

Are your employees like Mike?

Walking along Regents Canal one sunny afternoon in late June, I happened upon a crew of men and women cleaning and painting over graffiti on the canal walls. On their t-shirts was emblazoned the word 'volunteer.' They were talking as they worked and seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Out of curiosity, I asked one of them how they came to be working there. Mike, a tall man in his forties said, with an easy smile, "Our company sent us." He continued, "We're giving back to the community."

"What does your job normally entail?" I asked.

"I'm in IT," he said.

"And you don't mind being sent out here to do manual labour?"

"Not at all," he laughed. "I'm proud that my company wants to contribute to the greater good. Besides, it's a beautiful day, and it's nice to be outside. Also, we can chat while we work, so I feel like I'm getting to see a side of my colleagues that I never really see at the office."

"So do you think you'll be going back to the office tomorrow with that 'I hate my job' feeling in your stomach?"

"Definitely not," Mike said. "My company is a great place to work."

This, I thought, is an engaged employee.

Many people have tried to quantify this thing called happiness, as it pertains to employees. So much data has been collected. The drivers of engagement have been dreamed up and established.

A lot less has been written – with some notable exceptions – on how to implement employee engagement.

Because the truth of the matter is, the theory behind engagement is beautifully simple. The practical application, on the other hand, can be quite messy.

Definitions of employee engagement abound. The essence is that a happy employee is a productive employee, and that's great for the bottom line; so engagement is essential, as it simultaneously satisfies the needs of the company to be successful, and the needs of the employee, for whom work should be both satisfying and rewarding. As John Storey (et al), has put it, engagement is "a set of positive attitudes and behaviours enabling high job performance of a kind which are in tune with the organisation's mission."

And of course, this has led to the philosophical quest to answer the question, "What makes an employee happy?"

The Times "100 Great Places to Work" found that something all its top places had in common was that their employees felt that their voices were heard.



by Jasmine Gartner, IPA associate

But this bypasses the rather difficult process by which those organisations which don't have engaged employees can achieve engagement.

The IPA began to focus on employee engagement in 2007, when Rob Stevens, then research and information manager, conducted an intensive survey of IPA member organisations, as well as led several meetings of a steering group that included representatives from Egg, Royal Mail, Tesco, BAA, Lloyds TSB and Scottish Power, among others. During this time, much important data was gathered and analysed. In May of 2008, I was brought on board to continue the development of the engagement programme, bringing my background in cultural anthropology to the table. We established a new steering group this year, which included several people from the original group, but added new faces from companies like Diageo, as well as a representative of the trade union Unison. Through Stevens' excellent research, we have found that awareness of the importance of engagement is high, but understanding how to implement it is low. In 2007's survey, most companies scored quite well in their responses to such questions as 'has a clear business case been established within your organisation for investing in strategies and / or activities designed to increase the level of employee engagement?' But, responses dropped dramatically to questions like 'how often does your Senior Management Team initiate improvement actions and initiatives as a result of a review of engagement levels?' In other words, implementation is where things fall apart. This sentiment was echoed in our June 2008 steering group meeting, held at the IPA offices.

Having identified this area as the key challenge for organisations, the IPA has focused the development of their new Employee Engagement Programme on implementation. This programme can be linked in with the IPA's Information & Consultation Programme, or used on its own. Our engagement programme is unique in that it provides a

diagnostic survey of the organisational culture of a company, and then uses that as a basis to create a bespoke workshop with concrete tools for implementation.

It's important to see both the differences and similarities between engagement, and the IPA's long-existing programme of option-based consultation. This includes effective information and consultation processes, and workplace partnership. Over the years of introducing information and consultation forums in workplaces, the IPA has come up with its signature '5 Key Steps to Engagement,' and this strongly informs our new Employee Engagement Programme.

In fact, on the surface, it might be hard to differentiate between the two practices. As director Nita Clarke explains, "Whilst information and consultation can be seen as a guide to engaging employees as a group; employee engagement is more concerned with the individual's experience." However, this difference aside, there are also many links between information and consultation and engagement.

For example, the IPA's critical contribution to information and consultation was to introduce the idea of the "what else?" In other words, representatives do not function as the message bearer between staff and management, but actively ask what else management considered before

coming to any conclusions. "This dispels any ideas staff might have about management simply making knee-jerk decisions," explains Derek Luckhurst, IPA's training and development director, "and pulls them into the conversation, while decreasing resentment."

This creates an intellectual contract between management and staff collectively. Management involves staff, through requesting input, which may influence decisions (of course, it may not, but it assures that employees at least have a voice), and staff feel that decisions are understandable, even if perhaps not in their personal best interest. While information and consultation can be seen as the intellectual contract, employee engagement creates the emotional contract or bond that an employee can potentially build with his or her organisation. Ideally, the goal is to make sure that work is a fulfilling part of life for the employee, not something to dread.

And this is at the heart of the IPA's Employee Engagement Programme: we want to help organisations become the place where people like Mike, whom I met on Regents Canal a couple of months ago, work. Where people volunteer that their company is a great place to work.

