MyVoice
UWS Staff Engagement Survey

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- Performance Appraisal
- Trust in Leadership
MyVoice UWS Staff Engagement Survey

Information for Deans, Directors and Senior Managers

This following outlines the next steps for identifying improvement actions for your School/Divisional Unit/Area, in response to the 2012 MyVoice Survey results.

The proposed key dates in the MyVoice staff engagement process are:

- Presentation to UWS Executive and SQC: 28 May
- Presentation at the Senior Staff Forum: 21 June
- Broadcast email to staff: 21 June
- Presentations to School or Division Executive/Management team: June–July
- Presentations by Dean/Director/Senior Manager to staff: August–September
- MyVoice Campus Presentations: 27-30 August
- Presentation to the Board of Trustees: 5 September
- Vice-Chancellor’s Campus Forums: 18-21 September
- Action planning areas for improvement: August–December
- Report on progress of action planning: From December (then annually)

Voice Project or OPC will present School and Divisional Unit results to Executive/Management teams. This will be followed by meetings with School or Divisional Unit staff where the Dean/Director/Senior Manager will present and discuss the results with their staff. Meetings with staff will be supported by OPC.

Discussion with your Executive/Management team

1. Review the MyVoice Staff Engagement Executive Summary and UWS High Level Results

2. Review your School/Divisional Unit/Area detailed scale and item results
   - Refer to the ‘Guidelines for Interpretation of Results’
   - Ensure your Executive/Management team attends the presentation of results for your School/Divisional Unit/Area

3. Discuss the MyVoice results and next steps with your Executive/Management team in order to:
   - Develop a shared, high level understanding of the results including strengths and areas for improvement
   - Develop a consistent approach for the dissemination of results to staff
   You may wish to invite a representative from OPC to attend the meeting

4. Identify two or three improvement priorities to be integrated into your School/Divisional Unit/Area plans. These will be the responsibility of the Executive/Management team

5. Ensure alignment of improvement actions with the University’s priorities.
Discussions with your staff

1. Present the UWS and School/Divisional Unit/Area MyVoice results to staff. OPC can help develop a slide presentation.

2. Seek feedback on the results and suggested MyVoice improvement priorities in order to:
   - Develop a shared understanding of strengths and areas for improvement across the School/Divisional Unit/Area.
   - Engage staff in discussing and identifying priority areas for improvement to enhance the overall performance of the University and to increase staff satisfaction and engagement.
   - Ensure staff have realistic expectations about what is feasible in responding to the feedback. Some actions may require a longer timeframe for identifiable and quantifiable outcomes to be achieved.
   - Establish an understanding that actions can only be developed for areas for improvement that the School/Divisional Unit/Area has control over or accountability for.

3. Consider the following options for engaging staff. OPC can help facilitate these.
   - Action planning workshops
   - Staff forums
   - Team meetings
   - Focus groups
   - Discussion boards.

Follow up

1. Report on agreed priority improvements to the Executive Staffing Committee by December 2012 and build these into School/Divisional Unit/Area strategic and operational plans for 2013.

2. Regularly update your staff on progress for the priority improvement areas.

3. Report on progress annually to the Executive Staffing Committee.

Contact

For more information, contact:

- Aggie Lim, Director, Organisational Development on 9678 7490 (ext 7490)
- Phillip Marler, Consultant, Organisational Development on 9678 7494 (ext 7494)
- Your HR Partner in the Office of People and Culture on 9678 5838 (ext 5838)
Steps involved in a Results and Action Planning Workshop

1. **Pre-workshop**
   - Thank staff for their participation
   - Present and discuss the UWS High Level Results (refer to the MyVoice Executive Summary)
   - Discuss the School/Divisional Unit/Area High Level Results
   - Focus on strengths and key messages
   - Review areas for improvement. Are there any surprises?
   - Are there additional sources of information that provide a more informed interpretation of the results?
   - Is there any contextual information that provides an insight into the results e.g. recent initiatives, review, change in process or structure?
   - Invite staff to comment and brainstorm ideas on what the School/Divisional Unit/Area could improve.

2. **Workshop** – to consider the results of the MyVoice Survey and identify two or three priority improvement areas for action over the next 12 months.

   **Individual**
   - Ask staff to consider what the School/Divisional Unit/Area should focus on for the remainder of 2012 and into 2013 (and beyond).

   **Whole group**
   - Encourage open dialogue
   - Set aside issues that cannot be addressed at the local level or that need further exploration
   - Feedback ideas and identify common priorities.

   **Small group work**
   - Brainstorm possible actions to address identified priorities.

   **Whole group**
   - Each group to share their suggested actions
   - Discuss what is realistic and within the School/Divisional Unit/Area’s control or influence
   - Agree on who’s responsible for taking the chosen actions (that is, individual, shared or management responsibility), by when, and how progress will be reported.

3. **Post workshop**
   - Integrate priority improvements into strategic and operational plans for 2012-2013
   - Submit a report to the Executive Staffing Committee by December 2012 outlining your priority improvements. Refer to the example Priority Actions Report
   - The School/Divisional Unit/Area Executive/Management team to discuss any areas for improvement that cannot be addressed at the local level or that need further exploration.
## Priority Actions Report

**School/Divisional Unit/Area:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area for Improvement</th>
<th>MyVoice Survey Item Description and % Favourable Results</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Target/Measures</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
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BOARD OF TRUSTEES
Meeting 5 September 2012

MyVoice Staff Engagement Survey

Purpose
To advise the Board on the results and outcomes of the University's inaugural MyVoice: UWS Staff Engagement Survey conducted from 19 March to 5 April 2012.

