

The Viability Of A Crazy Idea!

Dr. M. Amr Sadik (*Group Chief HR Officer, El Sewedy Cables*) talks about how he learnt to think differently, act differently and evaluate differently



■ Customising HR Solutions

WHAT would you do if performance evaluation at your company does not work the way it is supposed to? Several approaches were tried in the case of my previous employer, but they all failed. And this was the dilemma I faced on my first day at the job.

There was no right or wrong answer to this problem. We simply had to think, act and evaluate differently. This was my answer to the Chairman when he asked me for a solution. I told him that there were no other magic answers! Maybe we failed because we were copycats! Instead of copying systems from the West, we needed to adapt those systems to our own environment and culture.

I am a great believer in HR's abilities to acquire good candidates, retain the best of them, and dismiss the worst of them. But frankly speaking, retention is the most critical job for HR practitioners.

HR has to come up with extraordinary stuff to retain the extraordinary staff; the pillars of your organisation.

Ability is what you are able to do, motivation determines what you do, and attitude decides how well you do it. Nobody likes performance evaluation systems too much. Managers find them unworkable and uncomfortable. Many experts think we should scrap them altogether. Employees do not hate to be evaluated, but they hate how we evaluate them.

Management by Objectives (MBO) was my first answer and recommendation to the VP while we were looking at developing in-house systems. But it was not enough. What else Mr. HR, he asked me. In a straightforward answer, I told him that we had to develop our own system using concepts from all different approaches.

It was a crazy idea, but I was convinced of its viability!

In a brainstorming session, we agreed to assess employees on the following parameters: living the company values, core competencies, MBO, job description (JD) and tasks beyond JD, and projects assigned, if any. Each item was assigned a different percentage.

But who was going to develop the company values for us? The answer was: we. The Chairman and all Directors agreed to use the company brand name of Katakait as the trigger. Through a staff competition, we asked employees to bring out the best statements to represent our brand. The results were as follows: K for 'committed to make our quality *Known*', A for 'trusting our *Abilities*', T for 'working as a *Team*', A for 'motivated and *Ambitious*', K for 'passion for *Knowledge*', I for 'continuously seeking *Innovation*', and T for 'investing in our *Talents*'. Then, middle and top-level executives came together in a full-day workshop to convert these statements into actions and behaviours, so that they could be measured.

I AM A GREAT BELIEVER IN HR'S ABILITIES TO ACQUIRE GOOD candidates, retain the best of them, and dismiss the worst of them

It took almost two years to develop this comprehensive programme. Parallel to this, we also sponsored the work of local business students in aiding the company's value development as part of their theses. This led to a reduction in external consultants' costs.

The results were magnificent. At the end of the day, we were able to save

a substantial amount of money and the subjectivity in performance evaluation reduced greatly. Moreover, all employees were engaged in the development of this HR programme.

thf