

TMM talent management



Cornerstone
ONDEMAND

UNITED STATIONERS: TRAINING AND RETAINING YOUNG MANAGERS

Article by Kellye Whitney

Succession planning success rests in one main area: the talent pool. There are specific elements required to augment a complete process, but with a pool of young, promising managers, organizational efforts to establish leadership bench strength have a firm foundation. United Stationers Inc., a wholesale distributor of business, computer and facilities management products, has found value in recruiting diverse talent from college campuses. Providing benefits such as tuition reimbursement to reinforce the company's belief in development helps promote organizational mobility and retain top talent.

"Succession planning for us is really driven by the talent shortage," said George Sanders, vice president of human resources, compensation benefits development and recruitment. "We're in an industry where people with experience in wholesale distribution are hard to come by, and it's something that we try to nurture at the college level through our internship programs. It's also something that we have to be prepared for internally to make sure that we've got the right people to fill critical positions."

Development is a key factor to prepare new and emerging leaders to execute strategic objectives that affect the organization's 5,700 employees and to that end, United Stationers has established several programs for its junior managers, beginning with its internship program.

Company representatives go to colleges and universities that have programs related to the wholesale distribution industry, and promising candidates are brought into the company during the summer to introduce them to the business.

"We're able to see whether there's a fit between our company and the soon-to-be-graduating college students. Hopefully, if there's been a good experience, and they've learned something, and we've learned something from them, we can offer those interns employment," Sanders said. "We also have a fairly sophisticated training curriculum, and that's complemented by on-the-job training. Anytime we have new or less-senior managers in the organization, they can take full advantage of our in-house training and on-the-job training. That helps a lot in their development."

The company formed a relationship with talent and performance management vendor **Cornerstone OnDemand** to deliver online and just-in-time training opportunities that give new and junior managers opportunities to learn at their own pace.

"That training is really important if you are trying to bring a new or less-senior manager up to speed quickly," Sanders said. "And then, of course, we have external seminars, especially in our technical areas such as IT. In the world of quickly changing technology, it's really important for those managers to be able to understand what our system architecture is, what our system requirements are, and they need to learn that quickly. IT is a critical part of our business — it's really what makes our business go."

United Stationers also has implemented a tuition-reimbursement program, which helps encourage training activity and ultimately aids in the retention of talented new and junior managers.

"We've got a very good tuition-reimbursement program," Sanders said. "We encourage people to take advantage of it, and the good news is, in complementing our succession planning process and making sure that we've got talent for the future, over the last three years, we've seen a respectable increase in the usage of our tuition-reimbursement benefits. These are the people that are going to be filling the gaps in our succession plans, and the tuition-reimbursement process just helps speed that along."

“ Management and senior management need a process to think through the future of the organization: What are we going to look like? What do we want to look like? Most importantly, what are the competencies of the future, and what do we need to do to develop those competencies? We use succession planning to have that conversation. ”

About Cornerstone OnDemand

Cornerstone OnDemand help organisations to empower their people and optimise workforce productivity by offering a comprehensive suite of web-based talent management solutions. With Cornerstone, organisations across all industries are addressing key challenges such as new employee onboarding, competency and goal management, 360 assessment, performance, development planning, career pathing, leadership development, certification management, succession planning, learning management, compensation management and social networking.