



Engaging in Challenging Times

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Challenges for the public sector – the starting point

- ✓ Evidence from public sector shows only a quarter think their organisation is managed well
- ✓ Three quarters do not think that when change was made it is usually for the better
- ✓ Only a third think their managers have a clear view of the future
- ✓ Engagement approaches patchy

Cuts don't have to equal disengagement

- **Roffey Park research 2011: How an organisation deals with redundancy has greater effect on employee engagement than job losses themselves**

- **Engagement has stayed high in high performing companies through the recession. Among results of engagement:**
 - Improved product quality
 - More technical innovation
 - Good internal co-operation
 - Managers encourage people to learn from their mistakes
 - Goals clearly defined
 - Career opportunities and performance management strengthened

(Towers Watson survey July 2010)

But what if employees are disengaged?

- ✓ **Undermine the effectiveness of new policies and initiatives
- non co-operation**
- ✓ **Will react negatively to new financial pressures – consent and evade**
- ✓ **Will leave as soon as they get the opportunity**
- ✓ **Will not act as advocates of their service**

Why does the public sector need engagement now?

- ✓ **Without deep engagement, relations between local authorities and their workforce at risk as cuts bite; effect on services of collapse in morale**
- ✓ **With engagement, very difficult decisions can be made and followed through without engagement collapsing – evidence in Review – Blackpool**
- ✓ **Engagement precondition for success in fundamental service redesign and reconfiguration – lessons of Total Place**
- ✓ **Can't drive effective change through command and control**

Strategic narrative – the story

- Strong, visible, empowering leadership provides an authentic, strong **strategic narrative** about the organisation and the future
- Staff are involved in developing the narrative – which is communicated constantly and clearly
- The story gives a line of sight between the individual job and the organisation's vision
- 'Understanding the journey that a company is on is critical to keeping employees engaged.'

Dianne Thompson, Camelot

Engaging Managers

- **Engaging Managers** are local leaders, and the engagement front line. 80 per cent of the variation in engagement levels is down to the manager.

They:

- focus their people and offer scope
- enable their team to do the job, ensuring that work is designed efficiently
- know and treat their people as individuals with fairness and respect
- care about their people
- coach and stretch their people
- offer appreciative feedback

‘He believed that what we were trying to do was not impossible, and he made us believe it too, so much so that we wanted very much to do it with him – and that very thing made it possible.’

Stephen Taylor

Listening to employee voice

- There is **employee voice** throughout the organisation, for reinforcing and challenging views; between functions and externally. Don't confuse an opinion survey with voice
- Sunday Times Top 100 Companies to Work For found that feeling listened to was the most important factor in determining how much respondents valued their organisation
- This voice is an informed one because information is widely shared, early and often. Employees are involved in developing solutions early – not informed of the next initiative. Options for change are discussed
- There is partnership with employee representatives / trade unions, based on openness, trust and a no-surprises relationship.
- “Give your people a damn good listening to and act on what you learn”

Richard Baker, Chairman, Virgin Active

Integrity

- There is organisational **integrity** - the values on the wall are reflected in day to day behaviours, building trust
- The expected behaviours are explicit and bought into by staff – ‘the way we do things’
- Keep it real - staff see through corporate spin quicker than customers or the public
- There are mechanisms for ensuring what you say is what you do
- ‘If somebody says there’s a particular area that we’re not good at we do something about it as quickly as possible’.

Sue Davies, Head of HR at Bourne Leisure Ltd

What about the unions?

- Risk that unions are sidelined in rush to implement cuts quickly. Fear they will slow things down. May have medium term consequences for engagement
- Partnership with unions can be used as part of architecture for engaging the workforce – underpins good relations
- Gives staff confidence that essential ‘hygiene issues’ are being looked after, which builds trust
- Locally unions want to protect members
- Unions are for life – not just for Christmas

Staff: agents or victims?

- ✓ **Staff need to be fully engaged in understanding need for, designing and implementing change**
- ✓ **Principles of how change is going to happen need to be explicit and developed with staff**
- ✓ **Vital that changes are put in context of improving services. Staff more likely to buy in if it is seen to have positive purpose and outcomes**
- ✓ **Those authorities doing engagement need to redouble their efforts – don't give up**
- ✓ **Need for a survivors' strategy**