

Leading Through Growth

HotChalk

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Assignment 4

HotChalk

HotChalk has been successful in business so far with just 25 employees, but now needs to expand in order to effectively handle new customer contracts. The company aims to expand to a size of 85 employees in the near future in order to accommodate three new teams, one per new university contract. To this end, HotChalk needs to identify and promote internal leadership in order to lead these new teams. Additionally, the company needs to identify best practices for expansion and the recruitment and training of new employees. The remainder of this document will attempt to outline best practices for the growth of HotChalk through its next stage of expansion.

Developing Internal Leadership

One-On-Ones

Identifying candidates for internal leadership requires communication, and employees should be talking to their direct managers on a regular cadence to discuss their aspirations, career goals, and interpersonal challenges. The cadence for these meetings need not be uniform for every employee, but a weekly one-on-one with a direct manager and a quarterly 'skip level' one-on-one with upper management is a good benchmark for most employees.

During their weekly one-on-ones with employees, managers at HotChalk should be discussing employees' futures at the company. This will give management a greater understanding of which, if any, employees are interested in advancing into positions of leadership within the company. One-on-ones also give managers insight into how other employees view the leadership potential of their coworkers in order to form better decisions about which employees to promote into management roles.

Peer Feedback

One-on-ones are a great way to gather feedback on the leadership potential of employees, but not all coworkers feel comfortable sharing this kind of information freely. Enter anonymously collected peer feedback. Peer feedback should be a regular quarterly process at HotChalk. Employees should be prompted for feedback on two to three preselected coworkers as well as their manager, and that feedback should be scrubbed and anonymized before being presented to the subject of the feedback's manager.

Peer feedback can help draw attention to concerns within the employees of the company that are more subtle than to be obvious to management, or more difficult to discuss than would be comfortable in a one-on-one. Peer feedback can also be a great way to draw attention to the potential for an employee's promotion. Employees with a lot of leadership potential may not know it or may have never considered advancement into a management role, but if management receives unanimous positive feedback on their leadership capacity it can bring up the idea.

Mentoring

Once potential candidates for management promotion have been identified they need to be trained, and there's not better training than that on the job. While management could send employees off to seminars about leadership, the most effective strategy would be for potential managers to be mentored by the current managers. Shadowing a current manager will give an employee the best possible grasp on what is expected of them, how leadership within HotChalk works, and what their potential new role would mean for their career.

Expansion Change Plan

Clear Communication

As HotChalk begins growing there needs to be clear communication as to what is happening and what the expectations are. Employees unaware of or surprised by changes in the company will be less likely to perform as effectively as possible, and the current experienced employees are key in expansion. Employees should be made aware of the current growth target of 85 employees, the reasons behind the expansion, the potential for existing teams to be shuffled, and the need for internal managers to rise up to support the new employees.

Limiting Team Size

Team size is proven to have a large effect on the effectiveness of employees and the team. Determining a maximum effective team size at HotChalk is important to gauge how many management and support staff will be necessary in order to make the company work at peak efficiency.. As new employees come into the company they will need additional support, mentoring, and guidance, making team size additionally important. Managers with too many reports will be unable to adequately support new hires on their team, causing the entire team to suffer.

New Employee Training

Employee Handbook

If HotChalk does not already have a thorough and clear employee handbook, it needs to create one. The employee handbook should be easy to find, easy to search, and most importantly stay up to date with changes in the company's policies and culture. An employee handbook gives new and current employees an easy way to locate information about the company, their benefits, policies, and the culture in clear and certain terms.

Onboarding

Onboarding is an integral element of introducing new employees to the company, their team, and the management. Employees can't reach their peak efficiency unless they're comfortable in their position and with their team, which makes onboarding so important. New employees should begin receiving communication about their role and the expectations prior to their start date, so they're aware of the onboarding schedule and company training. Once employees are in the office, they should be guided through the employee handbook, the company's benefits package, and the team and management structure. Employees should then be introduced to the management staff and their team. Expect at least the first week for a new employee to be fully unproductive.

Mentoring

To get new employees to peak efficiency they need to know how to fulfill their roles in the company. The best way to do this is to pair each new employee with an experienced employee for several weeks. At first, new employees will be merely shadowing their mentor to learn the basics of the job, but as time goes on mentees will transition to being in control of the process and mentors will be shadowing them to ensure they're taking the proper steps. Once the mentor is confident that their mentee is ready to fly solo, the new employee is finally ready to contribute fully to the team and the mentor can take on a more ad-hoc advisory role. While the upfront cost of pairing mentors and mentees can be higher, the speed at which new employees become fully productive and their quality of work easily make up for the initial productivity loss on the team.

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