HR Mastery Toolkit

Building a High-Performance Organization

Launch Your Organization to a New Level of Performance Today!

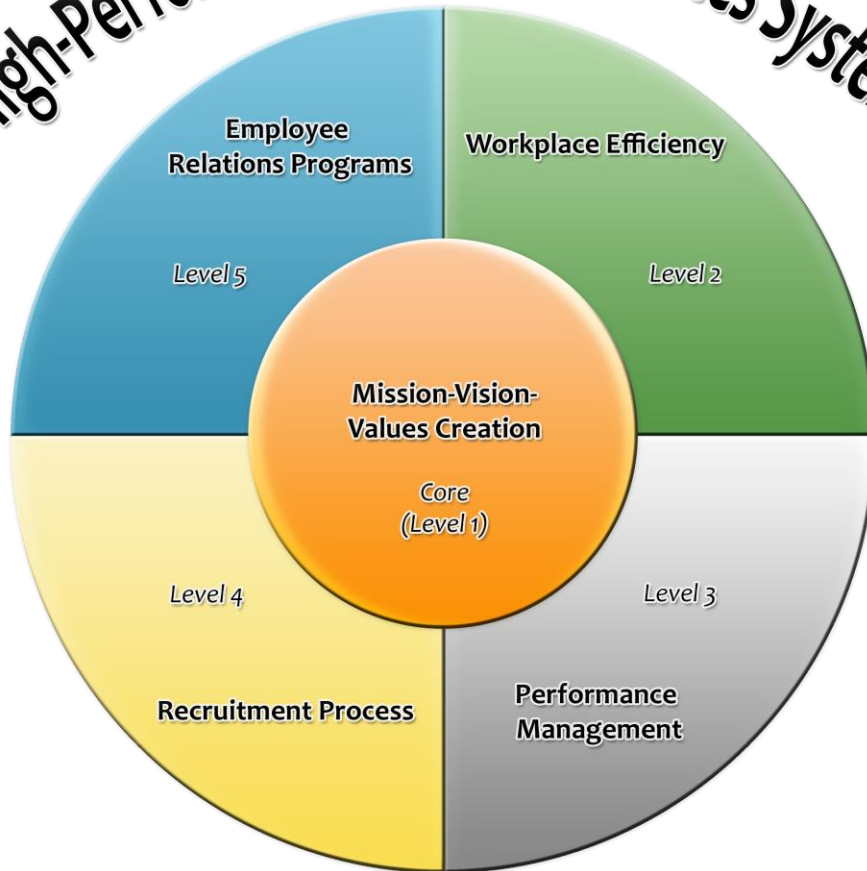## Level 5
Employee Relations Programs

Your All-in-One Human Resources Solution

Mark A. Griffin

High-Performance Human Resources System

Employee Relations Programs — Level 5

Workplace Efficiency — Level 2

Mission-Vision-Values Creation — Core (Level 1)

Recruitment Process — Level 4

Performance Management — Level 3

You are working on:

LEVEL 5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

By this stage, you have completed the first four levels of this HR Mastery Toolkit, beginning with our Core Level MVV Program, where you learned how to craft solid Mission, Vision, and Value commitments for your organization the right way.

Next, you examined efficiency in your workplace and worked through Level 2, the Workplace Efficiency Program. In this level, you learned how to create and use high performance Job Descriptions for greater efficiency and improved quality and productivity.

After completing Level 2, you moved on to performance management in Level 3, the Performance Review Process Program, where you learned how to maintain high performance through a thoughtful employee review process and how to make the process one that, instead of dreading, your employees and management actually embrace and enjoy.

After completing Level 3, you moved on to Level 4, the Recruitment Process. Here, you learned how to effectively and efficiently find and keep qualified talent for a fraction of the cost.

And, finally, we come to Level 5, the Employee Relations Program and the end of this HR Mastery Toolkit program. In Level 5, you will learn how to boost morale and ensure that your employees feel appreciated, purposeful, and happy to be doing good work.

