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Work Organisation and Innovation - Case Study: ROFF, Portugal

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Work Organisation and Innovation - Case Study: ROFF, Portugal

Abstract

[Excerpt] Founded in 1996, ROFF is a Portuguese firm dedicated to the implementation of SAP solutions. Since its early days, the company has grown significantly and currently employs just over 500 people. It has offices in Lisbon, Oporto and Covilha in Portugal, in Luanda (Angola), Paris, Stockholm and Casablanca. The company has also developed projects in many other European countries as well as in other African, South and North American countries and China. More than 50% of the sales turnover is based on international projects. In 2011 ROFF had consultants operating in 44 different countries. ROFF's main direct competitors include firms like Accenture, Deloitte and Cap Gemini.

Keywords

work organization, innovation, ROFF

Comments

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Work organisation and innovation

Case study: ROFF, Portugal

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Background to the organisation

Founded in 1996, ROFF is a Portuguese firm dedicated to the implementation of SAP¹ solutions. Since its early days, the company has grown significantly and currently employs just over 500 people. It has offices in Lisbon, Oporto and Covilha in Portugal, in Luanda (Angola), Paris, Stockholm and Casablanca. The company has also developed projects in many other European countries as well as in other African, South and North American countries and China. More than 50% of the sales turnover is based on international projects. In 2011 ROFF had consultants operating in 44 different countries. ROFF's main direct competitors include firms like Accenture, Deloitte and Cap Gemini.

The majority of ROFF's workforce is composed of graduates with an IT background and a speciality in SAP – 209 of the company's consultants are certified by this technology provider. The nature of their activity, developing and implementing IT solutions for different clients, is based purely on people delivering services to clients. Therefore, their business can only be successful if based on committed and satisfied employees. The company founders are well aware of this and have developed a company culture and a working environment that promotes patterns of high individual engagement.

The company's activity also implies that the consultants spend significant periods of time at the client's premises. These periods may last for several months or even more than one year. Such a situation implies that the company has in place mechanisms to compensate their employees' efforts to be away from home for these long periods and ensure at the same time that these employees do not lose their sense of belonging to the company.

Some years ago the company management defined growth and internationalisation as two key strategic objectives. However they did not want to jeopardise the strong focus that the company has always had on the welfare, motivations and satisfaction of their employees.

The organisation experienced high growth from 2004 onwards, reaching 300 employees in 2009 and 500 in 2011. In 2006 the company saw considerable international expansion, which contributed significantly to the growth in headcount. In the face of this growth ROFF's challenge was to maintain the same work environment with large numbers of employees based in different locations.

It seems this challenge was successfully addressed. The company has demonstrated in recent years that it was capable of translating its traditional practices into well-defined processes and policies. In taking this step, it adopted policies that are characteristic of some of the largest, most innovative and well managed companies around the world. One example of such policies is the performance management process which was recently implemented, another is the 'refer a friend' recruitment policy. In terms of training the company has also introduced a much more structured approach, and the induction process of new employees has evolved significantly.

This case study describes how this process happened. It is based on six individual interviews with different employees and managers and a focus group including another six different employees.

Nowadays, 17 years after the company was established, it still retains much of the atmosphere it had in the beginning. The way people relate to one another within the company, combining solid professionalism and a dedication to clients with a sense of belonging and a genuine pleasure in being in the workplace, has changed little even though there are now 500 employees.

¹ SAP is the market leader in enterprise application software.

But the story of this company was not always one of growth. In 2002–2003 the market in which it operated had a declined drastically. In view of the decline in activity the management had two options basic: reduce the number of employees by making redundancies or reducing the salaries of all employees and keeping the same level of employment. The second option was proposed by the management and unanimously accepted by the employees. In parallel the company implemented additional training and new solutions development to make the best use of the employees' available time. This proved to be a very good option because it kept staff invested in their training while they were not very busy and then when the market recovered they were in a very good competitive position which allowed the company to increase their market share and become the leader in their sector.

