Strategically Approaching Employee Engagement

A guest article by Adrian Johansen | Image Source: Pexels

Keeping employees engaged is a top priority in many businesses, but somehow the efforts are falling short. Worldwide, only 15% of employees are actively engaged in their work. Additionally, 63.3% of American companies say that retaining employees is harder than hiring them.

What's going wrong? All the work that companies put into employee engagement seems to be falling flat.

It's time to step back and look at the issue with fresh eyes. There are ways to keep employees engaged; it just may not be what you expect.

Know What Truly Matters to Employees

Many business leaders assume that small consolation prizes like pizza parties will satiate their employee's professional appetite, but they would be wrong. It's done constantly, and it doesn't even come close to meeting employees' real needs.

If you're understaffed, a pizza party won't solve the overwork. Unfortunately, managers often go with what's easy and inexpensive rather than with what's effective.

Instead, it might be better to gain feedback from employees through work satisfaction surveys. You should ask questions that can give you insight into your employees' needs, ideas, and desires. Doing this along with updating outdated processes, hiring additional employees, or giving back to your community may do more to boost engagement than 100 pizza parties.

Involve Employees in Creating Processes

Adapting your business is a continuous process, and the people who have the strongest insight about what needs to change are often the front-line workers. You can get better results from process improvements when you include them in the planning and execution.

Even more importantly, being included helps people feel like they are important to the organization. It improves morale and helps employees feel like they are valuable and part of the team. Instead of being told, they're being asked, and that can change everything. Empowering employees makes a real difference!

When you implement something new that employees have taken

part in, the updates will have more meaning to your staff and you'll get much higher buy-in. The process change is much more likely to succeed.

Don't stop there, though. Help employees understand that they are part of the team by sharing other information with them as well, from emergency response measures to continuity plans. Everyone can feel like an insider, and if they do, they will be much more engaged at work.

Give Daily Encouragement

Because managers have a lot on their plate, they often spend all day responding to problems and putting out fires. As a result, you may only communicate with team members when there's an issue or performance problem.

Unfortunately, this means that negative feedback is only what your team receives from you. They need positive reinforcement as well. You can improve employee engagement by providing it. You don't have to go overboard or make a big deal out of everything. Simply share genuine gratitude often.

Daily boosts build up and create loyalty, which matters a lot more than a momentary buzz from an annual kickoff event. Be a boss that people respect. If they look up to you because of your actions, they'll be less likely to leave, and more likely to engage in the company. This applies to everyone involved in a company — everyone from those that work at the management level to front-line workers.

Start Engagement at the Very Top

People know when their leaders are putting on a show compared to when they are genuinely enthusiastic. If engagement doesn't exist in your management team, you won't have engaged employees either.

Excitement is contagious, but so is cynicism. A key engagement strategy is to make sure you're encouraging great morale from everyone. This includes engagement from the very top of the company and those at the bottom.

If you're a manager struggling with a disengaged team, think about your disposition and how you display it around others. By working on your attitude and approach to work, you can make a big difference in your staff.

Develop the Careers of Your Staff

Another difference you can make with your staff is giving them something to stay for. If someone is in a dead end with their job and can't see a way to advance, they'll disengage and start looking elsewhere for work.

Being intentional about career development can help motivate passive employees and keep enthusiastic ones engaged. Talk to each team member about their goals for work and help them develop new skills. Keep your eyes open for opportunities and encourage your employees to go for them.

Don't make your employees look elsewhere to advance their careers. They'll either stay and grow apathy for their job, or they'll take their skills to another company. Neither one is good for your team!

Create an Environment Where Employees Can Thrive

As a business leader, it's important to have a team that's committed to the company's goals and involved in its future. To get there, you'll need to create an environment where employees are appreciated and encouraged to grow.

You can't force someone to be happy, of course. All you can do

is accept feedback and set the stage for people to succeed. Include your staff in process changes and significant decisions, help them develop, and pay attention to what matters.

When you do, your team will be an exception to the rule. They'll be genuinely engaged.

\

Author Bio:
Adrian Johansen is a writer and consultant in the Pacific Northwest. She loves sharing knowledge with others and learning along the way! You can find more of her writing **here**