Background
The University's Our People 2015 Staffing Strategy, approved by the Board of Trustees in 2007, recognises the need to have "the right people in place to be the University we want to be by 2015 and beyond" and supports the "Making the Difference" strategic imperative of "Building organisational and financial strength through the attraction, retention, recognition, reward and development of high quality staff."

The MyVoice: UWS Staff Engagement Survey (MyVoice Survey) was conducted to help inform the actions required to support this strategic imperative.

The MyVoice Survey assesses multiple indicators of the University's performance across a broad range of HR and general management practices and the relative importance of these practices for maximising employee engagement and performance. By analysing both performance and importance, a set of key priority areas have been identified to assist targeting of improvement initiatives.

The MyVoice Survey results compares performance between various organisational units within UWS and against 36 Australian and New Zealand Universities.

The implementation of the survey was overseen by the Our People 2015 Steering Committee and Executive Staffing Committee, supported by a Reference Group consisting of senior Academic and Professional staff and a Project Team lead by the Director Organisational Development. Staff were kept informed of the survey through regular email communication from the Vice-Chancellor and a MyVoice website. The Executive Staffing Committee will continue to oversee the post-survey implementation process.

Discussion
The inaugural MyVoice Survey elicited a very strong response with 83% or 2066 out of 2487 staff taking the opportunity to have their say and provide feedback to the University on a range of management practices, on UWS' strengths and areas for improvement. This response exceeds the sector wide average of 65%. The results were consistent with those seen at other universities and were 1% higher than the average benchmark results for universities and around 4% higher on average compared to other multi-campus universities.

Key strengths for UWS emerged in a number of areas including staff commitment to and belief in the mission and values of the University; job satisfaction; clarity of roles; the University's facilities; and the level of teamwork amongst colleagues. Weaker results were seen in areas such as cross-unit cooperation, quality of and support for entrepreneurial activities, and managing change.
The key outcome measures of staff engagement and of satisfaction with the University’s achievements and progress, were on par with other universities, at 76% and 55% respectively. Voice Project Pty Ltd, who administered the MyVoice Survey, have provided an analysis of the results and made four recommendations on priority improvement areas at the university-wide level. These recommendations relate to the most important drivers of staff engagement and staff perception of organisational progress: trust and confidence in senior leadership; effective recruitment and selection procedures; increased transparency in decision making particularly with regard to major change initiatives; facilitating communication and information flow; and greater cross-unit collaboration.

The University-wide results and recommendations have been presented to the University Executive and senior managers and Campus Forums have been held to present the MyVoice Survey results to staff and to acknowledge staff feedback. Local level results have been presented to Schools and Divisional Units by their Deans and Directors who are expected to identify improvement plans for their School and/or work unit based on local level results and feedback from staff.

For every survey completed, the University made a contribution on behalf of staff towards UWS’ student scholarship program. As a result of staff participation in the MyVoice Survey, the amount of $10,000 has been generated, and a two year community scholarship has been awarded to Hayley Bellamy. Hayley is in the first year of her Bachelor of Design (Visual Communication) at UWS. Hayley has a condition which confines her to an electric wheelchair and she depends heavily on her family for support. Hayley is very committed to her studies and through the use of computers for her design work, is able to express herself and achieve a level of independence. Hayley is an excellent candidate for the MyVoice Scholarship and the awarding of the Scholarship is a wonderful recognition of staff commitment to UWS and providing opportunities for its students.

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

The Board notes the results of the MyVoice: UWS Staff Engagement Survey and the proposed actions in response to the MyVoice Survey results.

Ann Tout
Executive Director, Office of People and Culture

Prepared by Aggie Lim, Director Office of Organisational Development
Approved by Rhonda Hawkins, DVC Corporate Strategy and Services
MyVoice Staff Engagement Survey

Guidelines for identifying areas to address

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Phillip Marler p.marler@uws.edu.au ext 7474

Identifying areas to address

Guidelines:

• Don’t try to fix everything

• Identify three or four areas to focus on

• Choose areas that you think you can reasonably do something about

• Prioritise areas that have a relatively strong impact on Passion and/or Progress (indicated by the strength of the blue lines)

• Consider any ‘high risk’ items (indicated in the risk analysis)

• Bear in mind the overall UWS recommendations, and that all areas of the university may be required to address these
Identifying areas to address

Guidelines:

• Make a short list by identifying the lowest three or four areas for:
  - Subunit %Fav
  - UWS %Dif
  - All Unis %Dif (if looking at UWS high level results)

• For each of these areas:
  - Does it have a strong impact on EITHER Passion or Progress?
  - Or, does it have at least a moderate impact on BOTH Passion and Progress?

• Are there any other areas that had at least a moderate impact on both Passion and Progress, and had a reasonably low %Fav? (e.g. <65%)

• For each area on your shortlist, decide whether to keep it by looking at the specific questions:
  - Is there any question that sticks out?
  - Are any questions noticeably different to UWS, or to Unis generally?
  - Which items have a strong impact on Passion and/or Progress?
  - Are these issues that you can do something about?
  - Do these results ‘make sense’, or will you need to investigate further?

the change process

“Kotters Eight Steps of Change”
SMART goals

• **Specific** – is it clear what you are going to do? What exactly are you aiming to accomplish?
• **Measurable** – how will you know that this objective has been completed? What will have been done?
• **Agreed** – whose agreement needs to be obtained? Which key stakeholders need to be on board?
• **Realistic** – are there adequate resources available (people, finance, equipment, time) to achieve this objective?
• **Timebound** – when will this goal be completed? Who will be accountable for delivering it, and what will be the implications if it’s not achieved on time?