Their current head office in Lisbon is a three-storey 500 m² open-plan space with a few offices, all with glass walls.

Nature of the innovation

ROFF has a strong company culture that in large part can be explained by the personality characteristics of the four company founders. A common reference that came across in the different interviews is the so-called 'ROFF DNA' as the basis for this company culture. This accounts for the strong influence that the four company founders had on the way things are done at ROFF.

The company places special emphasis on creating a work environment where employees feel relaxed, can have fun and can also interact easily with each other. This environment promotes a spirit of teamworking among the employees.

An indicator of this is the fact that 95% of employees stated that 'We enjoy a team or family spirit at ROFF' in the 'Great Place to Work Institute' survey.

The working atmosphere is informal and relaxed, although people work hard and intensively. This is in line with other IT companies, some of them very well-known brands, and famous for their working environments. Although there may have been an intention to follow the model of those large well-known companies in creating this special type of working environment, in the case of ROFF their founder's personality seemed to have played a key role in this respect.

As part of the office equipment they have a powerful sound system, and occasionally on Friday afternoon loud music is played, creating a kind of nightclub atmosphere even as the work goes on. A story is often told about one of the founders, who had the habit of throwing rubber anti-stress balls of different sizes to colleagues, late in the afternoon, while hiding behind his desk. Those balls would be thrown back and a kind of 'rubber ball war' would take place in the office.

This playful side of the company contributes significantly to the positive and inclusive work environment.

The statement from an employee who joined recently illustrates well this situation. She said she was able to perceive those good practices, the so-called 'ROFF spirit', from her first days of employment. She experienced the strong team spirit that exists in the company and the accessibility to the top management as a consequence of the open door policy and flat hierarchical structure. This employee had also had the breakfast with the management which she found to be a very positive experience in an informal, fun and collaborative atmosphere.

In summary, the special and enthusiastic work environment that exists in this company can be considered as resulting from the combined several factors:

- Management style and flat and non-hierarchical structure;
- Internal communication with a focus on listening to the employee voice;
- A strong sense of belonging where success is celebrated by all;
- Flexible work arrangements.

Altogether these practices make the employees feel well cared for and relaxed, and as a consequence they work better and provide a more valuable contribution. These four practices are described in greater detail below.

Management style and flat and non-hierarchical structure

The management style in this company promotes the autonomy and responsibility of each employee, with a real focus on achieving the objectives related to the project on which they are working. As such there is a great emphasis on managing each employee in the scope of the project they are allocated to.

It is critical for managers to know whether employees are satisfied with their current project role and responsibilities. Managers noted in interviews that one of their key tasks is to plan the project's resource allocation on the basis of the different employees' expectations and current desires. When the project is under way they have to follow up on these matters and take corrective actions when things are not progressing as desired.

Employees interviewed for this case study confirmed that they feel well cared for by managers, who demonstrate a real concern about their needs and personal and professional satisfaction. At the same time employees appreciate the positive reinforcement they receive from management whenever their contribution deserves it.

Several employees mentioned that in companies where they had worked previously the management focus was on asking more and more without recognising individual effort, which eventually tends to demotivate employees. At ROFF things are different.

The company has a very flat structure with managers having a large span of control. As an example one of the managers interviewed is responsible for 58 people. These 58 consultants are then allocated to different projects where they work as consultants or project managers and so in the scope of those projects they are managed in a different way, but still this manager is responsible for those 58 individuals and he has a close contact with each of them. He knows where they are, what work they are involved with, if they are satisfied with their current assignment, if they like the client they are working with and what type of difficulties they may be facing. What is surprising is that in addition to managing these 58 individuals this manager also works as a consultant himself.

From the organisation's top management to the bottom there are only three levels. This is a clear indicator of how flat and lean this organisation is.

