

# Induction and employee socialisation



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Induction process initiates with recruitment and leads to continuous employee improvement (Marchington & Wilkinson: 2008). During the induction new employees are informed about organisation's performance standards and expectations. It helps to identify employee training needs and attempts to socialise the new recruits into the organisation (CIPD Factsheet: 2010). According to CIPD (2007a), almost one in five new recruits leaves an organisation within six months and around one in twenty five employees leaves due to poor induction programme (Suff: 2005b). During the induction process new recruits analyse the organisation and if they conclude that the organisation does not provide what was agreed, this has obvious unfavourable consequences on their commitment and hence on performance and discretionary behaviour (Marchington & Wilkinson: 2008). IRS (2005) survey revealed that employees who had been fully integrated into the organisation in the initial three months of their employment were likely to stay on average two years more with their employers than those who did not. However, regardless of its importance only two thirds of organisations offer induction training (IER/IFF: 2004).

Select Service Partner's functional analysis reveals that there is a lack of an effective induction programme. Without an effective induction programme new recruits will find it difficult to integrate into the team, exhibit low morale, and will not perform to the best of their potential. Therefore, it is proposed that when starting work at Select Service Partner all new employees follow a comprehensive one week induction programme. The frontline managers must ensure that all the new entrants are given positive message about company's mission, job requirements, values, rules, policies

and try build employer brand. However, they should try to avoid creating an environment which develops irrational expectations by overselling the job. The induction programme has to be individually tailored in recognition of the previous experience and job specification of the new employee.

Line manager should play an important role in the process because developing a relationship with frontline employee at this phase will help in future interaction. It is possible that frontline managers may not always have the relevant skills and knowledge to conduct an induction programme. Therefore, the induction programme should be carried out both by HR and line manager. A CD-based training which includes demonstrations of examples of good and poor customer service based on Select Service Partner's performance standards must be developed. In the real world frontline employees will not only face happy customers but also some difficult customers. Difficult customers will often judge the frontline employees level of service based on how they respond to a mistake. Therefore, it is essential to train new employees to handle difficult situations. This will help new recruits to understand their role from the start and to deliver customer services to the required standards. The CD-based training will also provide benefits when frontline employee performance falls below the desired level and retraining the employee.

Performance appraisal is a key element of performance management. Performance appraisal cannot be referred as performance management, but it constructs an important tool that can be used to manage employee performance (CIPD: 2010). Frontline employees who receive performance feedback from their line manager exhibits higher level of job satisfaction

(Teas: 1981). Majority of the frontline employees expect feedback on their performance. Select Service Partner's policy suggests conducting formal performance appraisal annually. However, interviews of frontline employees reveal that company's policy is not followed by the management.

It is recommended to conduct performance reviews more frequently, twice a year or even quarterly. This will help the frontline employees to receive more structured feedback and reflection on their performance. In order to avoid perceptions of unfairness in appraisal, management need to develop good working relation and provide honest and accurate feedback on frontline employee performance. Conducting frequent performance reviews will reduce the 'moments of surprises'. Management need to keep a formal record of employee's actual performance. A formal record will assist the manager to remember and communicate employee performance throughout the cycle and not just particular examples. Frequent reviews will help management to concentrate on analysis and review of the important issues arising from the period under the consideration. It is also suggested that before discussing performance appraisal with frontline employee it essential to review the appraisals with the HR or next level manager to ensure that ratings are correct and consistent.