The following Voice Bites are helpful tips for addressing specific topics highlighted by the MyVoice Survey Results. They have been developed by Voice Project Pty Ltd.

Voice Bite Topics:

- Career Opportunities
- Cross-Unit Cooperation
- Ethics
- Flexibility
- Involvement
- Mission & Values
- Performance Appraisal
- Trust in Leadership
career opportunities

Investment in career planning, skill development and opportunities for career progression

Regardless of generational cohort or tenure, career opportunity within an organisation has a significant impact on employee engagement and bottom line results. One of the primary reasons why people leave companies is lack of personal growth, job challenges and opportunity for career progression.

suggested actions

- **competency framework** Provide a clear competency profile that allows all employees to identify their position within the organisation, identify current development opportunities and potential pathways for career progression (both upwards and outwards). Competencies should include the required skills, knowledge and behaviours for each level, role and job family.

- **developmental assessment** Give your staff the opportunity to participate in developmental assessments to determine current competencies and enable the identification of gaps between current and future planned positions. A self-assessment skills audit tool may be created and made readily available to allow staff to regularly monitor progress in closing competency gaps. Development assessments can also be used as a tool for identifying and fast-tracking a pool of high potential employees.

- **career planning** Talk with staff about their career goals. Career coaching can be integrated into the performance appraisal process, with managers assisting in the development of personal career interests, goals and the formulation of realistic career pathways in line with employees’ abilities and the long-range plans of the organisation.

- **tailored learning & development** Offer support and guidance for the development of an action plan in which development needs are formally identified and prioritised and relevant development and training options are tailored to learning style and career objectives.

- **strategic career development options** Get creative about developing future oriented options that are focused on the development of competencies to meet career objectives. Options can include job enlargement or rotation, lateral movement, cross-organisation task forces or even secondments in partner organisations to develop a breadth of organisational exposure, an understanding of different functional areas, peer learning, new skills acquisition and a new network of contacts. More specific development of professional skills can be facilitated through formal mentoring, development centres or formal education and training.
case study

Over a number of years, Cancer Council Queensland has improved its career planning and development capability with measurable results. In 2005, Voice Climate survey results revealed some staff believed that there was a lack of career opportunities and effort spent on career development. Management and HR took a number of steps in response.

Firstly, career planning was incorporated into the performance review cycle. Employees were given the option of discussing their career aspirations with their manager. The intention was to have an open and honest conversation about their real career intentions without impacting their perceived HR record. As such, managers were also trained and equipped to have these conversations. There was a positive response to this initiative with a 75% uptake of the career discussion option.

Secondly, processes were put into place to ensure that all jobs were advertised internally first before looking for external applicants. Staff can now easily access current job vacancies.

Finally, the organisation was restructured into a smaller number of divisions to improve the cross-department cooperation and manage the growth of the organisation. This action enhanced the awareness of job opportunities across the organisation.

By 2008, the percentage of employees rating career opportunities favourably had improved 20%, demonstrating a significant transformation in perceptions of career development. Cherie Everett, the Executive Manager, HR, believes that this combined with other HR and management initiatives has contributed to measurable improvement in performance and a reduction in staff turnover from 25% to 6%.

useful resources

cross-unit cooperation

Horizontal collaboration, knowledge and information sharing between sections of an organisation

Collaborative efforts between organisational units facilitates the pooling of assets, personnel, and equipment to improve problem-solving capacity, cross-fertilisation of ideas, organisational learning and new knowledge creation through information sharing. Leveraging the expertise and knowledge held in different parts of an organisation has become critical for organisations to maintain a competitive advantage through innovation, to deliver superior customer service and to improve employee engagement.

suggested actions

- **identification of needs and barriers** Understand the needs of different areas and diagnose the factors contributing to low horizontal cooperation, information sharing and communication, through mechanisms such as a survey, focus groups or interviews. Specific data will help the definition of a targeted approach. Ongoing review of collaborative processes allows future changes to be made.

- **leadership support** Observable leadership support of inter-team cooperation is critical for encouraging positive collaborative employee behaviours. Leaders should clearly communicate the value of cross-unit cooperation to achieving team and organisational goals as well as model the behaviours expected. Leaders can also eliminate identified barriers, such as redefining competing work goals, reducing competition for resources and clarifying cross-unit role responsibilities.

- **building organisational commitment** Building a strong organisational brand and identity that is consistently reinforced helps to encourage affiliation with the organisation over team loyalty alone. Leveraging high involvement HR practices can facilitate the alignment of employee interests and their willingness to engage in activities that support the wider organisation. For example, training and development opportunities signal the organisation's interest in employees' long-term growth and increase employees' belief in their ability to engage in expected behaviours and contribute to the organisation.

- **goal alignment** Creating similar levels of interdependence between organisational units to achieve work objectives can help overcome perceptions that one function is more important than another. Setting clear goals and accountabilities while minimising competing goals will ensure that individual team objectives do not impede employees from collaborating with other organisational areas.

