



"Employee retention is the key to having a good leadership pipeline in every organisation"

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December 14, 2008

Peter Handal, president, chairman and CEO, Dale Carnegie Training on the characteristics of great leaders

1) What are some of the characteristics of great leaders?

A leader's greatest skill is his/her ability to listen—which we, at Dale Carnegie, believe is the most important communication skill.

2) What kind of qualities do you look for in the people you hire (apart from technical/hard skills)?

I like what I refer to as "the fire in the belly"—a deep desire to succeed, a willingness to work hard and think outside the box—a go-getter attitude, a risk taker. You can usually identify those traits in an interview, but you can certainly ask questions that can help you uncover someone's approach to their career.

3) What qualities do you look for in your team?

At Dale Carnegie we strive hard to create an honest and an open environment. As I mentioned, that's the foundation for building trust in a team. Once you have established a trusting environment (where you don't get penalised for your honest feedback and input), then a team can begin to share and develop ideas that help to bring a business forward. The key is to unleash creativity.

4) Is it hard to find people with the right mix of work-related, leadership, interpersonal and attitudinal skills?

Talented employees are a company's biggest asset. At times, you can find someone with the right interpersonal and attitudinal skills and then, because of the cultural climate in the company, they become disengaged. At Dale Carnegie, we believe that keeping your employees engaged—that is winning both their hearts and minds, is the key to attracting and retaining talented employees. It's not that difficult to attract and find talent, what's hard is retaining them.

5) How important is it for organisations to have a leadership pipeline?

It is very crucial to have a leadership pipeline. And the key to this is employee retention. Once you have identified the top talent in your company, it is your job to make sure you retain them. Statistics show that employees are less likely to leave a company if they feel engaged. It is from your talent pool that you must look for succession planning, and that means investing in training and development.

6) What are your personal team management principles?

I prefer a collaborative process—one that focuses on consensus building – at the same time, it's important to make sure that people have specific goals and that they are held accountable for achieving them.