

The Essential Series

Engaging with your Employees



Region 11 Training Ltd are approved to
deliver ILM Development Awards

Introduction

Purpose of this guide

In 'First, Break All the Rules' (Simon & Schuster, 1999) and in the April 2002 edition of the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, Gallup published research proving that engaged employees are more productive employees. It also proved that engaged employees are more profitable, more customer-focused, safer, and more likely to withstand temptations to leave.

So, how do you engage with your employees within your business? This is a subject on many managers' minds, including our own.

In this edition of the **Essential Series** we bring clarity and practical ideas for reaping the benefits of going beyond just involving your staff, by encouraging higher levels of commitment, enthusiasm and passion for your business.

Contact us today to let us know the important issues on your agenda and discuss how we can engage your employees with their own development.

What we do

We're a training company that know how to get the best from people. We've coached and developed people to improve their skills for many years.

We've included a range of best practice methods which are proven to work. Please make full use of this resource, pass on to colleagues or download further copies from our website.

Here's a taster of the type of professional training we deliver for our clients:

 **Coaching**

 **Management Development**

 **Sales Training**

 **Team Building**

 **Customer Service Training**

 **Training The Trainer**

 **Contact Centre Training**

 **Consultancy Projects**

Employee Engagement

We take a very pragmatic and common sense approach to our work –
Here are six thoughts on **Employee Engagement** that, in our experience, do not appear to be as common place as you'd like to think!

Communicate

Share your knowledge (as much as you are able) with your people. Contrary to the saying 'knowledge is not power' – it's what you do with it that matters. Tell people what you can, be up front and explain when you can't; welcome feedback, thoughts and ideas from your staff. Create new and exciting methods for sharing plans and new initiatives.

Example:

In one company we've worked with a manager took it upon himself and did the simplest thing that made a huge impression. Instead of running his monthly Team Briefing (lasting only 45 minutes) in the usual cramped room that had become the dumping ground for everything from old PC's to the Christmas decorations he went across the road to the local café, got the coffee's in and began to run the best meeting they'd had all year.

The staff loved it – they actually claimed to have achieved much more, even though they had less time for the meeting due to walking there and back.

It appeared to have bonded the team together and they appreciated the thought and little extra effort their manager had made.

Funny how the smallest of things can make a big difference!

Thought - What do you do to communicate really well with your people?

Show a genuine interest in your staff

How well do you really know your staff on a personal level? Look around at each of your team and think about what you know about them. How much about their life outside of work do you know, their interests, hobbies, family, friends etc. Remember everyone will be different as to how much they like to reveal to others about themselves and their life – we're not talking delving deep into other peoples lives and becoming intrusive, simply showing a genuine interest.

Example:

One manager we've worked with (developing their performance coaching skills) saw a direct impact of this point recently.

Struggling to influence a team member to take on board new ideas to improve their performance the manager was about to give up, saying that *'if they're not bothered why should she be'*. A fair point?

We discussed what the manager had already tried and asked how well she knew her member of staff. We established a superficial level of knowledge picked up without any real effort. We explored this further and the manager established an agreed approach to get to know a little more about her team member.

The result was amazing! With some applied effort the manager established that her member of staff was fed up with work – hence her poor performance. Why was she fed up? Because she had been working her own full time shifts as well as grabbing as much overtime as she could because...she was saving up to get married and her fiancé's job wasn't terribly secure at the moment!

The best of it was that the manager was then able to coach using the same ideas and performance improvement ideas that she had before, but this time put into the context that if she implemented them she'd earn as much in bonuses as she was in overtime – thus reducing the need to do as much, if any overtime at all.

Imagine the benefits to your team or business if you took more time and effort to connect with each individual. Why would a member of staff want to take more responsibility within your business if their manager didn't do this?

Thought – How much do you really know about the people on your team?

Create the right environment

What do you do to create an environment that encourages an engaged workforce? What actions discourage employees from getting more involved? Top managers know that their every thought, word and action is responsible for creating the culture – good and bad. They allow staff to empower themselves, they establish clear boundaries, involve staff in decisions and reviewing performance, they look for opportunities to celebrate successes and they encourage staff to challenge the norm constructively.

