

Employee Engagement Overview

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Employee engagement - an overview

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Introduction

Employee engagement is a route to business success. An engaged workplace encourages commitment, energy and productivity from all those involved to help improve business performance.

This guide introduces employee engagement - what it means and how it works. It provides best practice on how you can develop integrity in your business by defining, communicating and embedding values and supportive behaviour.

What is employee engagement?

Employee engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are committed to your business goals and values. By involving them in your business, you will motivate them to contribute to your business success and at the same time improve their sense of well-being.

Further guidance on employee engagement is available in the 'Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement' report - produced after the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) commissioned an independent review into engagement in the workplace.

[Download 'Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement' from the BIS website \(PDF, 973KB\) - Opens in a new window.](#)

Employee engagement starts with managers showing a clear and collective commitment to making employee engagement part of business culture. This

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means sharing information on business plans and performance, making sure you live your business values and seeking views and ideas from employees on how to improve your business.

It is a two-way street. Encourage your employees to play their part by sharing their feedback, raising concerns and supporting the way you do business.

Benefits of employee engagement

Employee engagement benefits everyone involved with your business by creating an informed, involved and productive workplace that helps propel your business towards its goals. Engaged employees:

- have a desire and commitment to give their best to your business
- generate more revenue for your business
- demonstrate higher levels of innovation
- act as advocates for your business
- have lower rates of sickness or absenteeism
- are less likely to leave your business
- behave in ways that support your business values
- have a positive impact on customer services

Engaged employees also have a stronger sense of personal well-being and feel more involved, committed and productive at work.

The enablers of employee engagement

Addressing the enablers of employee engagement will provide the benefits of a

more engaging culture within your business. The four enablers are outlined below.

Strategic narrative

Leadership through a strategic narrative or business story that explains where your business is going and why - helping employees understand how their role fits in. For more information see our guide on how to [create and communicate your strategic narrative](#).

Engaging managers

Engaging managers who motivate, challenge and support employees, treat them as individuals and seek and respond to their views are key to employee engagement. For more information see our guide on how to [become a more engaging manager](#).

Employee voice

An effective employee voice which listens to employees and involves and consults them in decision-making within your business is important. For more information see our guide on how to [establish employee voice in your business](#).

Integrity

Integrity with employee engagement means practising what you preach. There shouldn't be a gap between what the people in your business say and what they do. For more information see our guide on how to [create and communicate business values with integrity](#).

Employee engagement champions

Identifying employee engagement

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champions in different departments or teams can help identify and share examples of employee engagement in action in their teams. They have a key role linking managers with the ideas and experiences of employees.

Role

The role of champions can be as narrow or as broad as you like. You could ask them to focus on one particular issue or you could give them a broader remit.

The scope of the role is up to you but there are some key aspects:

- helping share information and key messages about the business with colleagues
- seeking examples and proof points of good practice from colleagues
- identifying feedback or issues from employees and feeding these back

The role is not time-consuming. It would be a voluntary or additional part of an employee's job.

Qualities

Champions need to be willing and enthusiastic - who already get the importance of engagement and are keen to help the business improve. They could be in any area and at any level of the business.

The key qualities for champions are:

- understanding of engagement - what it means and its benefits
- enthusiasm and energy for the subject
- knowledge of the business and the

- people in their area
- connections and credibility among the people in their area
- confidence to deal with others on the business' behalf
- confidence to handle feedback - positive or negative - on the business' behalf

Preparation

Champions need information and guidance to help them in their role. This will also help you ensure shared understanding and consistency of approach across the business. Some core steps to consider are:

- a briefing pack for each champion
- a short training session or workshop
- if you have an intranet create a private section where champions can liaise with each other and share experiences, questions and good practice

In the briefing pack you could include:

- a letter from you explaining the importance of the role and thanking them for taking it on
- a summary sheet on the importance and benefits of engagement
- a summary of the activities
- a copy of the business' strategic narrative
- contact details for other champions and other colleagues they may need to liaise with - eg people running internal communications

Making it happen

To help shape and embed champions in everyday practice you could:

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- discuss the idea with other senior managers and gain overall agreement to the approach
- involve colleagues from HR or communications - if you have them - to help delegate or share some tasks and responsibilities
- contact each champion so they understand the importance of their role and are inspired
- contact each champion's manager to gain their support
- ask one of the champions to coordinate and report back to you

Here's how I learned to delegate to managers

TALENT4Life is a training provider based in Wigston, Leicestershire. It was founded in 2006 and now has 31 staff spread over three sites. As the organisation began to grow and take on extra staff Managing Director, Mark Parr, realised he needed to engage and trust managers to help the business grow.

Understand the issue

Mark found it difficult to delegate in the early days. As he puts it, "I was employing training centre managers but I wasn't letting them do their job". Feedback from managers helped him understand he needed to change and realise by involving his people more it would allow them to manage everyday operations and enable him to focus on developing the business.

Make the leap

Mark admits "It was difficult to do. I was worried about mistakes". But he now holds weekly meetings with managers, during which they can give feedback and he holds

quarterly forums with other staff which have led to "some brilliant ideas for the business".

Reap the benefits

Mark's approach delivered immediate results. He says "We opened a new centre in seven weeks, as we all worked out how we could do it, and as a result there was greater commitment because my employees felt part of it".

Mark's advice: "Take the leap, step back and let your managers make decisions. If they need you, they know you are there".

Here's how we created culture change through employee engagement

For the National Archives a poor Investors in People assessment in 2005 coincided with the arrival of a new Chief Executive (CEO) and acted as a catalyst for cultural change.

Involve employees in creating values

The new CEO asked staff what mattered to them and with senior colleagues used this feedback to create a clear set of values. These values - along with a new employee consulted strategy - were used to stimulate a more open and participative culture.

Build dialogue with employees

Changes included Question Time sessions with senior managers, revisions to the intranet - including blogs and a weekly CEO's diary - and an adjusted appraisal system that gives equal weight to living the values and objective performance.

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Employee research showed that 87 per cent of staff agreed with the values. Two years later, the organisation flew through a further Investors in People assessment.

Keep living the values

These values were still vital during a redundancy and cost saving exercise in 2009. In line with the values, all information was made open as soon as it could be, a lessons-learned report was published to all staff, and despite 10 per cent staffing reductions, morale was maintained.

Here's how we give our employees a voice in the business

Softcat is an IT provider with offices in Marlow and Manchester. It employs over 200 people and has remained stable and successful through the recession thanks to continued focus on accessible management and an effective employee voice.

Build a transparent culture

The organisation has always cultivated an open and transparent culture with managers sitting amongst sales teams. Shelley Ferrigno, Head of Recruitment, says that "Managers are accessible because they're not boxed away and can be bombarded with questions. It's an open, friendly and fun working environment where everyone feels like they're pulling in the same direction". For example - Monday morning meetings where Directors give regular updates on sales figures and company news are attended by the whole organisation.

Give employees autonomy

Softcat allows employees to vote in team leaders. "It goes a long way to

demonstrating how their opinion matters", Shelley explains. "It is clear acknowledgment that they have a role in sculpting the business".

Evaluate success

Crucially, Softcat blends ongoing investment in training with awarding as much autonomy as possible to its employees. Shelley says: "The combination of autonomy and support - in addition to cultivating strong two-way conversations between management and staff - has led to higher levels of motivation. Levels of employee confidence in the future have increased from 9.4 out of 10 in 2007 to 9.6 in 2009".

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