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HR's New Year's Resolutions

Each year at the end of December millions of individuals identify those elements of their life that they deem undesirable and resolve to change them. The same is often true in corporate America. With many organizations about to begin a new fiscal year, companies are filled with hope and anticipation for the coming year. Human Resources is no exception. We set goals, we create strategic plans and we make resolutions. And then it's back to business as usual.

As most of us know, resolutions can be difficult to sustain. Many surveys report that 50 - 90% of those that make New Year's resolutions will give up and abandon them, most between January and June. Although these statistics are daunting, there are a few simple things you and your organization can do to increase the likelihood of success.

First and foremost, departmental goals/resolutions must be aligned with the business in order to gain support across the board. Even a brilliant, innovative HR strategy will not succeed if it is not clearly aligned with business goals and does not have buy-in from the leadership of other departments.

If your list of personal career resolutions does not include improving your networking skills, add it to the list. Being a great internal customer service provider is not enough to strengthen your support and increase visibility and credibility across the organization. Networking both internally and externally can increase your exposure, your awareness of the subtleties of the organization's politics and your ability to leverage your newly gained knowledge to sell your ideas to senior management. Networking externally helps you gain insight into other companies and how they address some of their own challenges.

Be realistic in identifying goals for the upcoming year. If you are planning to implement elements to change your corporate culture, be realistic about what can be accomplished within a year. Chances are it took your company a number of years to develop its current culture; you are not going to change it overnight. Also, when establishing goals that will lead to new HR initiatives, keep in mind that the normal, everyday business of HR must continue; balance the number of new initiatives with the realities of meeting existing obligations to the organization.

Another key to successfully achieving your goals is to be honest with yourself regarding what you are in fact willing to change about yourself or do differently. We've all heard the Benjamin Franklin quote that "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." If you want something to be different, you must be willing to be different or behave differently.

Don't make resolutions for others. Frequently HR resolves that "this is the year senior management will give HR a seat at the table." You can't assume senior management shares your resolution. A more appropriate resolution may be that "this is the year HR earns a seat at the table." You can then set about managing yourself and your department in a way that achieves that goal.

If you are planning the same resolutions as in the past, what makes you think you will achieve them this time? Take them off the list and take a fresh look at yourself and your goals. Give yourself some new challenges that fit with what you are willing to do differently and with what is realistic. Banging your head against the same old wall diminishes your motivation to stick with the effort required of the goal. Give yourself a fighting chance at success by starting with something new and exciting.

As you progress through this next year, don't beat yourself up for the resolutions you don't achieve. Celebrate the successes; success breeds success and your celebration will provide the mindset and motivation to take on the next wave of challenges.

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