Level 5 Objectives

As the facilitator for your organization, you will learn and develop the following:

- How to take your developed MVV statements and apply them throughout your organization

- How to create communication processes that fit your organization

- The tools necessary to properly facilitate groups to create your own High-Performance Organization solutions

- How to implement Employee Assistance and Chaplain Programs that make sense and have a positive impact on your organization and employees

You will develop:

- A coherent and cohesive Communication Plan to forward the advancement of your MVV

- Valuable Employee Relations programs your organization can enact

- The basic skills necessary to lead and facilitate brainstorming processes

Employee Relations

Employee Relations involves maintaining employer-employee relationships that contribute to optimal productivity, motivation, and morale. This happens through *specific* initiatives and programs that directly target this critical organizational facet.

Employee Relations programs help prevent and resolve problems involving individuals that arise from, or affect, work situations.

Three important Employee Relations elements

High-Performing Organizations excel at the following elements of Employee Relations:

1. Helping employees understand and enact the organization's shared Mission, Vision, and Value statements.
2. Nurturing ongoing and meaningful communication processes
3. Helping *employees* generate meaningful <u>programs</u> that boost performance for the whole organization

For you to learn how to start this process, let's examine the following:

- How to create meaningful and productive communication processes
- The right way to create performance-boosting ideas and programs from the ground up
- Examples of successful reward programs you can implement that High-Performing Organizations routinely use
- Using Employee Assistance and Chaplain Programs

Creating meaningful communication processes

After the creation of your new Mission, Vision, and Values statements, most management teams want to know one crucial thing:

What do we do with it?

It starts by ***integrating*** your MVV statements into <u>all aspects</u> of your Human Resources processes, and embedding them into the culture and fabric of your organization.

This happens in two key ways:

1. Solid, ongoing <u>communication processes,</u> and

2. The organization's <u>employee relations materials</u>

When the HR department manages these aspects, it makes the processes easier. There are countless ways to share and embed your MVVs within your organization. Not only do employees grow accustomed to your MVVs, but also your clients and customers. This is an excellent way to build a great reputation and improve your integrity.

These communication processes may include:

- Your organization's <u>newsletter</u>

- Your organization's <u>website</u>

- <u>Brochures</u> available in your front lobby, or delivered by your sales force

- <u>Postings</u> in employee break and meeting rooms

- <u>Copies given to applicants</u> during employment interviews

- Your organization's <u>marketing materials</u>

- The reverse side of your organization's <u>business cards</u>

- The <u>packaging material</u> of your organization's shipments

- Your <u>media</u> and <u>social media</u> communications

- Customer service, or sales <u>interactions</u>

Additionally, MVV s should be included in employee relations materials, such as the:

- recruitment process

- employee job descriptions

- employee handbook

- performance review process

Once you establish your MVVs, don't just sit on them! Embrace them by saturating your organization with them every way possible.

External communication
Are MVVs really fit for public consumption? Yes!

MVVs are not just internal concepts for employees to understand. They should be widely publicized.

Here are some examples of initial pushbacks that employees expressed about sharing one organization's MVV with customers and individuals outside the organization (which were never realized):

- The overtones of their Values statement might offend customers, or make them appear self-righteous

- Prospective employees might be offended, or misinterpret their intent

When the organization went public with their new MVVs, the results were that:

- Employees discovered the advantages far outweighed the disadvantages
- It became patently beneficial to make the MVVs statements widely known

Consequently, customers displayed a newfound <u>confidence</u> in the organization and its integrity. They never complained about the official Values statement and complaints from employee applicants were scant.

Internal communication

Good communication strengthens organizations, which is why it is inherent in High-Performance Organizations. It is critical to thoroughly communicate your MVV statements *within* your organization.

Here are 10 ideas to promote your MVV through venues that are great ways to communicate general information to employees and/or their family members:

1. **Daily or weekly news email blasts**

   Free software, like Mail Chimp and AWeber, make communicating regularly with an internal (or external) email list simple and effective. By informing staff of new initiatives, promotions, products, and good news, camaraderie and excitement builds. Your brand is strengthened too, as excited employees share the information on the outside.

2. **Monthly newsletters**

   Like email blasts, newsletters provide a way to communicate and build a stronger relationship between employees and the organization's values. They draw attention to achievements, progress, and the unique culture of your organization, as well

as create a helpful focus on what you do, *how* you do it, and where you are going (Mission + Vision + Values).