## **Reward System**

The purpose of the reward is based on the assumption that rewards will foster teamwork, encourage employee loyalty, and ultimately improve performance (Milne: 2007). Select Service Partner offers 'My SSP' voluntary benefit scheme which is available to all employees, but surprisingly no one mentioned them during the interviews. It is due to poor communication,

unawareness, and lack of interest. In order to achieve the 50 pence extra per hour incentives, frontline employee has to achieve 90-100 per cent score in mystery customer ratings. The current system totally ignores those who work in the kitchen and are not directly involved with the customers. The company employees' have criticised the link between the 50 pence extra an hour incentive and overall team performance. There are evidences that employees who scored 90-100 per cent but did not receive incentives because of poor performance by their team members. It has the opposite effect on these employees and a key factor in their demotivation. This raises the questions such as reward equity and fairness in the organisation. Any system of reward will fail if it cannot influence the results. Reward packages will be more effective if they are tailored to the employees need and viewed as inspirational and available to all.

It is recommended that the company should redesign the current reward system. It should include both frontline employees and those who work in the kitchen. The company should continue the 50 pence extra an hour incentive scheme. However, it should be given directly to individuals who achieve 90-100 per cent. The company seems to be confusing the concept of individual rewards with team reward interdependence. The HR needs to review the effects of equal vs. equitable allocations of the team reward (Johnson: 2009). It is recommended to develop both equal and equitable rewards where the employee rewards should not only be contingent upon overall team performance but also on the amount of their relative contribution to team's performance.

The company should also introduce a voucher scheme which is a good alternative to bonus system. They are cost effective if purchased in bulk (corporate vouchers) from high street retailers. The HR department need to develop a point based reward scheme. For a consistent reward scheme a point based system will help to deliver more positive results. All frontline employees will find this system simpler and straight forward. A point based system will give more flexibility to frontline employees to redeem their points against a choice of rewards. A range of communication channels such as email, team briefings, posters, social network websites, text messages, and notice boards should be used to maximise the level of engagement. Similarly, public presentation of awards won by frontline employees will not only give a sense of pride, but will also show that goals are achievable.

Select Service Partner should use monthly newsletters for this purpose. Sending email is a cost effective method to send monthly newsletters to all employees. However, benefits of printed newsletters cannot be ignored especially where employees have no access to the internet. Employees who achieve 90-100 per cent score (requirement for incentives) in the mystery customers should be photographed and walled on the staff notice board. A coloured glossy printout from the office printer can be used for this purpose which is relatively cost effective compared to digital photographs. This will not only reinforce the sense of pride among the achievers but also encourage other employees to participate.

## **Employee Communication**

Line manager's communication has been recognized as important factor of in influencing employee behaviour and perception (Philippe et al: 2009).

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Therefore, it is characterised as an essential skill for leaders and managers in organizations. HR practices and management actions are articulated as a communication that is perceived by the individuals as a deliberate message to which they assign meaning (Philippe & Kohler: 2005). However, the challenge is for managers to understand what management actions are extremely essential to employees (Philippe et al: 2009).

There is an evidence of poor communication between managers and employees. Employees are unsure what is happening in their organisation and their unit. Staff notice board and verbal communication are the only channels used by the managers to inform employees. There is no system in place to ensure whether or not employees have understood the important information. Notice board messages may not be read by the team members.

Employees may misunderstand or misinterpret oral communication (Marchington & Wilkinson: 2008). In order to make employees well-informed about unit's progress and its achievements managers need to develop a two-way communication in which frontline employees should feel valued.

Managers need to engage employees by effectively communicating individual and team targets and improving downward communication. This can be achieved by improving manager's visibility, working with the team members, and sharing information. A diary should be used and maintained daily in which managers can assign task to frontline employees. The diary should be checked against the task assigned for the day and task completed. This will help that tasks are completed according to the company's required standards. Supervisors should help the frontline employees when they face difficulties in achieving those tasks. It is also suggested that managers

should consider using various channels of communication to engage employees such as intranet, in-house newsletters attached with salary slips, mobile text messages, Web 2.0 and email.

Managers need to listen to employees suggestions and if essential acting upon what has been suggested. Managers should also clearly communicate when a particular suggestion is not considered. Exhibiting such behaviours will reinforce the level of motivation and employee engagement. This will help managers to build employee's psychological contract and hence high level of commitment and improved performance.

