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BUSINESS CENTS: Are your employees an asset or a liability?

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--- — Happy employees are more engaged and more likely to stay on the job, this we all know. But are your employees an asset or a liability? The effect of employee attitude extends further than just within the work place; their attitude also has a lasting impact on your customers and their perception of your business.

Attitude is probably one the hardest-to-measure factors, is typically well hidden beneath layers of emotions that employees have and ends up being crucial to the overall success of a company. Employee attitude goes deep into the foundation of the company and tends to also impact productivity of a business, both directly and indirectly through the effect on other job-related factors. There are four focus areas that employee attitude impacts: engagement, retention, work environment and client/customer interaction.

n Engagement: Engagement within the business can be impacted by whether the employee has a positive or negative attitude. Employees that have a negative attitude toward their company are more disengaged, lack the motivation to complete their job responsibilities and provide a low level of quality on the work that is completed. In addition, a negative attitude indicates a lack of concern for the business, the company's well-being and is costly to the company since productivity is drastically decreased by negative attitudes. Employees who have a positive attitude and possess the same skill set will have higher productivity, be more engaged with the company and their colleagues and feel they are invested in the success of the company.

n Retention: One of the largest expenses experienced by companies is high employee turnover. It is costly to attract, train and retain new employees so if the company can simply retain the talent they have this will increase profits and engagement within company between employees. If employees have a negative attitude they are less committed to the job and more likely to leave. Those with a negative outlook feel no reason to be invested in the company or in the future of the company. Employees with a positive attitude toward their job are more likely to develop a sense of commitment and feel a greater sense of engagement with the company.

n Work environment: Attitudes are contagious. Employees can quickly share their attitude and outlook on the company and gain support, regardless of if the attitude is positive or negative. Negative and unhappy people like to surround themselves with like-minded individuals. This can quickly create a ripple effect within the company. Decreased trust will endanger collaboration and also cause a decrease in productivity. A negative social environment isolates individual employees as well.

n Client/Customer Interaction: Not all companies have employees that interact with customers, but if you do have employees that engage with customers be mindful that it will impact the customer experience with your company. Negative employee attitudes directly influence customer satisfaction. If a customer is not satisfied with your company they will feel as though your company does not care about their needs or that you have simply disregarded their feelings and what is needed by them. On the flip side, happy and positive employee attitude creates an experience of courtesy, emotional engagement and a real concern for the well-being of the customer.

As you develop your employee handbook and provide performance evaluations, be sure to keep in mind how employees can impact your business and select only those that have the positive attitude and skillset that will help grow your company and its customer base.

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