

Note: This communication provides general information about human resources and employment practices issues. It is not a legal opinion or legal advice. Readers should confer with appropriate legal counsel for their particular situations.

CUSTOMER FOCUSED HR

Your marketing materials communicate benefits to the customer. Your product development centers around building better mousetraps for the customer. Your sales force focuses on improving relationships with the customer.

So, shouldn't it follow that your Human Resources efforts focus on the customer too? One breed of HR does. It's called "customer-centric HR," and it defines HR and how it functions in terms of—you guessed it—the customer.

By integrating business strategy, technology and human resource practices (including recruiting, performance evaluations and training), organizations can put the customers' needs first, then determine what practices they need to put into place. A savvy rule of thumb for developing a customer-centric HR strategy is the well-known 80/20 concept (20% of your customers supply 80% of the profit). The 80/20 idea is often associated with marketing, but there's no reason HR can't use this concept as well.

Other steps to encouraging a customer-centric HR strategy include:

Look for ways to build customer loyalty. Make an effort to match employees up with clients that you think would complement each other. Be deliberate about getting to know customers' needs, preferences, and work styles, and be clear about how much their business, and their relationship, matters to you.

Empower employees to go above and beyond for customers. Give every employee the tools and the permission to provide excellent service at every turn. For example, encourage employees to give personalized tokens of appreciation to repeat customers; approve training dollars for employees who want to learn more about their customers' industries; let your standard procedures be "un-standardized" to better jibe with the customers' standard procedures.

Write "customer-focused" into every job description. Insist that anyone being considered for hire or promotion must understand your customers and how they think. Even "behind-the-scenes" employees need to put the customer first; if they don't, they shouldn't be hired or promoted, even if they're otherwise-stellar candidates.

Track responses. Invite feedback from customers, to ensure that your customer-centric HR program is truly customer-centric. Do they feel they're getting better service? Have they recommended your business to colleagues? Also, evaluate your per-customer sales figures, to see how much each has increased as a result of your new strategy.

BottomLine

Since employees are your direct link to customers, HR should be the catalyst for a customer-centric strategy. By encouraging this approach, you'll be better positioned to consistently meet expectations and satisfy clients. In turn, you'll encourage loyalty, increase profits and grow your business.

If you would like more information about this or other human resources and employment practices issues, please contact Praxis HR via email at info@praxis.com by phone at 206.262.8133 or visit our website at www.praxishr.com.