3. **Town Hall meetings**

   Town Hall-style meetings reinforce MVVs in a public setting. *Internal* Town Hall-style meetings also give employees a chance to ask important questions and dig more deeply into the undergirding and aim of the organization's leadership. (Town Hall-style meetings in a <u>public setting</u> offer a helpful venue for relevant interaction and communication.) New ideas, troubleshooting, and goodwill can be forged in a sincere and meaningful Town Hall-style assembly.

4. **Staff meetings**

   Staff meetings are a great way to succinctly reinforce the established MVVs. Everyone in attendance can better align with them through reiteration. Additionally, focus will tighten not just in understanding and absorbing your MVVs, but also in implementing them**. If given the opportunity, employees often come up with excellent ways to further disseminate and enact the MVVs.**

5. **A CEO blog**

   There's nothing like hearing from leadership directly. Much as a good magazine includes a letter from the Editor's Desk in each issue to set the tone and explain the aims of the current piece, an ongoing blog article from the CEO can go a long way to clarify and flesh out the MVV statements.

   Blog entries can be short, but they should directly include why and how the organization is doing what they do. Specific examples really help: for instance, if an organization has participated in a specific charity that aligns with its values, or

an employee has gone the extra mile in a way that is worth sharing.

Consistency is important too. If the CEO cannot make regular, ongoing posts, or does not excel at it, someone should be appointed to ghostwrite the posts. The blogs should be posted on a predictable schedule, after the CEO has reviewed and signed off on each one.

6. Intranet portal

Internal communication should be imbued with the concepts established in your MVV statements. As employees interact and communicate, all communications should use the language contained in the MVV. Reminders and encouragement on the power and significance of MVV commitments should be easily digestible.

As the frequency of the MVV language and attitude become more common and fluid, the shift to fully embracing them and acting them out will occur. Soon, the MVVs will be second nature and fully embedded in organizational endeavors, communications, and culture.

7. Podcasts

Podcasts go a long way to build authority in your niche, but they also provide a way to communicate what is most important. Your MVVs can get prime time as you incorporate them into your topics and advice. For instance, if kind customer service is one of your Values, you can highlight why that matters to your organization along with an incident of how that has worked specifically. Include how it was meaningful, not just to the customer, but also to your organization's overall Vision and Mission.

8. **Video blog**

Instead of merely conveying a message in this rich and easily absorbable medium, use the opportunity to enhance what you stand for. Your MVVs form the foundation of your organization and they should permeate all your broadcasting, in general and specific ways. As you craft a video communication, be wise in how you convey your information by saturating the content and carefully aligning it to your MVVs.

9. **Small group meetings**

Start meetings by reinforcing the commitment to the MVVs and rallying everyone with encouragement to stay the course. The air of small group meetings should be blanketed with your Values and consistent with what the organization is all about.

With this starting point, some problems can seem to almost solve themselves. The shared outlook from the onset creates a rewarding commonality and deeper trust. This makes working together and problem solving more productive and positive.

10. **Q&A postings**

Many High-Performance Organizations offer ways for employees to ask important questions and receive helpful answers. If you offer this amenity, make sure it is superintended. If someone posts a question, a reply should come quickly. The answers should reflect the MVV commitments and nurture greater connection and satisfaction.

Your opportunities to disseminate and communicate your MVV statements are limited only by your will and imagination. Make sure to enlist more ideas from your employees to avoid stagnation. Pick a few ideas and see them all the way through.

Creating performance-boosting ideas and programs from the ground up

In this section, we will concentrate on <u>facilitating the right sorts of meetings</u> that drive creativity and help develop programs for improved organizational performance. These ideas come from the people who know best: *your employees.*

The HR representative is key to inciting creativity and development

A common <u>misconception</u> among organizational leaders is that they know what employees want. Rarely is this entirely accurate. HR representatives will tell you that *the best ideas and programs for improving an organization come from employees*.

Employees have a valuable in-the-trenches vantage point, but, more importantly, they know that improving workplace processes will make their job easier. Their work will feel more meaningful when it can be accomplished within a High-Performing Organization. Leadership may be shortsighted and not take employee perspectives and insights fully into account.

This simple, approach eludes far too many organizational leaders. The result can cripple performance.

