

Why employee promotions should only come with proper training

Investing in human capital is necessary to adequately prepare the South African workforce for promotional positions and to fast-track business growth.



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Yet, according to a 2017 World Economic Forum (WEF) Report titled *The Future of Jobs and Skills in Africa*, sub-Saharan Africa is far removed from making optimal use of its human capital potential and underprepared for the disruption of jobs and skills brought about by the fourth industrial revolution. Further, the report indicates that between 15-20 million increasingly well-educated young people are expected to enter the African workforce every year for the next three decades. Therefore, delivering an ecosystem for quality jobs and future skills to match this is imperative.

“So many organisations simply lack the talent they need to optimise their business and achieve their goals. Turning this around is important for business growth and it’s high time we prioritise it,” says Richard Rayne, CEO of iLearn – a South African learning solutions-based business that offers accredited and non-accredited learning programmes and digital learning solutions to address skills shortages in organisations.

To increase an organisation’s talent pipeline and equip would-be leaders with the necessary skills, Rayne advises that employers adopt an in-house organisational learning culture, which encourages a continuous culture of learning, grows and develops competent employees and helps to prepare them for promotional positions. According to Rayne, upskilling and developing leaders in-house is one of the biggest challenges employers face. Too often employees are promoted into leadership positions based on long service, technical expertise or a “good feel” for the candidate’s ability.

Leadership development

“To move into a promotional position, potential leaders need to be adequately trained. They need the skills and expertise to lead. Promoting the top sales executive into the sales manager’s position could be detrimental to the business if he/she lacks leadership skills,” he says.

But learning and development is not just applicable to would-be leaders. Instead, Rayne says more organisations should focus on developing those members of staff in existing leadership positions by introducing mentoring and coaching programmes to help them formally train and mentor other future leaders.

“This allows leaders to be trained on how to mentor and coach their colleagues who they deem eligible for promotion, only thereafter can organisation specific learning take place and this will form part of the leadership development programme,” he says.

Structure

Rayne advises that organisations follow a leadership development structure, which maps out the key need-to-knows, including the structure and process flow required by the organisation; a leadership development strategy; a competency framework and the prerequisite for each leadership position. This structure helps employers identify where gaps exist and how promotion can take effect.

Typically, an organisation will select a group of entry level leaders who possess the technical competencies to perform their job function, but lack the skills to lead, motivate and monitor their teams effectively. These employees will undergo a training programme to prepare them for promotion, but only candidates who perform well will be considered. Further, middle level management should also undergo a training programme to equip them with people management and change management skills and improve their management capabilities.

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