

Engaging Human Resources – What is the Time?

Companies often ask: “When do I bring on Human Resources?” Earlier is better than later – it is much more effective to prevent fires than put them out.

Below are some events and milestones that trigger the need for Human Resources. It is recommended that every company at least have a designated Human Resources contact from day one. This person can guide a company through the three levels of HR Commitment:

1. On Call As Needed
2. Regular On Call
3. In-House

On Call As Needed is often a phone call for a specific issue. This is for the earliest stage of a company when there is likely less than 10 employees. **Regular On Call** often happens between 10 and 100 employees. There is a regular need which might start off at 10 hours per month, and grow to 50 hours per month or so. **In-House** is best for established companies, and may be required at the 50 and up range, when the company has consistent financial performance.

In addition to the person, a company should also have the correct HR infrastructure in place – to ensure compliance with legislation such as Employment Standards, WorkSafeBC, and Privacy of Personal Information. Regardless of the size of an organization, key paperwork such as Employment Agreements and Confidentiality Agreements should be in place from day one. The HR person can put these in place at all three levels of commitment. A list of start-ups and growth companies of HR processes follows.

Triggering Events

If any of the following events happen, a call to the HR resource is recommended:

- Hiring an Employee – Recruitment: Ensure proper processes for screening, reference checks and fair offers are in place.
- Hiring an Employee – Onboarding: Have an Employee Agreement and supporting documentation in place and ready to go.
- Employee performance issues
- Existing employees indicating their compensation may be under market
- Managers with strong technical backgrounds are uncomfortable with having discussions with employees.

The move to the second level of commitment often happens because of the following events. It is important to start planning about a month or two prior to these events happening, as once they occur, generally a company needs to hit the ground running.

- Round of financing leading to a need for significantly more employees.
- Customer contracts signed that require expansion.
- Meeting a technology milestone that generates increased activity.
- Reaching commercialization and requiring an expanded sales team.
- Any of the events above at the first level start happening on a regular basis.

Once a company establishes long-term consistency with revenue and production (hardware or software), and the need for HR is more than a day or two per week, the transition to an in-house resource is recommended. This may mean hiring a senior HR person, or hiring a junior HR person and reducing the Senior outside HR Resource back to a Level 1 commitment.

Background of Valerie Henderson

While HR Manager of a national food chain, Valerie identified the need for small to medium sized organizations to have access to Human Resources. Up until then, many considered HR to be a Recruitment Agency or a Labour Lawyer. In 1994 Valerie launched her consulting business to these organizations who quickly recognized that HR was about more than recruitment, compliance or discipline issues.

HR is also about helping employees achieve their maximum potential so they in turn help the company achieve its success. This is also about putting proactive programs in place to prevent the challenges. In an environment where good talent is hard to find, companies need to have the programs in place to draw in the top achievers.

Since she started, Valerie has worked with many, many companies in many different sectors, and has a growing list of “alumni” who have been able to transition from the first level, right through to having their own HR team, as their success continues to grow.

Valerie has a large knowledge library of Best Practices, forms and templates, and customizes these for each of her clients. She has also coached in-house junior HR resources and grown them to take on many of the HR needs.

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