

Upskilling to be successful is now a necessity

MORE and more companies are getting fewer and fewer people to do the same amount of work.

Often, despite their responsibilities being increased, managers are simply not equipped skills-wise to deal with the new level and areas of responsibility that are being placed upon them.

Bruce MacDonald, programme director of the Programme for Management Development (PMD) at the University of Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, (GSB), argues that this is leading to employee dissatisfaction and decreased levels of productivity.

It is a trend throughout the world. According to the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) the ranks of middle managers have significantly declined over the past two years while their responsibilities have

continued to grow.

A recent survey by ASTD of 2000 mid-level managers found that "only 11% felt well-prepared to handle their increased responsibilities and challenges over the next two years".

"That means that almost nine out of every 10 mid-level managers lack confidence in their own ability to fulfil their job responsibilities," reports the ASTD.

According to research conducted by the US-based Institute for Corporate Productivity, managers are being stretched thin as companies restructure in an effort to increase efficiency while expanding the number of direct reports a manager has.

The research, released in September 2010, shows the number of employees managers are responsible for will continue to grow in

the future; a situation for which many managers are ill-prepared.

"Companies looking to further flatten their organisational structures need to weigh efficiency and agility gains against disengagement and burnout among middle managers – or all managers, for that matter," said David Wentworth, Senior Analyst at the Institute for Corporate Productivity.

MacDonald says that it is vital that organisations recognise the importance of developing their managers and foster the ability to think strategically, lead change, create vision, and rally others around it.

In order to equip managers with the skills to increase their ability to deal with the additional responsibility and skills that are required, the PMD at the GSB aims to provide managers with

heightened self-confidence in their existing competencies, and enhance their abilities in new areas in order to offer substantial return on investment (ROI).

MacDonald comments that research has shown that companies that develop their managers have a higher employee retention rate.

"Replacing managers who have moved on is an expensive business, and investment in management development can easily pay for itself in reduced employee turnover," he says.

The GSB's Programme for Management Development is not lecture-driven.

"We believe that 80% of the learning should come from the individuals themselves; we encourage open debate, discussion and discourse, as well as the challenging of perceptions.

"This approach is particularly effective, considering the substantial experience that participants bring to the programme," he says.

"They are generally experienced functional managers. They come to us as specialists, and we equip them with the 'Jack of all trades' perspective that is crucial at higher levels of management. General managers are, by definition, generalists."

PMD is targeted at mid- to senior-level managers and is the GSB's longest-established management development programme. – TNA 701079

The next PMD runs from May 8 to 21 and then again from August 28 to September 10. Contact Junita Abrahams on 021 406 1323 or SMS "PMD" to 31497 for more information.