



Comprehensive Global Management Consulting Services

Commentaries and Insights from Allawos & Company

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“Got Human Resources”

Dr. David French, Principal Consultant, Human Development

Many companies have an in-house Human Resource Department to serve employee assistance issues that arise, by providing a safe and impartial environment to invite full disclosure. In theory, it is a clearing house that documents, insures confidentiality and provides resources and guidance to all employees. Their data collection, legal guidance and proactive counseling should be an impartial voice to management. In turn, the CEO and Executive Team can integrate grievance issues, actions items, staff trends and feedback from exit interviews to modify and strengthen the existing infrastructure strengthening the overall culture.

Employees must feel safe in their disclosure and trust that they will be fairly represented and guided, without any fear of retaliation. Unfortunately, remaining impartial and insuring the highest degree of confidentiality is extremely challenging, because HR reports to the leadership that also serves as their boss. This invites a high incidence of confidentiality leaks and under reporting to remain loyal and useful to the CEO, and justly their existence. Typically, they are not experts in the human dynamic and are not equipped to resolve underlying conflict and sabotage. They often give off subtle "cues" appear compassionate but do not invite honest reporting from employees. Because of their unique role they can adopt an altitude of policing and believing they are untouchable. This can manifest into overextending their scope of knowledge creating a false power base. They are a necessary and convenient service to aid and educate employees, assist on pre-employment interviews and conduct exit interviews. They are supposed to "know the pulse" of the employee culture and serve as an advocate for change. They are the supposed to be custodians of employee secrets and agents of change, to insure legal compliance and fairness in the workplace.

The reality is that they are reluctant and intimidated in giving vital feedback that might shed poor light on themselves or the management. They believe they are acting professionally but are careless and not disciplined in representing the whole truth. Essentially, they have a tendency to "act" as an employee advocate, but typically tell management what they want to hear. Many companies employ outside HR agencies to insure confidentiality and reduce the in-house bias. Others do not want to invest financial resources in the appropriate selection and rigorous training of a professional HR department. There has to be an initial commitment from executive management to empower the HR department to represent and advice based on employee feedback.

All employees must have consistent respect, trust, and collective confidence that their legitimate concerns and complaints will improve the culture. All grievances and inter-departmental areas of conflict, sabotage, and unprofessional conduct should be dealt with professionally. Only in this way can a company's most valued resources, the employee, transform new growth and establish a culture of professionalism that invites team work, empowerment, peak performance and cultural satisfaction.

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***Michael Allawos**
President & CEO
Principal Consultant
California, USA*

***Larry Vertal**
Senior Consultant
Corporate Development
California, USA*

***Ambassador Werner
Brandstetter**
International Diplomat &
Strategist, Vienna*

***Albert van Rensburg**
Senior Consultant
International Bus. Dev.
Guateng, South Africa*

***James Kohlhaas**
Senior Consultant
Systems Integration
Washington DC, USA*

***Dennis Alfieri**
Senior Consultant
Real Estate/Gov. Affairs
California, USA*

***Stephanie Jones**
Senior Specialist
Employee Relations
California, USA*

***Jim Shivers**
Senior Specialist
Water Treatment
California, USA*

***Magnus Caspar**
Senior Consultant
Basel, Switzerland*

***Dr. David French**
Senior Consultant, Human
Development
California, USA*

***Alex Kam**
International Trade Specialist
China & Hong Kong*

More information is available at
<http://www.allawosandcompany.com>
or by calling (626) 335-5015 or (626) 824-4546