

Employee Engagement

Getting people 'signed up' to making their own contribution to delivering business strategy and improving the organisation's performance.

There was a small gathering at the September HR Networking Luncheon. We had representatives from the legal profession and the construction and energy sectors. The quality and vibrancy of the discussion more than made up for the quantity of participants.

Although the topic drew considerable discussion, it also stimulated wider discussion on HR issues.

The key points that emerged on employee engagement were

- It is important to have trust between 'management' and staff
 - This means being honest with staff about what the organisation can realistically offer, even if this means not being able to satisfy their aspirations
 - Keeping staff 'in the picture' as soon as possible and not leaving the giving of 'bad news' till the last moment – a frequent practice of line managers
 - Empowering staff to take responsibility, make decisions and apply 'discretionary' behaviour
 - This means managers putting their trust in their team members
 - Allowing people 'space' to make their own decisions – not micro-managing them
 - Enabling people to work in the way that **they** feel comfortable, not necessarily the way the boss likes to work

- Developing a meaningful psychological contract
 - Having a reward and recognition policy that rewards success – not a lock step system that rewards service alone
 - Providing learning and development that keeps skills current and maintains career development options
 - Valuing leadership and innovation

- Being an organisation to be proud of being a part
 - Having a good reputation
 - Being a responsible member of the community – corporate social responsibility
 - Being an employer of choice

- **Communicating and consulting**
 - Telling people what is happening, good or bad, as soon as it is possible to do so
 - Find out what people think and what they want
 - When giving commitments as an organisation or as a manager – keep to your word!
 - People from all employee groups like to hear direct from senior management how the organisation is doing, say by video or webcast– this means cascaded communication is not as popular
 - The immediate supervisor **does** have a role - communicating and discussing the ‘basics’ such as reward, development and career progression

- **High quality leadership**
 - Select the right people to be leaders and managers
 - Give these people the development they need to be effective leaders
 - Make sure your leaders have the time to act as leaders not ‘squeezing’ it into their professional work
 - Remember, people leave their ‘boss’ not their organisation

- **Recognising that many people value a work environment that understands that people work to live rather than live to work**
 - Their personal life comes first and work should be able to fit in with this as best it can
 - Home working should not be a problem – ‘line of sight’ management is becoming unpopular with staff and implies a lack of trust
 - Some people do not want to engage with their organisation when they come to work – their priority is putting in the

time and being paid for it. We need to respect this motivation but recognise it is appropriate for some jobs but not others

➤ All the 'soft' motivational initiatives count for nothing if people are not rewarded competitively or equitably for the contribution they believe they are making

➤ Some statistics

- Engaged staff are 6 times less likely to resign than staff who are disengaged – consider the recruitment savings you can achieve having effective staff engagement
- In general only half your staff feel your organisation does a good job keeping people informed
- Trust erodes with length of service
 - Up to 57% of staff with less than 1 year's service trust management to communicate honestly
 - Only 26% of staff with 15 or more years service trust management communication
- In a recent survey, people who were willing to invest 'discretionary' effort in the organisation's success identified strongly with the statement "I believe that senior management takes an interest in my well being".



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