

Workplace Engagement & the Role of Business Leaders

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We have been focusing this year on workplace engagement and the huge productivity and performance gains to be made by better engaging your staff and aligning them to the goals of your organisation. Employment law expert, Geoff McGill writes, *“It is the substance of the employment relationship not its legal form which determines whether people are engaged and productive. Productive workplaces are not the outcome of legislation but of the quality of leadership and culture at the workplace”*. We believe our society needs business leaders who know how to cultivate engagement and discretionary effort, as there is a direct correlation between effort and performance.

This is critical, especially in light of Gallup’s latest State of the Global Workplace report that finds that only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged or emotionally invested in their work. While Australia fares a little better it is estimated that poor engagement costs the Australian economy over \$54 billion a year. What this means is that most workers are simply ‘turning-up’ and not doing all they can to provide great service, reduce errors, help colleagues, reduce costs, improve their work or innovate and drive new processes, products and services. In short, most workers display all the hallmarks of low discretionary effort.

Several new surveys support this view finding that Australia’s front line managers are operating under significant stress and struggling with basic leadership responsibilities, especially managing performance. The Australian Institute of Management has also found that a significant proportion of managers do not have the skills they need to be successful in their roles. There is no doubt that these capability gaps contribute to Australia’s sluggish productivity and competitiveness.

To drive performance in your organisation focus on the four areas of great engagement:

- Give staff the chance to share their views with you
- Communicate the future direction & goals of the organisation
- Provide honest feedback on performance & set expectations for future work
- Explain the link between the work people do & success for the organisation

Overlaid on these four pillars is the need for belonging. People need to feel that they belong to a common undertaking and are part of a shared effort and endeavour.

What is clear is that business leaders need to communicate more, and more effectively with their people. Leaders need to understand the drivers and motivators of staff, their strengths and the areas where people need to develop. The four pillars of great engagement above, provides leaders with a framework to engage the people in a meaningful conversation.



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