Passion, enthusiasm and involvement characterizes engaged employees. A complete commitment to the success of the organization, fostered by management's ability to inspire a strong desire for excellence in their work teams, is what differentiates engaged organizations.

The million rand question is how management can create an intellectually and emotionally committed work team, geared towards achieving the mission and vision of the organization. Culture, or "the way we doing things around here", is instrumental in achieving this and can make or break an organization. The challenge for management is thus how to create an organizational culture that will act as a catalyst to encourage the growth of a truly engaged work force.

[Employee engagement involves the enthusiasm and involvement of employees about their jobs and their organization, and the willingness to contribute to the organization's success. Simply put, engagement is management's ability to instil a desire within employees to strive for excellence. A culture should therefore be created where employees are intellectually and emotionally committed to achieve the mission and vision of the organisation. Culture, or the way we doing things around here, can make or break an organization.]

The themes below should be taken into consideration when dealing with employee engagement:

- Enabling and empowering leadership with an emphasis on emotional maturity and confidence. Leaders should act as coaches and mentors.
- A shared picture of the future ideal that is expressed in vision and goals/objectives.
- A shared identity expressed in value aligned behavior: ‘us’- culture of respect, teamwork and productivity.
- Trust is of the essence.
- Communication – spontaneous and structured – up, down, sideways.
- Context: policies, procedures, remuneration, etc.
- Fair, consistent application of discipline.
- One Team’ where the values of the individuals are aligned with the values of the organization.
- Capacity building; coaching and team-/individual development plans.
- Shared ownership expressed in profit sharing initiatives.
- Performance feedback’, acknowledgement and appreciation.

No single engagement tactic will work with all employees, so it is wise to experiment. The following ten keys will assist managers to develop a culture that enhances the key elements of engagement, i.e. employee involvement and participation.

Key or action required to create a culture that will facilitate engaged employees:

**Top management responsibility:**

1. Formulating an organizational vision and mission that facilitates and encourage employees' engagement on all levels.
2. Manage employees’ talent through effective career development and talent management strategies.

**Middle management responsibility:**

3. Move from being solution-generating goal achievers to becoming facilitators, coaches and mentors. Ensure that each person has an equal opportunity to make a distinctive contribution and the sharing of information and ideas are imperative.
4. Cooperation with co-workers that revolves in teamwork. Cooperation between co-workers should be instilled by ensuring the necessary resources, time and challenging work.
5. The establishment of clear goals and expectations, aligned with the vision of the organization. Unambiguous goals and expectations should be agreed upon by the manager and the employee.
6. The level of trust in the workplace. The old saying still counts ... first trust others, then you will be trusted.
7. Use clear, direct 360 degree communication. Downward communication (meetings, written documents, communicating through the union), upward problem-solving (quality circles), task participation and financial involvement are ways to involve employees.

**Employee’s responsibility:**

8 Actively seek opportunities to grow knowledge, expand skills and experience new challenges. It is good idea that the manager and employee should generate a personal development plan at the beginning of each year. During this discussion with the employee the necessary commitment can be explained to him or her.
9. Employees must think of themselves as operating their own businesses, as suppliers of valuable services that are in high demand. Employees should be introduced to the concept of being intrapreneurs and to become ‘business minded’ within an organization.

10. Employees should have a clear, shared picture and understanding of the importance of their efforts in the overall success of the business. This conviction ensures the completeness of the circle, which brings us back to step 1, namely alignment with the vision of the organization.

In conclusion, engagement is a two-way process in which employees and managers make commitments to one another and align their values, objectives and vision. The alignment of their ideals and efforts is in the best interest of the organization on which they all are interdependent. It involves enlarging a basic approach with a few key points to work into the process dynamics. Mature, emotionally leadership is as always key in this regard.

Gregg Thompson, the president of Bluepoint Leadership Development, summarises it very well in his unique style when he says that ‘great leaders have a contagious optimism about their organisation’s future and constantly convey a strong sense of confidence in themselves and others’.

We would like to thank our three co-authors Dr Cecile Schultz, Hugo van der Walt and Adele Bezuidenhout for their contribution.

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