- **reward and recognition systems** Expected behaviours need to be outlined and evaluated directly as part of the performance appraisal process, signalling to employees the importance of these activities as part of their role. Consider structuring incentive and/or recognition schemes that recognise collaboration and cooperation with other departments/units within the organisation.

- **cross-unit contact** Creating opportunities for horizontal face-to-face communication can foster trust and respect between areas, reduce ingroup biases and improve intergroup perceptions, which can increase employees' willingness to coordinate with others outside of their immediate team. More structured opportunities for employees to engage with those outside of their immediate team can be created through cross-unit project teams, training to facilitate organisational learning, networking events and job rotations.

case study

When researching initiatives to improve cross-unit cooperation in organisations, we came across a comprehensive partnering program that Sydney Water had embarked on to improve the way Operations and Maintenance (O&M) worked together to deliver services to its customers. Despite strong O&M performance, engagement and ownership was low, lines of accountability were unclear, and collaborative relationships were lacking. Sydney Water’s goal was to attain long term process and business improvements, and achieve O&M excellence through trust-based collaboration. Sydney Water have been generous in sharing the key initiatives they implemented to achieve this goal.

www.voiceproject.com.au

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As part of a broader change management program, a multi-faceted partnering strategy was implemented by the organisation to engage leaders and staff at all levels in O&M and improve relationships. The first stage was the creation of an Operations and a Maintenance Division with clear accountabilities to work collaboratively as equal partners towards the common goal of O&M excellence. Governance was, and still is, key in driving and maintaining change momentum. In the four months prior to launching the new divisions, and for several months afterwards a Program Leadership Team (including General Managers [GM], O&M Business Improvement Managers, Partnering Program Manager, HR) met weekly, now fortnightly to oversee the O&M change management program.

Post the restructure, the partnering program began. Starting at senior levels, both divisional executive teams participated in a foundation workshop to develop a Partnering Charter, to which everyone signed their name. The workshop served to drive leader alignment through the development of joint objectives, accountabilities and behaviours. The key messages from the workshop were communicated to staff through GM roadshows. The roadmap was supported with a simple story board designed so that it could be used on the back of a truck with pen and paper. Using pictures as well as a story board supported different communication and learning styles.

Next followed a series of engagement workshops with the leadership teams, after which employees at all levels participated in partnering workshops to cascade the importance of collaboration through the organisation. Employees were accredited as facilitators of the sessions, which helped to foster involvement and strengthen employees’ sense of ownership.

The workshops focused on: exploring the highlights, lowlights and ‘rub points’ of the O & M partnership; assessing the health of the relationship through a survey; identifying the desired target state for the O & M relationships; and action planning for making improvements. Leaders were responsible for refining action plans following the workshops and completed plans were posted to the intranet to improve transparency and accountability. Monthly follow-ups were implemented to maintain traction. Six to nine months following the initial workshop, a review workshop was conducted to acknowledge progress and address remaining ‘rub points’. An annual relationship survey was also implemented to measure progress, and each employee had partnering KPIs incorporated into their performance development plan.

Additional communication channels continue to be leveraged to maintain focus on partnership objectives. Examples include an online community of practice; toolbox talks, regular O&M update emails to staff, a staff Maintenance Improvement Suggestion Scheme and regular GM roadshows where leaders across both divisions in the depots and plants present back to the GM on what they are doing to achieve agreed objectives.

A number of follow-up measures indicate significant improvements since implementing the organisational restructure and the partnering strategy including: a consistent increase in the quality of working relationships between operations and maintenance since the 2009 baseline, a decrease in customer complaints with Sydney Water’s product from 3,542 in 2009 to 1,872 in June 2011 and an increase in the reliability of assets and processes, with July 2011 showing the best performance to date. Performance metrics that have remained static are the focus of ongoing strategies.

useful resources


ethics

Ethical, social and environmental responsibility of the organisation

There is increasing recognition that an organisation’s ethics affect employee outcomes, including behaviours directed towards external stakeholders. Employees often feel better about themselves when associated with an ethical organisation, and may also feel that such an organisation is likely to treat them better.

suggested actions

• management support Obtain support from management as soon as possible. Management plays an important role in setting standards for ethical behaviour. It is important to lead from the top.

• clear expectations Consider developing an ethical code of conduct, providing your employees with guidelines around what is considered acceptable ethical behaviour. Also outline the manner in which the organisation deals with external stakeholders. For example, describe how suppliers should be treated, how the organisation interacts with local government and community organisations and how decisions affecting the community should be made (e.g., waste management). Ensure this code of conduct is implemented and followed.

• intuitive and coherent actions It is important that socially, environmentally and ethically responsible actions align with strategic goals. These actions need to be relevant to the specific nature of the organisation, industry and region in which you operate. For example, organisations in the finance industry might consider running community education programs on the topic of money management. Organisations with operations in a number of sectors or regions may implement different actions across these areas, rather than taking a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.

• consultation Employees differ in their responses to ethical actions and different issues are important to them. When you are implementing ethically based actions it is important to consult your employees. Find out what actions employees expect, what they think the impact will be, and how they are likely to respond to ethical actions.

• meet the minimums Employees are more likely to pay attention to the areas in which ethical performance is poor, than the areas in which ethical performance is high. It is critical that you prevent or address unethical actions, rather than simply add on socially or environmentally responsible ‘programs’. Ethical actions should not be perceived as attempts to compensate for poor performance in other areas. For example, employees should not believe that you are donating money to local sporting clubs to divert people’s attention away from negative media coverage.