The notion of hierarchy as associated with permanent positions does not exist in this company. Everyone knows that one day they can be managing a project and the next day they could be just a consultant in another project managed by someone else. This notion of a flat organisation where the power of hierarchy is not felt overall all the time is an important reference shared among employees. Top managers reinforce that reality through their behaviour. A consequence of this is the increased sense of responsibility that employees exhibit, which translates into commitment to deliver the required results.

In contrast with other companies, the career perspective at ROFF is closely associated with the possibility of working on different projects and other assignments. Compensation is closely related to performance, so that employees have the possibility of improving their pay if their results improve. The company has a policy of using internal resources as much as possible, especially for new projects and other functions with increased responsibilities. This does not mean, however, that everyone needs to be a high performer. On the contrary, the company recognises that an employee may have a lower profile and less ambitious attitude, either for a certain period of time or permanently. The company is flexible in the approach to the individual's needs and performance. If an employee is not performing well because something is not going well in the project to which they are allocated, or because they require training or coaching, the company tries to provide the needed help to overcome those needs or gaps. However if the employee is satisfied with his/her current performance although this may be below that of other colleagues, with his/her manager's agreement the company can accept that and no corrective actions are necessarily put in place.

The openness and closeness in the relationship between manager and employee makes it possible to have this type of approach in dealing with the different cases and trying to find a unique and appropriate solution to each one. This is a clear legacy of the founders' management style and way of operating.

Internal communication and listening to the employee's voice

There are several internal communication processes in place to support this special work environment. The company culture reinforces open and fluid communication among all employees and management. During interviews several individuals mentioned that in this company nobody criticises anything without making a suggestion. This is not necessarily a company norm but a type of behaviour that employees adopt and exhibit through learning with each other. People know that they can influence things and so they feel motivated to make suggestions for improvements or just produce opinions or even criticisms about what is going on in the company. Employees interviewed for this case study noted that unlike some other companies where it is difficult or even impossible to talk about what is wrong, at ROFF people feel they have the space and opportunity to talk about what needs to change.

The company has regular events to promote internal communication including: the annual kick-off, an outdoor meeting with all employees held during the first quarter, during which the top management presents the previous year results and the current year's strategy and objectives. This is webcast to all staff who are remotely located. Another event is the ROFF weekend attended by the management and senior consultants when the company anniversary is celebrated and a deeper strategic discussion takes place.

newsROFF is a bimonthly newsletter with several sections about the business, projects, new solutions, corporate social responsibility activities, articles by employees describing some of their personal experiences and information about the company and employee-related topics such as babies born to ROFF staff.

In the focus group held for this case study, the participants talked about the spirit of collaboration that exists between the firm's top management and the rest of the employees. Their work is mainly executed at the client's premises and so they have to cooperate well with the clients. Because the ROFF workers have an excellent relationship among themselves this situation is easily transferred to the clients.

Internal communication is an area that was also cited by some employees as deserving added attention as a consequence of the growth in recent years. For example, it was noted that it is sometimes difficult to access certain types of information because not always is clear where the information can be found.

A new initiative in this field is the development of an internal social network in order to bring more efficiency to the internal communication field. This idea of the internal social network is related to the fact that the company believes email is not as effective as in the past, especially with the younger workers. With social networks, such as Facebook, people are able to structure the way they use the network so that they only have to read about the things that matter to them. This cannot be done through using email. Hence the company wants to develop its own social network to facilitate communication. The project is ongoing and its results are not yet known. However it is a demonstration of the way the company searches continuously for alternatives to achieve its objectives, trying to adapt to changes or even anticipating them.

The first responsibility managers have is to listen to their employees and understand what their motivations are. Then the company will act in accordance with the situation, taking the necessary actions to tackle any potential mismatches.

The company activity is based on projects that typically last for several months and involve teams composed of different individuals. When defining the team structure for each project it is critical that there is a good understanding of each individual's motivation and availability for that project, taking into account its characteristics, duration, location, etc. It's important that this understanding takes place before the project starts, and not when it is already running or at the end.

