



CUTTINGS

Number 82 October 2009

Compiled and edited by Geof Cox

Engaging for Success

Once again, the leading article in Cuttings is about employee engagement. I am not ashamed to keep plugging away at the same theme — the evidence in favour is growing but there are still a number of organisations who have not yet got the message. Never has there been a more appropriate time for considering the economic as well as the social impact of focusing workplace relations on getting the best out of people.

The catalyst for this article is the publishing of the report to government by David MacLeod and Nita Clarke. This is a comprehensive review of the practice of employee engagement in the UK and delivers an unequivocal conclusion that engagement delivers enormous benefits for both the organisation and the individual worker.

MacLeod and Clarke believe that if employee engagement and the principles that lie behind it were more widely understood, if good practice was more widely shared, if the potential that resides in the country's workforce was more fully unleashed, there would be a step change in workplace performance and in employee well-being, for the considerable benefit of UK plc.. (and the same would go for Your country plc if you are not a UK resident reader!)

Furthermore, MacLeod and Clarke assert that engagement, going to the heart of the workplace relationship between employee and employer, can be a key to unlocking productivity and to transforming the working lives of many people for whom Monday morning is an especially low point of the week. It should be a prime

consideration for every leader and manager, and be placed at the heart of business strategy.

The business case

The report summarises a strong business case for employee engagement. They detail a number of studies that demonstrate that private sector organisations with higher levels of employee engagement have better financial performance, and high levels of engagement are associated with better outcomes in the public sector:

A global study by Towers Perrin-ISR compared the financial performance of 50 organisations some with a more engaged workforce, some with a less engaged workforce over a 12 month period:

	High engagement	Low engagement
Operating income	+19.2%	-32.7%
Net income growth	+13.7%	-3.8%

The 2006 Meta-Analysis by Gallup analysed 23,910 business units comparing those with top quartile engagement scores in the with those who had bottom quartile scores. Those business units with the top scores had 27% higher profitability and lower levels of sickness absence (2.7 cf. 6.2 days per year).

In the public sector 78% of highly engaged employees say they can make an impact on service delivery, as against just 29 per cent of the disengaged, according to a 2007 Towers Perrin report.

Two recent studies in the public sector found that one key engagement characteristic — staff

advocacy (staff who would speak highly about the authority to others outside the organisation) — was strongly associated with better organisational performance: Ipsos Mori found that councils rated 'excellent' by the Audit Commission were more likely to have higher levels of staff advocacy than those rated 'weak'.

None of this research is new, but what makes it so compelling in this report is how it is brought together from perspectives in a single summary of evidence.

Barriers to implementation

Despite the compelling case for employee engagement, the authors know that a significant percentage of the workforce feel disconnected from the work they do and the people they work for. Whilst accepting that all of us are capable of having a 'bad day at work' they do not accept the inevitability of work being just one bad day after another.

MacLeod and Clarke identify 4 inhibitors to effective engagement:

1. Lack of awareness, or not fully understanding the concept and the benefits.
2. Not know how to address engagement.
3. Managers not sharing the belief of their leaders, or are ill-equipped to implement.
4. Seeing engagement as just an annual staff survey not an overall approach that places engagement at the core of the organisation's strategy.

All of these barriers can be overcome — the first by wide readership of this report. Addressing the implementation is where we should be focusing attention.

Engaging for Success, www.bis.gov.uk

nippets

A collection of thought provokers and quotations...

- ✂ "You can't shake hands with a clenched fist." *Indira Gandhi*
- ✂ "Without credible communication, and a lot of it, the hearts and minds of others are never captured." *John P. Kotter*
- ✂ "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." *Mahatma Gandhi*
- ✂ "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten we belong to each other." *Mother Teresa*
- ✂ "The wisest mind has something yet to learn." *George Santayana*
- ✂ "Make visible what, without you, might perhaps never have been seen." *Robert Bresson*
- ✂ "Love life, engage in it, give it all you've got. Love it with a passion, because life truly does give back, many times over, what you put into it." *Maya Angelou*
- ✂ "I often quote myself. It adds spice to my conversation" *George Bernard Shaw*
- ✂ "You must trust and believe in people or life becomes impossible." *Anton Chekhov*
- ✂ "If you wait for opportunities to occur, you will be one of the crowd." *Edward de Bono*
- ✂ "Greatness lies not in being strong, but in the right use of strength." *Henry Ward Beecher*
- ✂ "Every leaf of the tree becomes a page of the book when once the heart is opened and it has learnt to read." *Sa'di*
- ✂ The critical skills for the next 12-24 months are Change Management 75.43%, Strategic thinking 60.57%, Business continuity & risk management 51.43%, Financial acumen 43.43%, and Innovation 42.86%. *2009 survey for HRM Europe*
- ✂ "The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them." *Ernest Hemingway*

42 Rules for Creating WE

by Judith Glaser and her 18 co-authors was published on September 17th and gives creative, and innovative insights for practicing WE-centric thinking in organisations.

The book also provides clear strategies for breathing life into a workplace and people, and for creating the space to expand opportunities, possibility and productivity!

How to have good, great, and even very difficult conversations about trust, integrity, candour and working with adversaries.

How to create inclusive, strengths based cultures and get better business results than anticipated.

Here are a some examples:

Rule #19: Respect the Views of Your Adversary... "If we learn to refrain from trying to change others or to impose our truths on others, something positive and amazing happens!"

Rule #11: There is an 'I' in Team ... "The 'I's in team were now allowed to shine in their own terms, which resulted in a kinder work environment, a more productive staff, more satisfied Customers and a true WE spirit!" (acknowledging differences works better than diminishing them)

Rule #4: Live in Your Heart Zone ... "Actually it took recognising my own judgments and emotions as the true source of my stress that changed – even saved my life!" (really cool practices to shift business outcomes)

More from www.creatingWE.com

A sad message for all trainers:

Mr Sketch Scented Markers are officially discontinuing 9 out of the 12 colours and scents on 31st December 2009 - they are keeping red, green and black but all the others will be no more. So if you are a fan, get your order in quick to stock up for the next few years. Get on to your local supplier quickly.

Training Challenges

Leadership stands out as the clear high priority according to responses to smartpeople's survey of learning and development specialists from UK and Europe. Whilst leadership stands out as the high priority, middle managers won out as the job level which should take precedence when allocating budget.

For the full survey report contact: sallymoore@smartpeople.com

Management Training in a 99 Word story

To juggle three scarves, hold two in your right hand and one in your left. Toss one scarf from the right, then one from the left. As your left arm descends, snatch the first scarf out of the air. With your right, throw the third scarf and catch the second on the way down. Alternate your throwing hands; catching as the same hand drops.

The tricky part: if you watch the scarf you just threw, you won't be ready to catch the next.

To be successful, anticipate, watch what's coming next, and don't worry about the past.

By *Brian Remer*, quoted from the *Thiagi Gameletter* www.thiagi.com.

MORE INFORMATION

Cuttings is published by New Directions and distributed through an international network of consultants and trainers who work together to learn, research, design and provide consulting and training in individual, management, and organisation development.

On our website you will find downloadable copies of all past issues of **Cuttings** plus a discussion blog, articles and information on our network and services, plus links to our partners' websites.

To discuss any ideas and to access the network, please call me direct:

Geof Cox

New Directions Ltd,

26a Downleaze, Bristol BS9 1LZ, UK

phone: +44 (0)117 968 1451

mobile: +44 (0)7753 626284

email: geofcox@newdirections.uk.com

web: www.newdirections.uk.com

www.learningconsortium.eu