

BUILDING HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS

At the time of writing this manual, 36,700,000 results appear on Google for the search term, 'Our people are our greatest asset.'

Perhaps you've had the same thought? After all, what is a recruitment company unless it has exceptional people? Take a look at the photograph below.



Presumably, the company that employed the roadworker to mark the white lines down the side of this road had a good recruitment selection process? Presumably, they also believed that the roadworker was the right person for the job when they hired them? Presumably, the roadworker thought that the company was right for him/her too?

So after starting his/her job, why couldn't the roadworker be bothered to move the small branch that you see in the photograph? Why did they not ***care*** enough about their job?

What do you think could have disengaged them? Might it have included small things like...?

- The way that their manager spoke with them this morning?
- A sense of injustice? Perhaps they felt that their manager was treating them unfairly in comparison to a colleague?
- A broken promise? For example, perhaps they believed from a previous conversation with their manager, that they were going to get a pay rise only to find out that wasn't the case?

Of course, we don't know the answer to the question. However, would you concur that people sometimes show their dissatisfaction to perceived injustices by putting in less effort? And would you concur that in extreme circumstances people sometimes even resort to sabotage, 'in order to get their own back'? Below is an incredibly powerful quote from Ken Blanchard's book, *The Heart of a Leader*.

"If you want to know why your people are not performing well, step up to the mirror and take a peek."

If, at first glance Blanchard's quote seems a little harsh, take a moment to think about how (with better management skills) you will be able to influence the majority of behaviours that happen within your team. As you will see shortly, there is far more to creating a positive work environment than setting sales competitions. In fact, one of the most important ingredients of a positive work environment is **you**.

Let's now take a look at the huge importance of Employee Engagement in order to '***win the hearts and minds***' of your staff so that they deliver **more** than you expect.

■ Setting the tone for your team

In his hugely influential book, *The Extra Mile*, author David McLeod surveyed over 600,000 employees globally to find out what made them '*go the extra mile and give **extra discretionary effort** to their job*'. The book includes groundbreaking research based upon statistical evidence such as:

'Engaged employees perform 20% better and are 87% less likely to leave'.

We class the book as essential reading for any manager because it highlights the top 20 reasons why people choose to give **extra discretionary effort** to their work (and only one of those top 20 reasons is money!).

We'll show you some research from the *Extra Mile* in a moment but to get you thinking, 4 of the top 20 reasons include:

- "My manager cares about me"
- "I'm learning new things on a continual basis"
- "My ideas are valued"
- "I receive praise in the workplace"

If you are managing people right now, how many of the people that you manage would score **you** highly against the above?

Accenture, the leading global management consultancy firm has this to say:

People join organisations, but they leave managers

“An engaging manager is at the heart of success in engaging the workforce. Accenture’s internal research showed that 80% of the variation in engagement levels was down to the line manager. As a result, employees’ most important relationship at work is with their line manager.

People join organisations, but they leave managers.”

As we said earlier, ‘the soft stuff of management is the hard stuff of management’. The good news, however, is all the skills that comprise being a good manager are learnable and can be incrementally improved over time. Imagine completing the management diagnostic again in 12 months’ time having focused upon improving some of your weaker areas throughout the year. It may take some time, but you will improve your management and leadership capabilities by putting in personal effort to improve where you need to the most.

■ How engaged are your staff?

Do they go the extra mile? Do they come to you with fresh ideas that improve business performance? Do they arrive into work early full of energy and do they really care about filling every vacancy that they take?

Or, are they ‘just about doing enough?’ Are they even about to leave the company (because of you)? Are they gossiping and complaining about you to other staff behind your back? If so why?

Usually, there are reasons why people don’t display positive behaviours in the workplace. These reasons may not be obvious at first, but when you have a deeper understanding of employee engagement and a deeper understanding of performance management you’ll find that people perform better and management becomes easier for you.

Research from The Extra Mile, by David McLeod

Staff view on management capabilities and behaviours	% mixed or unfavourable
Is taking steps to ensure the long-term success of my organisation	57%
Acts in the best interest of our customers	48%
Effectively represents my organisation to external groups	46%
Has communicated a clear vision for long-term success	47%
Act in a way that is consistent with our values	37%
Supports new ideas and new ways of doing things	44%
Makes an effort to be visible and accessible to employees	37%
Sincere interest in the satisfaction and well-being of employees	30%
Effectively communicates reasons for important business decisions	35%
Communicates openly and honestly to employees	28%

Is aware of the issues I faced in my day-to-day work	25%
Supports and promotes teamwork	57%
Recognises and appreciates good work	55%
Treat employees with trust and respect	53%
Hold people accountable for performance and goals	53%
Empowers and encourages people to take initiative	51%
Acts quickly if I asked for help solving a problem	49%
Encourages new ideas and new ways of doing things	48%
Communicate clearly and openly	47%
Provides performance goals that are challenging but achievable	44%
Ensures that employees have access to a variety of learning opportunities	45%
Shares valuable work experience or expertise that I can learn from	44%
Manages performance reviews fairly and effectively	43%
Gives me frequent feedback on my performance	41%
Inspires enthusiasm for work	37%
How they influence the financial performance of the organisation	33%
Understands what motivates me	35%
Effectively coaches and builds the strengths of employees	34%
Consult employees before making decisions that affect them	35%

“Every employee has the capacity to be fully engaged. Engagement levels are your responsibility: something to be worked on, not simply hoped-for.”

Warning: A better understanding of Employee Engagement does not turn you into a soft manager – it makes your job easier!

Let’s now take a look at how to secure ‘buy-in’ to change, followed by holding your staff accountable when we reach the section on Performance Management.

■ Securing buy-in

When Sir Clive Woodward took over as England rugby coach he effectively inherited a team of talented underachievers. Of course, as the coach of a prominent sporting nation, he wanted to win the World Cup (something that he subsequently succeeded in doing in 2003). As part of setting his vision to win the World Cup he called a meeting of his new squad at a hotel. Woodward was excited to be hosting a team meeting to plot a World Cup victory, only to be immediately disappointed when some of his star players turned up late for the first meeting, chatting on their mobile phones, wearing shorts and sunglasses.

Inside, Woodward was seething but having had experiences of running large sales teams when he worked for Xerox in Australia, he knew the secret of getting people to buy into concepts. This is roughly what he said:

“It’s our goal to win the World Cup - and to win the World Cup we need to be world-class in everything that we do on the field and off the field. Let’s work together to come up with a list of everything that we need to become world-class at.”