### **Driving initiatives**

Managers can drive initiatives by effectively collaborating with frontline employees and customers. They need to set the right example by working with their team members, communicating, motivating and helping them to behave in way to achieve improved performance results. They need not to lose sight of performance targets but they should do it by being people oriented. This can be achieved by developing the frontline employee skills and bringing unity in the teams.

### **Influence rather than control**

Managers need to spend more time to ensure that frontline employees understand what is expected of them and what they are trying to achieve as a team and their role in this journey. They need to influence their team members rather than controlling them. It is suggested that managers should encourage employees to discuss problems and issues with customers. They



should coach their staff so that they can solve those problems and learn how to handle future problems too.

## **Plan leadership and management**

Managers need to plan leadership and management together. Leadership is about building vision, initiating change, and inspiring employees whereas management is concerned with order and organising and controlling individuals (Taylor: 2007). Management should listen to and consult with their team members. It is desired to regularly discuss company's vision, values and performance. They need not only to give timely feedback to their team members but also ask them to give upward feedback too. It is recommended that managers should discuss quite fairly with their staff what they can do to motivate them, develop them and help them perform better. It is preferable to ask frontline employees what they would like to change the way they work together to achieve their unit goals.

## **Addressing Poor Performance**

Performance management is concerned with continuous performance improvement (Armstrong & Baron: 2007). Employee's mistakes should be viewed as an opportunity for learning. Poor performance may not emerge if employees are effectively managed. In many situations employees performance falls below expected levels because they are not provided timely and accurate performance feedback (Mark: 2000). Both assistant manager and unit manager should try to resolve the poor performance informally with better communication and involvement. They should develop a corrective action plan which will specify:

the performance problems faced by frontline employee

measures to be taken to improve performance

time period for development

outcomes of failure to improve

follow up date

It is proposed that when a frontline employee's performance falls below the desired level at any stage during the performance cycle, managers should document the poor performance and take corrective actions, including (if essential) disciplinary action, to ensure that performance expectations will be achieved within agreed period of time. Failure to keep a formal record will be time consuming as managers will have to begin informal performance appraisals from the scratch. If an individual fails to achieve performance improvement after giving proper guidance and appropriate opportunity then it is desirable to seek help from the HR.

## **Personal Development Plan**

The themes of employability and career resilience have emerged in the contemporary organisation as a response to traditional organisational approaches to career management. The 'career resilient worker' is more dedicated to continuous learning, accepts change quickly, and is committed to the organisation's success (Atkinson: 2002: p. 14-15). Therefore, the core task of management should be on developing the employees rather than using the employees (Schalk & Rousseau: 2001).

Many employees have expressed interest in growing their present responsibility or in furthering their careers in the company. Therefore, managers should work with the employees and explore strengths and weaknesses and, if appropriate, assist them prepare an employee development plan. Personal development plans should specify how an employee can effectively use their competencies in their current role, improve their performance in their present role, build up areas of weakness, or develop the skills and experience they will require for potential future opportunities. Additionally, frontline employees must be given the opportunity to come up with their own ideas and opinions.

## **Coaching & Mentoring**

The main aim of the manager as coach is to support an organisational development strategy that emphasis on changing the relationship between employee and line manager (Ellinger et al: 2003). The objective of the working with team members in the manager as coach role is to assist individuals consider and learn how they might behave and work distinctively with more effective actions that result in improved performance (Wakefield: 2006). This is different from exercising one's authority as a manager and directing employees what they need to do to improve performance (Ladyshevsky: 2009). According to the CIPD survey (2009), nearly 90% of HRD professionals reported that coaching is used within their organisation.

The current study reveals that majority of the employees have not undertaken any training course during the last one year. The need is also reflected in the mystery customer ratings. The unit is facing large variations in achieving 90-100 per cent target in the mystery customer ratings. There

are well experienced employees who are working for the organisation for approximately 10 years. Although, some of these employees have expressed that teamwork has been improved with the current management, however, none of them have declared to be working as coach or mentor.

