



How to find staff who love to work

Concerns about employee performance have become prominent in almost any survey on business sentiment and a South Australian expert in workplace culture is offering a proven way to diagnose the problems and find solutions.

Leed Consulting principal Diarmid Lee has incorporated the US-developed Denison Model into a program that uses a comprehensive survey to pinpoint what is making it hard to attract good employees and keep them.

Diarmid says the Denison diagnostic tools generate a level of data to focus specifically on the areas an organisation needs to improve in order to attract the broadest talent pool and transform company performance.

"What I do using the Denison approach is to investigate and identify with the client what the underlying problem is in a workplace culture by investigating from many directions," Diarmid says.

"The data from the Organisational Culture Survey and the 360 Leadership Review provides specific information broken down into a dozen categories to accurately assess both organisational and individual performance.

"It leads to brutally honest conversations about what an organisation expects from its people and what people expect from the organisation."

The Denison model was developed by US researcher Daniel Denison and it is widely used internationally, with Coca Cola, NASA and Deutsche Bank among the high profile companies who have put themselves to the test of the Denison survey and review.

Leed Consulting is one of only two companies in Australia qualified to use the model, which benefits from thousands of clients who are continually researched for updates on what is happening in the international marketplace.

"One piece of Denison research compared the outcomes of high performing workplace cultures to those which are underperforming and found at the top they were recording 15% sales growth in one year against less than 1% at the bottom," Diarmid says.

Attracting Employees

Diarmid uses the data he gathers on cultural strengths and weaknesses to help identify why organisations are not 'employer of choice' and to determine a course for change.

"The reasons an organisation is not attracting the right staff vary greatly but all relate to culture," Diarmid says.



"Historically organisations have focused on the job and not the environment within which the job is performed.

"Employees are starting to ask 'am I going to enjoy working in this organisation?' rather than 'Am I going to enjoy the job I do for this organisation?' which means you need a saleable workplace culture."

The barriers that raise concerns for potential employees start with something as simple as the way the job is advertised and can be as complex as needing a clearer mission statement and a stronger brand in the marketplace.

Improving Employee Performance

There may be several reasons why an employee is underperforming and Diarmid says in many cases employees are not at fault.

"The Denison model provides a simple language that addresses the contribution of individuals and how this is impacted by entrenched practices that call for a review of the organisation's leadership," Diarmid says.

"Lack of training, an unsupportive manager, lack of resources and inefficient office systems are some of the aspects we scrutinise through our advanced diagnostic tools.

"Simply terminating the under-performing employee leaves the real problem unresolved and likely to recur."

Diarmid says the aim is to align culture and leadership initiatives and the Denison model brings great clarity to the link between organisational culture and bottom-line performance measures.

"When everything is aligned, improvement in returns on investment, sales growth, quality, innovation and employee satisfaction will follow," he says.

"If a company's expectations of its people are not in sync with what is expected from the company then there will be a constant struggle for success.

"Leed Consulting looks for the barriers to that and goes in hard with discussions about what is wrong with the employer/employee relationship and how it can be fixed."

Diarmid has considerable knowledge and experience from working in London when the GFC first hit and believes this adds value to consulting in workplace culture.

"It is important to analyse what is critical within a business to stay competitive when the market is under pressure," he says.

"In our two-speed economy some struggling companies are keeping their heads down and hoping to ride out their lows but a more positive approach is to look at the function of your company and sharpen up for a tougher market."



Diarmid Lee
Leed Consulting