The Edge: Is your business attractive to employees?

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(Photo: For FLORIDA TODAY)

It has been increasingly difficult for organizations to hire and maintain top talent. Organizations try to match employees with jobs based on ability, personality and fit with the organization, while applicants look for organizations that reflect their expectations, values and beliefs. Applicants also consider and weigh the organizational climate when making their final employment decisions. But, what is organizational climate?

Most of us understand climate as it relates to weather. The climate of a region is fairly predictable by patterns of weather that normally occur in a specified area. For example, we are pretty certain that the summer climate in Florida is beastly hot and humid, with a typical afternoon shower. So what about organizational climate? Are there predictable, stable and identifiable patterns in an organization that make up its climate?

Organizational climate is the visible display of a set of conditions or identifiable patterns that portray the underlying values of the organization such as how the employees communicate with each other, the friendliness and warmth of the environment, the perceived support and cohesiveness of the members, the organizational harmony and trust, and the structure of recognition and reward systems.
Organizational climate can be instrumental in influencing the behaviors of both applicants and employees in a variety of ways, and can result in both positive and negative outcomes. For applicants, a positive perception of the organizational climate may solidify the decision to commit to employment and join the organization. A negative perception of the organizational climate may influence an applicant to decline employment and have a negative view of the organization. New employees are particularly influenced by their perceptions of the organizational climate and how an organization focuses on the selection and training process, which can enhance the positive or negative feelings for new-hires. Positive climate factors relative to current employees have been positively related to the employees job satisfaction, job commitment, organizational commitment, and intentions to stay, however a negative climate match may cause the employee to terminate employment.

Organizations can reap the benefits of projecting a positive climate beginning with the selection process. Providing applicants with a realistic view of the job and the work environment will enhance the likelihood that the match between the applicant and the organization will be a good one. Once hired, organizations that provide a mentor or partner to help socialize the new employee into the organization and become more aware of the processes, systems, and social structures have seen retention success. A climate that is supportive of employee training and development has also been shown to attract and maintain top-level employees. Therefore, organizations that are aware of how their climate is perceived and promote a positive, supportive environment should recognize the positive benefits of increased selection opportunities for top candidates, and increased employee satisfaction and retention.

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