loopholes that contributed to the situation. Therefore, I would recommend that the company strengthen its pre-screening, selection, and training processes to ensure that they only hire the best people for the job.

Background screening is crucial as well, thus, if the company needs to use third-party companies to perform the background check, then they must invest time and money as well in finding the appropriate company to handle the company's pre-screening processes. This will guarantee that temporary seasonal employees have been fully screened for possible risk according to the company's specific criteria.

Secondly, we must adhere to effective networking practices, such as referrals, building relationships, and awareness on leads. Referrals are very important, especially for a small but promising company as Sibada because this is how we can gain more clients - through word of mouths and references coming from satisfied customers. Thus, this entails providing

current clients with utmost care and high quality services in order for them to recommend us to their own network of clients and friends. In seminars I attended about networking, I learned that showing a sense of gratitude to customers or clients who referred us to their own circle goes a long way, too. Considering that there are many companies who are in the same training business as us, showing some level of courtesy and appreciation to those who referred us makes way for more repeat customers and building and maintaining new ones (Sonnenberg). In addition, maintaining good networking relationships with clients help in developing trust, thus, when we are able to form good relationships with them, then we gain a lot as we become privy to the company's needs and requirements. As this may be the case, then we are in the position to promote products and services that our company has, which could help in addressing their concerns. This also gives way to opportunities to learn about other competitors, including their strengths and weaknesses as a company (Sonnenberg). It can also be a source of leads in terms of identifying possible " business opportunities, new career options, or further networking possibilities" (Sonnenberg). For instance, anyone belonging to the networking group could share information about a new, startup company that would like to attend similar trainings that Sibada offers, thus, having this close relationship with fellow networkers already give us the advantage of first-hand information about future prospects.

Finally, I realized that to be an effective networker, one should be very persistent. This involves having the patience in meeting people and understanding that not all who are introduced as a prospect could turn into a

business opportunity. Networking requires putting in the effort in meeting people without the guarantee of a business right away. But, if networking is done properly, it could turn into a very promising endeavor (Shewmake). Opportunities for networking abound. All a networker has to do is become active in various chambers that offer chances of meeting people in the same industry and even those who do not share the same interests as others. For one, it may not turn out to be an opportunity for the two networkers, but one that involves people or companies they know. If what one wants is a more organized approach in networking, then he or she may opt to make a list of potential customers or groups that their company wants to target. But of course, gaining understanding about these companies is of high importance in order to know if they are ones that can really contribute to the company's business interests.

Networking is nothing new as it has been practiced even in the past. It could have been in a very informal manner or an organized one, but surely, there is always an opportunity to interact with other people. Regardless if people do not have common interests during the time of introduction, it does not necessarily mean a dead connection as it could lead to possible future business endeavors, too. What is important is the individual or the company understand why networking is essential, why it's important to build internal and external company network, why relationship building is a must when dealing with bosses, subordinates, and colleagues, and what having a good networking strategy can do for networkers.

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