For more information about IPA's Employee Engagement Programme contact jasmine.gartner@ipa-involve.com

Your Guide to the New Equality Bill 2008

1. WHAT IS THE EQUALITY BILL?

The Equality Bill is an attempt on behalf of the Government to simplify and modernise discrimination law.

It will contain a single equality duty to replace the race, disability and gender equality duties currently set out in nine major pieces of legislation and over 100 statutory instruments and, in addition, it will also cover gender re-assignment, sexual orientation and religion or belief.

2. WHY IS THE EQUALITY BILL BEING INTRODUCED?

In February 2005 a Discrimination Law Review was launched to fulfill the commitment made by the Government to create a clearer and more streamlined equality legislation framework. The Discrimination Law Review's findings resulted in a consultation paper on proposals for the Equality Bill entitled "A Framework for Fairness: Proposals for a Single Equality Bill for Great Britain" which was published in June 2007.

The consultation ran from 12 June to 4 September 2007 and nearly all respondents agreed with the objective of streamlining the law. Accordingly, in light of the responses received during the consultation, on 26 June 2008 the Government announced a package of legislative and non-legislative measures aimed to "strengthen protection, advance equality and declutter the law". These proposals are contained in a White Paper entitled "Framework for a fairer Future – The Equality Bill".

3. WHAT ARE THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSALS?

Introduce a new equality duty on the public sector: the new duty will bring together the three existing public sector equality duties that require public authorities to tackle discrimination and promote equality for race, disability and gender. It will also extend the duties to cover gender reassignment, age, sexual orientation and religion or belief;

End age discrimination: the Bill will contain powers to make further regulations outlawing unjustifiable age discrimination by those providing goods, facilities and services;

Require transparency: public bodies will be expected to report on important inequalities such as in gender pay, ethnic minority employment and disability employment. Secrecy clauses which prevent workers discussing their own pay, will be banned and a new "kite mark" will be introduced to improve transparency in the private sector. In addition, the Equality and Human Rights Commission will conduct inquiries in particular sectors, including the financial services sector (where the gender pay gap is much higher than the average) and the construction sector (where ethnic minorities are under-represented to a greater extent than elsewhere);

Extend the scope of positive action: employers will be able, but will not be obliged, to take into account the under-representation of disadvantaged groups (for example women and ethnic minorities) when selecting between equally qualified candidates; and

Strengthen enforcement: the Bill will allow for tribunals to make wider recommendations in discrimination cases which will go beyond benefiting the individual taking the case and benefit the rest of the workforce. It will also explore further how to allow discrimination claims to be brought on multiple grounds and how to introduce representative actions in discrimination law so that unions, the ENHRC and other bodies can bring claims on behalf of a group of people who have been discriminated against.



Pinsent Masons

by Kate Derbyshire, Solicitor, Pinsent Masons LLP

Managing The Ageing Workforce: Achieving Productivity and Competitiveness



Two years on from the Age Discrimination Regulations coming into force, few HR professionals would argue that age doesn't matter any more. In fact, as surveys bear out, discrimination still continues, though that is only half the story.

The other side to the coin is that the population is getting older and many informed observers believe the real issues are not just about age discrimination. Rather, they would say, we need to understand the more holistic concept of age management. "How we did it" examples can be a starting point. Age management demands a strategy and it requires proactive interventions to achieve positive results. It is a classic case where a strong partnership relationship can achieve a "win-win" for companies and employees.

The IPA and TAEN are collaborating to bring you this series of briefing seminars, starting with an examination of the legal developments and then going on beyond compliance with the law to analyse an age management response to the risks that demographic changes pose to unwary businesses.

Programme

- 0945 – 1000** **Registration & coffee**
1000 – 1015 **Welcome and Introductions from the Chair**
1015 – 1045 **Legal Overview**
Richard Lee, Partner, Wragge & Co
Two years on from the legislation, what are the recent developments employers need to be aware of and what can we look forward to?
- 1045 – 1100** **Legal Q&A**
1115 – 1145 **Looking to the future – the Age Positive Agenda**
Chris Ball, Chief Executive, The Age and Employment Network
1145 – 1230 **Discussion groups: Sharing experiences and ideas. Action Planning**
1230 – 1300 **Case Study: Hanley Economic Building Society**
Cris Hammond, HR Manager
How one organisation approaches age management to the benefit of the business, the workforce and customers.
- 1300 – 1315** **Summing up from the chair**
1315 **Buffet Lunch and Networking**

How to book

This event is free to attend. To reserve your place please:

- Email sarah.dawson@ipa-involve.com with your name, job title, organisation, email address and a contact telephone number.

OR

- Visit the IPA website at www.ipa-involve.com and navigate to events

We will send you joining instructions approximately 1 week before the workshop

NEXT EVENT

11 September 2008

55 Colmore Row, Birmingham

hosted by

Wragge&Co

MORE DATES IN 2008.....

14 October – London

19 November – Leeds

1 December - Glasgow

For more information about all IPA services - visit www.ipa-involve.com



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