• measure success Think about what you want to achieve from implementing ethically based practices and define clear objectives. Choose ethical, socially responsible or environmentally responsible actions that can help you achieve these objectives. Use clear guidelines to determine if you are meeting these objectives.
case study

Blackmores is an Australian organisation delivering natural healthcare solutions. It is committed to measuring internal organisational climate, and uses Voice surveys to prioritise action areas. One priority area for Blackmores, and a core value, is social responsibility. “It is important to practise what you preach” notes Philip Daffy, Sustainability Manager, “if you are in the natural health industry, you have to be naturally healthy”.

Blackmores advocates seven steps to sustainability: (1) Establish your sustainability priorities, (2) Walk the talk, (3) Minimise your footprint across all aspects and locations, (4) Establish trust with your consumer, (5) Recognise employee rights, (6) Take control of and responsibility for your supply chain and (7) Report and promote honestly. Staff are encouraged to nominate colleagues who demonstrate behaviour consistent with social responsibility, or other Blackmores’ values, for quarterly awards.

One way in which Blackmores has demonstrated their commitment to social responsibility is their impressive new workplace campus, designed to be both environmentally sustainable and to create a healthy work environment for staff. The Blackmores campus incorporates a number of environmentally sustainable elements, such as light/motion sensitive lighting, as well as being designed with employee health in mind (e.g., low Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC) emitting furnishings, internal gardens).

Blackmores has faced a number of challenges in their commitment to social responsibility. For example, the new campus condensed a number of existing sites into one, resulting in the need to find a suitable sized site, which still allowed Blackmores to meet their commitments to the environment and employee health. Another challenge is that while Blackmores sees benefits from socially responsible actions (e.g., staff retention, staff health), many corporate practices can contribute to these benefits, meaning stakeholders do not always recognise the return from socially responsible actions.

So, where to now for Blackmores? Philip believes the next big challenge for Blackmores, and indeed a challenge for any business, is gaining complete knowledge and control of the supply and distribution chain, in order to ensure that products are ethical and sustainable from the ‘cradle to the grave’.

useful resources

- http://www.ethics.org.au St James Ethics Centre
flexibility

The extent to which staff believe they can control when, where and how long they work

Workplace flexibility is more than just flexible work policies. It is a sense of trust and respect between employer and employee, a supportive workplace culture, and a sense of control over one’s job and working conditions. Organisations with workplace flexibility are more successful at attracting and retaining employees, even if the employees don’t use the policies. A sense of control over work is a strong mechanism for managing stress, and is linked to less sick leave, less work-related impairment and higher job commitment.

suggested actions

• **manager attitudes** Encourage and educate supervisors to be accepting and supportive of workers’ lives outside work. Changing individual attitudes towards flexibility can be a challenge, but educating supervisors as to the benefits and illustrating their key role may help. Managers and supervisors have a strong influence over whether or not formal workplace flexibility policies are available for use and to whom they are available. The usability of flexibility policies is positively linked to organisational commitment, whereas the mere presence of flexibility policies is not. Informal flexibility, attitude towards flexibility and the acceptance of its use are key to successfully utilising the benefits of workplace flexibility.

• **myth busting** More hours equals higher productivity is not always true. Long hours can have a negative effect on productivity by straining employee engagement and increasing stress levels. Similarly, the mistaken belief in some organisations that part-time employees are less committed and of less value than full-time employees can deter people from requesting part-time hours. Research shows that part-time employees are equally as engaged, but are often less stressed than their full-time colleagues.

• **consistency** Managers might worry about "everyone" wanting flexibility. However, the benefits of workplace flexibility outweigh the costs, as commitment and staff retention can be increased amongst staff generally, but not everyone will require flexibility. Flexibility policies should be applied consistently, particularly within work groups, and promoted to all employees.

• **every employee is different** Individual needs, preferences, and circumstances will reflect the type of flexibility people need. ‘Flexibility fit’ is a powerful positive predictor of employee engagement. Provide a range of flexibility options, such as **schedule flexibility** – part-time work, flexible work hours, alternative leave arrangements or part year employment; **location flexibility** - working from home or remotely; **flexible job design** - phased retirement, job sharing.

• **promotion of flexible work options** Just knowing that flexible work options are available has potential positive outcomes for all employees such as lower depression, less work/life conflict and lower turnover intention, even if they don’t use it. Increasing employee understanding of policies and available resources can positively impact job commitment in the organisation.
case study

Regents Garden is an aged care facility that operates three residences in Western Australia. Their facilities accommodate for independent living through to full high-care. In a recent Voice Survey, staff rated Flexibility as a strength of Regents Garden, scoring in the top quartile across all industries, a rare feat for an organisation in an industry that often struggles with inflexible shift work.

Executive Director Ann McAdam, says the culture at Regents Garden is the key to their flexible workplace success. There is no formal flexible workplace policy, but their culture has grown organically as a response to individual and business needs. “We’re not very formal people. When it comes to things like OH&S, we have to be formal. But with flexibility, we probably don’t do anything that is greatly different to others, as far as procedural things go.” Ann explained that Regents Garden’s aim of encouraging residents to be comfortable, happy and live life to the full can only be facilitated by a workplace culture that encourages employees to do the same.

