Rules of E.N.G.A.G.E.M.E.N.T.

A previous article addressed the importance of enhancing employee engagement but what can organisations do to increase employee commitment and lock into their discretionary effort? Researchers such as Ulrich, Towers Watson, the Corporate Leadership Council, and Gallup, amongst others, have identified a variety of factors driving engagement.

I have distilled these into 10 Rules of Engagement, which, when combined, can result in engagement "lift".

Enable Empowerment
Empowerment is the process of enabling individuals to think, take action, and make decisions in an autonomous way and if done authentically, empowerment leads to higher productivity and increased morale. Organisations need to create an environment where employees are allowed make appropriate decisions in relation to how they control their work.

Nurture relationships
Good supportive working relationships with managers and colleagues are key components of commitment and workplace satisfaction. Friendly and positive relationships are good for employees and good for business and these can be nurtured through team building activities and social events.

Genuinely communicate
Engaging behaviours involve having good two-way communications with staff, providing clarity around expectations, listening and showing genuine empathy and demonstrating an active interest in people. Regularly communication on organisational performance and outcomes can engender commitment and alignment to organisational objectives.

Authentically lead
The role of the manager is a key lever in the engagement process in that they empower and facilitate their staff and it is vital that they treat them with dignity, fairness, respect and a genuine interest in their well-being. Engaging managers also provide clarity around expectations, stretch the capability of their staff and support them through coaching to achieve their objectives.

Give recognition
Recognition for a job well done should not be underestimated as a motivator. A good performance management system with meaningful and regular discussion provides an ongoing opportunity to foster engagement and commitment through recognition and reward and ensures that employees feel genuinely valued by the organisation.

Ensure a good work environment
The existence of a strong positive climate and a good working environment can enable commitment and this extends to providing good working facilities, nice surroundings, and a genuine care of employee health and well-being.

Maintain trust

Organisation loyalty and commitment cannot be achieved without maintaining a climate of trust, honesty and integrity and this responsibility clearly lies with management and can only be achieved through openness and good communication.

Encourage feedback

Giving employees a voice, where they are given a "say" in what happens in the organisation and, where their opinions are genuinely encouraged and responded to constitute another key lever in the engagement and retention equation. This can be facilitated either formally or informally, but it must be genuine.

Nourish organisational affiliation

In order to feel truly committed people need to believe in something that is bigger than themselves even in a work context. A strong affiliation and identification with the organisation and its brand can be achieved through a strong corporate value system, high standards and quality services and products. In some sectors the nature of the work itself provides this affiliation and sense of shared ownership and a contribution to a higher purpose.

Train and develop

Employees need to feel that they have the opportunity to develop and progress in their jobs and careers. Development may not always involve promotion but can extend to job enrichment, special projects, assignments, and lateral moves. While training budgets might be curtailed, cost effective experiential training and blended learning also provide development opportunities.

The premise is quite simple really - if organisations truly commit to their employees they will receive commitment in return, leading to higher engagement and retention and increased organisational performance.