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HUMAN RESOURCES

Countering low productivity and overworked CEOs

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At company X the work wasn't getting done. Despite having a full team of employees, the owner felt overwhelmed with the amount of work he was taking on. Things were falling through the cracks, and the team was disorganized.

The HR challenge: How had company X created this situation and how did they resolve it?

When business is busy, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, but when this becomes the norm or when CEOs feels like they're not getting anywhere despite doing far more than they should be, it's often a bigger problem.

On meeting with company X, it became clear that no one was clear. The leaders weren't sure about the direction of the company and they couldn't figure out what they wanted or needed. They wanted to be better, they knew that much, but they didn't know how to get themselves there.

A clarity session dug deep to help understand who they were as an organization and what they wanted to become. Meeting with the employees one on one helped us (and them) understand what was going on.

Making do is not enough

The root cause was something we had seen many times in the past, across all industries and company sizes. The entrepreneur who'd built the company had built the structure around the employees they found rather than building it around what was needed for the organization to be successful.

Despite the small team, inconsistent work schedules due to a "flexible" culture supported employees to dictate their own schedules, creating inconsistent workflow and client support. When clients phoned or dropped by, they never knew who might greet them. Workplace errors increased and productivity levels dropped.

Compounding this was the situation that whenever an employee didn't have the necessary skills, wasn't in the office or didn't understand what was needed, the owner was left carrying the burden of doing the work. As a result, burnout began to set in. He was surrounded by chaos and things became overwhelming.

Having helped company X identify their culture and the structure needed to support this, we reviewed their current structure, figured out the gaps and provided guidance on how best to proceed. As a result, some roles

were changed, some took on more responsibility, and others were no longer needed.

See the positive side

This last part is often the most challenging but, as a leader, once you've made the decision to move forward with structural change, you must commit to the process. If it helps, rather than looking at restructuring as a negative thing, keep in mind that employees who move on are better able to pursue roles to which they are most suited.

If this situation feels familiar our advice is:

- get really clear on where your organization is going and how it's going to get there;
- define your culture. Who are you as a company and who do you want to become?;
- review your structure and determine what changes are needed;
- see these changes through, even if they're hard; and
- make sure all hires are for best fit and not any other reason.

The key to success is in the leader committing to the process and doing what's right for the success of the company. Regardless of company size, if people aren't in the right roles, the roles will eventually require more skills than they have, inviting disorganization and low productivity.

The result for company X is that things have settled down. As a team they've become more productive. Staffing changes were made, and although some people have left, others have been hired.

Things are getting done. The owner feels less overwhelmed. He has regained some of the precious time he had lost and now focuses on the business rather than working in it.

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