

# Go for employment-driven learning and development

There is no minimum wage rate in some Asian cities. Hence, retailers there will set their own wage rate based on what their business models can bear and what they think is fair.

When Indonesia implemented a minimum wage rate in 1989, it resulted in a higher payroll for most retailers. This, in turn, meant that the retailers would naturally expect their workers to perform at the required competencies in their jobs to justify the higher costs.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities, personal characteristics and other “worker-based” factors that help to differentiate superior performance from average performance under specified circumstances. Competencies are identified to clearly define the essential functions of the job.

With a minimum wage rate, the need to link pay to performance is critical to generate a positive rate of return on payroll.

Today’s retail environment is fiercely competitive. With emerging retail concepts such as omni-channel, retailers need to go beyond processing transactions to building communities. They need to perform brand activation to bring their brands to life to encourage positive participation and deepen emotive association — physically or digitally. Workers’ ability to engage customers through experiential retailing and service excellence becomes key.

In this context, generic content-based learning and development that does not relate to the challenges at the workplace context will not help to enhance workers’ competitiveness.



When workers know what is expected of them in terms of job performance, what lies ahead in terms of their career progression, and are equipped to perform at their peak, they will be able to contribute to the company. In time, it also translates into an effective retention and recruitment strategy.

Instead, retailers should consider adopting employment-driven learning and development. They should, from the outset, consider the roles and tasks that the workers are hired to do to enhance their business success.

Starting with the retailers’ mission, vision, core values and strategic planning, they can then identify and profile the right type of workers to form a career progression pathway (Figure 1). With this career progression pathway, the professionalism of retailers is raised as workers are able to sense their contribution and progression in their companies. They can then plan for their careers with a purpose.

The required competencies are mapped with each job title, thus communicating the mindset, knowledge and skills required. This provides clarity to the workers. It also promotes professional development planning as workers are now empowered to determine their performance gaps by benchmarking their actual performance against their required competencies and act on them.

Faster learners can move ahead and work on their competencies for the next higher expanded job based on the career progression pathway. This creates a pipeline of qualified workers ready to be deployed as and when the business expands.

Based on the performance gaps identified, employment-driven curriculum and learning approaches that integrate vocational content with the essential skills can be offered to workers for their continuous learning and development.

Appointing workers with exemplary performance as workplace coaches can also facilitate learning at the workplace.

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