Regents Garden tries to leverage its strengths to meet employee needs where possible. They have 24 hour care, and therefore options for people to work outside of traditional business hours. The majority of staff are hired on a permanent part-time basis and rosters are modified regularly. It is common for supervisors to make an effort to accommodate people’s requests for changes to their work hours if possible, even though some types of workplace flexibility, such as working from home, are not an option. They also take advantage of their work environment to accommodate parents who have conflicts between child care and work rosters - employees occasionally bring their children to work where they talk with residents, watch TV or even teach residents how to use a computer.

Regents Garden recognises and accepts that each employee is a whole person, with their own circumstances and responsibilities. They need employees who are loyal and genuinely care for residents in order achieve success. “Our management values fairness. We try to be approachable from the CEO down. If the situation arises, we can be tough, but above all, we are fair.”

useful resources

- www.workandfamily.nsw.gov.au (The NSW Office of Industrial Relations - Work and Family)
- www.workplaceflexibility.com.au (Aequus Partners)
- www.ways2work.business.vic.gov.au (Victorian Action Agenda for Work Family Balance)

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involvement

Employee consultation and involvement in decision-making

Employee involvement is linked to positive changes in employees’ attitudes, overcoming resistance to change, increasing commitment, trust in management, and productivity. Despite its importance, employees consistently rate involvement as one of the aspects of work they are least satisfied with.

suggested actions

- **employee decision-making** Encourage employees to make suggestions and empower them to make changes to their daily work processes. Ensure the change process is continuous, allowing for ongoing input. Educate and train employees, as they may be new to offering ideas and making decisions of this nature. *Organisational surveys, suggestion schemes, continuous improvement systems, quality circles and self-directed work teams* are all ways of involving staff. A quick Google search will provide you with more information about these strategies.

- **clear organisation direction** Regularly communicate the vision and strategy of the organisation to employees. It gives employees the structure and information needed to make autonomous decisions and changes that are effective and in line with organisational goals.

- **communication** Facilitate information flow up and down the organisation. Set up meetings, at least once a month, so there are opportunities for two-way communication between management and staff. Have an open door policy at work and use open-ended questions to elicit feedback from employees. In times of organisational change, more communication is needed. Consult with staff particularly about decisions that will affect them.

- **management commitment** Involving staff can be challenging for some managers who are used to directing rather than listening. Management will need to take on a supportive role and give up a little authority. They need to proactively encourage, pay attention to, and act on employees’ opinions. Consulting on decisions will almost always take more time than making them autonomously, and managers must be convinced that it is worth the effort. Education and training may be required to assist in changing management views and behaviour.

- **structures for evaluation** Develop and frequently review strategies to involve employees. Have an evaluation process in place to decide the value of each idea made by employees. Always respond to ideas, without making promises that cannot be kept. Provide feedback on decisions where ideas were not implemented.

- **feedback on action** Communicate actions taken and explicitly link them with the involvement process. Acknowledge employees for their part in any improvements. This will encourage continued involvement from staff.
case study

The most recent ResMed Global Voice Climate Survey was conducted in 2008. Andrew Cameron, Head of Manufacturing – Patient Interface Unit in ResMed Australia, presented their results to his 200 employees. Together they chose a few priority areas, one of which was involvement.

In response, Andrew asked each employee to come up with one idea for improving their job that could be implemented within a year. He empowered employees by acknowledging “you are here all day... you’re the ones that are best equipped to make a decision”. He was confident that the organisation direction was well known as it is communicated by him every 6 to 8 weeks, and by the COO quarterly.

Some ideas were simple – for example, moving paperwork from one side of the campus to the other by allocating a post bag. Every single idea was given attention. Ideas not able to be implemented were discussed with the employee who made the suggestion. All staff had put forward an idea within 2 weeks. “Within 3 months we had actually implemented the whole 200 ideas. It was mind-blowing. We won the COO Continuous Improvement Award of the month for not only recognising 200 ideas, but realising these 200 ideas”. The enthusiasm generated has resulted in improvement ideas being suggested daily. In 6 months their unit achieved savings worth $500,000. “It wasn’t so much the money that was motivating, it was about making it an easier and more improved place to work with efficiencies behind that. If you talk to the employees, they love this program”.

Andrew also involved staff in communicating progress through a “visual feedback loop”. “A lot of the actions that we see happening on the floor, we could capture photographically and remind ourselves and our employees about the actions that we are taking”. Displayed on posters around the work area, this innovative and effective form of communication has generated much excitement, and featured in ResMed’s global magazine.

useful resources


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mission & values

Staff belief in the purpose, work and values of their organisation

Research conducted by Voice Project has shown that employees’ belief in the mission and values of their organisation is the strongest driver of employee engagement. This connection between purpose and passion is strong across sectors, industries and all types of staff – both front-line delivery and back-office employees. Practices that support organisational purpose and values meet basic human needs of meaning, stability, esteem, and belonging.

suggested actions

• **communicate**  Employees need a well-formulated purpose (not a mission statement that is little more than public relations ploy) that offers something for people to commit to, with leaders providing clear, consistent, frequent and inspiring messages about direction and values. Keep mission and values part of everyday conversation in the organisation, and on meeting agendas. Invite employees to discuss what the values mean in action to help ensure alignment. Put them in documents, posters, websites and other media to help staff remember them.

• **select**  Attract and select people who are already predisposed to sharing the organisation’s values. People are attracted by the values of an organisation that are consistent with their own, so communicate these values in your recruitment brand. Build on this information in initial interviews so that candidates are more likely to self-select appropriately. Include assessment against organisational values in structured interviews.