Paying special attention to each employee is probably one of the strongest legacies of the founders' attitude to work. It is expected that business or client pressure will not always allow things to work in this way. Nevertheless it seems that the company is flexible enough to find solutions for different situations and managers in general believe they have a special responsibility in this domain.

The activities that support this process of listening to the employee voice are the following:

- Suggestion box: there is an email suggestion box where people can send their suggestions and opinions for improving working conditions. The suggestions received are analysed by a team of five people from different departments who assess their potential implementation. These suggestions may be related to the way work is done, to benefits employees would like to have or to services delivered to clients. Each year the three best solutions are awarded a prize. The breakfast shared by management and new employees is an example of a practice adopted following a suggestion made through this channel. All suggestions received are presented to the company board.
- Open door policy: each employee knows that they can access any manager, whatever their level is, at any time and for whatever reason. Illustrative of this was a statement by the senior director saying that when in the office his time tends to be taken up with talking on an individual basis with different employees. When he happens to have the door closed because he is holding a meeting, people tend to book up his next available slots with his secretary. When he needs to do any work that requires special concentration, he tends to stay at home because at the office he will not have the chance to do it. The principle underlying this policy is that any employee can at any time talk with a senior top manager about any issue.

A strong sense of belonging

The sense of belonging is a topic that came across in several of the interviews carried out for this case study. Employees noted that when they are working in projects out of Portugal, sometimes for extended periods of time, this sense of belonging does not disappear. On the contrary, managers have the good habit of keeping in touch with expatriated employees on a regular basis, perhaps every day, to enquire about how things are progressing, how they are feeling, etc. When working abroad employees still feel supported by the central office-based team. The company is also considered to be quite generous in terms of financial support for those who are working away from home.

Because the ROFF employees work at the client's premises they have to adjust to the client's culture and way of working. They have the flexibility to adapt to the client environment. An example is the dress code. In their office the dress code is casual, but if they are working at a company with a formal dress code, then they will dress accordingly. However if the client is casual they will keep casual. This is in contrast with their competitors, who tend to stick to the same formal dress code no matter what habits the client has. This can create a strange situation where consultants spend months working amongst people who are casually dressed.

Another relevant aspect is that the company values the differences between employees, accepts these differences and looks for ways to use each person according to their current situation, availability, and personal life. The management emphasised that in this company not everyone has to be excellent. Some are better than others and the important thing is to find the right place for each one. The company also recognises that in certain moments of one's career, due for example to the birth of a new baby, an employee may wish to work less intensively or even part-time. These needs are well understood, accepted and appropriate arrangements are put in place to deal with it.

This acceptance of different levels of performance as being useful is even more striking because it contrasts with the management philosophy of the company's direct competitors, the so-called Big 5 or Big 4. It is well known that such firms have an underlying principle known as 'Up or out' or 'Grow or go'. This puts employees under pressure to progress

in the organisation by developing their skills, assuming more responsibilities and climbing the pyramid ladder or alternatively they know they will have to leave. This pressure is embedded in the management style of these firms and directly affects the employees' behaviour. At ROFF the situation is different. Employees here feel the pressure of delivering according to what is expected by the client, and will work hard to do what is needed to fulfil that but at the same time they do not live on a daily basis with the pressure of fearing that if they are not the best they may be forced to leave the firm.

Celebrating success

Celebrating successes, whether large or small, is an important way in which the company reinforces the sense of belonging. Several means are used to celebrate various achievements: the management sends an email to all employees announcing that something special has happened, an ad-hoc celebration can be organised in the office, regular company meetings are used to publicly recognise different individual or team achievements, a special outside event may be held to celebrate a certain situation, etc. In parallel the company also promotes the celebration of employees' birthdays by announcing them to all employees, buying cake and champagne and organising a small party. It also marks a new baby's arrival by sending flowers to the mother and distributing photos around the organisation.

