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Since the widespread inception of black economic empowerment (BEE), the issue of fronting has received a fair deal of media coverage.



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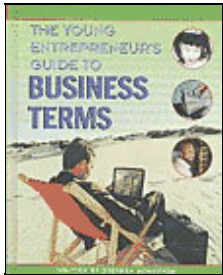
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Each month our professionally chaired groups of chief executives, owners and operators meet to discuss and critique the difficult issues facing our businesses.

One topic that emerges consistently is the challenge of recruiting, developing and retaining good employees in today's competitive business environment.

The task is getting more difficult and made extra challenging due to many factors.

These include a shortage of skilled workers as well as the BEE skills shortage and increased competition.

Two major workforce elements also play a role, with generation X and Y, for example, having a different work philosophy to the older, 50 plus regime.

What contributes further is that high performers can and do regularly change jobs.

Many employees complain of stress and burnout, while many companies do not have planned programmes to aid retention.

Employers also still manage time and tasks rather than agreed measurable outcomes. But life balance and fulfillment are key career priorities for employees. Fundamentally there is a "war" for talented staff.

To help us analyse and understand this critical issue, we engaged a resource speaker – Sandy Asch, from the US. Her philosophy is to be successful in a quest for talent, organisations must create an environment that provides more than just good reward systems and incentives.

Talented staff want to work for organisations with talented people, where managers are enlightened, leadership is respected and employees enjoy a positive experience. The idea is to become an employer of choice, which embodies key elements such as a commitment to excellence in all aspects, constantly striving for high productivity, ensuring full engagement of your people and providing inspired leadership.

These employers will also focus on developing managers of choice (ie managers we would choose to work with), relentlessly focusing on matters of importance and ensuring a constant balance between the needs of the organisation and the individual.

In particular, leaders or managers of choice should embrace a number of characteristics couched in the following mnemonic: CASTLE

Courageous

Authentic

Service oriented

Truthful/honest and open



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Loving/caring

Effective/outcomes driven.

When we become an employer of choice then there are significant advantages.

These include the ability to attract quality talent more easily, optimised performance through enhanced talent, talent retention, increased employer loyalty, reduced employment cost, lower stress levels and improved workflow.

Customers and stakeholders are also attracted by positive image and cultures with further enhancement of financial performance.

With regard to financial performance, a Fortune magazine study of Best Companies found that compared to S & P 500, profits were up by a factor of three, and that staff turnover was reduced by at least 50%

The core element is to develop managers of choice in your organisation. Too often managers are selected because they are the most skilled individuals in that field, without due regard for their people management or potential.

Managers of choice will care about their staff and be empathetic (not sympathetic), and will, at the same time, delegate effectively, involve staff in decision making but, none the less, hold people accountable for their agreed area of responsibility.

The outcome will be staff that are loyal, dedicated, committed, involved, engaged and effective.

In most organisations people are one of the most significant cost elements – if not the most – and should be your most important asset.

As managers and leaders, the task of locating, recruiting, developing and retaining talented staff is one of the most crucial.

Creating an environment of excellence and striving to become an employer of choice will make the task simpler and more effective.

Importantly it also brings a host of advantages, which makes adoption of the strategy very compelling.



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