

By Ajay Wahi



This is an action, if done correctly, would earn you the loyalty of your key personnel forever! I seem to keep harping on people retention issues, but you know as CEO, this is one of the most crucial issues, and the biggest threat (besides poor cash flow management) to success that a SME faces.

For each function/role/process in your company, there are similar roles/functions /processes being carried out professionally in a large company by adopting world class models.

The first step in tasking employees ahead of their experience is to identify and shortlist critical and strategic business roles, practices, models, projects, quality initiatives and so on which are implemented in large organisations by people with 10 to 15 years of experience.

Identify such business practices that will help you to deliver better processes/higher productivity/robust product and technical and sales management models/more satisfied customers/enhanced market visibility/reduced expenditure/wider geographical spread/vibrant HR policies/tighter IT security/higher production: any one or more of a set of performance enhancements.

The next step would be to identify your key personnel and then map their skill sets with the ones required to execute the identified Performance Enhancement areas. Having done this mapping, choose (based on skill sets) the best employee(s) from these key personnel who could be tasked with the rare and much sought after once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deliver on improving performances in the identified areas.

The key challenge is that the key personnel in the SME might have only a fraction of the experience that employees in larger organisations would have. Despite this, entrusting major responsibilities to relatively junior personnel can have untold dividends if done correctly. Do give them that chance in your SME even if they have just half the experience required.

I contemplated taking this action for months till I concluded that CMMI implementation (Capability Maturity Model Integration: an internationally accepted quality process model being adopted by software companies) would be the right opportunity to implement this idea. I did it, and was floored by the results!

CMMI in larger companies is managed by people with rich experience of 10 to 20 years. And I am got the very same CMMI implemented by people with just 6 to 8 years' experience! My employees, tasked ahead of their experience with this responsibility, are delighted that I have reposed so much trust in them. They are getting chances to enhance their learning and experience which they would never have got at any other organisation! This makes them eager to work and develop new skills, think proactively about other ways that they can contribute to the company, and also remain loyal to the organisation.

Another example is when two years ago, we decided to evaluate, shortlist, select and implement a Sales Management tool which could help us to track , record and then analyze data across clients /prospects /products/offices / status /deal value etc .

The leader we chose for this exercise was a person with only 5 years' experience. Normally, a person would have at least 8 years' experience before being entrusted with such a job. Our employee took on the challenge with great enthusiasm, and from a point where he did not know the ABCs of Sales Management tools, 5 months later he was reasonably well-equipped to perform the evaluations required for selecting the tool!! Even today, he is grateful to have been given this rare and wonderful opportunity!

How wonderful this sounds! But there is a warning note: you will not see success unless the exercise has your backing as CEO of the company, and your leadership team's personal backing and involvement. Therefore, tasking people ahead of their experience without your personal involvement runs the risk of failure due to the team's lower expertise which could lower the confidence of the team, which in turn could de-motivate employees.

Given that you know the situation you are faced with at work, you need to decide whether or not to task people ahead of their experience. If you don't, they may look for greener pastures outside; but if you are willing to take the risk, and can provide that additional support, your experience and guidance along with their eagerness to acquire new skills can make this idea a winner.

Be aware that you will need to make the time and resource commitment to provide the additional guidance and encouragement needed for this idea to be embraced across the organisation.

It is important to identify the correct people who, with adequate guidance, will be able to implement them else you run the risk of killing this great concept.

What Is In It For Me...?

Tasking employees ahead of their experience immensely increases their skills, confidence, productivity, and contribution and finally loyalty to the organisation.

The company gains by showing better performance with a relatively lower wage bill, since the personnel do not have as much experience and salary as their peers in larger companies.

About the Author

Mr. Ajay Wahi has got two and half decades of all-round experience in all areas of organisation functioning like general management, sales and marketing , finance, HR, software development, brand building, team work etc.

He has been working for SMEs for the last 15 years. With all this experience , the author has managed to fast-track the growth of all the SMEs he has worked for. It is these experiences which he has put in this book: ***and the award for BEST SME of year goes to...*** Mr. Wahi

shares the insights of his book in a series of columns through Small Enterprise India.com

For more details about the book ***and the award for BEST SME of year goes to...*** contact Mr
Ajay Wahi at
ajaywahi@rediffmail.com