

IMC

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Laying the Foundation for Staff Success....How Clear are Your Employee Roles?

Despite all the testimonies we hear about the productivity of American workers, our organizations are actually nowhere near as productive as they could be. Conservative estimates indicate that the average employee wastes as much as 25-50% of his/her time at work. (Wow!) While some of this is due to not doing things right the first time, much of the problem stems from working on low priority items...or tasks that no longer need to be done.

Try this exercise: Ask an employee and his supervisor, *independently*, to list the employee's key responsibilities in priority order. Quite often, you will find that the two lists are quite different. Not only does this point to a root cause of productivity problems, but also brings to light the origin of frustrations between supervisors and their employees. Thankfully, many of these problems can be addressed by clarifying roles. Here are two simple tools to consider in remedying these problems:

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions are 1-2 page documents that summarize the purpose of each role, and clarify key responsibilities and job requirements. For most positions, responsibilities can be listed in order of priority or time expended. For those that follow a specific routine, responsibilities can be listed in chronological order.

Mini-Profiles

Mini-Profiles are much more concise. Typically one paragraph is used to describe key employee responsibilities; another to describe job requirements.

In the past, most of our clients opted for job descriptions. They realized that the additional detail job descriptions provide could help them be more effective in the areas of recruitment, selection, orientation, coaching and performance development. They also found them helpful in clarifying whether a role should be legally classified as exempt or nonexempt. On the other hand, job descriptions take more time to prepare and are difficult to keep current in an organization experiencing a great deal of change.

For those organizations that are running lean and evolving rapidly, mini profiles may be a more viable tool.

Whichever approach you decide upon to clarify staff roles, here are a few of the benefits you should realize:

- Staff members will feel more secure
- Productivity will increase
- You will be better able to pay team members more equitably
- You will enjoy more positive relations with your staff

As entrepreneurs, we often resist structure. Some of us may even see job descriptions as limiting. But here's where we may benefit from looking at the world from the perspective of a staff member. Most of these individuals want to do a good job for us. Many come to work for more than a paycheck: they relish the opportunity to contribute to something bigger than themselves---to make a difference in the world. This can be accomplished when staff members have a clear understanding of what is expected of them. As leaders, we may be pleasantly surprised to see

employee motivation “take-off” when staff members feel competent and confident that they are performing well, and indeed making their contribution.

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