Coaching will help the managers to identify staff personal learning and development needs. It will not only increase employee productivity but also help to manage under-performers. Managers should provide continuous feedback on employee's performance. Management need to motivate employees and offer opportunities for employee improvement during the normal day-to-day activities. It is proposed that managers should share their knowledge and experience with their staff. Managers need to involve experienced employees to help as mentor. Internal coaching is also a cost effective method compared to hiring external certified professional. The HR need to develop a system to measure and evaluate the impact of coaching. In case internal coaching is not producing the desired results then it is preferable to hire external professional. It is recommended that the HR should give managers responsibility and accountability for people development in their team and coaching as part of their leadership role. The L&D should provide continuous support to frontline managers through workshops and the opportunity to learn and practice the skills required through coaching from the HRD team.

### **Managers training for performance management**

According to Armstrong (2006), employees tend to feel insecure or lose confidence in themselves when they are not certain about what their role is and in fact, what is expected of them. Therefore, it looks logical to propose

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that defining the line manager role should be the important part of the strategy to improve performance (Martins: 2007). Devolution of HRM to frontline managers can result in establishing a motivational environment, in addition to effective control, as frontline managers are in regular contact with frontline employees (Brewster & Larsen: 2000).

The conflicting arguments of (Renwick: 2003) and (Hales: 2005) regarding the role, nature and importance of the frontline managers emerge from uncertainties about whether they are managers or not, and who should be given the responsibility of people management – HR professionals, frontline managers, middle managers or senior managers (Renwick: 2003). Frontline managers are in best position to adopt and deliver the most appropriate HR practices (Storey & Sisson: 1993; Cunningham & Hayman: 1999), but in partnership with HR professionals (Whittaker & Marchington: 2003). The CIPD (Crail: 2007) argue that while some frontline managers undertake this “new” role, and are able to accomplish HRM assignments appropriately. However, other studies have revealed that frontline managers often fall short of delivering their HRM tasks effectively, thus, indicating a “rhetoric” and “reality” gap (Cunningham et al: 2004).

Most of the well-designed performance management system never succeeds because line managers lack the relevant skills in implementing it.

Irregularities in performance appraisal, poor communication with staff, and low level of employee involvement indicate lack of interest and skills deficiencies. Inconsistencies also suggest the conflicting views of the HR and line managers about the importance of particular HR activities. It is

recommended that HR should provide clear procedures to follow and conduct regular meetings with line managers.

It is suggested that the HR should develop the skills and competencies of the unit managers to perform the HR aspects of their job effectively. They need to develop their knowledge of motivation, communication, and conducting effective appraisals. The HR should provide relevant training and supporting environment to the managers. Managers take up training opportunities when they are committed and view training as beneficial for their development. Training should be systematic, structured and tailored to the individual needs, thus enabling managers to pick up things as they go along.

Considering the time, work-life balance and work pressure on frontline managers, it is suggested to adopt flexible, just-in learning methods including bite-sized and e-learning. The HR should prepare a 24 week action learning and development programme for the frontline managers. Managers should be engaged with five separate five-day workshops. The workshops should be held off-site at regular intervals and focused on the managers, teams, and organisation's strategy. Training for managers should be based on role plays and practical learning. The role plays with HR professionals will enable the managers to apply their learning to real life business scenarios. Therefore, the HR should ensure that managers are able to develop, exercise and demonstrate their key leadership skills.

It is suggested to encourage e-learning delivered via intranet, internet, CD based along with the class room based training. A dedicated HRD manager should be available to assist managers in their learning and development

needs. CIPD Training DVDs are helpful and cost between £995- £895 per DVD. These training DVDs include practical examples, handouts, customised tools and the advice of an expert in the field (CIPD: 2010). Finally, it is essential to develop a plan for monitoring and evaluating the agreed success criteria.