Ask your employees: ***How can we improve employee relations at our organization?***

To best harvest the useful ideas from employees, put together a cross-functional group to collect, create, and brainstorm ideas to find solutions and identify problems. *This group should include employees from various capacities and responsibilities across your organization.*

Once assembled, conduct a <u>specific</u> sort of brainstorming session.

Brainstorming session best practices

A brainstorming session is a process where multiple employees offer multiple ideas in a non-threatening environment.

The *process* helps members to generate ideas, using a group approach, in a way that is real and uninhibited. *Brainstorming helps a team identify problems and agree on suggested remedies.* The idea of brainstorming is simple and the process should stay simple as well.

Facilitation

The most important aspect of a brainstorming session is to have a good *facilitation leader* overseeing the session. What characteristics are needed for a good facilitation leader?

1. Impartiality – they should have no agenda or political reasons for swaying the outcome

2. Sensitivity to the personality temperaments and how they may function in a group setting – an effective facilitator is balanced and sensitive to these dynamics

   Note: It may make sense to use a Myers-Briggs Type Sorter personality assessment beforehand. It is a valuable piece of starting data as you invite particular employees into the session. Extroverts typically thrive in a fast-paced, engaging session but, because extroverts are helped by interaction and speaking through the process of idea creation, they may end up dominating the session. Introverts, on the other hand, benefit from knowing the topic and questions ahead of time in order to carefully process them and submit their best ideas without on-the-spot pressure.

3. Comfortable and relaxed speaking to groups and interacting with diverse clusters of employees

4. Capable of managing the flow of the brainstorming session and able to see the forest *and* the trees, conscious of details while keeping the big picture in mind

5. Ability to track progress on a whiteboard, being respectful of every effort and contribution

Forming the group

An ideal brainstorming session size to solve organizational problems is 20 to 25 employees. However, smaller groups of 12 have been known to generate amazing results. Diversity in education, gender, ethnicity, experience, and backgrounds tends to produce the most powerful ideas.

Setting session parameters

Once you have a problem to solve and have identified a suitable employee to facilitate your group, here is the *method* to successfully brainstorm:

1. Initiate welcome

Begin the session by welcoming participants and thanking them for their participation. It is important to the outcome that the employees feel relaxed, comfortable, and at ease, and a hospitable environment encourages this by facilitating genuine goodwill and connection.

If necessary, ask individuals to introduce themselves to the group and find a way to make it interesting, or pleasurable. A simple icebreaking activity will help employees to relax, learn more about each other, and find common ground.

An example of an icebreaker activity is the "two truths and a lie" game. Each member of the group shares with the group two

truths about him/herself and invents a lie and then the other group members try to guess which is the lie.

2. **Organize**

Provide the group with an agenda and timeline as to how the meeting will flow. Keep the agenda simple and the time allotted modest.

3. **Set the stage for your session**

Clearly define your brainstorming as a "technique to freely and uninhibitedly generate ideas about problems using a group approach."

Explain to the group that brainstorming helps teams use and harness their creativity while focusing on a common purpose within an environment that is open and respectful to all ideas.

Let them know that this process is particularly helpful when trying to identify a specific problem's potential causes and solutions.

4. **Orientation**

Give the group the <u>parameters</u> of the brainstorming process:

a. A problem statement or question will be written on a white board or flip chart. During the session, participants will not be censored, and only clarified if it is necessary to promote greater general understanding.

b. A "parking lot" will be created: when ideas or thoughts are submitted that fall <u>outside</u> the scope of the question at hand, those ideas will be noted on the side, in a designated "parking" area.

c. Establish general behavior guidelines: respect and kind treatment of everyone is expected during the entire session.

d. The session will be conducted using these three premises:

    i. No idea is considered a bad idea

    ii. A large <u>quantity</u> or pool of ideas is the goal (stressing that this stage is *not* when each idea's merit is discussed)

    iii. No censoring of *anyone's* ideas is permitted

5. Recap

A brief review and refinement of the ideas presented will occur once the time is finished.

Beginning the session

1. Write the topic statement, or question in a central location.

   NOTE: Introverts in your group will benefit from knowing the question ahead of time, so they can better process the question and contribute to the solution.

   The statement, or question should be clearly defined and written on a board where everyone can see it. Supply sticky notes, and have participants write down one to three ideas on solving the issue, and stick them on the board by the problem statement.

