

Great HR is about people and it's about business.

We see it as improving business performance through people. It is not about weighty policy and devilishly complicated procedure. When HR is done well it supports and drives the business owners' mission, values and beliefs. So let's start there with some simple foundation steps:

1. **Set your stall - simply**

Mission "mission" I hear you cry, "Mission statements are not worth the paper they are written on!" You are right, most of them aren't. But some are and when they are they become the unspoken heartbeat of your business which all the people stuff falls out of. This is a great example:

Ben and Jerry's product mission: To make, distribute & sell the finest quality all natural ice cream & euphoric concoctions with a continued commitment to incorporating wholesome, natural ingredients and promoting business practices that respect the Earth and the Environment

It clearly conveys what the business does and what it values. If you haven't done it, write your own, keep it concise, convey your personal passion and align it to your values.

2. **What do you truly value?**

Your mission should be underpinned by your Values & Beliefs. These are a simple set of core values that you live and die by. The values you align to your business are important as they define the culture of your business.

For example if you are a truly ethical business they should reflect that ethical status; if you are a hardnosed sales driven bottom line focussed business they should reflect exactly that.

They might include a statement around, the way you do business, how you treat your customers, how you treat your employees, what you look for in your people, the standards you have in place or aspire to. Take a look at the example below to get you started.

Customer Focussed – "we work hard and go far for all our customers and believe in building lasting relationships with them"

Your values will probably be no more than 6 - 8 lines, any longer and you won't remember them and good values should be instantly memorable.

3. Find the right people

We know at Cajun that the critical key to business success is finding the right people, (those with the right skills, knowledge and attributes) to work with, who can deliver your mission and support your values.

Recruit, induct and develop people who "fit" with your business and the way it works. This is of course easier said than done but clear recruitment practices are a good starting point.

4. Communicate clearly and regularly

Once you have found these fabulous people, be transparent in your communication and share the dream with your team!

Share as much of your information as you can, communicate clearly and regularly and not just the good news, it's important that your employees understand the good the bad and the ugly.

Open communication is vital when managing people. Plan your communication for the year. Take your clutter free January calendar and plot your team meetings, your one to ones and maybe even a little team away day.

Think about what you might include in your communication meetings, perhaps include an update on company results, next quarter targets, recognition of those who have done well, presentation of new product or initiative and remember to include time for questions or an open forum.

5. Tell people how they are doing

Give people a clear role and then tell them how they are doing.

Use some kind of review or appraisal that works for your business. It does not have to take hours, include reams of paper but it does need to happen at least once a year. Having clearly articulated performance management builds trust in a business.

Employees work best when they are clear about the parameters of their role and when there are clear guidelines in place for working practices. Employers we work with sometimes fall short of their statutory obligations because they do not have something as straightforward as a disciplinary procedure in place.

A straightforward and user friendly employee handbook will give employees and you the employer a fair and reasonable set of ground rules that mutually protect the

employer and employee and encourage an open and straightforward working relationship.

6. Be a great place to work

For some businesses, the last few years have been tough. The stresses of meeting your payroll obligations, customers demanding more for less, rate / rent reviews driving your fixed costs up all take a toll on business owners and employers.

Some of this rubs off on your employees. During these times being a great place to work matters, it really matters. So how can you overcome this challenge?

Do the stuff listed above, for sure but try these suggestions for size too:

- Run a competition, it could be a sales, creative, suggestions or service competition but there is nothing like a bit of (fair and equal please!) competition to get people going. The prize does not have to be huge, a few hours off is a favourite, it could be product or discount but whatever you choose make it relevant and meaningful.
- Have a social night out, you don't have to foot the entire bill but buy the first round of drinks at least. This kind of goodwill is highly valued by employees.
- Invest in your team, develop them in their existing role and prepare them for the next role. Employers that develop their people, keep their people.
- Support a charity, doing something for someone else gives everyone an afterglow of joy, take part in an organised event or do something yourself

So in summary you have six simple steps to get you started on your journey to improving your business through people. Just set your stall, decide what you stand for, and find great people to work with, talk to them, tell them how they are doing and be a great place to work – not difficult at all is it?

Cajun HR Services specialise in guiding owner managers of successful growing businesses through the minefield of employment matters and HR legislation. Call us now for practical, straightforward and no nonsense HR advice which allows you to improve your business performance through people.

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