

Building Focus

MANAGERS

“You cannot depend on your eyes when your imagination is out of focus.”

Mark Twain

Introduction

What is it that provides us with energy at work?
What encourages us to deliver exceptional results rather than just going through the motions?

‘Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?’

‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the cat

‘I don’t much care where’ said Alice

‘Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,’ said the Cat

‘so long as I get somewhere’ Alice added as an explanation

‘Oh, you’re sure to do that’ said the Cat ‘if you only walk long enough.’

Alice meets the Cheshire Cat, Alice in Wonderland

How many times does this aimless activity become reality at work? You can observe it all the time, so how will you ensure it doesn’t happen for you and your team?

As people, when we can identify with what we are aiming for, we are able to focus on those goals and these goals often give us the spur to greater things. Without this context we simply do what we are told.

So let’s apply this to work.

Action

1. Reflect on the last 6 months and ask yourself the following questions
 - What were the highlights?
 - What were the low lights?
 - If you were to build a time capsule for this period what would it have within it?
2. Now let’s focus on the coming 6 months and ask yourself the following questions
 - What do you really want to achieve this year?

- What do you have to do differently this year to make this happen?
- What are the first few steps that need to be taken to start gaining ground and quick wins?

Now put these answers to one side for 48 hours

3. Go back to the answers you gave a few days ago – what do you notice?
 - Is the language the same or different?
 - Is the tone the same or different?
 - Imagine you are telling someone, who didn’t know you, about these ideas – how would the ideas come across?

To focus on where you are going, it is not just what you are going to achieve, but also how you will achieve it. You need to find a way to make your focus compelling for you and those around you.

4. How can you change what you previously wrote to ensure that it is compelling?

Once you are focused it is easy to translate this to others.

So to set your team off with a bang, why not take 30 minutes out together to get the focus going by using the team meeting structure outlined on the last page?

And take a look at the tips below to help you keep on track as the weeks unfold.

Tips

1. Provide a compelling vision for people
 - What do you want to achieve?
 - Where are you now... be realistic?
 - What are the first few steps you see?
2. Define the boundaries and then let people work out the how. If they are inexperienced act as their support/guide
3. Involve individuals in setting objectives – ask individuals to be proactive in identifying what their objectives should be

4. Set clear objectives – agree SMART objectives with your individuals which are:
Specific- Be precise about what must be achieved
Measurable- How will you know if it has been achieved?
Agreed-By you, the individuals and the team
Realistic- Objectives have to be able to be achieved
Time-bound- To be completed by a specified time
5. Explain objectives clearly – when explaining objectives, think about the person you are talking to, and make sure you communicate with them in a manner and at a pace, which is appropriate
6. Encourage individuals to seek clarification – check on their understanding and give them opportunities to ask questions
7. Update objectives regularly – review objectives as often as appropriate in the light of changes to individual and team workloads and organisational priorities
8. Check that objectives have been achieved – as part of the objective –setting process, agree the date when you will review with the individual whether objectives have been achieved
9. Provide feedback – both formally and informally, which includes constructive suggestions and encouragement for improving future performance

Lifted!

Goal

The team values the importance of their role to the business.

Equipment

Post It Notes, flipchart, blue tac

Timing

30 minutes

Context

This activity encourages people to understand the impact of their own feelings on the job that they do. It promotes the idea of acting constructively to get into the right frame of mind every day.

Process

- Take no more than two minutes to outline to your team what your focus and goals are for the coming year. Remember to use colourful language, positive and energetic tone and be very clear about these aspirations.
- Divide the group into two teams.
- Tell the teams that they are going to explore the way in which they work to ensure they can hit these goals.
- Ask the teams to spend 10 minutes preparing a 30 second Radio Newsflash.
- One group's subject is 'what could happen here if we did not fulfil our role' and the other group 'what could happen here if we had a perfect day'.
- Get the participants to perform the adverts for each other. Review the great points that they brought out
- Use one wall of the room you are in. Blue tac a piece of A4 paper with the words 'nightmare scenario' on it and put it at one end of the wall. Now do the same thing with the word 'perfection' and put it on the other end of the wall.
- Ask participants to use the wall as a graph and stand where they think we would be in between the two using our current practices to achieve the goals outlined earlier.
- Then ask the team to think of three things that they could do that would allow them to move a bit closer to perfection. Get

everyone to write down each thing on a separate Post It Note® and walk over and stick it on the wall where they think it will get them to.

- Review the wall chart focusing on similarities and differences; discuss the effect of their mood on the way they do their job. Highlight that it is not just what they do but the way they do it.
- Conclude the session by building in team commitments that will support the achievement of your goals in the coming 6 months

Feedback and Discussion

- What stops us from doing the things that builds success?
- How does having a positive upbeat nature make us feel?
- What impact will it have on the customer and us?
- What can we do to support each other when the going gets tough?
- How can we remind ourselves of this commitment?