

Rationale for An Even Better Place to Work

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Section One - The Need

The Need

Studies continue to show that the greatest source of inefficiency for companies lies in working relationships.

- 70+% of people leave jobs because of relationship issues and most of those are with their immediate supervisor
- Managers typically lose 25% of their day to unnecessary conflict, argument and misunderstanding
- Two thirds of staff feel undervalued at work
- Managers are the greatest source of stress at work.

The same 'people' issues keep on reappearing in companies. We don't seem to have the solutions or indeed to be making much progress in preventing or resolving these 'people' problems.

The Cost

The human and financial cost of staff dissatisfaction is high.

The financial implications of managers losing 25% of their day to unnecessary conflict become obvious when we look at a medium sized company with 100 managers. If we take the average annual salary per manager as £40,000, then the cost to the company will be £1,000,000.

This only accounts for management time. The true cost will include poor performance, higher staff turnover, missed opportunities, absenteeism, low morale and poor teamwork.

Section Two - What is An Even Better Place to Work?

An Even Better place to Work offers a new approach for getting the best from people and new ways of managing working relationships.

It is an on line, Do It Yourself resource for developing not only leaders but leadership across the business. It is not e learning but it uses an IT platform to deliver a highly interactive system which allows people to take ownership for improving the quality of their working lives.

It is directly aligned to business performance and increases profitability by creating a happy, motivated and well led workforce.

It will change the culture of companies from within and works successfully with a single team, a division or a whole company. It is applicable at every level, where people want to minimise inefficiency and maximise efficiency in working relationships.

Seven Indicators of An Even Better Place to Work

The program uses seven indicators to measure staff satisfaction levels and by implication the impact of leadership in that company.

People who are well led:

1 **Feel Valued** – they feel appreciated and appropriately rewarded – people believe in them – they are made to feel special and hence they act special.

2 **Are Open** – they are receptive to new ideas and engage in genuine two-way communication - can talk freely about a wide range of topics including those delicate and difficult issues.

3 **Engage in Feedback** – they recognise the importance of regular constructive feedback to improving performance levels.

4 **Are Motivated** – their abilities are recognised and utilised – they have positive feelings about the job and their colleagues and have an intrinsic drive to achieve and support each other.

5 **Manage Differences** – they create collaborative working relationships with colleagues who are very different to them. They ensure that differences are not allowed to get in the way but are seen as a source of strength.

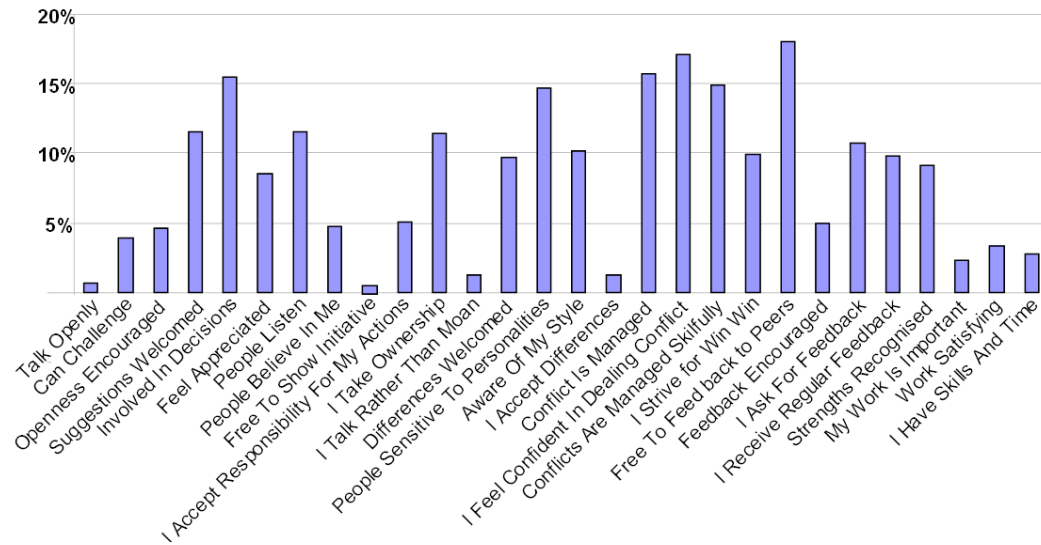
6 **Take Ownership** – they take ownership for getting their needs met rather than moan behind backs. They view leadership as a partnership and take joint responsibility with the leader for being led.

7 **Are Conflict Free** – they engage in proactive feedback and hence dysfunctional conflict is minimised and time is not wasted.

