



Human Resource Strategy

making the most of people

“The breakthrough for me”

“The breakthrough for me was when I realised that we had to stop thinking about how to manage the business and how to motivate our people as though they were separate issues. Instead, we had to work out how to manage ourselves in a way that delivers the goals of the business, including the needs of our people.”

This CEO had a clear sense of his company’s product strengths, the business model and the future, but was struggling with how to get employees to share his vision and deliver it.

He saw the problem initially as one of communications and he sensed resistance all the way. People did not seem to share his conviction about where they were all going, why, or how to get there.

He was absolutely clear in his own mind about what needed to happen. He also knew that he was trying to impose his view onto everyone else. He readily acknowledged that had always been his natural style; it had helped him get to where he was.

But he also began to realise that the style was no longer working as well for him as before. He had to force the pace. He was struggling with the time and effort it was taking, and he was not making sufficient progress. Ironically, one of the reasons with which he justified his old management style was that it would take too much time and effort to try to carry people with him at the earlier stages. He had felt he could always persuade them later when he had formulated his own conclusions and when he needed their help to implement them. And if they were not open to persuasion, maybe they were not the people he needed to have around.

He now concluded that he needed everyone in the organisation, whatever their different perspectives, to engage not just in delivering the products and services but also in the whole process of deciding where the organisation should go and how to get there.

The intellectual breakthrough came when he realised that there had to be a way of managing the business that used the available resources more effectively. People’s time and effort could go directly into developing the business direction and making it work, instead of being wasted in arguing, after the fact, the merits of his vision. He acknowledged he had to share the load more effectively by involving people from the outset, even if that meant losing some control.

His own personal breakthrough was recognising that he was part of the problem. He did not want to share with others the most interesting parts of the work, and he did not trust other peoples’ judgement or capacity to come up with a better strategy as much as his own. However, his traditional solution -to do it himself- was slowing everything down and discouraging others from contributing.

He also began to notice that his top team were adopting similar practices. He came to the conclusion that changing their behaviour was critical to making the business a success, and he had to show the way by changing his own.

*“If I continue to believe as I have always believed,
I will continue to act as I have always acted.
If I continue to act as I have always acted,
I will continue to get what I have always gotten.”*

Marilyn Ferguson

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