



The University of Texas System Employee Advisory Council Career Development Committee

Report

In May 2013, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Workplace Forecast reported that one of the Top 10 workplace trends for 2013 and beyond includes “Greater economic uncertainty and market volatility.” The University of Texas System is one of the nation’s largest systems of higher education, with nine academic institutions and six health institutions that educate more than 216,000 students and employ 87,000 faculty and staff. Such a forecast has the potential to affect the workforce of those within the industry of higher education in several ways: reduction in force (RIF) and/or hiring freezes; salary/merit increase suspensions; and dissatisfaction with compensation studies and job titles. On a more personal front, employees may also begin to experience low-morale, anxiety, fear, and a possible sense of demoralization because of this type of uncertainty. Circumstances like those mentioned can have a profound effect on the local institution staff as well as the U.T. System employee-base as a whole. Presently, U.T. System has two institutions that are merging because of forecasts like that of SHRM- UT Pan American and U.T. Brownsville. Personnel of both universities are now faced with the affects mentioned earlier: reduction in force and/or hiring freezes, etc. and concerns have been raised.

An appeal was submitted to the Employee Advisory Council on behalf of employees of U.T. Pan American to:

- Improve retention rates and improve overall staff satisfaction by initiating system and institutional response(s) to the said affects.
- Identify and inquire effective and supportive solutions for affected staff.
- Conduct research (i.e. surveys) to compare compensation processes and compensation levels for similar positions across System.
- Consider System-wide recommended job titles and, in some cases, compensation levels for consistency across institutions.

Upon receipt of the proposed issue, The Workforce Satisfaction/Career Ladder committee was formed. However, after careful review it was decided by the committee to defer the forecasting component to that of professionals and consider the perspective of the individual employee (contributor) instead. The committee’s rationale was that while there is not much that an employee can do about today’s market volatility and undesirable outcomes, action could be taken by way of identifying and inquiring effective and supportive solutions for those affected.

Objective

By taking this stance, the name of the committee was then changed to The Career Development Committee to better reflect its objective, which is to empower the workforce to invest in themselves via a career development plan in order to support and/or ensure satisfaction, retention, and growth when the opportunities avail themselves; especially when encountered with changes within the workforce. The committee recommends the creation of an employee career resources toolkit that would include topics such as workforce productivity, retention, satisfaction, engagement, communications, and work-life balance. The optimal hope of return of investment for such a resource would be: trust, ownership, commitment, professional and personal growth, a sense of worth, acquisition of transferrable skills, marketability, and potential job security/sustainability for the employee.

Evaluation

In order to discover best methods to empower the workforce, the committee decided to perform two actions: 1) assess which institutions offer leadership programs to their staff and 2) to gain the perspective of those that could potentially be affected by such an event- the individual contributor.

The committee designed and distributed a survey to all of the members of the U.T. System Employee Advisory Council. The goal of this survey was to learn about leadership programs that are made available to faculty, staff, administrators/managers, and students at the various UT component institutions. See Appendix A. To date, 14 of the 15 institutions responded to the survey. Of the 14 institutions that completed the survey, 13 of them offer their workforce staff leadership programs on their campuses. Overall, 12 of 13 institutions have deemed their programs successful, while the one institution cites the format in which the program is provided has been ineffective. See Appendix B.

The purpose for the employee perspectives, both manager and staff, is to show the vantage points of how each stakeholder is effected by such change. The desired outcome for the employee (individual contributor) is to gain insight on how best to move forward towards enriching one's self whether facing economic uncertainties or not. See Appendix C & D.

Employee Enrichment- Career Resources Toolkit

Employee enrichment is vital to the employee, manager, and organization overall. All involved benefit from career development efforts performed by the individual contributor. The individual contributor benefits by strengthening their skillset and abilities to meet the expected goals of self and their managers while the institution benefits by an increase in the employee's productivity, engagement, and satisfaction. Virtually, every member of the U.T. System workforce has the potential to profit from the enrichment process.

The Career Development Committee of the Employee Advisory Council recommends that the Board of Regents for the University of Texas System endorse the creation and development of a career resources toolkit for the employees of the health institutions and universities within UT System to ensure provision of career development tools and best practices to empower the workforce to invest within themselves.

Format

The Career Development Committee has identified several resources necessary for the individual contributor to accomplish their goals through use of the toolkit. The following items are recommended for inclusion within the toolkit:

- ❖ Individual Development Plan- a resource to aid employees in aligning their career growth and objectives with that of the department and institution. To increase the impact, the plan is to be supported by the manager or supervisor to ensure that the development objectives of the individual contributor are realistic and measurable.
- ❖ Formal training within the institution
- ❖ Coaching/Mentoring
- ❖ Educational and motivational literature (e.g. books, other print and electronic media)
- ❖ External education (e.g. collegiate curriculum; SkillSoft)

The committee recommends that the Career Development Toolkit be housed on the U.T. System Employee Advisory Council (EAC) website to ensure accessibility for all within the workforce.

Ultimately, the purpose of a Career Development Toolkit is to assist the U.T. workforce in achieving an intrinsic motivation for enrichment. In doing so, the individual strengthens their skillset and abilities in addition to experiencing an upsurge in confidence, worth, marketability, and potential sustainability (job security). Engagement and satisfaction are the ancillary benefits for the Manager or Supervisor by assisting their employees in achieving their career goals within the institution. The organization will have added value to itself as such a resource yields trust, commitment, pride, and ownership of its employees because they will have recognized that executive leadership has made the investment to help its workforce.

Attachments

Appendix A – Staff Leadership Survey

Appendix B- Staff Leadership Survey Report

Appendix C- Individual Contributor/Employee Perspective

Appendix D- Managerial Perspective

Sample Individual Development Plan

Sample Career Development Reading List

Sample “How To” Manual – Management and Leadership Development Program

Website Resources- Website links for Career Enrichment