

Qualcomm: A Portrait of Human Resources Management Success

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What allows some companies to enjoy a stable, content workforce while others struggle with high turnover and collective job dissatisfaction? More often than not, this divide is realized by the development or lack thereof of a company's current human resources pool. Our text illustrates the example of Qualcomm, a technology company that consistently ranks high with regards to products, work culture, and employee practices. Especially concerning work culture and employee practices, the company consistently receives high marks, both internally and externally, for the successful development of its human resources, and thus maintains its position as a market leader in mobile technology (Gerhart et. al., 2013).

At the time of this writing, Qualcomm is trading at \$61.66 per share. Its success is evident by the company's board's recent decision to authorize a forty percent increase in the quarterly dividend of the company. Its product success comes from its position as the third largest semiconductor supplier for chipsets for smartphones, including its popular 'Snapdragon' processors. In order to be this successful, however, it relies on its valuable human resources (Value Line, 2013).

Our text explains the leadership development program that Qualcomm currently employs. This involves a leadership skills program which brings in experienced managers to better hone their technical skills through the study of company specific case histories and online trainings. After this, employees meet to discuss what they have learned and challenges they might encounter in executing these new strategies (Gerhart et. al., 2013).

While perhaps a bit hesitant to make recommendations to such a successful company, this author believes that there are other development activities that may help Qualcomm to further improve its human resources. The text mentions that the leadership conference is designed for already experienced managers. It may be beneficial to pair these individuals with novice managers in a mentorship program. After all, the many benefits of mentorship are made clear in the available

research. Ash and Dreher explain the two primary benefits of mentorship's benefits in an organization. First, the system provides an important avenue into social networks that often provide information not available through formal channels such as an online database. Secondly, the individual being mentored often picks up important managerial skills by observing a senior manager (Ash & Dreher, 1990).

A mentorship program may be very beneficial for these more novice managers to pick up beneficial skills and habits. As they move into greater roles with more responsibilities, the mentors will help to "serve as a role model, friend, and counselor, who accepts and helps the protégé develop a secure self-image" (Taylor & Dreher, 1996). This should ensure that any additional stress the more novice manager may face is managed well and is not detrimental to the employee's physical well-being or the quality of his work.

Another issue in employee development that many companies face is that of the 'glass ceiling.' The glass ceiling describes issues that women and minorities may face in achieving advancement in their fields (Gerhart et. al., 2013). Indeed, referring back to mentorship, employees are often more likely to seek out male mentors due to a perceived image of having more power (Taylor & Dreher, 1996). This observation is seemingly validated by the fact that men occupy many more executive positions than women. Therefore, it will be important for a company like Qualcomm that is in a traditionally male dominated field to ensure that women and minorities are developed for senior management positions.

Qualcomm believes strongly in giving back to the community. By doing so, it improves the communities it serves and educates the population from which it may someday draw additional human resources. In addition, these community outreach programs provide a unique opportunity to give back and further develop its human resources at the same time. Our text describes the case of Qualcomm sending a manager to a remote Peruvian health clinic, both to improve the health clinic's ability to provide quality health care and to develop its manager's development.

Several managerial skills and competencies could be improved through such an assignment. Obviously the primary goal of such an assignment is that the increased skills gained through managing a remote health clinic will transfer back to the office setting once the employee returns. Skills might include things like the ability to do more with less or to work under pressure. Important to note is whether or not these increased skills will actually transfer from one field to the other. Motivation to transfer describes whether or not an employee will take those learned skills from the training and actually utilize them once removed from said environment (Felf & Franziska, 2012). Therefore, it would be important to choose an employee for such an assignment who shows motivation and who has previously shown high transference from past trainings.

Other managerial skills that could be increased would be the manager's ability to work with workers of different ethnicities, and more part time and temporary workers. A clinic experience in a foreign country would definitely give the managers opportunities to develop these new skill sets. Such simulations have proven to be effective in improving managerial skills and should be used more frequently "to play a pivotal role in the development of managers to meet future challenges" and "to deal with problems before they occur" (Cleveland & Thornton, 1990). The advantage of such a project therefore accomplishes the dual challenge of development and community outreach.

The case of Qualcomm is a model for responsible corporate citizenship and effective human resource management. Qualcomm has managed to streamline its human resource development in a way that prepares for the future and makes the system understandable for employees. With its continued emphasis and development on its human resources, and the tremendous growth opportunities for 3G and 4G cellular technologies (Value Line, 2013), Qualcomm is in a position to maintain its position as a market leader in wireless technologies.

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