The integration of an employee in a team when they start working in a new project is a quick and straightforward process. This is regarded as very positive because employees have to change regularly from project to project.

The strong team spirit that exists across the company makes employees feel very confident that they can achieve anything and be the best in the market. This is obviously very advantageous for the company.

Flexible work arrangements

ROFF provides high flexibility in terms of working time and working place. What is important is that the objective is achieved, not when and where it happens. The main reference in terms of working time schedules is the client's own schedule. Employees working in support-related activities have to adjust their working time schedules to the client's one. Outside of that there is considerable flexibility. The company likes to have people working in the office and they offer the appropriate conditions for people to do that. But employees know that if their personal circumstances require it, they can work from home or from any other place. If there is a need for an employee to work part-time they can request it and are normally given permission.

The nature of the company's activities means that employees sometimes experience work intensification. Employees are aware of this but accept the situation because they know it is inherent to their business. They also feel compensated for it and they know that when necessary they can trade off this flexibility for their own benefit. The flexibility in itself does not lead to work intensification; on the contrary, it helps employees cope with it.

This spirit of flexibility and give-and-take in the company translates into a strong collaborative and team spirit that was referred to by several interviewees. This allows them to count on each other to share best practices, find common solutions to solve problems and promote each other's mutual learning and development. This collaboration mindset contrasts with a more competitive mindset that typically exists in their market competitors.

Process of implementing the innovation

During the early years the process of creating ROFF's distinctive work environment was rather spontaneous and unstructured, reflecting the founders' personalities and working style. When new people were recruited they would adapt easily to this way of working and behave accordingly, because recruitment was also based on personal contacts, friends or relatives of former employees.

When the company started to grow the management realised that some things would have to change and become more structured. The management knew that one of the reasons for their success was the fact that their employees' happiness had a positive impact on clients, who also tended to feel happier. Even more important is the fact that satisfied employees will work better and more effectively with natural consequences for customer satisfaction rates.

At the same time such an environment allows the company to be more effective at retaining talent as well as clients. The company has a low employee attrition rate and also a high client retention rate. An example of this is that their first client, Unilever, is still an active one.

In recent years the company has developed and adopted a number of different processes as described below. This was done with the specific intention of guaranteeing that the basic principles of the company culture and management style are preserved in spite of the significant head-count growth.

On-boarding of new employees

The company aims to ensure that each new employee feels special and unique in the organisation. In other words, they want each new employee to understand and feel that they are not just a cog in the machine, but instead they can make a difference and be an added value.

As such the company puts a special emphasis on the new employees' 'on-boarding' process.

Non-experienced new employees are integrated in groups into the so-called 'ROFF Academy'. This involves a structured programme lasting one month and includes technical and project management training, behavioural training as well as all the general information needed to work in the company.

In the case of experienced new employees there is an individual on-boarding programme.

In both cases, on the first day the new employee is given their 'boarding plan', introduced to their tutor, and presented with the on-boarding manual, which contains all the information they will need for their first days of employment. They also receive a backpack, which is their working bag containing a laptop, mobile phone, passwords and when applicable 3G device, and the company access cards.

Each of the elements involved in the on-boarding, i.e., top management, HR, direct manager and tutor, have specific responsibilities regarding their contribution into the process.

Two to three months after the first day of employment there is an on-boarding validation exercise including an assessment by the tutor and the new employee.

Following the on-boarding process each new employee attends a breakfast with the senior managers during their first few weeks of employment. This meal is used as an opportunity to have a deep conversation about the new employee's experience, expectations, how these have been met so far, whether there have been any problems and if so why. Several employees interviewed for this case study confirmed that these breakfasts work particularly well.

Performance management

Performance management is one process that has evolved significantly during the last two years. Previously this was not formalised and would be done without specific documentation. As a consequence of the significant headcount growth in recent years the company felt the need to formalise the process, which now follows written rules and the same procedures across the organisation. The new performance management system requires objectives to be defined, and competencies to be analysed. Throughout the year information is gathered about the individual's performance and objectives may be reformulated as needed. The performance appraisal has a strong focus on teamwork and employees know that this is a competence that is highly regarded and valued in the company. An electronic system has been developed to support the performance appraisal.

