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THE TEAM ROLE OF EMPLOYEES' COMMERCIAL AWARENESS FORMATION ON ENTERPRISE

Summary. Business leaders obviously want to retain their best employees for as long as possible. If an employee has proven their worth and is incredibly valuable to the enterprise, then there will always be opportunities for internal promotion. The individuals who are able to confidently demonstrate their commercial awareness in several areas will be the ones who grab the attention of business leaders. When the time comes for an individual to look for and secure a new position, commercial awareness of the specific industry they want to work in should be prioritised. Realistically, business leaders will interview a high number of people who are qualified on paper to do the job. When it comes to hiring the right person, however, leaders will assess which candidates displayed a clear understanding of what will be expected of them, as well as how they will react to professional trends and developments.

Keywords: commercial awareness, employee, enterprise, business, team, development.

Introduction. Commercial awareness is a skill that should be consistent throughout the entire hierarchy of an enterprise, as it ensures that the business is being run as efficiently as possible. Based on organisational aims and objectives, the best employees will be able to manage their own responsibilities and act in accordance with what the business is trying to achieve, related to several areas including profit, expansion and reputation. As well as business and industry developments, it is crucial for employees, particularly in high-risk sectors like industry, to remain on top of what is expected of them in order to be successful.

Commercial awareness can be defined as a developed knowledge of specific objectives, how the business works and an understanding of external factors such as wider industry knowledge and legislation that can then assist an individual’s actions and decisions for the good of the business. More often than not, employees at all levels will demonstrate their awareness without even noticing. Understanding how an enterprise they work for is run, making suggestions for improvement and maintaining an understanding of how competitors are operating are all adequate examples of displaying commercial awareness. There is of course, a large responsibility on the business in this regard to communicate specific targets to their workforce. If an employee’s assumption of objectives is misaligned with the wishes of those in management, this can have a negative impact on future operations.

With so many companies working in increasingly competitive environments, having a workforce that is aware of exactly how to carry out their roles, aware of current industry trends and aware of how to work in accordance with specific regulations can prove to be extremely beneficial.

Research results. While having a workforce that has an understanding of their roles and the industry in which they work is advantageous for leaders, there are also a number of benefits of maintaining a sense of commercial awareness for individual employees also. Delegation should select an appropriate task for the right developmental reasons (not just to shift something off her desk but because it will help in your development). She should also select you as an appropriate ‘delegee’ for good developmental reasons rather than because you happen to be available [1, p.24].

She should then prepare the briefing, carry out the briefing with you and give you opportunities to allow her to monitor how you are doing. She should liaise with others - with the client so that they know you are doing the work; and colleagues so they know you are already busy - then, once you have done the job, provide feedback and, finally, find further opportunities to reinforce your development by giving you related tasks.

In the briefing itself, your boss should identify the nature of the task and the client, then check your experience and availability, then she should specify the output she wants (note, draft letter, report - is it for her or the client? If the client, what will the client be using it for?) as well as any constraints (e.g. how much time to spend on it) and the deadline. She should then check your understanding by getting you to reiterate what she has said and to check what your first few steps will be [2, p.48].

She should also set up an interim monitoring procedure (specifying a midpoint when you can go back and report on progress) rather than just saying ‘If you have any problems, come back’ which makes you feel that if you do have to go back to her you have failed [1, p.56].

This is the theory. But busy professionals are often under too much pressure to delegate properly and, as a result, the job isn’t done well. So next time they decide it’s quicker to do it themselves. Your job is to ensure that does not happen. So you must make sure that you understand enough to be able to do the job properly. Do not be afraid to ask questions - if you fail to do so, your boss may not be available next time you need to. Be sure to establish:

– the required output (format/length) - what your boss needs it for and, if she is passing it to the client, what they need it for;
– how much time it should take you;

– when you need to have it done by (deadline);

– interim monitoring procedure (when you can go back, part-way through, to check that you are on the right lines);

– who else you can ask in her absence;

– relevant background information on the client and task [2, p.51].

Above all, think what you would want if you were in her position. In other words, put yourself in your client's (i.e. your boss's) shoes.

Sometimes your boss doesn't have time to do it like this at all. The theory says that her style in delegating to you will fall somewhere on a spectrum between an asking/coaching style (as outlined above) where she is trying to develop you and a telling/directing style where she is simply trying to get the job done. The latter is less risky and less time-consuming. If you develop a good relationship with her you can both agree which is most appropriate to the situation in hand (emergency = tell; less demanding timeframe = coaching).

By the way, Stephen Covey (author of Seven Habits Of Highly Effective People) encourages delegation: it takes more time initially to train someone up to do a job, correcting their mistakes, giving them a chance to try again on a different task, and so on; but he says it saves time in the long run. A job that a supervisor can do in an hour but will take her three hours to delegate and supervise properly may be one she is tempted to do herself. But if she does delegate, she is saving time after the third recurrence of that particular task. The best managers keep their desk clear by delegating. This allows them to spend their time on developing people (by delegating, then 'managing by walking about', supporting those they have delegated to) and being available to deal with crises [3, p.21].

