

WHAT DO EMPLOYEES Expect?

by Lawrence Darmani

Good business plans achieve results. However these results precariously depend on staff performance. When employees are on probation, so is the organization. When employees do well, the publisher does well. When prospective employees are interviewed, the company is also under scrutiny.

Do you expect the best from your publishing organization's high-caliber personnel? Well, employees also have high expectations, and their expectations critically affect their performance.

Remuneration

A Ghanaian proverb says, "Your stew determines your weeding." Literally, when you hire a farm hand, his performance is determined by the quality of the food you provide at the farm for him. It is true in all forms of employment, including the publishing industry. Good remuneration—that is, salaries and other incentives—attracts the best employees. Graduates expect to receive a salary commensurate with their degrees and hard work. Yet, for most publishing firms in developing countries, there is a wide gap between the dream and the reality of paying good salaries.

The manager of Africa Christian Press, Richard Crabbe, alluded to this shortfall when he congratulated staff of publishing houses during an award presentation ceremony in Accra, Ghana. He said hard working staff are not usually paid as much as they deserve. In another meeting, Crabbe cited an instance when a potential employee quoted a salary that was far from what the manager was receiving. Where publishing enterprises operate under a tight budget, paying high salaries is a cherished dream.



Even so, remuneration issues are top on the list of expectations with which their employees join or abandon the company. When considering remuneration:

1. *Be realistic:* If, for the same work, you pay an experienced graduate the same amount you pay a novice, you might soon face disgruntled employees.

2. *Communicate your limitations:* Some people are willing to accept lower salaries if they

are made aware of the company's financial limitations. This is especially true where the working environment includes recognition, respect, and good relationships.

3. *Make good on the promises made during lean seasons:* To say, "We'll raise salaries when things improve" and then to neglect to do so is tantamount to not keeping faith with the staff—a recipe for trouble.

Recognition

I asked a job applicant why he wanted to leave his current place of employment. The very first reason Adomako gave was lack of recognition. He felt his supervisors did not recognize his contribution to the organization. He cited examples of how his suggestions for improvement in work procedures were spurned. Adomako expected his suggestions to be considered rather than disdained, even if not used immediately.

For many people, respect and recognition are even more critical than remuneration. After the interview, Adomako accepted an offer of a relatively low salary with a promise of better recognition for his qualifications and input.

Employee's take pride in helping to build the office, and there are many ways to recognize their efforts. Some managers grant awards as a strategic way to rec-

ognize key staff. Others grant needed holidays. For others, a simple "Thank you" goes a long way.

In the parking lot of a large corporation I visited, there was a sign for the "Worker of the month," followed by the name of the worker. The name was not written in gold, but that simple sign, which was the

Employees' expectations critically affect performance—and profits

organization's way of recognizing a hard working staff member, is a great source of motivation.

Job Security

"Prospective employees expect security in their jobs," asserts author Edwin Flippo in his book, *Personnel Management* (McGraw-Hill). This includes the hopes that the organization will not collapse and that they will not be easily sacked. Employees want assurance that in the event of serious financial stress they can count on management for support. In Ghana and other parts of Africa, the payment of employee social security is important.

Job security also leads to the expectation that one's employment will be comfortable, with attractive working conditions. Therefore, personnel management gurus recommend that the organization's conditions of service be made available to the new staff on arrival.

Leadership incompetence, most evident in poor organizational direction and incoherent instructions to subordinates, is injurious to job security. It often demotivates workers, resulting in low productivity. To enhance employee's sense of job security, maintain good working relationships, especially between managers and their subordinates.

Personal and professional development

Highly motivated people take the initiative, work hard, and contribute much towards the growth of the publishing organization. Unfortunately, they are often the ones most likely to resign and raise the staff turnover rate. What accounts for this?

Lack of opportunity for personal and professional development is a leading factor in staff turn-over. An editor who resigned from a publishing organization cited "lack of training" as one reason for vacating his post. A woman I interviewed for a position in our editorial department said she expected to be challenged. She wanted training and an opportunity to advance in her profession. She was leaving a company that had relegated her to a dead-end position.

Employees expect to attend seminars, workshops, conferences. They also expect to receive on-the-job training. They want to be enthused and motivated to realize their potential. But according to an international trainer of Christian media practitioners, it is unwise to ask employees to search for training opportunities.

Instead, the managers or the leadership team should actively seek training opportunities for their staff. Develop your employees, personally and professionally, so

they can leave the organization as better persons than when they joined it.

A happy office environment

"When I sought employment in this company," said a young editor of a small publishing house after the morning devotion, "I looked forward to working with people who loved each other and were cordial to one another." Clearly dissatisfied, she went on to complain at length. The meeting was tense, but she spoke freely. In the end, fortunately, others joined her in expressing their opinions candidly. Tensions relaxed and understanding prevailed.

When people join organizations they expect to relate well with other staff, especially their immediate supervisors or subordinates. Where misunderstanding and petty squabbles are allowed to degenerate into tension and quarrels, the consequences can be traumatic for the staff, resulting in resignations or poor output.

Top performance

Employees' job satisfaction is critical to top performance. But how can employee expectations be met and used to achieve corporate goals? As we say in Africa, "The right hand washes the left hand and the left washes the right." Job satisfaction requires a joint effort. Where expectations are unrealistic, dialogue from both management and staff is key to resolving problems. Dialogue, transparency, genuine care, and honesty on the part of both management and staff are key to bridging the gap between what employees expect and what employers can provide. ❖

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