

Top ten tell tale signs of an engaged organisation

THE NETWORK
OF LEADERS

CRITICALEYE

By Annie Coleman, Jerome Reback and John Smythe

An engaged staff and leadership team are critical to executing strategy and building a sustainable business that delivers both in the long-term and every day. But how can you spot an engaged organisation? In this article, engagement experts, Annie Coleman, Jerome Reback and John Smythe of Engage for Change outline the top ten signs showing that leaders and staff members of a company are truly engaged.

How can you spot an engaged organisation? First there will be laughter, enthusiasm and determination pouring from the people. It will be a place you come away from as a visitor thinking 'I would like to spend some time there too'. It might be housekeeping at the Intercontinental in London anticipating needs, the shop steward at Manchester Airport enthusing at being invited to improve service or site staff in Canada or Australia at mining giant Xstrata feeling they own the place.

From our latest and current research we believe that engaged organisations demonstrate ten possible tell-tale signs:

1. **Devolved leadership**
2. **Devolved accountability**
3. **Devolved strategy**
4. **Devolved structures**
5. **Devolved processes**
6. **Shared purpose**
7. **Shared vision**
8. **Shared responsibility**
9. **Shared learning**
10. **Shared innovation**



We have drawn these insights from our work and writing. CEOs talk to us about the challenge of engaging their leaders and people as being about setting the balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces, devolving absolutely as much as possible but sharing purpose, vision and crucially responsibility for performance, social obligation and compliance with regulatory requirements.

The key to this balance between devolvement and sharing is being clear about what is not negotiable – the givens – and the invitation to others to share power. If an individual or group debates the scope of the non-negotiables (the givens) they will be comfortable with engaging others. In fact as they define the non-negotiables these will shrink as people ask ‘why do we need to control this or that’ and the invitation to others will grow.

In so doing, the thrust of leadership shifts from control and supervision to guidance, freeing leaders up for more creative work and the encouragement of others.

If engaging leaders and employees is largely a question of leadership philosophy, what practical process can be followed to create such a way of working? We think there are seven:

ENGAGING THE EXECUTIVE TEAM

- Top team facilitation to negotiate and articulate shared narratives about vision, values, strategy, change
- Top team alignment: engage the team to work together
- Define and agree the business case and scope of staff engagement
- Develop the strategy

ENGAGING SENIOR MANAGEMENT

- Plan and run leadership strategy sessions
- Build behavioural change into everyday business activity
- Design leadership rituals and meetings that surprise, challenge and, where necessary, shock
- Apply proprietary techniques to make meetings/interventions work, strategy safaris, predator business simulations
- Change leadership behaviours through meetings and interventions that model effective engagement
- Diagnostic assessment to drive awareness of leadership capabilities and limitations

BUILDING LINE MANAGER ENGAGEMENT CAPABILITIES

- Review personal development processes to determine if engagement capability is represented
- Train trainers to deliver engagement capability in-house
- Review performance management approaches to determine if engagement practice is adequately reflected

ENGAGING TO DRIVE CHANGE

- Create large scale engagement programmes to drive change
- Set up group sessions of up to 1,000 people
- Build the principles of engagement into ‘traditional’ change programmes
- Identify and clarify role of ‘change, culture, brand champions / ambassadors’
- Coach change facilitators and champions to be exemplars of effective engagement
- Design and run digital engagement interventions, particularly for dispersed workforces
- Keep the programme in the management spotlight / maintaining energy and focus

ENGAGING COMMUNICATION

- Fast reviews of communication
- Map demographics using profiling techniques
- Channel refreshment
- Digital strategies
- Campaigns

ENGAGING CUSTOMERS AND CLIENTS

- Link business strategy to the brand experience
- Clarify and help to create shared meaning for your value proposition
- Conduct external customer/client reviews
- Map the customer journey to identify key touch points and the employee behaviours required to deliver the promised experience
- Engagement programmes that help employees to deliver on the customer/brand promise

MANAGING RETURN ON ENGAGEMENT

- Validate existing staff research
- Compare your results with benchmarks
- Translate your data into practical engagement programmes
- Carry out quick, focused pulse polls to focus and drive engagement programmes

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Prior to consulting, John saw service in corporate communication positions with three US corporations: Occidental Petroleum, the Bechtel Corporation and Marathon Oil. He spent a year as special advisor to Neil Kinnock during the latter's tenure with the European Commission. John recently released an award-winning new book: 'The CEO – The Chief Engagement Officer, Turning the hierarchy upside down to drive performance', published by Gower in June 2007.



Jerome Reback

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Jerome is an accomplished consultant in communication and change management having provided guidance and advice to many of Europe's leading organisations over the last 20 years. His experience spans the development of approaches to support corporate change, leadership mentoring and coaching and the creation of communication and engagement strategies and programmes. Jerome's specialty lies in helping to develop leaders to engage with their stakeholders effectively and in the creation of programmes to engender alignment with the brand promise.



Annie Coleman

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Annie joined Engage for Change having successfully run her own consultancy AlphaPerformance Consultants Ltd for a number of years. Prior to that she was Global Head of Brand and Communications at leading alternative investment management firm GAM. Previously she spent eight years at investment bank Goldman Sachs as European Head of Brand and Marketing, which included worldwide internal engagement programmes for the global Chairman's office.

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