

Individual Engagement: Organisational Success



Introduction

The culture of an organisation is driven by the behaviours that exist within it. Improving performance requires change. All change is derived from individuals and teams within an organisation changing some element of their behaviour – which therefore automatically shifts the culture.

The speed and traction of change (and therefore any improvement) is driven in large part by how **willing** and able people are to execute upon it. Improving performance is therefore made easier, more effective and more sustainable the stronger the level of employee engagement. Performance can be directly correlated to the level of engagement that exists within that organisation.

Engagement is NOT something that is simply 'DONE' to people from on high. Sure, Leadership must work hard at it, but engagement by its very nature needs to be seen as something integral to the business rather than a strategy to deliver performance. Engagement is something that is driven and grasped at all levels in the business

Engagement as a concept

Engagement is often solely directed towards one element of how an individual 'buys in' to working with an organisation. People actually engage on a number of levels – with extensive research, evidence and theory helping us to understand each level more clearly.

- ✓ Why – An emotive sense of purpose and a logical understanding of how I fit into the bigger picture
- ✓ Who – Engaging with those we work with or for – I may not 'do it' for the cause, I may 'do it' for someone
- ✓ What – engagement with the task at hand and how I complete it

These three all work in some way to either engage or disengage people. The stronger the engagement on each level, the less we need to extrinsically motivate people. The more they will do things and do them well – because they WANT to – Intrinsically.

People do not engage with the money. Those that ONLY turn up for the money tend to be far less engaged. People who turn up for the money AND other reasons are more engaged by definition. They expect to earn it and most people would not turn up without it. However, its like food and water – we need it to survive but its not the reason we get out of bed day to day. Money is important – however, it is an extrinsic motivator, which puts it into a different bracket to engagement.

There is a fascinating paradox here to discuss. To engage people they need to be paid 'enough'. The more people are engaged however, the less money will be an issue for them.

The WHY

Building a Sense of Shared Purpose

A sense of purpose is the key factor in driving engagement. This is a vital factor but only possible if people logically understand what they need to emotionally engage with. People need to see how purpose, values, visioning, behaviours, objectives etc. fit together from a logical point of view for them to emotionally engage with it. If this is not the case: If people don't understand and buy into WHY they are doing something – they will never do it as well as they could.

It is vital that we help people to make the connection between their behaviour and the bigger picture. Helping employees to understand how purpose, vision and values drive the way we behave as individuals in an organisation is a vital factor. How we communicate purpose values and ideology will also be key.

The WHO

People and Their Influence on Engagement

We engage with people as much if not even more than we do with an overriding sense of purpose. Although it could be argued that it is often people that 'give' us that sense of purpose.

People engage both with their 'leaders' and with their 'teams/colleagues'. There are some people that one would run through a brick wall for. This is engagement just the same.

We attend influence courses but the truth is, the better we have engaged with someone, the stronger the influence, whatever clever skills we might apply. This IS influence. True engagement will drive greater levels of performance from people through 'authentic' not 'affected' relationships.

The greater the authentic influence the greater will be the ability to release the potential of individuals and coach that potential rather than manage their limitations.

The WHAT

Doing Things for the Love of Doing Them

- ✓ Why do people engage in activities that they don't get 'paid' to do?
- ✓ Indeed, why is it that someone can be disengaged completely by their work – whilst demonstrate huge dedication to a hobby or task that they receive no monetary reward for at all?
- ✓ What is it that makes someone for hours on their guitar, or spend most of their Sunday morning washing their car or doing the gardening?

The answer is that they are engaged at the final level. They are engaged with the task itself and the way they complete it. There are a number of factors that are known to drive engagement with what someone DOES (rather than the WHY they do it or WHO they do it for or with).

The Columbo Factor

“Just One More Thing”

At the start of this article we stated that the speed and traction of change (and therefore any improvement) is driven in large part by how willing and able people are to execute upon it. So far we have talked about how engagement – driving the willingness to change. Engagement is most effective when people ALSO understand HOW they can change behaviour. The ability to change.

In a high performance culture, people learn ‘HOW’ to change their behaviour from its current state to that which is desired or required by the business. It is vital that people understand what drives behaviour and how we can realise sustainable change.

Outcomes

Why Engagement?

Engagement is a game changing commodity – especially in a time of huge change and in a tough external environment. True engagement enables a number of things;

Stronger adherence to values and greater employee advocacy – building trust – driving pace up and costs down

Better execution of outcomes and results (sales, customer experience, productivity and more)

Effective performance management – allows the tough conversations to be had more easily (if they need to be)

Speed and traction for change – real engagement allows and even drives the case for adaptability

Increased creativity and innovation as part of everyday activity and problem solving

Improved ability to delegate - More time for managers to concentrate on their role, rather than doing others’ day jobs

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