Creating Accountability for Employee Engagement

Making Employee Engagement EVERYONE'S responsibility

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If you're reading this guide, you are probably aware of the positive impact a great culture and high employee engagement has on the success of an organisation.

But high engagement and a healthy culture doesn't happen by accident. Left unchecked culture can often become unruly and the consequences of poor culture and employee engagement become increasingly apparent as time progresses.

Whether it shows itself in high employee turnover, high sickness, high conflict, or high inefficiency, often the longer it's left unaddressed the worse it becomes.

But it can often land on HR and People teams to drive the ownership and change that might be needed to improve engagement or shape up culture.

There are many examples where HR professionals are expected to personally ensure that each individual in the business is happy and will run themselves into the ground ensuring that is so.

The reality is, that it takes everyone in the organisation, from the top to the bottom to be committed to high engagement and culture to make it a great place to work.

From the senior leaders who may set the tone, and shape the culture needed for the future. To the people managers, with teams, who are likely the most influential in how it feels to work in the organisation. Right through to the individual contributors who have a choice over how they show up to work every day.

This guide will give you some thoughts and ideas on how you can make everyone feel accountable for culture and engagement in your organisation, helping it to scale and reproduce more naturally.

The key to high engagement is to always be thinking about employee engagement, from top to bottom and beginning to end!

Victoria

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Getting to grips with employee engagement

The first thing to do is get a grip on where you are currently when it comes to employee engagement and culture.

We'd recommend that you consider an anonymous employee survey for this purpose. Using a well-crafted survey, you can capture your employee's thoughts and feelings about how it feels to work in your organisation and get some useful data and insight that can help you understand the work you need to do.

The benefit of doing something high-profile, involving all employees, is that you can signal to your employees what your intentions are and make them feel involved in the process by giving them a voice.

Here are just a few of the things you may be able to identify through this data, using the right questions and some great segmentation of the data:

> **?** *Are your senior leaders are **creating the environment** that your employees need to thrive?*
>
> **?** *Are your people managers giving your employees the **support** they need to thrive?*
>
> **?** *Which areas of your culture & engagement are **strengths** and which are **opportunities**?*
>
> **?** *Which **teams or demographics** need additional focus & support to de-risk them?*
>
> **?** *Are employee engagement activities having the **impact** you want them to & what **progress** is being made?*

If you have done a survey recently, go and revisit your results through this lens and see if the accountability for engagement lies within your teams already.

You may decide that you don't want to do surveys, that's fine. But you'll need another way to get to grips with your current engagement and culture situation. For example, you may want to consider using focus groups, or similar.

From here, you need to look at the "story" that your employees are telling you. What are they telling you they love, what don't they enjoy? What populations or areas of your organisation aren't taking accountability for engagement that you need to address?

You can then start to engage the whole organisation in engagement!

Starting at the top – Senior Leaders

Senior leaders in the organisation are responsible for the strategy and direction of the organisation and how that is achieved.

A huge part of this is to ensure that the culture and engagement of the organisation is aligned to the goals and designed for success.

However, only a small number of leaders seem to have a clear accountability for the culture and engagement explicitly in their roles.

We checked out senior leadership roles that were advertised on LinkedIn.

Only **21.5%** of the senior leadership / board roles we looked at mentioned being responsible for culture, engagement or employee experience in their teams or organisation.

This included only **44%** of CEO job descriptions and **0%** of Sales leaders!

These senior roles have a huge influence on culture and can help to ensure that culture and engagement is continually on the agenda and reviewed as the organisation evolves.

So what can be done to influence this set of people? Here we're sharing some of our experience of how to get senior leaders to take accountability for their role in culture and engagement across the entire organisation.

Starting at the top

In our experience, senior leaders respond best to data and insight!

You can share your engagement research as a way to help them to understand where the organisation is and get them involved in the story.

However, they also need to understand the "so what' and the impact that they can have. Here's some ways to create the "so what":

1
Link the engagement data to other data that they may be more familiar with, that has an impact; sick pay costs, employee attrition costs or even recruitment fees

2
If you have data and insights about the leadership team themselves, sharing these can really help them to link their own impact to the impact in the broader organisation.

3
Look to the future, what is the impact if the trends continue and action isn't taken? Here you might want to predict what talent you may loose, or what costs may be incurred.

It can help to link the impact of improving engagement and culture on business results. The reality is that creating a workplace of high engagement is a competitive advantage. It gives the best opportunities to welcome the best talent, bring out the best in them and ensure they build long and successful careers in your organisation.

Starting at the top

The Senior leaders have the following accountability when it comes to culture and engagement:

- Defining the culture needed for the organisation to succeed
- Redefining culture as the organisation evolves
- Talking about great culture and engagement, what it means to them personally and what it means to the organisation, keeping it high on the agenda and measures of success
- Shaping culture and engagement for their specific areas of responsibility
- Holding people leaders (their teams) and others, accountable for creating high engagement in their teams and supporting them to do so
- Calling out examples of poor engagement and culture and addressing them
- Providing the required investment, funds, or resources, needed to execute the culture and engagement plan
- Acting as a role model and inspiration for culture and engagement

