



Why Your Engagement Model is Essential to HR Strategy and Business Success

Introduction

We have all heard the phrase *"Culture eats strategy for breakfast"*. The phrase is widely accredited to Peter Drucker and apparently was a guiding principle of Mark Fields, who was the President of Ford from 2014 - 2017. The simple logic being that any organisation that disconnects strategy from organisational culture is setting itself up for failure!

Organisation Culture

There are many excellent books on organisation culture by leading academics and practitioners that offer varying definitions, including models for diagnosing an organisations culture to varying models on how to change an organisations culture to align to the organisation's strategy. This article will not attempt to summarise this considerable broad area of work but one common theme is that a poor organisation culture will have a negative impact on an organisation, irrespective of its size or purpose. As such, this will adversely have an impact on business success. As noted, there is no shortage of definitions for organisation culture. The simplest one I've come across to date is by Deal and Kennedy:

"It's the way we do things around here" (Corporate Culture : The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life 1982:4).

A key component in the process of diagnosing an organisations culture is to undertake an employee engagement survey. This confidential 'warts and all' survey will indicate and highlight the key areas that an employer will need to address in order to begin the slow transition of introducing a new culture into an organisation which should include regular pulse points to ensure the programme is on track.

This logical approach is employee engagement at its best and demonstrates the inextricable link between how a proactive employee engagement strategy can influence an organisations culture.

Well managed, an effective employee engagement strategy will underpin your HR strategy to achieve the overall business strategy successfully.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is about creating the right conditions for all employees to work to their potential, are committed to the organisation's values and are motivated to contribute to the organisation's success with an enhanced sense of their own well-being. How an organisation engages with its employees will vary significantly depending on its size, structure, purpose and the prevailing culture within the organisation.

While there are a number of different employee engagement models to consider, there are **common key initiatives** that can be viewed as **best practice** to assist any organisation adapt a more strategic approach to employee engagement.

1. **Demonstrate and live the core values and behaviours at leadership level.** It is critical that senior leaders of an organisation are seen to fully adhere to the espoused core values and behaviours as this will then permeate throughout the organisation.
2. **Communicate regularly with employees.** This is absolutely necessary. Explore new ways to introduce or enhance two way communications with employees. This can take many forms from group / team engagement to individual one to one's. Whether an organisation is unionised or non-union, this should not stop the employer talking to their employees.
3. **Understand what motivates your employees to create a positive work environment.** Learn from employee feedback, exit interviews etc. Figure out what makes your employees want to work in your organisation?
4. **Review Learning & Development initiatives to build organisation capability.** Involve your employees as this shows commitment. Research shows this is reciprocated by employees who feel they have a sense of purpose. This applies across all engagement initiatives.
5. **Implement a talent management strategy to ensure you recruit right fit employees.** Have a mentoring programme to build internal talent for succession planning.
6. **Support work life balance.** Flexible working and other initiatives can be implemented. Employee Wellbeing and mental health awareness are becoming more of a priority for organisations due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the requirement for many employees to work from home.
7. **Establish a pay and recognition policy that is transparent and fair.** This is a key area as employees who do not feel valued will likely leave the organisation which can create additional problems. A dynamic performance management process that adequately rewards employees for their efforts with regular feedback can be a significant part of an effective employee engagement strategy.

A **key outcome** of all the above engagement initiatives (as part of your HR strategy) is an **engaged workforce** which can only create a positive culture in the organisation where employees can meet their potential in a positive work environment.

In conclusion, the implementation of an effective employee engagement model is essential to the HR strategy and to business success.

If you would like to talk to us about any of the above issues or about engaging your people through the period ahead, please get in touch with me at paul.obrien@stratis.ie or any one of our Partners.

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