

Article:

WORK HARDER, OR DIE

Read with interest in a recent newspaper article some thoughts by Ratan Tata, the boss of Tata Group, the Indian conglomerate which owns what used to be British Steel and Jaguar Land Rover, which makes it Britain's largest manufacturing employer. His thoughts questioned the 'work ethic' especially of British managers and he pronounced, that in his experience, none of his managers were prepared to 'go the extra mile' in his British manufacturing businesses. He qualified this pronouncement by stating that managers would duck out of meetings at 5pm pleading they had a train to catch to go home and "Friday, from 3.30pm, you can't find anybody in the office". He warned Britain, which has fallen from fourth to twelfth in the Davos World economic Forum's global competitiveness rankings, that if it didn't change this work ethic and compete more effectively, its businesses would die out.

Much is written about the British manager and the long hours culture. But hours at work are not synonymous with either commitment or performance. My experience tells me that many managers are short of knowledge and skills to perform at the highest level and are not fully equipped to help their organisations secure competitive advantage and continuous improvement. Is this an indictment on top management who fail middle and first line managers or is it an inbuilt complacency among managers who 'clock the hours' but fail to 'clock the performance'? Perhaps that is the sixty four thousand dollar question?

What can be done? Well to start with all levels of management need to improve their management knowledge and skills and acquire greater understanding of what makes the best companies so successful. This can be achieved by investing in good training. There are many first class trainers who will assess needs of managers and produce programmes of

development, either for groups or individuals, all aimed at eliminating serious shortfalls in management competence. Often these programmes will produce, with immediate effect, a step change in performance.

A second area that managers may look at to relieve the pressure and help them manage more effectively is to operate a core-periphery model of labour. Put simply, they have permanent staff for core or principal work activities and temporary staff to cover the rest of the work. Managers often find managing people the most difficult activity, so by outsourcing staffing to a temporary labour supplier they can benefit from: avoiding difficult discussions on staffing levels and possible redundancies; avoid the problems of dealing with absenteeism, lack of performance and poor attitudes; and potentially save on cost. Many of the most successful companies in the UK operate such models of labour dynamics and regularly use employment businesses providing staff regularly or as needed. With this approach you get the staff you need at the time you need and only pay for it when it works. This approach also provides managers with more time to influence high performance operations. HR GO Recruitment with 50 offices stretched across the UK supplies business with over 5,000 temporary workers daily. If you want to know how you can benefit from that service give HR GO Recruitment a call.

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