• **orient**  Design a compulsory, formal orientation that includes the organisation’s history, philosophy, and how the values are ‘lived’ in the organisation. Ensure new recruits have the opportunity to meet senior executives, observe role models, receive positive support from and spend social time with organisational ‘insiders’. Assess best practices and problems of socialisation processes from the perspective of newcomers.

• **celebrate & reward**  Tell stories about actions that reflect the mission and values, especially difficult choices, to reinforce and celebrate what your organisation stands for. Articulate, evaluate and reward behaviours that support the values.

• **create meaning**  Help people to understand the link between their work and the end user of your products or services, and why their role is important. For example, build purpose and impact statements into job descriptions and role orientation, or put up posters for staff on an assembly floor showing where their part fits in the whole, and customers using the product.

• **align**  Talking up values and purpose is a double-edged sword. Employees who are personally aligned with your mission and values will also be more conscious of, and frustrated by, structures that are out of alignment. Constantly evaluate decisions, strategy, systems, policies, practices and people against your values and purpose. Refer to values when communicating the reason for changes and choices.
HammondCare is a not-for-profit organisation with a reputation as one of Australia's most innovative health and aged care organisations, with over 2000 staff and 2500 clients. It consistently achieves ratings of above 90% Favourable for staff belief in Mission and Values. Typical comments from staff include “people all have the same attitude”, “honest belief in core values and ability to hire staff that believe same”, “‘walks its talk’, ‘staff believe their jobs are important and worthwhile’. Stephen Judd, Chief Executive of HammondCare, says this strong culture is achieved through selection, alignment of practices with values, and handling hard decisions.

“I’m pretty passionate about getting recruitment right. We don’t hire on the basis of knowledge and skills, we hire on the basis of attitude. So lots of people in our industry would say, must have knowledge of this or must have that certificate. You can teach that. We prefer to say you’ve got a really good attitude, we’ll train you. In our aged care services for example, we really only want people who actively enjoy working with older people. Core values articulate to people what we want them to believe in and why they shouldn’t be working with us if they don’t. Too many people hire on the basis of knowledge and fire on the basis of attitude”.

At orientation Stephen talks about what the mission and values mean in practice. For example, values of choice and flexibility in residential services mean “that you don’t get people up at eight o’clock and shower them and get them all together for meals. Let them sleep in! Have breakfast anytime from midnight till noon.” This has meant that all structures, practices and policies come under the ‘values’ microscope – including job roles.

While people are happy to sign up to the values in theory, when it comes to practice there can be some resistance – “they’re actually pretty hard to do”. He talks about a senior staff member who was behaving in a way that was contrary to the values of the organisation. “I talked to [that person] within the day, I think it’s really important to confront those things immediately and I followed it up in writing. They knew it was serious when I did that.”

While Stephen acknowledges the importance of communication, he says the best way to bring people on board “is by some of the hard actions you take. If you’ve got an instance of proven elder abuse, are you going to go through process, first warning, second warning, over a period of months? Are you afraid if you don’t do that you’ll expose the organisation to an unfair dismissal? If that’s the case, you are saying you are more concerned about litigation risk than risk to those in your care. You are what you tolerate and your actions show what your real drivers are”.

useful resources

**performance appraisal**

**Frequency, fairness, and clarity of performance evaluation**

Performance appraisals have the potential to significantly improve both individual and organisational performance. Yet the ways in which performance appraisals are conducted strongly impact employee engagement, perceptions of organisational fairness, and can even negatively impact performance.

**suggested actions**

- **prioritise** Although it may be difficult or confronting for managers, providing feedback to employees on how well they are doing is necessary for reinforcement or improvement of performance. Keep managers accountable for conducting performance appraisals to provide each employee with formal feedback every 6 months. Have a template to document the process and results, and a plan for tracking development. Encourage managers to provide informal feedback on performance between formal appraisals, as more frequent feedback is perceived as fairer and allows staff to improve their performance prior to the performance appraisal.

- **clear purpose** Ensure that employees understand who will see their appraisal results and how they will be used, e.g., for professional development, training, career or succession planning. Research suggests that greater positive gains in performance can be achieved when the performance appraisal is used solely for developmental purposes rather than to determine pay and promotion.

- **employee voice** One of the strongest predictors of positive outcomes from performance appraisals is the extent to which employees participate in the discussion. Managers must not do all the talking. To support participation, provide employees with the appraisal template/form in advance of the meeting. Encourage them to rate their own performance and note reasons and examples to support their self-ratings. Promote two-way communication during the performance review, jointly decide how to rectify any problems and establish mutual goals for future performance. Provide a formal appeal procedure for employees to challenge inaccurate or unfair evaluations.

- **evaluation criteria** Base the performance evaluation criteria on a job analysis or competency dimensions, align with organisation values and goals, and communicate to employees well in advance. The most effective feedback is candid, specific and focussed on task behaviours and performance only, not on the person or any part of the person’s self-concept such as motives and traits. Give reasons and examples for the ratings assigned to the employee, as well as examples of desired behaviours for higher ratings.

- **appraiser** The appraiser should be familiar with the employee’s typical performance (i.e., their efforts) as well as outcomes, and trained how to conduct the review and evaluate performance. Perceived supervisor support and fairness is critical for employee’s engagement in the process and subsequent improvement initiatives.
case study

Sylvanvale Foundation, a growing not-for-profit disability organisation with 60 years of service, recently developed and implemented a new performance appraisal system across the organisation of 530 staff. The percentage of staff rating performance appraisal practices favourably improved by 27% from 2008 to 2010, and positioned them as the highest rated disability services organisation (out of 30 organisations) on performance appraisal.