2. Once all ideas are posted, each one is read to the group, and, if clarification is needed, the employee who posed the idea answers any questions until the group agrees that they fully understand the suggested solution.

3. Once all the ideas have been revealed, break the group into teams of four to five members, and equally divide the number of

ideas among the groups. This is called a Breakout Team Session.

4. Have each Breakout Team huddle in different parts of the room to discuss each solution and generate consensus on whether the solution is worthy to pursue further, or should be discarded. If, for example, you start with 25 employees and divide them into five groups, at the end of the breakout session you will have chosen five potential solutions from the original 25.

5. Express your appreciation to the group for the time and energy they have invested in solving the problem and reinforce the fact that all of the consensus-based ideas will be considered.

6. Indicate that you will follow up with them with more information once it has been decided which of the ideas/solutions will be applied.

7. Spend time subsequently with leaders and appropriate financial managers to further analyze the ideas to develop the guidelines and identify the performance that will be recognized.

8. Meet with the original brainstorming session members to review the final workup of the programs.

Tying rewards and recognition to results

High-Performing Organizations routinely recognize and reward those employees who stand out and deliver great results. These recognized and rewarded employees will keep striving to improve work by taking more pride and responsibility in your organization.

In High-Performing Organizations, recognition and rewards don't happen in random or haphazard ways. They happen through specific, well thought out, and well executed programs. This makes all the difference.

Before initiating any kind of rewards program, it is critical to ensure it makes sense for your particular organization and fits well. Leaders who read about a successful performance-boosting reward program at another organization sometimes mistakenly make an executive decision to implement it without first ensuring it will work as well in their organization, an often costly and disastrous approach. **Good leaders start with their employees** in order to achieve the best outcomes for everyone involved.

Employee Relations Programs cannot be attached like Christmas tree ornaments—they grow by planting seeds, from the ground up.

Results

When you tie rewards and recognition to good performance with good results, your employees will be happier to work for you and your organization. They will be more efficient and improve the overall working environment.

Human Resources upgrade

This HR MASTERY Toolkit is all about investing time and money in the things that have been proven to improve an organization and the lives of the employees. The transformation starts by a shift in thinking.

Employees are not just "personnel." They are your most valuable resources.

Your Human Resources representative must shift from a picnic planning-style of administration to a leadership style that reflects organizational partners.

With that transformation, comes responsibility. When your HR representative harnesses and utilizes this employee responsibility,

the results are improved organizational results and huge boosts in performance.

When implementing new employee programs, ask yourself:

1. **Is this program something the *employees* brainstormed?** (Or is it a leader's program that is tacked on, like a "flavor of the month?" It should stem from employees.)

2. **Will this recognize employees frequently and systematically?** (Sporadic and illogical recognition can be worse than no recognition at all. Even a good, well-liked program will backfire if it lacks consistency.)

3. **Does the program reward activities linked to *specific* organizational <u>objectives</u> and desired organizational <u>Values</u>?** (This is necessary to maintain the consistency and documentation of the program.)

4. **Has a cost benefit analysis been made?** Has return on investment (ROI) data been completed? Does the program deliver results consistent with the associated time and cost?

Some CEOs dismiss these types of programs based on finances, or time involved. They mistakenly think that, for example, big cash rewards will be required, but the HR representative knows that often sincere appreciation and recognition goes further and is long remembered over monetary rewards. Recognition is encouraging and socially beneficial. It can be monetary, or materially rewarding if the organization can *consistently* offer it.

It's simple: employees want to feel useful and appreciated. They want to do well and not feel that what they are doing is a waste of time. Listen to your workforce. Take the time to find out what motivates them. Then make a genuine effort to consistently notice their contribution and reward them.

Successful reward programs that aid employee relations

Implementing programs designed to make your employees love coming to work and do their very best is precisely what High-Performing Organizations do. Let's take a look at a few of the more common of these types of programs, most of which are based upon reward and recognition. The success of these programs has everything to do with how the employees of a particular organization themselves define their efforts as having been gratifyingly recognized and rewarded.

Quality awards

Improving the quality of goods and services makes organizations more competitive and high performing. It also helps build you a great reputation. With direct incentives, employees feel their hard work has truly been worth the effort.

