“That Engagement of People...”

Fiona Ash

“You sort of smell it... that engagement of people. What goes on in meetings, how people talk to each other. You get the sense of energy, engagement, commitment, belief in what the organisation stands for”

*Lord David Currie, ex Dean, Cass Business School (1)*

An engaged employee is likely to be proud of their organisation, would recommend it to others as a good place to work, understands how their job contributes to its success and is personally motivated to help in that success - often putting in effort beyond what is normally expected. Don’t we all know organisations where this description fits – and other organisations where the very opposite is true!

But how do we encourage engagement?

Research by Towers Perrin (2) found three key activities essential to encouraging employee engagement:

- a robust strategy that is clear and communicated throughout the organisation
- clear leadership from the senior team, which is then adopted by every manager. If the top team and managers are not on board with the strategic direction of the organisation, then the message being delivered will be diluted and staff will instinctively pick up that the leadership is not speaking with one voice.
- regular, two-way communication between managers and their staff including employee surveys (and action being taken based on the results), team meetings, individual performance reviews or appraisals, one to one meetings, learning and development opportunities, being able to feed upwards ideas and suggestions

It is also all about instilling a culture that encourages engagement – at an emotional and rational level – where people want to invest their talents and enthusiasm.

It comes down to people knowing exactly what their job is and why it is important.

Now more than ever, when so many people feel uncertain about the future security of their jobs, employers need to find ways to engage their staff – to retain those key people who make such a difference - and to attract new talent.

(1) The Extra Mile : How to Engage your People to Win, David McLeod, Chris Brady (Prentice Hall) (2008)

(2) [http://www.cfo.com/article.cfm/10610786/c_2984355/?f=archives](http://www.cfo.com/article.cfm/10610786/c_2984355/?f=archives)
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