East of England Staff Engagement Network Launch Event
30 April 2014

At the event, attendees sat on 5 tables. As a result, each table contained representatives from a broad range of departments. As part of the event, everyone participated in 2 table conversations, in which they discussed their responses to 4 questions. Below are the notes of those discussions.

Table Conversation 1

What are the barriers we need to overcome?

Difficulty engaging with the organisation where one's future is uncertain
Difficulty engaging with the organisation where one's unclear of its direction
People feel that they have lost control of their work, there is little freedom and flexibility and they are simply a 'cog in a wheel'
Some departments invest more in their people e.g. providing recognised qualifications
Inconsistent commitment to engagement amongst senior managers
Lack of trust
Lack of strategic narrative
Communication challenges, such as too many layers
Lack of buy-in
Cultural problems
Managing expectations of what can be achieved
PMR guided distribution (use of the wave)
Industrial Relations/Unions
Staff weary/tired of change (fatigue)
Impact of change generally
Challenges of social media
Lack of support/leadership from middle managers
Lip service paid
'No one is going to listen no matter what we say'
Hard to pull back disengaged staff
One size fits all approach
Clear definition of engagement missing
No commitment at executive level/no central drive
Time constraints – increased workloads with reduced workforce
Budgetary constraints – pressure to do more with less
Employees don't feel valued and feel vulnerable

What are the possible solutions?

More involvement at the grass roots in decision-making (it may be happening locally but is it at higher levels?)
Managers to go back to the floor/frontline
People Management Training
Promotion for those who are proven people managers rather than box tickers
Invest more in the individual

Act on promises by ensuring delivery
Publish a strategic narrative
Ensure communication is relevant and linked to need
Have a joined up working incentive to secure buy-in
Explain why change/evolution is needed and ensure that regular updates are provided and that staff have a voice
Make efficiencies that enable us to do more with less
Manage behaviour to improve the culture
Deliver feedback to manage expectations
PMR – time to complete, regular notes of the year, use templates
Management capability
Industrial Relations/Unions – have regular dialogue and local meetings
Ensure the right language is used
Focus on middle managers – develop them and give them appropriate support
Engagement needs to be a key driver everywhere
There needs to be consistency
Have local engagement champions everywhere
Give sufficient time
Empowerment
Provide a definition of engagement
Use local initiatives so staff feel valued
Raise awareness of engagement – use technology and face to face to communicate key messages

Table Conversation 2

What might we achieve as a network?

Share good ideas, best practice and local initiatives
Share the struggles and challenges for feedback and suggestions
Share resources
Share lessons from Business Change Implementation
Ensure consistency of approach
Create a resource centre
Staff learning and development
Directory of CS Local Reps/Engagement Champions
List of contacts
Could we access other government departments' Intranets?
Promote closer working between departments
Integration between different departments
Raise awareness of engagement

How can we best work together?

Opening communications across departments – knowing more about the Civil Service
Use a contact list for e-mails etc.
Share contact (including locations) list with members
Use video conferencing
Share templates/reference resources

Use a pre- and post-survey
Teleconferences
Use a website, such as CS Local
Extend invitations to others' workplaces
Create a virtual network
Use other resources, such as Yammer, if possible
Provide regular updates
Have face to face meetings (quarterly, six monthly or annually)
Gather feedback on events/forums
Visit other organisations