



East of England Staff Engagement Network: Launch Event
ACAS Offices, Kempson Way, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk IP32 7AR

30 April 2014

Report

This event was arranged by Civil Service Local to launch a staff engagement network for the Civil Service in the East of England. Those invited held engagement (or similar) roles in a broad range of departments in the region.

Introduction – Ian Barton (presentation slides used)

Ian Barton welcomed everyone and explained that the speakers today would be talking about engagement. He thanked ACAS for hosting the event.

Ian gave a summary of the agenda and explained that it was most important that everyone spoke to each other to share their experiences, ideas and opinions. He said that it was good to see such a wide number of departments represented at the event.

Ian explained the context. Part of the Civil Service Reform Plan is to encourage and reward an 'engaged workforce' and that its overarching theme is to have 'a more unified, open and accountable Civil Service'. He ran through the aims of Civil Service Local, one of which is to build greater cross departmental collaboration.

He provided the audience with a couple of definitions of engagement and reminded everyone of Sir Bob Kerslake's challenge in his blog of November 2013 that 'we must all get involved in thinking about how we use the staff survey results to help make our organisations great places to do great work'.

Civil Service Local has already been facilitating an Action Learning Set (ALS) made up of a small number of departmental representatives from the region who meet to learn from each others' experiences and share ideas. Ian explained that the members of the ALS were sitting amongst the attendees on each of the tables.

Finally, Ian explained the reasons for creating an engagement network:

- Demonstrate commitment to engagement
- Overcome geographical isolation and create a sense of community
- Share best practice and avoid repeating mistakes

All of which help us to contribute to the aims of the Reform Plan and meet Sir Bob's challenge.

Case Study 1: A Departmental Perspective on Engagement – Rob Neil (Ministry of Justice) (presentation slides used)

Rob explained that he wanted to share the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) journey with the attendees – what they do well.

He asked for a show of hands from those who had been in the Civil Service 5 years or less, 10 years or less, 15 years or less and so on, asking individuals in each group to say who they were and which department they worked for.

Rob explained some of the facts surrounding the MoJ, such as that they have 80,000 staff in 2,700 sites.

He asked what was the role of employee engagement was and explained that a search on Google produces over 28 million results.

He next focused on the different types of people one finds in the workplace – how do they feel about their work and employer. They range from ‘I don’t have a voice at work’ to ‘I’m able to give my best at work’. Statistics show that 70% of employees do not trust their manager, whilst only 30% feel actively engaged.

Rob referred to the Engaging for Success report to Government by David MacLeod and Nita Clarke. He encouraged everyone to look at this valuable source of guidance and asked them if anyone knew what the 4 Key Enablers of Engagement referred to in the report were. They are:

- Strategic Narrative (where has the organisation gone and where is it going?)
- Engaging Managers (who focus their people, treat them as individuals and coach and stretch them)
- Employee Voice (for reinforcing and challenging views and so employees are seen as central to the solutions)
- Organisational Integrity (where the values on the wall are reflected in day to day behaviours)

He referred everyone to the Engage for Success website:

<http://www.engageforsuccess.org>

In the rest of the presentation, Rob focused on the work around engagement in the MoJ.

He explained that their Permanent Secretary, Ursula Brennan, is fully committed to engagement and supporting this work in her department.

He outlined the department’s approach to the annual survey – to measure and contrast the Engagement index scores through the 5 ‘say, stay, strive’ questions (those that identify an individual’s personal attachment to their organisation) and ‘ask, analyse, act’ in respect of the 9 key themes of questions that make up most of the survey.

The process of 'ask, analyse, act' forms an annual cycle that begins with the survey moves to an analysis of the results and the identification of team priorities and concludes with the creation and implementation of action plans to address key issues.

To embed this cycle it is essential that everyone has access to the survey and the results (via an online reporting tool), that there are support, tools and training for speedy analysis and presentations and that everyone can discuss the results in their team and be involved in the agreement of an action plan ('we said, we will') which must be acted upon and reviewed ('we said, we did').

Rob explained that there is a 'bottom up, top down' approach in the MoJ with engagement supported by a national network of key agents – EECs (Employee Engagement Champions) and HR Business Partners supporting managers and workshops across the country run by TEAs (The Engagement Advocates) who help teams draw up action plans. He also advised that there is a performance objective for all Band As and the SCS to raise employee engagement.

Rob ran through the results of the latest survey for the MoJ, which is now in its 5th year for his department. The Engagement Index for the whole department is 52% for 2013, 1 percentage point less than for the previous year and 6 points lower than for the Civil Service collectively. However, within the MoJ are a number of organisations and they each have their own Engagement Indices that range from 48% for NOMS to 68% for TNA. The response rates also differ considerably. He then provided some information about these organisations.

Rob identified the range of support materials developed by the MoJ to support engagement which included activity guides and a theatre based learning activity that resulted in 85% of participants saying that they now felt confident that they understood what employee engagement meant.

When looking at survey results, Rob explained that it was important to begin with a celebration of what was good before moving onto areas for improvement and those results that require further investigation. This ensures that everyone begins with a positive energy.

