

## **Moving From Compliance To Commitment**

I have been talking for some time with employers and other clients about how successful organizations move their employees from compliance to commitment, but now there are some especially compelling reasons why this isn't just good management, its becoming a competitive necessity.

**Retention** – the first reason is fairly simple, in this economy employees have choices and they simply will not remain with an organization where they do not feel valued. When I talk to employers, especially small employers, one of their biggest concerns is getting and keeping the talent that they need to successfully run their organizations. Unemployment is at an all time low. Organizations are recruiting new grads, foreign employees, and even in some cases lowering their expectations to keep their staffing requirements at critical mass. Employees who are committed are less likely to change companies.

**Changing Expectations** – expectations are changing on two different fronts. First, employees are becoming much more likely to challenge bad management practices based on the economy. There are numerous examples of employees “going over the head” of their manager or even directly to the Boards of publicly traded organizations when they believe that management is performing effectively. What is even more important, management is listening. According to the Gallup organization, which has conducted climate assessment surveys for hundreds of clients, almost 50% of them have taken direct action. They indicate client organizations have “... retrained, reassigned, or terminated a few thousand managers who perform poorly and fail to respond to coaching.” A major Canadian bank attributes much of their success in retention to the quality of their front line supervision, a factor they give a weighting as high as 80%.

In addition, the workforce is changing, Generation X and the group immediately following –Nexters, have different expectations. They take “employment at will” literally and will not commit to organizations that they don't perceive as committing to them. These people represent a great deal of the emerging workforce.

**Productivity** – a recent survey published by the Hudson Institute found that fewer than 50% of the employees surveyed feel a strong sense of loyalty and attachment to their current employer. According to their research, there is a direct correlation between productivity and commitment. Their finding categorized 33% of the employees as “high risk” or highly likely to leave their employer within a two year period. Transportation, communications, and public administration/government were at the back of the bus; with almost 60% of the employees in these sectors feeling their employer is not attentive to their concerns. Given these are targets for organized labor as well this should be cause for concern.

If you add these factors together, it says we need to be responsive.

It is not all about money either. In other articles, I have talked about respect, communications, management training and coaching, and other factors that employees are evaluating. We have the tools to address our employees concerns. Perhaps if we won't do it because it's the right thing - we will do it because it is a competitive necessity.

**Mark F Herbert & Associates, Inc** is a management-consulting firm offering organizationally specific solutions to companies and organizations on a regional and national basis. Mark F. Herbert is president and principal consultant. He has been a speaker regionally and nationally on HR related topics.