The introduction of this formalised process faced some resistance from some managers and employees. As always the company deals with such resistance, analyses and discusses it as appropriate and where necessary takes action to resolve the situation. A slight modification in the process was introduced this year as a result of an employee suggestion. However, in essence this is a new formalised process that implies a change from the recent past and to a certain extent contrasts with the company's informal nature. The company is committed to make it work and will proceed with its full utilisation.

Training

Training is another area where there has been great progress in recent years. In terms of project management the company has provided extensive training for numerous people, allowing them to apply a unified methodological approach to this area. This represents a break from the past when project management was approached very differently by different people. Currently the company has a continuous offer of training sessions, including language training in English, Spanish and French, and behavioural-type training.

'Refer a friend'

When the company was first founded, employee recruitment was mainly based on personal contacts. In its corporate presentation ROFF has an interesting slide stating that in the early years this was a company where the workforce was made up of people's brother-in-law, girlfriend, cousin, nephew, old colleague, sports buddy, etc. As its needs grew the organisation implemented a process to incentivise employees to refer friends or relatives as candidates for vacant positions. If one of these referred individuals is hired then, after six months, the referral employee receives a prize. Such a process is used by other companies worldwide, having proved to be one of the most effective and economic ways an organisation can identify people with the right skills. This is also a way of strengthening the links between the company and its current employees.

'ROFF Labs'

This is a programme that was created in 2011 and which is based on mini-laboratories where employees can conduct experiments and research technological solutions that may lead to new business areas. This programme provides not only the technological tools but also the time necessary to do such work. This programme facilitates creativity and innovation, giving rise to additional development opportunities. All employees with some seniority are encouraged to participate in this programme. The company believes that it is also useful to have less senior employees participating because this will foster their customer-oriented attitude. New solutions are presented to customers during breakfast meetings, which again is a developmental opportunity because the individual has to make a formal presentation in front of clients and colleagues. Currently the company is selling several solutions that came from this source, for instance, SAP integrated mobile applications for Apple iOS or SAP Interactive Forms by Adobe.

Reactions and challenges

Senior employees have experienced the company growth from a small office where everyone knew each other to a larger organisation where that is no longer possible. In spite of this they recognise the considerable effort the company management makes to find ways of keeping the 'ROFF spirit' alive. These efforts have positive results in the sense that the key characteristics of the original company have been retained and are passed on to new employees. Employees are aware of the conscious effort that the company management puts into dealing with the challenge of growth, and readily recognise that this is mainly a positive achievement.

Employees interviewed for this case study did, however, mention certain shortcomings of the company system. Internal communication, for example, was cited as an area that could be improved. When the company was still small employees found it easy to keep track of who knew what and where to find necessary information. The company has now grown so much that this is no longer the case. Finding out what information is available and where it can be accessed could be made easier. There is a certain frustration with this situation and the company is trying to address that, for example through the internal social network and the more structured on-boarding process for new employees.

Impact on employees

The management style gives employees high levels of autonomy and also promotes a strong sense of responsibility. Employees take this responsibility seriously and enjoy the considerable autonomy they have.

Employees like to know that their opinions are appreciated and taken into consideration. They also like to know that their suggestions are analysed and if of interest are used for the benefit of the company.

The growth and internationalisation that the company has gone through offers possibilities of an international career for their employees. Some employees have decided to move on a permanent basis to other locations where ROFF now has permanent offices. Other employees value the possibility to work abroad for different periods of time. They stated that they feel well compensated by the company for taking on these international assignments and they also value the fact that the company always takes into consideration their personal preferences when making proposals for their project involvement.