He referred to the survey online reporting tools detailed in the accompanying slide.

He then focused on the TEAs and EECs who are volunteers who receive internal accreditations for these roles. There is an Engagement Champions Forum in the MoJ comprised of nominated EECs. The forum meets periodically to undertake a number of activities including the sharing of best practice and the testing of concepts, approaches and ideas to engage employees. Rob explained that the EEC network has grown from x120 in 2008 to x674 today, with many more stepping forward to volunteer. This group is fully supported with resources, webchats, an e-newsletter and an annual 'Champions Day' event.

What next for the MoJ? – the Top Team are increasingly visible and talking to staff about change, leadership and motivation and are inviting ideas and role modeling. The department wants more EECs leading to Hubs within the business and across

organisations through the work of Civil Service Local. They want an increasing focus on 'engaging managers' and 'employee voice' and they want to link increased engagement to improved business outcomes.

Rob explained that the MoJ defines engagement as 'encouraging individuals to bring all of their potential into the workplace.'

He concluded by providing e-mail contact details for any questions or information regarding the survey, analysis, workshops and the role of the EECs.

Table Conversation 1

In their tables, attendees discussed the following questions:

- What are the barriers we need to overcome?
- What are the possible solutions?

Responses were captured on flipchart paper (see separate document for full details).

Role of ACAS – How ACAS can support a more engaged workforce – Fiona Neathey & Phil Rimmer (presentation slides used)

Fiona explained that they were there to talk about the role of ACAS – who they were and how they support organisations. ACAS have been involved in Engaging for Success.

She spoke about their own drivers of engagement which were along the lines recommended by MacLeod. There is good engagement in ACAS at both the local and national level.

ACAS provides a lot of advice on engagement, such as case studies, and Fiona referred to their website: www.acas.org.uk

Phil explained that ACAS works with both public and private sector employers and he outlined the benefits of involving them as a third party, such as the way this improves listening.

He then outlined the process for a typical employee involvement/engagement workshop programme involving ACAS which would aim to encourage people to feel that they have a valuable contribution to make to the organisation and would use the nominal group technique (problem identification, solution generation and decision making) to achieve the desired outcome.

Case Study 2: A Local Office Perspective on Engagement – Bernie Wilson (DWP Bury St Edmunds) (presentation slides used)

Bernie explained that Bury St Edmunds DWP office has 132 staff and that their role is to process 3 benefits. She explained the challenges that they are facing, including the loss of a number of staff.

Bernie directed the audience to a slide showing the results for the 'say, stay, strive' questions for her office in the 2013 survey results:

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| • I am proud when I tell others I work in DWP | 75% |
| • I would recommend DWP as a great place to work | 68% |
| • I feel a strong personal attachment to DWP | 74% |
| • DWP inspires me to do the best in my job | 73% |
| • DWP motivates me to help it achieve its objectives | 74% |

These are significantly higher than the national results for DWP and most other departments.

Bernie explained that in her office they have a People group who meet regularly to discuss a range of staff issues and then provide feedback to their colleagues. Their management take more responsibility for communicating with staff, including a staff forum called Ask Linda.

They run regular events, such as charity fun activities, quizzes on payday, competitions and reward and recognition. They also have feature events, such as BOSCARs (staff nominating colleagues to receive awards which are then handed out at a ceremony) and an 'Ideas Festival', in which everyone is encouraged to come up with ideas to improve things for staff and which was based around the concept of a music festival with the categories 'Electronic', 'House' and 'Indie'. Both events draw upon existing processes (reward and recognition and staff suggestion schemes) but present them in a way that is inclusive and genuinely engages staff. The financial rewards associated with these events come from the existing reward and recognition budget. Other ideas they have come up include People Boards, homemade posters and Diversity Days.

Handouts were given to attendees with further information on some of these ideas (BOSCARs, for example, was adopted by HMRC PT Operations Anglia Group following the sharing of it at the ALS meetings).

All of the above are designed to make the workplace a more positive place to be and this is reflected in the survey results.

Table Conversation 2

In their tables, attendees discussed the following questions:

- What might we achieve as a network?
- How can we best work together?

Responses were captured on flipchart paper (see separate document for full details).

Feedback from Table Conversations – Ian Barton and attendees

A nominated spokesperson from each table fed back to all of the attendees the key points from their discussions (see separate document for full details).

Next Steps and Close – Ian Barton

Ian explained that all of the material from today's event would be shared with all of the attendees and that a list of everyone's e-mail addresses would also be made available. Ian ran through some of the possibilities for how the network could operate and advised that the attendees' suggestions would feed into this process.

A short video from the Engage for Success website called 'Get Engaged' was played to the audience. The film was directed to employers and highlighted the value of engagement as something that is not an additional activity but is what you do, how you do it and how you grow. The message was clear – employees need to feel valued and have a voice and if organisations want their employees to give of their best they need to create places where people want to shine.

Finally, Ian thanked everyone for attending the event.