Quality awards center on what your organization has already clearly defined as delivering good quality and what constitutes this achievement. What time period is involved? What specific MVV features are tied to the level and kind of quality the reward is designed to acknowledge? Who is eligible? How much quality improvement does it take to save money? (This is calculated using ROI data.)

Safety awards

Who among us wants to work in an unsafe workplace? Poor safety standards can cost you more than dollars—it can ruin lives and bankrupt organizations. A safe workplace is something to take pride

in, and employees naturally have a vested interest in making that happen.

Ask your employees what they think will help make their working environment safer. Safer work environments generate savings. The savings are generated by fewer accidents and reduced employee compensation costs. Use a percentage of this savings to directly benefit employees by implementing workplace safety initiatives. Not sure how to navigate workplace safety? Work with your Worker's Compensation insurer to become a safe organization, they typically have much to offer at no cost.

Productivity bonus

A lack of motivation blankets an organization when the payoff for going the extra mile is absent or isn't obvious. No one wants his, or her efforts and hard work are perpetually overlooked, or taken for granted.

The big surprise?

The payoff doesn't have to be monetary to be meaningful. If your employees are just putting in time, day by day, without conscientiously trying to add value, awarding productivity with bonuses can make every day feel truly rewarding, making achievement and performance a more ingrained part of your organization's culture. By clearly defining levels of productivity and making this reward attainable through simplicity and specifics, your employees will want to do their best work in order to be rewarded.

Employee of the month

This type of recognition is often used in food and retail environments. Done well, the recognition can lift up an organization and encourage employees to do great work. The results can be mixed if the setting is

wrong, and can even create hard feelings and jealousy. Decide what perks this reward will deliver and how the winner will be fairly determined. Tie your MVV to this reward and decide what contributions an employee of the month would need to display in order to achieve it, and how this information will be gathered.

Team of the month

Rewarding high-performing teams with perks and/or recognition can create a healthy competitive atmosphere *if the program is done well*. Find out what parameters would make this sort of program both beneficial *and* enjoyable for employees to participate in. How might low-performing members of teams be helped to do better? Note what organizational Values teams should display when striving to achieve this reward. Amazing things can happen when employees—and teams—are given a window to innovate freely.

Service awards

Great service goes a long way. Decide what *specifically* constitutes great service for your employees. How would your employees like to be noticed for great service? When you recognize the talents and efforts of great service, more great service is to come.

Birthday recognition

Your organization's most valuable resource, its employees, may appreciate some special treatment. Some organizations throw monthly parties, give an employee their birthday off with pay, or chip in for gifts. The key here is to see each employee who works for you as a real person with basic needs and a desire to be noticed, and then extending kindness and gratitude for their life and work in a thoughtful way.

Recruitment bonus
Few organizations realize the enormous savings that employee referrals offer. When filling job openings, your organization should give employees incentives to find trustworthy talent and invite it onboard. Employees have never been better connected than they are today through social media like Linked-in or Facebook, with the opportunity to connect with friends, family, and former colleagues and classmates. Instead of spending your hiring budget on classified ads, consider first enlisting your employees and rewarding them when their referrals pan out. Many employees do better work when the newly hired employee is someone with whom they've already worked with, or enjoy an existing level of cooperation and camaraderie.

Spot awards bonus recognition

Sometimes the best and most meaningful reward comes as a surprise. If you can catch someone doing a job well done and can immediately reward it, it serves as an excellent incentive to boost work performance throughout your organization.

As with all the programs outlined here, if you want to initiate a program like this, first make sure your employees welcome it. Clearly define what behaviors and actions would merit a on-the-spot bonus and determine how all departments and all employees will be fairly included. Also, lock in how many rewards are available at any given time, and which departments will benefit.

Before you enact any of these programs, consider these three factors:

1. Your organization's unique culture

2. The right fit at this time (programs should be evaluated annually)

3. The preferences and needs of your employees

Don't be tempted to copy a program from another organization and squeeze it in without considering your organization's unique culture. This is perilous and could backfire.

Culture

Every organization has its own culture, a sort of eco-system of interactions, attitudes, and behaviors, and you need to define yours. How? Ask yourself:

- What is the *tone* of your organization? (Ask around to gain a broad perspective.)