The other thing you want is - once you've done the job - some feedback on how you have done. If professionals are bad at delegation, they are even worse at feedback. No one likes to criticise a colleague. So you must make it easy for them:

– Ask them to fix a time convenient to them

– Say you're not expecting more than 5-10 minutes of their time

– Be prepared to help them provide feedback by going prepared with two or three areas you can prompt them for feedback on (e.g. structure of output, depth of research, etc)

– If you can't think of anything, then (1) ask them what they had to change before acting on your work or sending it to the client and, failing that (if they seem happy with everything), then (2) ask 'If there was one single thing I could have done better, what would it be?'

– Whatever you do, don't try to argue against them or justify what you did - this is about learning for the future [4, p.556]

Make the process easy and enjoyable for them - then they are more likely to do it again - and don't ask too often: it can be annoying and smack of a lack of self-confidence.

Just so you know, there are several accepted models for the giving of feedback. Here are two.

BOOST stands for Balanced, Objective, Observed, Specific and Timely. Balanced means setting the bad in the context of the good - sometimes called a 'praise sandwich' (good/bad/good). Objective means that feedback should be based on behaviour, not personality ('You were late today' not 'You've got a slack attitude about getting to work on time'). This is because there's no point in criticising someone because of who they are (which they can't change). It's what they do that feedback is meant to try to change. Observed means that comments should be based on behaviour that has actually been observed, not on hearsay. Specific means that comments are restricted to one particular item (more than one can be overload). Timely means that it is done as soon after the behaviour in question as possible [5, p.12].

Replay means - as with BOOST - the person being told precisely (as if being played back on video) the behaviour that is being commented on ('This morning, when you were presenting at the client seminar, you jangled the keys in your trouser pocket all the way through') [5, p.12].

Rationale: 'The trouble with this is that it distracted the audience from the very useful and interesting points that you were making, so they learnt less and came away with an impaired impression of the true level of your expertise.' [2, p.71]

Prescription: 'Next time, please try taking keys and coins out of your pockets so that, if you have to put your hands in your pockets, there won't be anything in them to jangle.' [2, p.71]

The best supervisors use these and other models to give positive as well as negative feedback. Everyone likes to be praised but it helps to know exactly what you have done right, so you can replicate it, rather than being told in general terms that you were 'fine' or 'really good.' [2, p.72]

Feedback should be given reasonably regularly - it may just be a few words in the lift or taxi on the way back from a client meeting. By contrast, appraisal tends to be more formal and may only occur once a year. The problem with appraisals is that they often occur too far away from the aspects of performance that are being appraised. Effective feedback overcomes this problem. Effective feedback at frequent intervals should support the appraisal process. Now you know that, see if you can get regular feedback.

In many organisations appraisals are done either poorly or not at all. Most supervisors hate giving appraisals because of the implication that they are required to be critical. Again, make their task easy: it's your job to get an effective appraisal so that you know where and how you can improve your performance. Only by doing that will you increase your prospects. Be a willing appraisee.

One way of doing this is to change the appraisal from being retrospective (backward-looking at the previous year) into a prospective process (something that is forward-looking). Ask your supervisor what the department or team's plans for the next year are and how you can play your part in helping meet those objectives. This is a good way of showing enthusiasm and of being able to discuss what sort of work you want to receive. By asking you are more likely to get. But you also need to explore with your supervisor where you need to improve your skills in order to take on the work that you would like.

Cast in this more positive, forward-looking light, the appraisal becomes more of a two-way discussion. Your supervisor is more likely to relax and give you an honest assessment of the areas on which you need to work. You can then ask for development opportunities and/or training to be able to develop these skills. And you can be sure that what you are doing is in line with the team or department's plans and strategy so you are more likely to be doing what your boss wants.

By the way, upwards-only appraisals are where your appraisal is informed by the views of your subordinates; and 360-degree appraisals take into account the views of your subordinates, your colleagues (peers) and your seniors, as well as clients.

Of course, there may come a time when your appraisals seem negative. Don't take it personally. It may simply be time for you to move on to another organisation where your skills fit more readily with their strategy. In short, don't be afraid of appraisals: far better to know what people really think of you than to be kept in the dark and to be unaware of views being expressed behind your back. Ultimately your goal is to be a successful professional. And you can only do that in an organisation where your skills fit. So you owe it to yourself to be sure that they do. If you are in an organisation where appraisals are done badly or not at all and you aren't getting any encouragement or decent responses to questions about the team's plans, you may be in the wrong place.

So, you're now involved in client work, either being delegated to or as part of a team or both. Now you need to get the work done. I am assuming that whatever your particular professional vocation, whether it's accountancy, the law, surveying, etc - you know the technical aspects of the job; in other words, you know the content.

However, being an expert isn't necessarily the only thing clients value you for. The first thing you need to show is not just that you can do the work but that you can manage it. Project management is a buzzword amongst clients. But many professionals (other than management consultants and construction engineers) are poor at project management. They tend to think of it as requiring software like Microsoft Project which generates spreadsheets and Gantt charts. And they don't like it because it constrains their autonomy. Many professionals consider that their experience comes from having done things before so they plan how they are going to staff and run a client job on a mental back-of-an-envelope. Anyone needing anything more than that obviously lacks experience.

