

# The human element

People management expert Eric Kung believes a company is known by the staff it keeps



According to a survey conducted by Boston Consulting Group and The World Federation of People Management Associations in 2012, one of the key areas in which high-performing companies differ substantially from low-performing ones is their ability to do more to attract, develop and retain talented people.

It is not hard to see why — we all know how powerful skilled workers can be. However, it is harder to determine how that goal of developing an enjoyable work experience can be achieved.

“Good people practices confer a performance advantage to enhance productivity and effectiveness,” explained Eric Kung, CEO of Human Dynamic, a people-management consulting company.

Kung has been working in people management for over two decades, and his experience has led him to believe that a company is known by the people it keeps, and sometimes valuable people can be lost needlessly. Kung gave an example of a man named Peter, who had been working in a global company for nine years and had always been a

good performer. However, he started to show unwillingness to support certain colleagues, and as a result, his team members gave negative feedback about his interpersonal skills. Despite coaching sessions, there was still some ambivalence and resistance from Peter.

“Eventually, he admitted his inability to get along with a particular supervisor. Unfortunately, the company failed to retain this valuable employee. It was agreed in a discussion with key stakeholders later that the situation could have been handled better at supervisory level and that they should have done things differently, at an earlier stage,” Kung said.

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Most human-resource strategies focus on preventing big problems, but as apparent in the example of Peter, seemingly small things such as a misunderstanding with a colleague, a personal-life crisis, or simply being misinformed, can lead to a stressful environment at work. Coupled with the fact that today’s younger generation tend to switch jobs more frequently, valuable employees can decide to leave a company just because the environment is deemed too stressful.

He revealed that from Human Dynamic research last year, Thai employees speak with the company’s consultants most about stress, because they find it difficult to manage and balance their work and personal life.

Excessive stress at work is a contributing factor to a high turnover rate. While Kung believes stress is a key challenge in daily life, each person responds differently to stressors. Career-development challenges, workloads, and relationship problems with bosses are the top sources of job stress based on Human Dynamic’s recent survey among a few Fortune 100 companies.

“Difficulties are inevitable, and people should accept them. However, they

should realise that difficulties are external and therefore are not attached to any feelings. We project our worries, concerns and emotions on them, making them seem like the problem. Instead if we change the way we manage, prioritise, or strategise a solution, our stress will lift. The difficulties will then become challenges, and their attitude will change,” Kung explained, adding that some companies have adopted training programmes to help employees develop their personal competence and emotional intelligence as well as safeguarding positive well-being by developing strategies to help them cope with work and life stress.

A firm believer in work-life balance, Kung said it is crucial for an organisation to create a happy working environment, healthy employees, and a productive workforce. This means that for human-resource strategies to work, everything related to an employee needs to be taken into account, especially family.

“Our services cover the employee’s family under the same roof, which means your company and Human Dynamic care not only for you, but your family also,” he said.