

## **Managing People**

The importance of managing people well cannot be overstated. Nor is it a simple matter, and is more of an art than a science.

Third-sector organisations achieve their goals because of the skills of their people. They don't always have all the staff they want, or even the choice they would prefer, so they have to get the best out of those they do have. To do this, they need to:

- Create high-performing teams
- Delegate effectively
- Coach / train / develop / mentor their people

### **Effective teams**

It is much easier to talk about teamwork than to create and sustain it. People in third-sector organisations tends to be motivated and visionary individualists, which makes then harder to manage as a collective.

Tools like the "Belbin team role analysis" can be helpful. Effective teams also have a clearly-defined goal in view, with each member having a clear role. Many teams can be time-limited in nature, coming together for a task and disbanding when the task is completed. Hudson notes the following about teams (p313f):

- Teams need objectives – everyone needs to be clear about what the team wants to achieve. The more that all team members are involved in agreeing the objectives, the better.
- Teams plan together – however the planning function is broken down, it is important for teams to be clear about how they will achieve their objectives
- Teams need coaching – the team leader sets the tone and standards for the team, encouraging each member to contribute according to their skills and experience
- Teams need good administration – preparation for team meetings, and good communication between meetings, is essential

### **The 'art' of delegation**

Few people find delegation easy, but it is an important way of sharing work around a team and giving people freedom to make decisions about how a task is to be accomplished (so that they are accountable for what is achieved but not how it is done – within limits proscribed by an organisation's values, ethical considerations and the law!).

Reasons why managers find it hard to delegate include:

- It's easier / quicker to do it myself
- I'll do a better job
- I haven't got the time to brief and supervise someone, I'll just get on with it
- Others are just as overworked as me, I feel guilty dumping my work on them

But not delegating gives no opportunities for a person to learn, and reduces the time available for the manager or leader to plan, think and do the things that only they can do. Successful managers delegate as much as they can.

### **Developing people**

"Our people are our greatest assets" is a well-worn cliché that needs to be thrown into the jargon bin. You sweat assets, you move them around at your will, and if you want to use Marxist categories about labour and capital, feel free but remember to enjoy living in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I find it more fruitful to think of people as investors, and I explore this concept further in a separate paper, [Investing in People](#). Put briefly, people can be considered as bringing 4 different types of capital with them into a role, each of which should grow as they work (as all investments should):

- intellectual capital (the knowledge they have and continue to build)
- emotional capital (self-awareness, resilience, ambition, vision, passion and energy)
- social capital (networks, relationships and contacts)
- spiritual capital (commitment to Christ and his mission)

Paradoxically, if people find that their work opportunities are growing because of their current role, they are often more likely to stay than if they feel themselves becoming de-skilled and therefore less likely to find alternative employment in the future. The 'investor' concept helps to explain this – if a person's personal capital is shrinking rather than growing, they will move their investment elsewhere.

Personal and professional development of your staff needs to cover three different areas:

- the individual - their abilities, experience and aspirations
- their current role, with its varying demands and possibilities
- the organisation's emerging priorities, prospects and future needs

Ideally these three would overlap, though they rarely do (and even when they do, they often shift). The temptation for the organisation is to shape the person to fit the role (or the peg to fit the hole), with the downsides of demotivation or lack of fulfilment for the person concerned. The individual, on the other hand, tends to concentrate on doing the things they enjoy and/or are good at, rather than fulfilling the terms of the job description. Probably the best you can aim for is a negotiated compromise between these two needs, always remembering that longer-term strategic changes in an organisation can (and will) change the human resource needs of an organisation and bring disruption to any previously-agreed harmonious arrangements.

Useful mechanisms for helping to develop your people include:

- regular (e.g. monthly) "one-to-one" / supervision sessions (which gives a person the opportunity to update their manager on their current work and to receive feedback, guidance and coaching)
- annual appraisal / performance review (which looks at a person's achievements, frustrations and struggles during the past year, and identifies areas for training inputs for the future)

Hudson (p335-343) gives more ideas and detail about this.

It is important that poor performance is identified and addressed, especially in third-sector organisations:

- we have a responsibility to use donors' funds as effectively as possible
- we exist to achieve a mission, not to provide employment to those who can't 'cut it' elsewhere
- to do nothing signifies to other staff that we are not really serious about personal development

While extra training and supervisory support should be offered to those whose performance is not satisfactory, the possibility of a change of role should also be addressed, always retaining the back-stop of a fair, legal and transparent disciplinary procedure and dismissal if performance continues to be unsatisfactory.