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SA'S BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

BY HARRIET DICKS, NORMAN SMITH AND PROF NICO MARTINS

ALL COMPANIES ARE SEARCHING FOR THE BEST PEOPLE WHO WILL DRIVE PROFITABILITY, PRODUCTIVITY, COMPETITIVENESS AND A DYNAMIC ORGANISATION. IT IS WELL PROVEN THAT PROFITABILITY IS POWERED BY THE EFFECTIVE USE OF PEOPLE. IN FACT, MORE THAN HALF OF THE WORLD'S "MOST ADMired COMPANIES" (FORTUNE MAGAZINE) ARE ALSO RATED AMONG THE "BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR". FORTUNE'S 1998 LIST OF THE MOST ADMired GLOBAL COMPANIES POINTS TO A SINGLE BEST PREDICTOR OF OVERALL EXCELLENCE: THE ABILITY TO ATTRACT, MOTIVATE AND RETAIN TALENTED PEOPLE (CHARLTON, 2000).

THE WAR FOR TALENT IN SOUTH AFRICA IS INCREASING AS MORE AND MORE HIGHLY QUALIFIED PEOPLE ARE RECRUITED BY INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES.

"How do we retain our intellectual capital?" is a question that is challenging many in this country. According to Nicola Tyler (HR Future, March 2001) a conservative estimate of 282 qualified South Africans are leaving the country every month. What irreplaceable knowledge and experience is leaving with them, and what are they leaving behind?

Deloitte & Touche Human Capital Corporation (HCC) together with the Financial Mail launched an annual survey in South Africa to determine who the best employers are and to ascertain what attracts, motivates and retains talented people to an organisation.

PURPOSE OF THE SURVEY
The survey is aimed at establishing the comparative ability of South African organisations to attract and retain talented employees. Various aspects could be considered when the best companies to work for are analysed. In a recent publication of the Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut (AHI), a comprehensive study was conducted to determine the most innovative and progressive companies in South Africa. It focuses on macro criteria (financially stable, enjoy market success, enjoy status and good reputation) and micro criteria (salary, benefits/work environments, recruitment, career opportunities and development, job security/handling corporate change and the human face of the company).

This survey used a slightly different approach (figure 1) in determining the Best Companies to Work For. In order to differentiate the survey, both employer and employee perceptions as well as external market perceptions have been analysed. The role players in the project were:
>
> The participating companies' Chief Executives, who completed an employer questionnaire;
>
> An employee questionnaire that was completed by 50 to 200 randomly selected employees;
A focus group of elected employee representatives in organised labour, to obtain answers to the main questions posed in the employer and employee questionnaires;

> Leading recruitment firms who rated the participating companies in terms of their candidates' views about their desirability as employers; and

> The ranking of the Best Companies to Work For by a panel of experts from business, employer representatives and heads of Business Schools.

Just as in the case of the Fortune 100 Best Companies to Work For in USA, this survey's participation numbers suffered from a fear of organisations to expose themselves to the intense scrutiny of the South African survey. Now that results, summaries and benefits are open for all participants to see, the survey will grow in its ability to influence decision-making by talented individuals about which are amongst the Best Companies to Work For in South Africa.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

In total, 1,955 employees from 42 companies participated in the survey. The results of the survey provide revealing information on how to attract, motivate and retain the best talent. The overall results indicate that the most positive or highly ranked dimensions by employees are:

> Trust & Relationships;
> Job Satisfaction; and
> Leadership.

Chief Executives perceive the most positive or highest ranking areas in their companies as:

> Policies and Procedures;
> Change;
> Diversity; and
> Leadership.

The areas that provide the most useful feedback for future company attention are those that were measured as the most negative in the perceptions of employees in particular. Employer negatives are those areas already recognised by CEOs as in need of attention.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>EMPLOYERS</th>
<th>EXECUTIVES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rewards and Recognition</td>
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<td>Management Information</td>
<td>Training and Development</td>
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<td>Change which has occurred</td>
<td>Management Information</td>
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<td>Change</td>
<td>Performance Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Change which has occurred</td>
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A more detailed analysis of the results showed that more than 85% of all participating employees agreed that the following...
related.

In summary, it appears as if the mismanagement of change, poor communication, poor management of remuneration and the way Employment Equity is implemented are some of the aspects that lower employee commitment.

THE BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

After summarising all the results from the 42 participating companies, the panel of adjudicators ranked the following as the top ten best companies to work for:

- RMB
- Eli Lilly
- DAV
- Coronation
- Liberty Life
- MTN
- Nedcor
- Standard Bank
- Escher Group

It must be taken into consideration that only 42 companies participated due to internal changes, restructuring or other problems in other companies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SA COMPANIES

The results of the audit indicate a clear difference between the Best Companies to Work For and the traditionally orientated organisations (figure 2). It appears that although the remuneration package is, as always, important to employees, factors like relationships, job satisfaction, trust and good leadership are very high on their lists. The areas that employees perceive as important are the way change is managed and implemented as well as the