

40,000 small businesses on the Gold Coast: What's your story?



Your Business

Workplace outcomes call for hands-on staff input

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THE shape of work and workplaces has to change if the corporate world wants to boost productivity and retain talent, according to Gold Coast future of work consultant Libby Sander.

Ms Sander advises businesses on the Coast and across the country how they can cast off the 'industrial age' focus on process and concentrate on outcomes.

"The process-driven model was designed to control people working in factories, not those in our more concept and knowledge-based economy," she said.

The Mt Tamborine-based Ms Sander, who has almost 20 years experience in corporate settings, said it amounted to management giving staff more autonomy and trusting them to get the job done.

"Employers have to relinquish control," she said.

"We don't give people enough opportunity to think for themselves and apply the intelligence that we hope they have.

"Most people want greater choice and flexibility. "Attendance at work and productivity aren't necessarily related."

Ashmore businessman Warren Chapman, of IT business Net Effects, enlisted Ms Sander's help to stem a high staff turnover in an industry in which retention is traditionally difficult.

Taking Ms Sander's advice, Mr Chapman told his staff they could work where and when they wanted as long as they got their work done.

"We took the whole rule book and threw it in the bin," he said.

"It was harder for management to grasp than the staff.

"It went against everything I'd learned in traditional business systems and processes."

Mr Chapman said he even allowed a staff member who was moving to Ireland to work



Libby Sander and Warren Chapman

remotely from the Emerald Isle.

He said staff retention and profitability had risen while his stress levels were down.

Ms Sander said the workplace had to become more like home because people spent so much time there and needed it to be a place that encouraged creativity and motivation.

"Most workplaces are so depressing – all cubicles and grey carpet," she said.

"It should feel user-friendly rather than somewhere you can't wait to get out of. We are seeing table lamps instead of overhead strip lighting, sofas, farmhouse-style kitchen tables in the eating area, boardrooms that feel more like

dining rooms, timber floors, indoor gardens and the creation of intimate, purpose specific zones within the office for different types of work.

"Workplace design isn't a nice-to-have feel-good idea, it is a vital strategy for financial success and competitive sustainability."

See more at libbysander.com