Employees also stated that the company growth allows them to work in more and different technical areas which results in a clear skills development opportunity for them. Examples were cited of employees who had had the opportunity to change jobs and/ or technical area every few years.

In spite of the difficult economic environment in Portugal, the company has continued to grow through the international expansion and also continued to develop new services. Altogether this provides development opportunities.

Employees value the management style that exists in the company, and appreciate the fact that they know that their opinions are listened to and taken into consideration. In fact one senior executive interviewed for this case study said that the main responsibility a manager has is to listen to the employees and understand what their motivations are. Then the company will act in accordance with the situation, taking necessary action to tackle any potential mismatches.

In general, managers expressed awareness that the company growth was making it more difficult to keep the same type of management style with a close relationship with employees. Nevertheless there is a common agreement that the company is able to cope in a positive way with this growth and its consequences.

Impact on the organisation

This company operates in a very competitive market traditionally dominated by certain global players like Accenture, Deloitte and Cap Gemini. ROFF managed to gain a top position in the Portuguese market and began expanding internationally. They have now a true global presence, either with a few offices in different locations or with itinerant teams that develop projects in more than 44 countries. This internationalisation has allowed the company to experience a continuous growth which would not have been possible had they remained restricted to the Portuguese market.

The company internationalisation needs a skilled and committed workforce that is flexible enough to work as needed for long periods of time in different locations. The mobility of their employees and their capacity to adjust to different environments allows the company to deliver successfully on the projects in different regions of the world.

The type of skills that ROFF's employees have – SAP implementation experience skills – are in high demand in the market. Even during recent recession years there has been a demand for consultants with SAP expertise. Several employees interviewed noted that they receive job offers from other companies on a regular basis, and they are aware that many other colleagues also receive such offers. Sometimes some of them decide to move because a good offer has been made. In some cases they decide to return to ROFF because they miss the working environment.

The sense of belonging that the company promotes is valued highly by employees and a positive factor in their life. Especially when working abroad or just away from the office, this sense of belonging is even more important. They feel they are part of a bigger team with a common sense of purpose.

Conclusions

This company is a very interesting example of a business success story with a clear win-win focus. Its business is based entirely on employees delivering IT services to clients. The types of skills these employees need to have are scarce in the market and in high demand. To have sustainable growth throughout the years the company needs a loyal and skilled workforce.

The main way to promote this loyalty is by providing employees with the right working conditions and environment. The company wants their employees to feel happy and enthusiastic about working there and succeeds in achieving it. During its first years ROFF would promote these conditions in an informal and unstructured way. It was like a group of friends working together in the same place doing the same job. The role of the company founders, their personal and working characteristics, were crucial in defining the way the company operates. This means that when the company was small, with fewer than 100 employees, things could be done consistently across the organisation without the reference to a written policy. After the workforce grew to 300 and beyond, this was no longer possible. There was a need to formalise some policies so that they could be accessible to everyone and understood and used in the same way by all.

Recent years' experience demonstrated that the company was able to cope with these challenges and translate their original intuitive practices into policies and processes that can be documented and replicated.

The new 'on-boarding' process for new employees and the ROFF Academy are good examples of a process that evolved from an informal to a structured one. The 'refer a friend' recruitment process is another example of a new process developed on the basis of the previous company experience and best market experiences. The company was able to keep the old tradition of celebrating successes and personal events in a much wider context, which is a remarkable achievement. The open-door policy is another process that reflects the old company culture and has been adapted to the current structure, being part of an effective internal communication practice. There is room to improve the access to information in this larger organisation and the company is making efforts in this respect. One area that seems to lack a more formal policy is that of work-life balance. IT consultancy activity may be subject to high work intensity patterns with obvious effects on employees; work-life balance. In this respect things are probably not clear enough, and taking into account that this is a sensitive area for the type of work that the company does, it would be advisable to discuss the topic and take some actions. In terms of performance management, the company is implementing a formal process which so far seems to be progressing well despite resistance from some employees.

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