- What is the leadership style when interacting with employees?

- Do leaders implement an open-door philosophy, or are they more closed and private?

- What kind of atmosphere is there? Is it fun filled, or very formal and businesslike?

- Is it customer oriented, or production driven?

- How trusting and open are employees with management?

Return on investment

The program's **objectives** need to be determined prior to implementation in order to calculate its ROI.

What is the direct benefit of an employee recognition program?

- Will the behaviors you reward align with your MVVs?

- What are the boundaries for the behavior and performance you wish to encourage?

- What will be the acknowledged costs associated with consistent commitment to the program?

You must go all in when investing in and implementing a new recognition program, but only if it makes sense in the first place. How will you know if it makes sense?

Input

Get input from employees up front. (This cannot be overstated.)

Brainstorming sessions, conducted separately with both management and employees, can help shore the foundations for a recognition program.

Cooperation is the key to any Employee Relations program success. The brainstorming sessions should provide further input to the guidelines or measures, revealing whether the program is reasonable, whether employees will respect it, and whether it will be perceived as worthwhile.

Solidify criteria

Never implement a program without defining program eligibility criteria. Clearly define what employees, departments, locations, etc., are eligible for each recognition program. Leave no room for misunderstanding, or jealousies to creep in. Document what locations are included, and what level or type of employee may participate (commission, non-commission, full-time, part-time, interns, contract workers, management, etc.).

Awarding

Clearly identify who is the program decision-maker. Naturally, the final award decision will be tied to the objectives of each recognition

program. When you have a program that recognizes years of service, the decision-maker's job is easier. Having a program that involves giving out on-the-spot gift cards worth $50 is not as easy! Determine who will decide who is to be rewarded and how the data will be collected. It is imperative that criteria be set up and guidelines provided *beforehand*.

Your MVV statements should be suffused in all of the rewards, promotions, and materials that relate to your Rewards and Recognition programs. It's a perfect opportunity to maintain organizational integrity and consistent Values that reflect your very best intentions.

Employee Assistance and Chaplain Programs

Now that we have covered how to create meaningful and productive communication processes, and you have learned what brainstorming is and how to use it to your organizational advantage, and how to create performance-boosting ideas and programs the right way—all ideas (with examples) that High Performing Organizations routinely use—let's take a look at some resources available to help you help employees who have personal issues.

As stated before, employees are an organization's most valuable resource. Sometimes it is necessary to step in to help the employee who make your organization thrive, to better employee relations by helping employees solve personal problems. Doing so has the added benefits of protecting you and the organization, eliminating potentially uncomfortable discussions with employees, and preventing any legal dilemma for you and your organization. What are these available resources? They're called Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and Chaplain Programs.

Using EAP and Chaplain Programs

Divorce rates, substance abuse issues, financial problems, troubled teens at home, aging parents, economic instability, and political turmoil are only some of the challenges that employees find themselves dealing with today, challenges that increase stress on employees, both in the workplace and outside it.

Why is this an issue? Because, when employees suffer from these issues, productivity decreases, absenteeism soars, quality suffers, and safety becomes an issue because employees become distracted. This is a fact that studies have shown to be true. Healthy employees perform better than those under chronic stress.

Employees need our help now more than ever. We need to be there for them when they need us.

Many employees only enjoy stability in the workplace. They find comfort being at work because their home lives may be unmanageable and they feel less in control.

Most organizations are ill equipped to handle the competent counseling of employees, never mind the families involved, and the risks associated with doing so are considerable.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule is the first comprehensive federal protection for the privacy of personal health information. This rule can make it difficult for you to legally help those in need and almost certainly can cause issues in the event there is a resulting employment action in which you are involved in the decision-making.

This is where Employee Assistance and Chaplain Programs come into play.

Employee Assistance Programs

EAPs originated in the 1940s with services focused on alcohol abuse and the impact it had on organizations. Over the past 80 years, EAPs have broadened considerably. These days, they help employees suffering a variety of personal issues that impact job performance. The greatest period of EAP growth was during the 1970s, when they began to help employers address a variety of employee problems and proactively deal with workplace issues beyond personal substance abuse to include marital and child rearing issues, and workplace problems, such as violence in the workplace and morale.

