

I  my manager





Employees don't quit their companies; they quit their bosses

The role of the manager in employee engagement

Beating at the heart of the strongest performing companies are happy employees who have a positive outlook towards their employer. These employees are fully engaged with their company's brand and its values and as a result are more productive and loyal. And because they're a happy bunch they're also the best possible corporate ambassadors – they interact better with their customers, which leads to a positive effect on profits.

One of the strongest ways to create an engaged employee – even stronger than remuneration – is through a positive relationship with their line manager.

Managers are not just senior personnel – they're anyone who has direct responsibility for another person in the workplace, from the post room to the board room. And evidence shows that it's front line managers that matter more than their senior counterparts when it comes to rallying the troops.

The hardworking, caring supervisor – who can motivate even the most cynical employees – is crucial in maintaining a positive atmosphere and engaged employees.

Meet the new boss, same as the old boss?

Traditionally it's been a negative relationship with a direct line manager ('The Bad Boss'), that's topped the list for why people quit their job. And despite the current economic climate, which has led to an increase in leavers blaming 'restructuring / downsizing' for moving on, 'poor relationship with my manager' is still near the top¹ of that list.

Creating better managers is vital to reducing employee turnover and ultimately increasing company profit. Line managers at any level of the business have a tremendous personal power for good or bad over the ordinary daily lives of the individuals they lead – so getting it right should not only be part of their remit, but essential in giving their employees rightful brand pride.

Employees don't shed their feelings when they come into the office and are happiest when they're appreciated and recognised as individuals, rather than units of productivity. Having the odd heart-to-heart can work wonders, as it's a manager's personal knowledge of their people that helps them create positive experiences of the brand and business.

Treating everyone as individuals is important, because even though it's true that people are drawn to positive experiences and avoid negative ones, it's also true that experiences are very person-specific. What one person believes is a positive experience might not be the case for another – it's down to the manager and how well they know their employees as to how an experience is perceived by each person.



“I can live for two months on a good compliment.”

Mark Twain

We all know how great it feels to receive a compliment, but there are many ways a manager can create a positive relationship with their employees:



Small things matter.

Engaging the team doesn't necessarily mean making grand gestures. Saying thank you for a job well done works wonders



Keep talking!

Keep employees updated about what's happening in the business, the team and about them as individuals



Get to know the team.

What's important to them, what are their likes and dislikes? Remember to ask how their child's first day at school was or if their partner's cold is better!



Listen.

Hear what they say – seek their thoughts and don't just dismiss their views, opinions and ideas



Make time for them.

Managers should ensure they're available when their team needs them. Something that can seem trivial might be really important to one of the team



Have fun - laugh with the team!

Having fun at work breeds excitement and energy, which are some of the key signals of engaged employees. Customers are more likely to respond to an excited employee than a disheartened one. Plus, laughing has physical and psychological health benefits, boosting self-confidence and giving mental strength to cope with daily challenges in the workplace



**Actively support employees
in their development.**

Seek opportunities and ways to help them grow and reach their goals. If their goals aren't clear, they should be defined



Empower employees.

to make decisions and take ownership of projects. Trust them to do the job and to seek advice when they need to



Provide the right tools.

Ensure individuals have everything they need to do the job to the best of their ability



Be flexible.

A good manager should be open to new ideas and ways of working



Keep promises.

Effective managers should do what they say they're going to do when they say they're going to do it



Use the company's brand values.

to help you do all of this

These ideas need to be taken throughout a company to achieve the greatest number of engaged employees. And every manager needs to feel motivated and supported by their own manager before they can do the same for their own team.

Giving managers practical, hands-on management skills to ensure they're motivated and inspired themselves, will help them understand the value of motivating and engaging their own teams.

Getting it right – what's in it for the manager?

Let's not forget that a manager is an employee too. And following some of these 'hearts and minds' ideas with their team will produce their own sense of positive engagement with the company. But a manager will also see:

- ♥ A more stable team with less staff turnover and greater productivity
- ♥ Improved people skills at a time when such skills are being increasingly valued (these 'hearts and minds' ideas will help those without a natural gift)
- ♥ A happier working environment with less absenteeism
- ♥ More respect and loyalty in good and hard times
- ♥ Personal popularity and more fun at work.

Getting it right – what's in it for the business?

In a word – profit. Engaged employees have a real impact on the bottom line. Company performance begins with employees showing up for work and engaged employees have, on average, 27% less absenteeism than those who are actively disengaged².

In a typical 10,000-person company, absenteeism from disengagement costs the business about 5,000 lost days each year, worth around £400,000 in salary paid where no work was performed³. Essentially, managers who maintain higher levels of engagement in their teams save their companies the cost of what are sometimes euphemistically called 'mental health days.' **Great line managers know that by improving the lives of their employees, they'll also improve bottom line results.**

We'd love to have an informal chat about helping your managers better engage their teams. Why not get in touch at www.woodreed.com, email hello@woodreed.com or call Jo Moffatt on 01892 515025.

^{2&3} Source: The 12 Elements of Great Managing by Rodd Wagner and James K Harter, Gallup Press, 2006



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