

Energy is a finite resource. How we live our lives as an individual impacts hugely on how energised we feel. (Article - Energy - Are You Making The Most Of Yours). Organizations often neglect to think about how they generate or dissipate the collective energies of their workforce. As a result those organizations miss out on the potential enthusiasm and productivity which is generated by the creation of an energizing approach to working.

Consider your own work force for a moment. Do you think they are full of energy and enthusiasm? Are they using their creative juices to underpin your department or organizational success? Are they problem makers or solution finders?

Staff who find that their working day leaves them feeling lifeless and without enthusiasm are far more likely to take time off work. Even when they are actually present, their sense of engagement and focus is likely to be far less secure.

Creating Organisational Energy:

There is no one approach to creating an energised and enthusiastic workforce. However, there are several underlying principles which go a long way to ensuring you get the best out of your staff. Each organization will need to consider their specific circumstances and find their own way, in the most effective organizations this aspect of working life will be part of an ongoing dialogue with the staff.

A sense of organizational worth:

When you ask staff what they love about their job it is rarely the salary which is the crucial element. In my work with clients, across a wide range of organizations, the most common response is that they want to feel they are needed and that they can make a real difference. Having a sense of contribution is vital to that sense of worth. The job description doesn't matter, a cleaner can have just as much of a sense of pride as the CEO if their efforts are recognised.

As the Manager, it is important that you recognize each person's contribution and thank them for it. Be aware that among the pet hates, people state that false praise or a sense of managers, simply going through the motions, is counter productive. Knowing them by name, noticing when they have done a job well, or have gone that extra mile, giving credit for ideas and contribution are what matter.

An opportunity to be heard:

One of the greatest reasons cited for stress is a sense that the individual has no control over a situation. Involving your staff in finding the solution is a great way of giving them a voice. The great bonus is that they often come up with some fantastic ideas.

It is vital that, as a manager, you make the parameters of those decisions very clear right from the outset. What is not negotiable and why, and what is negotiable. If you

are uncertain about the efficacy of what they come up with, set the review date when you will consider how effectively it is working sooner.

The impact of effective decision making:

Decisions which are well thought out, clearly communicated and only changed when there is a clear rational need to do so, can energize the work force. Where the decisions have no rationale, or are constantly changed because they were not properly thought through in the first place, or are badly communicated so everyone gets a different version or half the story will sap the life energy out of an organisation. The rumour train is hugely expensive in energy terms.

How are decisions made in your organization? How are decisions communicated?
How much energy do you spend smoothing things over or putting things right?

The power of anticipation:

Anticipating future needs, planning strategically can save huge amounts of time, energy and money.

This can be demonstrated by an example shared by one of my clients. An IT servicing company decided to change its corporate image. Rather than talking to staff to determine the best time to do it, putting aside the necessary time to change, not only the printed materials but the website, infrastructure and everything else which is involved, they made an announcement that the change was to take place in two weeks time. The time chosen happened to coincide with the last two weeks of several big projects where staff were already under considerable pressure to meet deadlines. The end result was that staff had to work long hours; they felt completely overwhelmed and undervalued. The legacy of not involving them in the decision making process lasted long after the change took place.

Do you anticipate? Do you train your staff to anticipate future needs and plan for them? Doing so not only ensures that you maximise the use of the resources at your disposal but ensures there is time for strategic thinking and development.

In-completions create a sense of overwhelm which is de-energising.

Structuring work into manageable chunks so people feel a sense of achievement and completion can solve this problem. This can be done by training them to break goals down into manageable targets.

Never take good will for granted:

Many organizations rely heavily on the good will of their staff. Good will is difficult to quantify but can have an amazing impact on an organization. At its best good will oils the wheels, people want to go that extra mile because they feel appreciated and know

that their contribution makes a real difference. If taken for granted it is de-motivating, people turn into clock watchers, 'jobsworths' who resent any extra time or effort they are asked to contribute.

Are the right people doing the jobs?

If the job is too challenging people quickly feel swamped. Overwhelm saps the energy and the confidence. Appropriate training and support can minimise the problem.

If the job is too easy, it becomes mundane and boring. Boredom is incredibly tiring and quickly de-motivates. The solution is not always easy. Some jobs are, by their very nature, stultifying but breaking the day up into different activities can help.

As the manager how many of your team are under utilized and unchallenged? Have you ever asked them how they feel about what they do?

When should you train in-house and when is it more cost effective to call in an expert. I have watched staff wrestle with a specific activity which they need do rarely, perhaps once a year. The training is ineffective because they undertake the activity so rarely they have forgotten how to do it. It takes hours to do a job which done by experts would take a fraction of the time. The net effect is a loss of confidence and high levels of frustration leading to a poor use of energy and effort.

Creating a good working environment:

If people are working in clean, bright, airy conditions they are more likely to feel that they are valued. I find it amazing what a difference asking two simple questions of the staff can make if you implement their suggestions. It is that you value the staff enough to think about making their working conditions better which makes the difference.

What could we do to improve the quality of our working lives - things which have no budget implications?

What could we do which would improve the quality of our working lives we have a budget of?.

Do your staff feel that the management care about them?
How do you know?

Laughter is a great energiser:

Being professional is extremely important. Creating a culture where work is enjoyed and people can find humour together can be done in a highly professional outfit with very positive results. Where staff share some social time together can pay dividends, especially when they have had a significant role in its planning.

Remember that, like time and money, energy can be used only once. Over the next few days be curious about how you and your staff use their energies and how you create procedures within your organization to make the most of what is a precious resource.

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