



Transforming HR as You Transform Your Property

by Rick Flath

You can sense the energy and the electricity in the air. After months of speculation about the new addition, the tribal council and the senior management team are holding a news conference at 11a.m. Rumors have been flying for months – will the expansion include a hotel, 5-star restaurants, a convention center, name-brand retail shops, an enlarged gaming floor? As director of HR, the daunting task of possibly doubling your employee population is both exciting and a little bit overwhelming.

Where to Start?

The first steps in this process are to think through what has to be done now to make this a successful opening and keep in view the long-term human resource and organization development strategy to build an effective and resilient employee team.

Demographic Study

Challenge: Where to find sufficient applicant flow to support 1,000 new jobs over the next year? Using a 7:1 ratio of applicants to hires, the challenge is to discover where to find 7,000 applicants to fill the new jobs, plus normal turnover.

Suggestion: Conduct a local area demographic study of current employment trends, commuting patterns, and wage rates. Consider the three to five year local market economic projections and how those will affect employment trends. Look for new ways to generate applicant flow.

Application Flow and Selection

Challenge: The expansion is adding positions with which the interviewers are unfamiliar.

Suggestion: Write detailed job descriptions that include competencies and skill levels; use information to train screeners to be effective interviewers in unfamiliar positions. Video tape interviewers and critique questions.

Supervisor Training

Challenge: How and what to train new supervisors, taking into consideration that for 1,000 new employees you will need approximately 100 new supervisors?

Suggestion: Ensure that all of your HR policies, procedures, forms, and communication systems are streamlined and efficient. You may want to consider a new HRIS program to ease the HR administration. Have multi-levels of training programs to ensure knowledge transfer. Test supervisors for understanding of materials. Build in the fundamentals of management, leadership, and developing a successful organizational culture.

Internal Communications

Challenge: Communicating to all employees the exciting new staffing and promotional opportunities due to the new expansion is critical to building long-term success strategies.

Suggestion: Consider a two-shift HR staffing schedule, 24-hour help desks, employee kiosks, intranets, and creative print pieces. Especially efficient to internal communications is the use of “town hall meetings” by the leadership team.

Orientation Programs

Challenge: Getting all new employees up to speed as quickly as possible in the organization is a huge task.

Suggestion: Orient the new employees to tribal history and culture along with the casino’s mission statement. Consider mentoring programs, video taping the operations of every department, starting a “welcome wagon” program for new employees, and displaying photos of the senior leadership team.

Compensation Programs

Challenge: Without a coherent and well communicated compensation program and internal equity programs for all employees, all the excitement of the opening will quickly lead to lower morale based on the perception that the pay program is not rewarding the staff appropriately for all of the extra work. The other challenge is to merge compensation programs of distinctly different organizations, i.e. gaming and hotel/restaurant departments.

Suggestion: Consider a comprehensive salary rate survey, a formalized job evaluation system to ensure internal parity of positions, and job descriptions that reflect logical job families that enhance promotional opportunities.

Performance Management System

Challenge: With many new departments and different definitions of success criteria, a significant challenge is to design a performance management system that actively reflects the skills, competencies, and development opportunities for all employees.

Suggestion: Convene a task force of a cross section of the organization to analyze the most effective system that has relevance to the desired behaviors of the new organization in terms of customer service initiatives and identifying the conditions for success. Remember there is a difference between managing (measuring for efficiency) versus developing a staff (building competency for the future needs of the organization).

Executive Development & Compensation

Challenge: Support for the executive team during and after the expansion is critical. The executive team will not only have to operate their own departments, but also be involved in extensive planning and implementation for the new facility. Additionally, the executive compensation program may no longer be relevant due to the combined nature of the casino and hotel/convention. The financial metrics for success will be entirely different in the future.

Suggestion: To match the new goals and strategies, completely revamp the short and long-term incentive plans to match the new business strategies, analyze market compensation data based on an enhanced revenue stream, and revamp the executive performance management system to reflect new skills and competencies to meet goals. Provide executive coaching programs to integrate both current and new executives more efficiently into the leadership team.

Summary

A huge amount of effort and energy is focused on planning, designing and constructing the new facility. As important as this is, it is imperative that the organization revamp and support the HR Department by providing funding and staffing resources. In concert with the building of the new facility, senior management needs a forward looking short and long-term plan of their human resource needs for the new property. A detailed transition plan of both immediate projects and long-term sustainability is critical to building a successful organizational culture. ♣

Rick Flath is President of Flath & Associates Consulting, Inc. and Founder & Co-Director of the Center for Human Resource Development & Leadership Studies at the University of New Haven. He can be reached by calling (203) 318-1803 ext. 42 or email rflath@aol.com.

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