

## ***EMBRACING PRODUCTIVITY IN FIVE KEY STEPS...***

With the Canadian market recovering amidst continued global uncertainties, many employers are continuing to explore and seek ways of engaging their employees and identifying pragmatic strategies to maintain or improve their productivity.

Looking for relevant solutions can range from very holistic strategies to more targeted areas that many organizations can use as a checklist to identify “quick hits” to kick start their own road to improve productivity. Holistic solutions can range from implementing Employee Value Propositions to overhauling business processes but these typically involve significant time and resources. But before entertaining any strategies, it is important that organizations keep the following considerations as they follow their quest for increased productivity irrespective of which strategy is ultimately adopted:

- **Keep it Relevant:** Identify areas that are grounded in issues and challenges encountered within your organization that may act as an irritant or potential barrier to productivity. These issues and challenges will also need to be understood from a priority basis both from an employer and employee perspective.
- **Follow Through:** Once priorities are identified, and especially if employees are engaged as part of the process, be seen to take immediate action to address any issues or challenges. This action can be as simple as a commitment by the organization to address some of the issues and challenges, or it can represent significant change with will require careful planning and implementation. But commitment to communicate along the way is critical to keeping employees engaged and committed.

With the recovery underway, both organizations and employees want to embrace ways of improving their collective success – and businesses today quickly realize that one is not exclusive of the other! Here are some areas that might represent low hanging fruit that can result in higher productivity if addressed:

1. Thinking a Total Rewards perspective, an organization can pinpoint what employees value including potential barriers to fully understanding or appreciating current state. This could include the effectiveness of the working environment, compensation and benefit programs, career development and training and performance management.
2. Ensuring that employees understand how their role contributes to the organization’s success and are treated fairly and equitably. Role clarity is also foundational to effective performance management practices. Without a clear understanding of what has to be accomplished, employers and employees will have difficulty in setting appropriate goals not to mention rewarding for what adds value!
3. Ensuring that compensation programs are meeting the organizational objectives whether that is attracting, retaining and motivating employees or rewarding for performance or both. All too often companies are playing lip service to their

compensation programs, assuming that objectives are being realized without doing the due diligence of “testing” the waters to ensure that their objectives are valid and achieved.

4. Having an articulated Compensation Philosophy and Strategy that reinforce corporate culture and objectives while providing meaningful recognition and appropriately rewarding employee contribution. One of the largest expenditures on a company’s P & L is typically payroll. Unfortunately, companies still do not spend the time or resources to think through how to align their compensation programs to meet their needs. Employee productivity also depends on a well articulated and executed compensation program that will recognize and hopefully motivate their actions and contributions.
5. Thinking through HR’s role in providing effective HR and compensation programs and practices is a worthwhile endeavour, especially since many organizations have limited resources. Outsourcing transactional activities such as payroll, job evaluation activities, incentive management, etc. is becoming more attractive given the importance of finding strategic solutions to increase productivity and having the time and resources to get there.

2010 might well be remembered as the turnaround year when organizations took a step back to reflect on what truly adds value so that they can embrace the recovery from a solid grounding. Governance and performance in an era of restraint will push many companies to look for pragmatic solutions that are anchored in realism. Understanding what currently works or does not work is always a good starting point.