

Engaging and motivating your people - top tips

Develop a supportive culture that aligns with your vision.

Attributed to Peter Drucker, the remark 'Culture eats strategy for breakfast' is so true. This first tip about nurturing the right culture overshadows everything else.

Working with your people, develop core values and state their associated behaviours.

Think about ideal behaviours such as being approachable, listening, honesty, fairness, supportive and communicative. Include being decisive, people almost always prefer and respect strong leadership. Live up to the values and make sure your managers do the same. It is quite likely that the values that underpin the way you treat customers will also impact upon how people treat each other in your business.

Develop leadership values and behaviours as part of the overall core values.

Most of the benefits from these recommendations will be lost if your managers are not effective role models of your culture.

Use the values and behaviours

- Behaviours are a great basis for individual feedback and development (appraisal). Include managers in this process.
- Recruit for attitude and train for skills is a great maxim.
- Define 'the customer journey'
- Word your communications as well as policies and procedures in the same language.

Listen to your employees and keep them informed

Let people know how things are progressing. Keep it to the right level, it need not be complex, nothing discourages people more than participating without then getting feedback. Remember too that in times of change and uncertainty you need to communicate more not less.

Plan with your staff

Involve your employees in planning in line with your vision together with both short and longer term goals. This promotes ownership, understanding and motivates people. It also underpins decision making and prioritisation of tasks. A good way of starting this process is to use a SWOT (Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats) analysis. We suggest you get your team to complete one individually and then combine them into a single summary for group discussion.

Always encourage ideas

Use briefings, one to ones, team meetings and any other opportunities to encourage people to come forward with ideas. Be proactive in this; passive approaches do not usually work as well. And ensure you have a 'no blame' culture where people can try new things without fear of failure.

Give people clear stretch goals and constructive feedback on their performance

People need to know what success looks like. So agree clear goals with them, in line with what your business needs to achieve. You don't necessarily need to get into formal appraisals, but do give them regular constructive feedback on progress. This means helping them to understand their strengths and identifying areas for improvement.

Manage performance effectively

Give thanks and praise in the moment and where people are not performing do not wait – confront the issues before they become embedded and impact upon the motivation and morale of others.

Bring out everyone's people's full potential

People almost always have unused potential and are motivated by learning new skills. Give your people the opportunity to develop their individual strengths and skills in an environment where they can try new things without fear of failure.

Ensure learning is effective

Much of the training people receive is 'On The Job', but this is not always well done and is seldom evaluated. Adding some sound process to this will almost always pay real dividends in people's output and quality of work.

This includes making sure that new employees feel welcome right from day one.