We do not wish to imply that these Seven indicators are the only indicators for making your place of work an even better place to work or that the list is complete. It is a pragmatic choice based on 20+ years working on people issues in companies. We have created a model, which is friendly, manageable and has obvious benefits for the user.

Above all, we address these seven keys, because it works. As the figure below shows.

Actual (typical) % **gains** recorded with UK client between May-September, 2004



The figure shows improvement across a UK-based subsidiary of a global pharmaceutical. After the intervention there were distinct improvements in staff satisfaction levels that showed up as measured.

The Satisfaction @ Work Indicator

This is an on line measure that gauges current staff satisfaction levels, tracks the impact of leadership and allows people to know when they have achieved the objective of the An Even Better place to Work program.

There are 7 indicators and 4 questions for each indicator to answer (see chart above for abbreviations of these questions). This takes less than five minutes to complete which makes it ideal for busy people. Reports at an individual, team and corporate level are available within minutes of completion.

This is not a survey that staff complete and then sit back with the expectation that management will sort things out. It is a tool that highlights areas of concern and indicates where interventions need to be made by the individual. The report also provides a structure and suggestions which individuals can use to improve their personal scores.

In measuring staff satisfaction levels, the indicator is indirectly measuring the impact of leadership in the business.

The Satisfaction @ Work Indicator becomes a guide throughout the program, tracking progress, allowing individuals and teams to make informed decisions about areas of development.

The Underlying Model of Leadership

Leadership is about individualising not universalising. It is responding to the specific needs of an individual rather than behaving in standard, generic ways.

Leadership is complex. It is not realistic to expect one person to be 'getting it right' for his / her colleagues no matter how many leadership courses they have attended. Leadership is likely to be most effective when viewed as a partnership between the leader and the led. When people are willing to engage and take ownership for being led rather than sitting back and expecting the team leader to be solely responsible for leading.

Do I pass ownership for my health to my doctor? Of course not. While the doctor is a significant resource in maintaining my health, I am responsible for my own well-being. Do I pass ownership for my appreciation and motivation levels onto my team leader? This happens in the 'entitlement' culture where staff blame others for not meeting their expectations and often do little themselves.

At the heart of the An Even Better Place to Work program is this engagement of staff, and people taking ownership for their issues and Satisfaction @ Work levels. This will only work in a culture where people are open, welcome feedback and connect with each other's needs.

It is in this context of joint responsibility for leading and being led that leadership across the company grows. This model of shared leadership not only improves satisfaction levels for staff but frees up a manager's time to focus on the strategic side of his/her role.

If you have only one leader you are short on leadership
Gerard Egan

Section Three – How does it Work?

An Even Better Place to Work recognises that for change to be sustained the intervention needs to be made in several key areas:

- Mindset
- Skills
- Transforming Experiences
- Maintenance

Mindset: The paradigm offered challenges traditional understanding of relationships, removes value judgements and enables open communication and trust to develop and grow.

Skills: A range of skills are developed to support these new operational beliefs. These skills focus primarily on the giving and receiving of feedback.

Transforming Experiences: Theory changes little. It is only by using the mindset and skills about real work and relationship issues that transformational change happens.

Maintenance: Practical, workable structures are provided for people to take ownership for monitoring and continuing this transformation in the workplace.

Program of Activities

Experience shows that the benefits of 'one off' events are minimally sustained, so a series of interrelated workshops has been created which make the intervention at these four levels.

These are based on the 7 Satisfaction @ Work indicators and last between 45 – 60 minutes. These have maximum impact when done with teams, i.e. people who work in inter-dependent ways.

Paired Work

These workshops are highly interactive and lead to paired work – people meeting with colleagues inviting feedback, coaching each other and problem solving on needs. This paired work is at the heart of this program. They are moments of real growth between people and are initiated and owned by individuals themselves.

Paired work will fluctuate between formal and informal moments at work. They will also take place outside of work. Through such paired work, openness becomes part of the culture - it becomes the norm to bring up issues that 'get in the way' and more importantly deal with them.

Personal Learning Space

Everyone has a personal web space which they can use as they wish. In effect this becomes a personal learning space, where people make notes, store information and communicate with colleagues. It is an easy and

efficient way to share learnings, initiate conversations and keep the process alive. It is a catalyst for face to face work.

Everyone's web space is confidential to them and contains a comprehensive resource section, especially in the giving and receiving of feedback. The intention is to leave people as self resourced as possible for improving work relationships and the quality of work life.

Section Four - Results

Incremental Learning

Learning is most effective in small chunks spread over time. An Even Better place to Work through activities, paired work, resources, posters and indicators enable the mindset and skills to be gradually absorbed into the consciousness and behaviours of people.

