

LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

Creating an Effective Workforce

By Leyla Hussein • 3 October 2018



I have watched more than one small business quietly buckle because a single person left. The receptionist who also did the invoicing and somehow knew every client by name. When she went, three jobs went with her, and nobody had noticed she was holding them all. That is what happens without a workforce plan. The cogs are all doing their bit until one stops, and then you find out how much was resting on it.

In business, building an effective workforce is everything. Your people are the cogs and gears that keep the whole thing turning, and if one gets rusty or weakens, the rest have to compensate and weaken in turn. You need procedures in place so the workforce can adapt and carry on with as little disruption as possible. But before any of that, you need an effective workforce plan, so you recruit the right people in the first place.

What effective workforce planning is

Workforce planning is simply getting the right number of people, with the right skills, to fit the business. It is how a company forecasts how many and what kind of employees it needs now and in the future, and it works hand in hand with your [business plan](#). It is one of the central jobs of human resource management, helping you foresee change, spot trends and put the right HR policies in place. Done well, it makes sure you have a workforce of the right size, with the right skills, in the right place, which is a real competitive advantage.

How to create one

Start by surveying and analysing how the company is performing. Look at which departments are doing well, who makes them up, and how that compares with a department that is struggling. Note who oversees what, whether anyone is juggling several roles, and any patterns in the results. Get the workforce's own opinion too, through a survey or simply by asking. Apply all of that to the company's current position, then project it forward, taking account of the internal and external factors, political, industry and otherwise, that could affect the business and therefore its people. Once you have spotted the opportunities, the places where a new hire would relieve pressure and add complementary skills, build the ideal employee profile for each role, so you are completely clear on what you want from that person, for the team, the department and the company.

How to recruit the right people

With the plan set and the profiles drawn up for who you need now and later, it is time to recruit. To align new people with the business, they need a proper introduction to the company and a clear set of procedures and expectations. Be precise in the job advertisement so the right people understand the role: state the desired skills, the tasks, the performance criteria and the pay, and then describe the personality traits that will fit the team and department. Depending on where the business stands, this can run for internal candidates as well as external ones.

Putting the right attitudes in place

With the right people in, you set up how the company actually operates. This is where [management styles](#) and procedures come in, and where you make your expectations plain, usually during the induction, when new people meet their teams and get to grips with their role. It comes down to this: clear communication and clearly identified expectations set a company up for a genuinely effective workforce.

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