



ENGAGING FOR SUCCESS: enhancing performance through employee engagement.

A summary of the second chapter of the 2009 report on employee engagement, commissioned by the UK Secretary of State for Business and produced by David Macleod and Nita Clark.

CHAPTER 2: The evidence (pp.34-66)

- 1) One argument against employee engagement is that there are organisations, run on a command and control basis, which are doing well. Macleod and Clarke respond to this by claiming that they could be doing even better if they added the value that employee engagement brings. Studies and research covers a multitude of sectors and follows different methodologies. Macleod and Clarke have not attempted to validate every study that is mentioned in this report. Many can be challenged at some level. However, taken together, and supported by case studies, *"the overall picture becomes compelling."*
- 2) Examples used to show successful employee engagement: cross-organisational, (e.g. Tower Perrins – 664,000 from 50 companies), other (Gallup, the Chartered Management Institute, PWC), and individual employers in the private sector (Nationwide). See pp.36-44.
- 3) Small and Medium-sized businesses. There is a tendency to assume that those working in smaller organisations are automatically more engaged. However – this is not always the case. An example of a smaller company using employee engagement to advance is HansenGlass. (p.51)
- 4) The public sector: 78 per cent of highly engaged employees in the UK public sector say they can make an impact on public services delivery or customer service, against just 29 per cent of the disengaged, according to the 2007 Towers Perrin report. Public sector examples where employee engagement has improved performance: Wychavon District, South Tyneside Council, Birmingham City Council (pp.54-58).

Case study: Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe, Professor of Leadership at Bradford University. Metcalfe has carried out a three-year longitudinal study of 46 mental health teams working in the NHS, which has shown that a culture of engagement predicts performance.

According to Alimo-Metcalfe: *"engaging leadership does, in fact, predict productivity. We also found that this style of leadership increases employees'*

For full report see: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/employment-matters/strategies/employee-engagement>



motivation, job satisfaction and commitment, while reducing job-related stress. Leadership skills alone do not have such a transformational effect” (p.53).

She argues that there are three dimensions of leadership culture:

- 1) engaging with others
- 2) visionary leadership
- 3) leadership capabilities

While it was found that all three contributed to affecting staff attitudes and well-being, it was engaging with others that *“significantly affects all aspects of positive attitudes at work, and all aspects of well-being, including a strong sense of team spirit, which neither of the other two leadership dimensions predicts” (p.53).*¹

- 5) Benefits for the Individual – making changes that positively impact on how employees think and feel about what they experience at work, is likely to impact positively on their well being too (lower stress, better life balance.) Those who are cognitively engaged at work are almost three times as likely to have six positive emotions (enthusiasm, cheerfulness, optimism, contentment, to feel calm and relaxed.) Those who are physically engaged are almost ten times as likely to experience these emotions.

Conclusion: the correlation between engagement, well-being and performance is repeated too often for it to be a coincidence.

ENDS

¹ Beverly Alimo-Metcalfe & Margaret Bradley (2008) 'Cast in a New Light', *People Management*.