

ENGAGING STAFF IN TIMES OF CHANGE

In today's business world, change is becoming the norm. Whether it's internally-driven re-organisations or those forced through external influences from the economy or the marketplace, business leaders need to implement the changes while keeping staff engaged and 'on board'. Here are some tips for ensuring you take people with you on your change journey – not leave them behind on the dockside.

Recognise the impact of the change

It's easy to focus on the facts and process of the change – the company re-organisation, a new manager joining, downsizing or expanding – rather than the impact it will be having on the people. Ignore this at your peril! We all experience change differently depending on our personality, previous experiences, tolerance of uncertainty and personal resilience. So keep an eye out for signs of stress and provide support for those who are struggling.

Communicate a clear vision

To get people on board with a new change, you need to be able to present it clearly and with enthusiasm. If the change is perceived as bad news you need to be clear on the business case and communicate this in a helpful way. Whether you agree with the change or not, as a manager in the business you need to be able to deliver a positive and coherent message about the reasons and benefits. To do this you need to make sense of it for yourself first, then tailor it to your audience – how will it impact them? What might be the benefits for them personally? And allow lots of time and space for asking questions, so that it becomes a two-way dialogue.

Develop a coaching approach

Whatever your natural leadership style is, during changing times where there is less information available, coaching is a highly effective leadership style to ensure staff are motivated and engaged. Rather than telling and directing, coaching is a supportive approach based on listening and asking questions to encourage the individual to think things through for themselves. This encourages staff to take more ownership



and responsibility, as well as helping them to realise they have choice in the actions they take. So set time aside and spend time with each individual asking questions to help them think through their issues or find ways to achieve their goals.

Recognise their contribution

It's easy for confidence to get knocked in uncertain times. You may find staff questioning their ability to tackle activities they would previously have found easy, or needing reassurance before taking decisions. This is quite natural in times of change, and it is vital that managers recognise the contribution of their team members. A simple thank you note or a piece of positive feedback will make an enormous difference and boost the morale and motivation levels of your staff. Make a point of doing this on a regular basis – and make sure it's sincere.

Create short-term certainty

In times of change it's even more important to ensure staff are clear on what's expected of them. If you don't have a clear idea of what will be needed in the long term, set short term objectives to ensure staff have a clear focus and understand what's required. Make sure these are reviewed on a regular basis, and the achievement of objectives is recognised. For your teams, make sure you celebrate the quick wins and the achievement of short term milestones to keep them motivated and willing to go the extra mile for you.



Involve them

By encouraging your staff to contribute their energy and ideas to the change, you will not only get a fresh perspective, but you will also help engage them more proactively. If it's an organisational change, use their expertise in their own areas to help implement the changes in a way that's most effective.

Encourage them to voice any concerns or issues, then ask for their ideas to address them. Spot those who are real advocates for the change and give them a role to play in it (helping to train others, involve them in the project team etc).

Develop their skills

Change often provides great opportunities for broadening skills and expertise. And having access to development opportunities is a great way to engage your staff. Think creatively about how you can do this. Skills development isn't just about going on training courses. It's about experiencing new areas of work, involvement in projects or shadowing others. When you have work that needs delegating, don't just give it to the usual suspects. Share it around and start to use it as a tool for developing the potential in others.

'Be the change you want to see...'

And finally, the biggest influence on the behaviour and attitude of your teams is you! So role model the qualities you want to see in others. If you are passionate and enthusiastic and display a can-do attitude, those you manage are more likely to. As Ghandi famously said, you need to be the change you want to see in the world.

For a more help with change in your organisation and how to handle and manage it, call me now to discuss your needs.

Tel: 0845 519 2474 Mob: 07879 072337

Email: info@julieblunt.co.uk