

MANAGING PARTNER MAGAZINE

Most people want to do a great job

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Nowadays employee engagement is more important than ever as we claw our way ever so slowly out of recession. Finding the best people, helping them to become even better and motivating them to want to bring the best version of themselves to work is a critical leadership task. The evidence that this is imperative for sustainable business growth is irrefutable.

Statistics from the Department for Business Innovation & Skills calculate that disengaged employees cost the UK economy around £6bn each year. An employee engagement survey of 5,000 UK adults by Bupa also sets out a solid case for leaders to focus on the well being and motivation of their people.

Published in [Fit for Growth](#) in December 2013, the research found that almost half of respondents admitted to not going 'above and beyond' at work because they thought that they wouldn't be acknowledged or rewarded. One in four surveyed admitted that they didn't want to win new business as it would only mean more work for them. At the same time, over a third of teams are experiencing extra stress and pressure due to staff ill health and absences.

On the flip side, research by the government's '[Engage for Success](#)' initiative following the publication of the groundbreaking [MacLeod Report](#) shows that companies with engagement results in the top quartile earn twice the net profit, with 18 per cent more productivity. They also experience 40 per cent lower turnover in staff than those in the bottom quartile.

If that doesn't convince you of the urgent need to address your own firm's engagement strategy, reflect on this - nearly 60 per cent of engaged employees say their jobs bring out their most creative ideas, contrasting with only three per cent of those less engaged.

In a world where innovation in the client value proposition and stand-out service experience equals true competitive edge, you had better be taking this seriously. The fact is that engaged organisations are more innovative and capable of driving improved business performance, as well as of delivering superior levels of client service.

Enabling engagement

"An engaged employee is aware of the business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employee and employer" - Institute of Employment Studies, Engage for Success.

The government research identified four key enablers of engagement:

1. visible, empowering leadership providing a strong strategic narrative about the organisation - where it's come from and where it's going;
2. engaging managers who focus their people and give them scope, treat them as individuals and coach and stretch them;
3. an employee voice throughout the organisation to reinforce and challenge views between functions and externally, treating employees as central to the solution; and
4. organisational integrity - the values on the wall are reflected in day-to-day behaviours - there is no gap between what is said and done.

So far so obvious. The trick is bringing each of these enablers to life with investment in specific initiatives. They must also be delivered authentically by leaders who believe in the action and desired outcomes - not just the story. And that's where the hard work starts. It takes commitment and deliberate management focus on actions that deliver:

1. consistent and two-way communication with your people - connecting, not simply telling;
2. selective investment in appropriate levels of resource - this sometimes means making hard choices;
3. good processes that focus on outcomes - fearlessly routing out needless bureaucracy that hold up innovation; and
4. training to provide the skills to do the job, as well as to stretch and challenge to improve performance.

A tall order? Not if we want to unlock our peoples' potential and reap the business benefits. Most people want to do a great job. Let's have the courage to take action that helps them do it even better.

Beverly Landais is a credentialed executive coach, chartered manager and chartered marketeer. She runs her own coaching business. She has a private and corporate practice. She offers coaching and training for individuals as well as teams and groups.. She embraces a wide range of coaching models. She is particularly experienced in using strength-based models. She is skilled at connecting people with ideas and activities that cultivate habits of success. Through coaching, she enables productive as well as rewarding business and personal relationships. Packages and costs are available upon request.

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