"If you get too far ahead of your troops you begin to look like the enemy"

Six ways to reduce…

the cost of motivating staff

LEAPS & BOUNDS

Building long term careers and reducing the cost of building motivation and stability

Exceptional customer service will always be expensive to deliver as long as teams are motivated by 'targets and fruit baskets'. What would it take to turn customer service roles into credible careers, building huge internal motivation to succeed in every member of staff?

In companies with a large number of front-line customer-facing people, the quality of customer interaction is mission critical. Many companies rely heavily on external motivators like incentives and targets, which are expensive and need to be constantly 'topped up'. Front-line teams are often prone to high churn rates, making the quality challenge even greater.

Creating teams who care enough to constantly build their skills and their credibility within the organisation as a customer **communication expert** has to be a key target in defining organisations in today's crowded marketplace. These people would deliver consistently exceptional service and stay in role for a long time. The organisation no longer commits more and more budget to expensive and transient external motivators.

A pipe dream or could this be the reality?

The recession offers an opportunity to transform your corporate culture and build that desire. Many large organisations focus their attention on building exciting Brands with which to be connected and in the short term this works to attract people but it is not enough to really engage and motivate people seek out ways to offer discretionary effort over an extended period of time.

Let's examine this world where people look forward to work and leave buzzing by the difference they have made.

If you consider some of the critical measures in the business and the cost of:
- Low productivity
- Staff churn
- Only satisfying customers
- Lack of discretionary effort
- Extrinsic motivators

… what is the cost to your organization? How could that money be better spent or better still what impact would it have on your bottom line if you didn't need to spend it?

It doesn't need to be this way. Through our work, we have identified six critical factors that contribute to professionalising the industry.

1. What does my company stand for?
2. How do leaders lead?

3. What are my measures of success?
4. Does my manager 'get' me and help me be the best I can be?
5. Am I doing something worthwhile?
6. Am I and my colleagues treated fairly?

Let's take each factor one by one and examine some typical illustrations of breakdown for each component.

1. What does my company stand for?

Your company has a strong Brand presence but what this says to their customer is not carried through in the workplace. For example a Brand value espoused to the customer is innovation but you provide outdated computers and systems to serve these same customers, you spend money on external sponsorship and publicity whilst at the same time slashing headcount and reducing spend on providing growth opportunities. You might encourage customers to connect through social networking sites yet ban staff from using them.

Action
Look at your organisation's Brand promise and the way it presents itself to customers.
- What expectations are you developing for your staff by these promises?
- How well do you mirror this internally in the way you work?
- If you don't really examine why that is. Ask yourself, what is the worst that can happen if you do?
- What is the danger if you don't?
- What simple steps can you make to test your assumptions?

2. How do leaders lead?

You talk about openness with your people and that their views matter but managers hold team briefings that just tell their staff what is happening with one way communication, changes happen without consultation and discussions take place behind closed doors. Project groups are set up to drive change when the people who serve the customers are holders of unique information that is often ignored or suppressed. Leaders talk about development and coaching yet when the going gets tough, command and

control style leadership prevails. Not wrong on one hand but surely you would want to create a culture where people look out for each other and cover so that people in a valuable conversation can continue rather than directing like the conductor of some amateur orchestra.

Action
Notice your pressure points and observe what happens when this pressure builds.

- What would need to change so that your staff notice the signs and take action for themselves?
- Do your leaders really walk the walk, every day? What simple steps could they take to live the Brand each day? You'll be amazed how much a simple hello works!
- Take time out to observe the relationship between team leaders/ supervisors and their teams – if you were a member of that team what would you be thinking?
- Reflect on your relationship with your team – if you put yourself in their shoes are you doing enough to support them?
- What is the one thing that you can change that would signal the biggest change for them?

3. What are my measures of success?

What are your beliefs about people's attitude to work? Do you believe that people will do as little as possible to get by? Or do you believe that people, given the right opportunity, would really want to do the best they can at work? Having asked this question of many thousands of managers, it is only a handful who (sadly) believe that people, given the opportunity would do the best they can at work and that the negative belief that prevails becomes the fundamental premise for most measurement systems in operation at work. Everyone wants to get paid fairly for doing a good job, but there is much more to it than that. When our measurements demonstrate lack of trust and focus on the process rather than the outcome, we get people who focus on the task rather than the customer. The more our measurement can get to the heart of our purpose the more it will support your strategic intentions.

Action
- What outcome do you want for your customers?
- Do you want recommenders and first time resolution? Then what conditions need to be in place to ensure that can happen?
- Are you really measuring the right things and feeding this back to the staff in a way that promotes success? Rather many managers manage minutia as if they were minor dictators.
- What do you think might happen if you got staff to work with you to develop a meaningful measurement system? One that they bought into rather than facing league tables, red flashes and highlighter pen demonstrating how bad they had been that week? This is clearly an extreme example but it can be seen in many organisations.
- Why not ask any of your staff if they find the measurement motivational and what information would help them do a better job?
- And while you are at it – ask them how they would like this shared with them?

4. Does my manager 'get' me and help me be the person I want to be?

We don't work just for works sake, it leads to something and for each person that something is different. How many of your teams personal needs do you actually know? Ask them? If you don't know what they are aiming for and how work can help them, how can you possibly hope to get the best out of them? This type of conversation can be a little awkward at first but you will be amazed by the value of it. Some of the thoughts that have come to me recently are:
"I want to do a great job but I worry about my children, I'd really like to be able to be with them after school 2 days a week, that would make all the difference"
"I'm saving to buy a house, the deposits are so high and its tough still living at home with my folks"
You can see a visible shift in people's approach to work stemming from the fact that you are showing personal interest in them. I am constantly amazed by the wonderful diversity of people in organisations – their background and their drivers and this richness is being lost because we simply don't know what they want and what they are really capable of. Just imagine if you could help facilitate something they are aiming for by changing a shift or allowing time to pursue a personal goal – do you think they might work with a little more energy and focus? A manager should be their teams' biggest advocate, always seeking out ways to help them feel fulfilled on their terms not yours.

Action
Ask them and see what happens.

5. Am I doing something worthwhile?

The more you can help individuals understand the value that they offer in their jobs the more focused and productive they will be. For example in a Collections department of a Utility company when asked, most people said that the purpose of their job was to collect money. When asked how they like their job, many screwed up their face and most said 'its ok I suppose!' When we reframed their job for them so they could see that they were helping people, like their own family, reduce their debt, the stress of debt and also helping them reduce future bills by working with them to use less energy in their homes their meaning for work transformed. As a result, more energy, focus and significantly more money collected.

Action
What frame of reference (that's real) would give your staff valuable meaning?

6. Am I and my colleagues treated fairly?

Inequality is one of the biggest annoyances to people. It is hard to like some people and you all have particular 'friends' at work. But this should not get in the way of being treated fairly. Not should the other side of the equation, we all have people who make us more anxious when we enter into conversations, some people can be very aggressive and this stops us from dealing quickly with their performance issues and others see this as them 'getting away with it'. Fairness and integrity go hand in hand. People simply won't respect you if you don't treat those around you fairly and with equality. You need to be able to explain every decision and action, and if you can do that them you are being fair, if these decisions can be challenged you need to think again. Lack of fairness leads to reducing productivity, stress and absence and

encourages a 'why bother' mentality. **Action**
Where you have inexperienced managers, you
will find fairness is often an issue. Work with
them to better understand the impact of their
actions, draw on role models within the business
and most of all ensure that you can explain with
confidence each of your decisions.

To find out more about our consultancy approach
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