Wendy Greenhalgh, HR Manager, said the former performance appraisal system “wasn’t being implemented consistently across the organisation; there was no way to measure its utilisation, it was very haphazard”. All their records were paper-based so a lot of the focus was around who had completed their reviews and when they were due to be completed. The performance appraisal templates are now electronic, and they have a HR Information System which will enable HR to run timely reports and give managers advance notice of performance appraisal meetings.

One challenge was managing staff expectations and fears. Some long-term staff had never been through the process, so “for some people it was frightening; they didn’t know what to expect”. Employees were reassured by communicating the aims of the performance appraisal system (i.e., professional development, learning, career and succession planning) and encouraging their input to the process. The performance appraisal template is given to the employee in advance. This way staff know what will be discussed at the performance appraisal interview, so “there are no surprises”, and staff are able to prepare examples to support their ratings.

HR explained the process to all front-line managers. In small groups, managers were given the template, the policy, and “did a role-play around how we expected it to be delivered”. Managers were educated to explain why an employee was rated in a particular way, and encourage two-way dialogue to allow employees to voice their thoughts. Greenhalgh says managers ask questions such as “tell me how you think you’ve gone in that area” to elicit employees to talk first. The manager is then able to agree and provide their own examples, or they have the chance to say, for example, “In this circumstance I felt you didn’t manage that particularly well” and then clarify why.

useful resources

• http://performance-appraisals.org (Performance Management and Appraisal Help Centre, Bacal & Associates)


trust in leadership

Role-modeling, competence and communication skills of senior management

Trust in leadership, particularly trust in senior leadership, consistently proves to be one of the strongest predictors of employee engagement. Trust helps to create and facilitate cooperation and relationships, and provides a very strong foundation for influencing others. Trust in leadership also increases employees’ willingness to go above and beyond what is needed to get the job done. However, trust can deteriorate more quickly than it can be built. Once trust has been abused, people are particularly slow to trust again and substantial effort is required to rebuild.

suggested actions

- **trust in employees** Trust begets trust. Demonstrate trust in employees by consulting and involving them in decision-making, and allowing their views to impact decision outcomes. Share the organisation vision and strategy, and rationale for decisions. Express confidence in the capabilities of employees, recognise effort and achievements and invest in staff development.

- **common identity** Similar attitudes between leaders and employees about what is ethical, right, and important are related to trust in leadership. When leaders clearly communicate shared values and goals, and evaluate decisions using these organisational values and goals, employees feel more confident that they understand leaders and what they want.

- **visibility and accessibility** Help employees get to know leaders through communication and visible action. Develop leaders’ verbal communication skills. Increase frequency, quality, depth and variety of communication and interaction. Suggestion schemes, attitude surveys, mentoring, town hall meetings, regular newsletters, and senior management visiting front-line staff will promote two-way open communication. As organisations grow, webcasts or videos can be a practical way of supplementing (but not replacing!) face-to-face contact. Role-modeling behaviour so that words and actions are consistent will demonstrate integrity.

- **supportive environment** Create and maintain a workplace where employees feel supported. This may entail making some short-term sacrifices in order to support others and build trust, such as leaders sacrificing some of their time to mentor staff. Listen, show empathy, and express understanding. Encourage staff to collaborate, rather than playing off competition between employees which can lead to questions about motives. Show sensitivity to differences between people, individual needs and desires. Consider the feelings of employees before acting.

- **fairness** The importance of integrity grows with leadership seniority. Leaders must keep their promises and treat employees with respect and dignity. Give adequate feedback on tasks and decision-making processes. Explain to employees the criteria for performance related benefits, such as rewards, raises and promotions. When procedures such as performance appraisals are consistent and transparent they are more likely to be perceived as fair.
case study

Each year Roche Pharmaceuticals conducts Voice Engagement Surveys to determine the key drivers of high engagement for their employees. In recent years they have invested a lot of time into Leadership as it is one of the two top drivers of engagement at Roche. Despite significant organisational change, Roche continued to achieve high levels of trust in leaders, with 90% of staff rating Roche as a well managed company. These great leadership results are “due to four leadership practices”, says Director of Prescription Medicines, Kirsten O’Doherty.

Firstly, Roche leaders involved employees in organisational change decision-making. They ran focus groups and surveyed all employees asking them what changes they would make to the organisation. Employee recommendations were made available on their website, including the outcomes. O’Doherty says, at Roche the “transparency and involvement in decision making is not lip service, it’s real”. Secondly, clarity of direction is important. Regular town hall meetings enable the business plan to be understood by their employees. This allows employees to effectively be involved in the change process.

Thirdly, Roche recognise and reward high performance. Roche “value everybody that contributes but particularly value high performance”. Recently, they have created detailed descriptions of high performance to clarify Roche’s expectations and promote fairness when allocating rewards.

Lastly, Roche invest in their leaders by providing ongoing leadership skills training for managers in local and global programs. Organisational change and leading that change is important at Roche. Skills developed include, for example, how to be a leader in the change process, and the guidance of career development as a manager.

O’Doherty highlights the importance of leading by ‘doing’ rather than by ‘telling’: “People rate you on what they see, not what they hear!”

useful resources