Program Outcomes

Engagement with the program ensures that

Individuals will be

- more valued
- better motivated
- open to change
- receptive to feedback
- able to create positive working relationships
- taking ownership for managing their own issues

Teams will

- be more solution focused
- have improved self belief
- have a stronger sense of identity
- take ownership for their own issues
- experience greater trust, openness and collaboration

The company can expect

- greater efficiency
- improved morale
- less stress and conflict
- reduced staff turnover
- an improved bottom line

As a consequence of greater levels of understanding and collaboration between people, processes in the company are likely to be quicker, cheaper and better thought through.

Section Five - What makes this program so special?

Why does it make a Difference?

It is a unique program in many ways. It doesn't just talk about openness, trust and collaboration but creates these realities. It doesn't talk about ownership but provides a structure and an approach so people put themselves at cause and make things happen.

It is not management information to be digested but experiences which bring about transformation.

Transformation from the Inside Out

At the heart of any company transformation will be people transformation. By changing the culture at micro levels (one to one) An Even Better Place to Work develops (team to team) and eventually impacts on the entire company.

This is in contrast with most company initiatives that start from without – management defining the culture, communicating this to their staff and then hoping to get the transfer to behaviours. It is usually at this stage the process breaks down, interest is lost and there is another failed initiative.

An Even Better Place to Work starts with everyday working relationships and moves out to the macro levels. Initiatives often fail because they are seen to be meeting the agenda of management or the company rather the interest of the individual. An Even Better Place to Work appeals to the self-interest of people and hence its sustainability and success.

Internal Ownership

A weakness with many company initiatives is their dependency on external agencies. Take away this support and the initiative falters. An Even Better Place to Work is owned by the participating company and its people, not by external consultants and trainers. From the moment of registration, every step is delivered internally. Team members run activities, teams decide on the modules and frequency of meetings. Individuals take ownership for improving their Satisfaction @ Work scores.

The company appoints an owner and a sponsor. The owner is someone who takes ownership for driving the initiative forward, supports the team leaders and reports to the senior team. The sponsor is a senior person who promotes the initiative internally. Team leaders will drive the program forward within their teams. and individuals take the lead for improving individual relationships. This is like having a series of pumps spread throughout the system ensuring there is a strong flow all the time rather than being dependent on pumps at the source and only a trickle at the end.

What is not Systemised will not be Sustained

Many companies initiatives fail because they are not sustained. Launching an initiative is a bit like a marriage day - the family together, a

celebration, high energy but a marriage is really about the ongoing relationship when life is tough, money is short and the children crying.

An Even Better Place to Work is a totally automated program. It initiates, reminds and makes implementation of activities easy. It is not dependent on the mood or memory of busy people.

Knowledge Trap

An Even Better Place to Work bypasses the problem that companies can give themselves by going down the training route i.e. how to translate the knowledge into workable practice.

When there are problems, companies usually think of some form of training as the solution. The theorists tell us that 80% of classroom learning is forgotten within four weeks. Like an open fire where most of the heat goes up the chimney rather than into the room, training can be highly wasteful.

Professionals are aware of the ineffectiveness of most trainings but are at a loss for an alternative – maybe run master classes or invite a business guru to speak, but these also have their limitations. It can be a bit like 'I don't know how to fix the brakes on the car so I make the horn louder!'

An Even Better Place to Work is a program that gets results with minimal wastage. It is not training, it is not e learning, it is not knowledge based leadership development. It is primarily a 'doing' program and the 'doing' is based on the latest in leadership theory and corporate dynamics. It provides workable practice with minimal but sufficient theory.

Creating a Critical Mass

Evidence shows that running a culture program in a tight time frame, creates a critical mass of awareness and of skilled people which sustains these new ways of working.

As an automated system, An Even Better Place to Work is ideally placed to roll out across large populations and create a simultaneous awareness, mindset and skills. This is just not possible with a more traditional 'teaching' approach.

This on line approach also allows the program to be highly cost effective. Not only are the financial costs minimised but the 'time-out' cost per employee is marginal, allowing the business to keep functioning.

No involvement no Commitment

Company's can create problems for themselves by how they go about change. Managers can run a staff satisfaction survey and then give themselves the problem of what to do with the results. The ways forward suggested by management are often rejected. People usually don't take care of a rented car, because it does not belong to them, they don't own it. Unless people are engaged and involved expect them to be compliant but not committed to the change.

Companies who want to retain their staff and get the best from them will want everyone to have a strong sense of connection to the company, its

people, leaders, mission and business. This happens when people are involved in creating a culture of shared values and vision.

Conclusion

The true worth of a company lies not only in profits and fixed assets but also in customer and employee satisfaction and particularly the quality of its leadership.

A company's success lies with shared leadership that creates valued people who will drive productivity.