

WHY HR LEADERS NEED TO RE-THINK ENGAGEMENT

HR Grapevine

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Low workplace engagement costs the UK £340billion per year, according to figures from UK PLC. Therefore, it makes sense that plugging this productivity problem remains high on HR's to-do list.

With a study from the University of Warwick revealing that happy and engaged staff are 12% more productive, while unhappy staff are 10% less productive, it is believed that one way to curtail the drain on UK businesses is by improving engagement.

Andrew Cocks, Culture and Engagement Consultant at Questback, tells HR Grapevine, that companies today are

looking to move away from traditional approaches to employee engagement.

In fact, changing the way we think about engagement may help businesses to solve the persistent conundrum. Below, Cocks has collated a number of insights that may help to shape your employee experience...

1. ENGAGEMENT IS A MATTER OF CHOICE

“Engagement comes from within, it’s not something that can be imposed upon you as an employee,” Cocks says. “The most that organisations and their leaders can do is provide an environment that supports and sustains engagement - they cannot make people ‘engage’.

While many definitions of engagement acknowledge this, engagement survey questions and action planning approaches almost never do.”

2. ENGAGEMENT IS EXHIBITED AND REINFORCED THROUGH BEHAVIOURS

Traditional engagement surveys focus on finding out about people's attitudes, but it is their behaviour that really matters, Cocks explains. "The behaviours that characterise engagement include:

- Active participation
- Taking responsibility
- Having fun
- Sharing information and ideas for innovation
- Challenging what is currently happening
- Giving and receiving feedback and recognition.

"All of the above are commonly used to define high performance cultures or teams. This isn't surprising if we accept that higher engagement drives better performance, and also that a high-performance culture is also an engaging one."

3. ENGAGEMENT IS ITS OWN REWARD

"Most of us accept intuitively that in any endeavour, what you get out is directly proportional to what you put in. Why should the workplace be any different?," Cocks asks. He cites a recent work culture assessment with a major UK retailer, where Questback discovered that the factor most closely associated with engagement was the belief that what you receive (in a non-financial sense) depends on what you put in. "In this sense it's true that engagement is its own reward - 'engaged' behaviours are themselves intrinsically 'engaging'."

SO, HOW CAN I BETTER MEASURE AND IMPROVE ENGAGEMENT?

Deduced from the above, Cocks believes that when HR attempts to measure engagement, as well as asking questions about traditional topics such as leadership, resources, training and rewards, engagement surveys need to assess the extent to which people are experiencing and exhibiting high engagement behaviours. He advises that through asking questions like: "How can we all work together to improve in these areas?" it shifts the focus onto people's personal responsibility for their own engagement.

This also encourages everyone to get involved, helping them identify their role in creating and maintaining a high

performing team. "Essentially make these behaviours the norm - in cultural terms 'the way we do things around here'," Cocks explains.

"In conclusion, what organisations, managers and employees need from engagement programmes is changing," Cocks concludes. "They want greater local ownership of the results and bottom-up influence on improvement actions. Now is therefore the time to adopt flexible technology that links responses, insights and actions, enabling you to drive more effective and lasting sustainable performance improvements."

ABOUT QUESTBACK

Questback provides a feedback and survey technology platform that helps companies transform customer, employee and market research programmes. Used by thousands of companies, including 1/3 of the Forbes list, Questback is the smarter, faster way to manage feedback. Get the software, services and human support you need to manage your feedback - all in one place.

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