However, clients expect it and, indeed, think they are already paying for it. Many clients themselves use project management techniques. So should their advisers. A project plan is a good way of showing a client that you know what you are doing (that you have done it before). It instils confidence.

At its most basic it includes:

– A breakdown of a piece of work into stages

– A resource plan (who will do what when with an indication of how many professionals and their level of seniority/experience)

– Timescales

– Costs

– Contingencies (what may go wrong and how to tackle it)

– Cushion (allowance in time and costs for contingencies) [6, p.305]

None of this requires a spreadsheet. A classic bit of project management theory is the trade-off triangle. The three corners are Time, Cost and Quality. Improve Quality and the job may take longer and/or cost more. Shrink the deadline and Quality will suffer or costs will go up as more people are thrown at it; and so on. Professionals will say, 'This doesn't apply to us. We never - and can never - compromise on quality. Otherwise we'd be negligent.' Not so. Quality here doesn't mean technical skill. It means quality of service. You can compromise on quality - with the client's approval. For instance, you can give an oral piece of advice that you don't back up in writing. It saves time by providing a different level of service (quality) [6, p.306].

As the world becomes more complex, tasks can no longer be entrusted to one person to carry out. Instead, work is increasingly team-based with different members bringing their own expertise to bear on the project. Crucial to a project's success is the way the team itself functions. A lot has been written about teams. A leading writer is R. M. Belbin [7, p.78.]

Belbin studied the way groups of people work together in teams. From his studies over several years he drew a number of conclusions. These were (1) that teams need a certain distribution of types in order to succeed and (2) that each team member had a principal and secondary type that he could deploy. The principal was dominant but the secondary could be consciously asserted if necessary for the team's composition [7, p.81.]

There are eight types altogether (although Belbin subsequently added a ninth: the specialist, in the team for his/her task-specific expertise). They include:

■ resource investigator - looks outside the team for help and ideas

■ plant - creative thinker

■ completer/finisher - ensures the job is completed to specification and on time

■ chairman - often mistaken for somebody who takes charge; rather, someone who coordinates

■ shaper - gets the team moving

■ monitor-evaluator - analytical; weighs up options; prone to being conservative (many professionals are like this)

■ team worker - ensures everyone is involved and listened to

■ co-worker - practical organiser who turns a project into separate tasks [7, p.81].

All have their pluses and minuses. Belbin's point is that the more balanced a team is in terms of its make-up, the more effective it will be, Although Belbin is regarded now as old hat, the model's still a good starting point for establishing individual strengths and weaknesses. Take the Belbin test yourself. You can find sources on the web.

As a junior professional, you will find there are many demands on your time and you need to start prioritising. It may be tempting to read a book or two on time management (if you can find the time). They tend to cover three things, which I label: Head, Desk, Door. How you manage time depends on what is in your head, what is on your desk and what (and who) comes in through the door [8, p.2219].

What's in your head This is about how you work, what your working patterns are and what your aims are. It reflects how you are as a person. Things which also go under this heading (please pardon the pun) include: how you prioritise (different types of To Do list), decision-making models, creative thinking, breaking jobs into chunks (e.g. whether you read documents the night before to let the brain process them overnight), your peak working time (biorhythms), physical exercise and stress management and knowing your own working style [9, p.121].

Conclusions. Employees who want to excel in a specific area should be continually developing their awareness aligned with current trends and business objectives. In doing this, an individual will be able to carry out what is expected of them and more, as they will be prepared to face a wide range of challenges associated with their role. Commercial awareness is something that individuals can demonstrate and develop naturally, and is mutually beneficial for both employers and employees. Maintaining a strong sense of awareness throughout an entire hierarchy will enable individuals to work in a way that will help both them and the wider business to improve.

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РИНОК ПЛОДОВО – ЯГІДНОЇ ПРОДУКЦІЇ: ЕКОНОМІЧНА СУТЬ, ВНУТРІШНЯ БУДОВА

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MARKET OF FRUIT AND BERRY PRODUCTS: ECONOMIC ESSENCE, INTERNAL STRUCTURE

Анотація. В статті розглянуто категорія «ринок» та її загальний зміст. Визначено місце ринку плодово – ягідної продукції серед видів сільськогосподарських ринків. Встановлено, що на плоди та ягоди існує постійний попит. Надано визначення ринку плодово – ягідної продукції як економічної категорії, наведено його базові риси. Запропоновано комплексний підхід до будови агрегативного ринку плодів та ягід в цілому та за горизонтальним принципом. Розкрито механізм взаємодії всіх елементів ринку даної класифікації. Визначено напрями проведення подальших досліджень щодо оцінки розвитку даного ринку.

Summary. The article deals with the category "market" and its general content. The place of the market of fruit and berry products among the types of agricultural markets is determined. It is established that there is a constant demand for fruits and berries. The definition of the market of fruit and berry products as an economic