Today, many EAP programs try to improve organizational performance, as well as assist individual employees and their dependents. These programs are run typically by for-profit organizations staffed by practitioners who provide crisis intervention and preventive services, as well as short-term problem resolution services to individual employees of all levels and their families.

EAPs can be costly; however, depending on your employee's situation, they may be well worth the investment if you have employees struggling with issues who are hurting the profitability of your organization.

Chaplain Programs

Many organizations use Chaplain Programs to help employees who are suffering. Much like EAPs, the burden is lifted from the organization and handed to a third party. Chaplains are able to talk to employees differently than you are, both legally and comfortably. Many chaplains are skilled in reaching the hurting because they are able to frame their discussions around long-term or eternal perspectives, and not just the immediate situation.

Chaplain Programs are not just for religious organizations; many secular companies have Chaplain Programs for their employees. Chaplain Programs can often be more effective than EAP programs because chaplains are:

1. present
2. responsive
3. able to drive real change at the root of an issue

When you hire a chaplain, they will be present. A good chaplain will spend time every week at your workplace, mingling with employees, spending time on the floor where employees work, and showing employees that they care and are there for them.

They are responsive—most chaplains provide all employees with their contact information and make themselves available 24/7.

Finally, a good chaplain can drive change at the root of a problem because they develop a personal relationship with the employee and can hold them accountable for measurable change. As we explained before, many employees are suffering, and chaplains may be the solution to alleviating this suffering.

Let's Review!

What did we learn in the Level 5 – Employee Relations Programs?

- We showed you how to create meaningful communication processes, externally and internally, and provided you with a slew of great ideas to get you started.

- We walked you through the selection process to establish a talented facilitator and brainstorming group to create solutions and innovate for better performance.

- We showed you how to run a successful brainstorming session, one that harvests meaningful ideas for programs, using your most important resource: your people.

- We provided you with a list of some of the more widespread successful employee recognition programs used at High-Performing Organizations.

- We closed with how to create and implement fair recognition programs, how to gain employee cooperation and support, and how to determine who should dole out rewards.

- We discussed how Employee Assistance and Chaplain Programs can help employees dealing with personal issues, which, in turn, can solve many employee relations issues.

Now, Take Your Action Steps:

It's time to get started!

- Once you **absorb** the concepts presented, start a dialogue with your owners or upper level management.

- Convey and **define** the key concepts of your employee relations strategy, and ensure you have mutual understanding.

- Together, begin to **specify** what employee relations considerations are important and unique to your particular organization.

- Discuss agreeable outcomes to the process. Agree on how the program will pay for itself by eliminating costly turnover, increasing employee productivity, decreasing safety issues, improving quality, and helping employees navigate today's difficult times.

- Create a draft communication process and share with your owners, or upper level management. Ask for their input.

- **Enlist** the help and input of line supervision after an initial draft outline of the communication process is formed.

- Work with management, supervision, and employees to **build a final consensus.** Hone a final draft and gain approval from your owners, or upper level management.

- Ensure you do not overcommit when designing your program. Oftentimes, the simplest programs generate the greatest impact. Implement your program! **Refine** as necessary. Stick to your process.

Congratulations!

You are on your way to becoming

a High-Performance Organization

In Closing

As you learn and implement the Five Program Levels from the HR MASTERY Toolkit, you will find yourself well on your way to creating a High-Performance Organization.

Take the time to thoroughly understand the material in the five programs and teach the concepts to your leadership. Then, teach the concepts to your employees and start enacting the programs from the ground up.

HR representatives spend years learning how organizations perform best. Large organizations have far more the resources necessary to maintain a large staff of employees, creating and implementing the best HR programs 100 percent of the time. Until now, only the biggest organizations enjoyed the best HR expertise and know-how to become far more efficient and remain as a High-Performance Organization.

Now, with these five programs of the HR Mastery Toolkit, you can enjoy these benefits as well.

With the HR MASTERY Toolkit, you can tap the wellspring of experience of a competent HR team's knowledge, program templates, and agenda in order to create the very best, most successful and efficient organization possible.

If you need further assistance, please contact us. We wish you the very best!

Mark A. Griffin and the Team at In HIS Name HR LLC