**Putting the 'person' in personnel**

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*Recently named the world's strongest bank for the second straight year, OCBC Bank leads the way not only through its disciplined approach towards credit and risk management but also its active talent development initiatives. Eric Ong, Head of Emerging Business, Global Enterprise Banking, OCBC Bank, shares how the bank's leaders make the personal effort to groom their talent*

With a history of more than 80 years in Singapore, OCBC is a bank centred on people. The Bank has come a long way from its first days of helping rice merchants continue to trade times of war. This is evident in its sterling performance in recent years. In May this year, Bloomberg Markets magazine announced OCBC as the world’s strongest bank. Also, one in two businesses currently operating in Singapore has an account with the Bank.

The success of the bank is built on the back of sound business policies and active talent management and development.

For instance, within the first three days of a company being incorporated, OCBC will contact them about opening a corporate account with the bank. “The Bank practises the same proactivity when it comes to managing and developing its people,” says Eric Ong, Head of Emerging Business, Global Enterprise Banking, OCBC Bank.

**Career framework**

OCBC takes training and development seriously as human capital is the Bank’s key differentiator. Investment in this area helps to build the capabilities of employees to deliver superior performance.

“Learning is part of the Bank’s ongoing business strategy and helps to create a win-win situation for us and our staff,” says Ong. “By aligning employees’ learning objectives with business goals, we help employees succeed in building a career and not just a job with OCBC.”

OCBC encourages its employees to take charge of their own careers through the Bank’s ‘Career Best’ programme, launched in 2002. This programme involves helping employees evaluate their strengths and career orientation, and finding the best fit between their talents and OCBC’s needs.

The Bank also introduced the ‘OCBC Learning-3’ programme in 2007. A structured three-year development programme for employees, OCBC Learning-3 clearly delineates learning roadmaps for individual employees during their first three years of service with the Bank.

“Underscoring our commitment to training, we have created the OCBC Learning Academy and also dedicated an entire floor at the OCBC Centre, called The Learning Space @ OCBC, for the sole purpose of learning and development,” says Ong.

In addition to the typical classroom training, the Bank has also tapped on learning technologies like eLearning and virtual classrooms. Through the use of Web 2.0 and video conferencing technology the training programmes are now able to reach out to employees in different geographies.

Employees are given the first opportunity to learn of and apply for job-openings within the OCBC group through the Internal Job-Application Programme, in which after 18 to 24 months, an employee has the open to move into another role.

“We want to encourage employees to continually acquire new experiences, knowledge, skills and competencies, and allow individuals to fulfil their career aspirations at different stages of their careers,” Ong explains.

This is especially so for Gen Y staff who constantly seek change and want progression – something to look forward to. They need to feel challenged and recognised for the work they do. If they are ‘stuck in a rut’, performance dips.

“In banking, employees need foundation,” says Ong. “I was once a bank teller. I then moved on to typing bank drafts and the like.”

Leaders walk the talk too. “In my business review, one part is financial numbers and business initiatives, while a large part (50%-60%) is based on the human resources,” says Ong.

   Shalini Shukla-Pandey - 18 Oct 2012 - See more at: http://www.hrmasia.com/content/putting-person-personnel#sthash.Ppc7z2nI.dpuf