

Addressing Poor Employee Engagement and High Levels of Attrition

The Scenario

Our client had experienced a marked and serious increase in staff turnover for a specific team within the business. Naturally, the team's managers and the HR function suspected what some of the reasons for this might be. However, suspecting the causes was not sufficient. The underlying causes were likely to be complex and multiple. Corrective action needed to be taken quickly but the business also needed to be sure that any actions taken were the correct ones. They were aware that making the wrong decisions could make the situation worse instead of resolving it.

The Curve Group was asked to help identify the root causes of poor employee engagement and resulting attrition rates and then make recommendations for actions which would significantly improve the situation.

Exploring and Analysing the Issue

The first step was a briefing meeting between The Curve Group, the team's senior managers and their HR Business Partner. This facilitated meeting enabled people to share their own perspectives of the problem and led to agreement

around the process to be used for further investigation. In brief, this consisted of:

- A semi – structured, face to face interview with each senior manager having leadership responsibility within the team
- All members of the team invited to participate in a semi-structured interview either on a 1:1 basis or with a small group of colleagues of the same level of seniority. (Individuals could choose which format they preferred. Some opted to attend both). The questioning mainly allowed for qualitative data to be collected but also a small amount of quantitative data to check likely future levels of attrition.
- A report analysing root causes of the issue and making recommendations for actions to resolve the issues

Outcomes

Whilst initially concerned about issues of confidentiality, participants were soon reassured and were very keen to share their experiences and to see improvements to team morale and performance. Rich data was collected as a result of the process and the resulting report provided very clear evidence of the challenges faced by the team. Whilst the

situation was complex, none of the problems highlighted by the team were insurmountable. The recommendations presented back to the senior leadership team of the business were relatively straight forward to implement given a modest amount of investment of time and resources. These could easily be offset against the costs of a disengaged team and the expense of recruiting new people to replace those leaving.

The recommendations implemented ranged from restructuring the team's senior management, through to a new personal and career development structure for all team members.

The team's morale improved almost immediately, even before the impact of the changes could take place. This was a result of the team appreciating that something was being done about

The impact of the actions is now being experienced as a drop in levels of attrition, having a significant impact on the health of the business.

Success Factors

Use of an independent objective third party to investigate complex sensitive issues

Meet the individual who will be working with your people to ensure they have the advanced interpersonal skills and high levels of integrity required to develop a trusting relationship with your people

Provide employees with reassurance about confidentiality and ensure you build as much choice into the process as you can

Ensure you are prepared to take action to improve employee engagement quickly, following the research process

Make sure you communicate as openly as you can throughout the process and especially about the changes made as a result of the process

Involve people as much as possible in action planning and implementation

"There are only three measurements that tell you nearly everything you need to know about your organization's overall performance: employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and cash flow...It goes without saying that no company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it..."

Jack Welch, former CEO of GE

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