Example:-

Another company we've supported used this point to build their plan for the future around.

Gathering input from all levels within the organisation during separate sessions the management team built a picture of what their future working environment should look, sound and feel like.

The answers they received were original and quite imaginative and reported enthusiastically that the response from their staff was very encouraging.

The management team took the outputs and were able to benchmark their current progress towards this position and decide and prioritise actions they needed to take to create this new environment.

Interestingly most of the points raised in this exercise were not physical changes, like new desks & chairs; it was mostly about management actions and practices.

Thought:- What is the right environment for you, your business and your staff?

Demonstrate you value contribution from others

People become genuinely engaged in activities when they have an interest in them. The more they can contribute the more you increase the opportunity to generate an interest. How much opportunity do you create for your staff to participate in decisions, planning, idea generation and following through on action plans? Remember the saying – *‘the sum of the parts is greater than the whole’*.

Example

Suggestion Schemes. Do you have one?

If not, how do your employees make suggestions of ways to improve your business?

If you do, make sure it follows this simple saying that has been around for years. *‘Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves’*.

By this we mean that you should encourage and value all ideas from your employees. Typically it is the big money or time saving ideas that get all the publicity within a business. Remember the cumulative effect a lot of small ideas could make. Why would anyone bother suggesting smaller ideas if the perception is that your business is only interested in the next ‘Big Idea’?

The message here is – **Communicate!**

- 1.** Communicate your expectations clearly
- 2.** Make it easy for your employees to communicate their ideas
- 3.** Communicate successes, benefits and feedback swiftly

Three simple steps that will help you engage with your staff your business and its aims.

Thought – What actions do you need to take that will demonstrate unequivocally that you value the contribution of your staff?

Clear Expectations

How clear are your employees about what you expect of them?

Our experience suggests that there is always opportunity to improve in this area.

Example:-

We recently ran an Expectation Exchange exercise as part of a team building programme with some fascinating results.

We helped the team describe what they expected from each other in specific situations, producing clear gaps which were leading to dissatisfaction from both sides.

By the end, the team had a clearer understanding of each others views and buried a few hindering differences between the team and the manager.

The results of this very frank session ended with the team establishing some of their own protocols which improved their team working approach in key situations. They were also more confident to publicly publish their Customer Service Standards, as they felt more confident of living up to them.

Thought:- What support do your staff expect from you in key situations in your business? We can all assume, have you asked them?

Feedback

When was the last time you provided each member of your team with some personal and motivating feedback? How often do you do this? Catching people doing things right is just as important as correcting feedback.

Employees who understand what is expected of them and know how well they are performing against these expectations are more likely to feel cared for at work and perform better.

For more information on Feedback see our *Essential Series* guide to **Effective Feedback** available from our website.

Values

We hope that you have made the most of this **Essential Series** resource and passed it on to your colleagues and friends so they too can continue to develop their management skills.

This is a small selection of ideas of practical and proven management tips that we've shared with you. To give you a better idea what it is like to work with us, we also share with you our values, below, which are evident from the moment you meet us.

They also help us ensure we add value to everyone we work with.

Thank you...

Damian Palin, Director
Region 11 Training Ltd



Challenging

It's simple. People learn much more and much faster when stretched.

We challenge people to step outside of their comfort zone and encourage them to find better ways of doing things. It's all about improving and becoming better tomorrow than they were last week.



Engaging

We work hard with clients to ensure people are engaged and stimulated by their development. We use a blend of accelerated learning principles and focused activities to bring the training to life. With strong connections with the work place this encourages long lasting learning and real benefits.



Professional

We are serious about helping people and businesses improve. We adopt a professional approach to achieve this.

We are qualified professionals and bring our years of knowledge, practical experience and 110% energy and attention to each client relationship.



Fun

When people work with an enthusiastic, professional person and are engaged and stimulated by challenging activities, it's almost impossible not to have fun.

This is the vital ingredient that keeps us all healthy and ensures clients get value for money.