HR and People teams can support senior leaders in a number of ways:
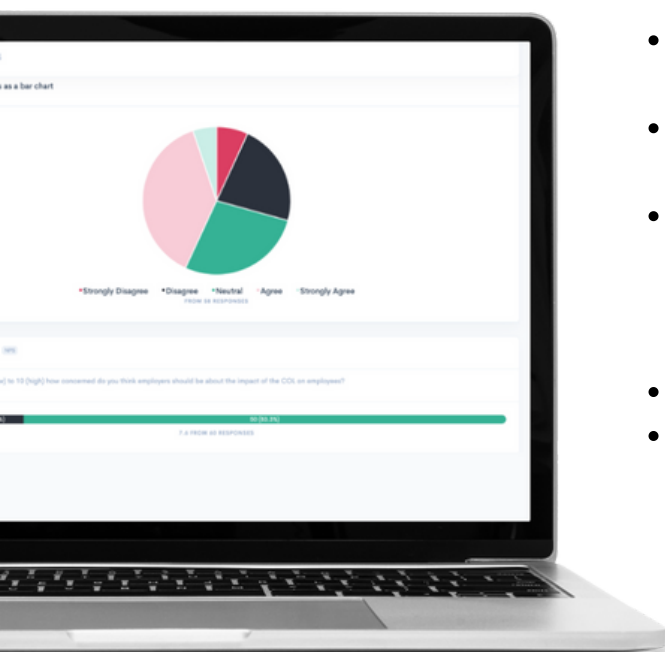
- Providing regular insight and data to help leaders to understand their impact
- Highlighting areas where key talent may be at risk of leaving, or the culture isn't serving its purpose
- Helping to prioritise what will have the biggest impact to support decision-making for resources and investment needs – with business cases and return on investment
- Providing coaching in this area – directly, or with others
- Providing regular updates to demonstrate progress and impact – this is where regular engagement surveys can help (we recommend quarterly).

Tackling People Managers

People leaders, managers, supervisors, team leaders, line managers – whatever you call them!

People managers are often the biggest influence on how it feels to work in an organisation. The daily interaction and decision–making of people managers have a huge impact on employees.

They are also often the key to scaling engagement across the organisation – translating the work of the leaders, into the day to day reality.

But, there is a "watch out" with people leaders in your organisation, they are often under engaged....

> It's not uncommon for poor culture and engagement to be scaled by this population instead of the positive and healthy one that is desired, because the way they are feeling influences others so strongly.

If you are asking people leaders to be accountable for employee engagement in your organisation, you first need to ensure that they are engaged themselves.

This again is where we can use engagement surveys and data to understand if there is work to do here. By examining the layers in the organisation, we can look at how our people leaders are feeling and what would make a difference to their own engagement.

It may be necessary to then prioritise any activities that are found here. By doing this, we can secure the people leader talent that we need to influence culture and engagement, as well as showing them how engagement and culture can be measured and improved. It highlights the value of monitoring engagement and the impact that taking action can have.

Tackling People Managers

The people leaders have the following accountability when it comes to culture and engagement:

- Translating the culture and engagement from the senior leadership team, into what is needed for their specific team
- Redefining culture as the organisation and their team evolves
- Talking about great culture and engagement, what it means to them personally and what it means to the team
- Encouraging the flow of feedback in their team, to create a trusting and open environment where culture and engagement can be openly discussed
- Holding their teams accountable for culture and engagement and operating within the values
- Calling out examples of poor engagement and culture and addressing them – not accepting poor examples of engagement to go unaddressed, or to continue longer
- Acting as a role model and inspiration for culture and engagement in their teams

HR and People teams can support people leaders in a number of ways:

- Ensuring that people leaders as a population are engaged and able to engage others
- Supporting them to gain the skills they need to lead in an engaging way
- Providing regular insight and data to help people leaders understand their impact and the impact they can have on their team
- Highlighting areas where key talent may be at risk of leaving, or the culture isn't serving its purpose
- Supporting to put in place action plans to address poor culture and engagement, or to share great examples
- Providing coaching in this area – directly, or with others, to support with problem solving and best-fit approach
- Providing regular updates and insights to demonstrate progress and impact – this is where regular engagement surveys can help

Individual Responsibilities

This one is maybe a little controversial….. Employees have a responsibility to make sure they are personally engaged and that they are happy at work.

It's common for formal processes such as disciplinaries or grievances in the workplace to be as a result of employees who have let themselves become disengaged, lost their way and fallen out of love with their workplace.

Whilst HR and people leaders can put in place action plans and initiatives to keep teams engaged, the individuals themselves also need to do the work to ensure that they are open to it and keeping themselves engaged.

Of course there are a lot of things that HR, leaders and people managers can do to help employees in this area. We can explore this in our Ten Space employee engagement model, which you can see below.

These are 4 key areas that we know contribute to engagement and that we explore through employee engagement surveys.

The Ten Space Engagement Model

Connection

How connected employees feel to the business – employees feel informed, heard and bought into the vision

Employees share the vision
Employees feel their voice is heard
Employees feel well informed

Leadership

How confident employees feel about their leaders & managers and how inspired they are by them

Bringing out the best in the team
Providing great recognition
Creating great working environments

Fulfilment

How well roles meet employees needs – personally & professionally

Rewards match the contributions made
Employees enjoy the challenge of their roles
Employees are proud

Wellbeing

Employees feel safe, secure and supported – emotionally & physically

Employees feel safe & secure in their role
Employees feel supported by the business
Employees feel able to be themselves at work

Individual Responsibilities
People leader support

Whilst we can put in place the key elements of engagement, people leaders might also need to support employees to receive the engagement that is on offer.

Consider the following:

- Help individuals to ensure they have absolute clarity on the direction of travel, the goals of the team and the impact they have
- Work to build a trusting and supportive relationship with their teams
- Listen to their ideas and concerns and create a true open door for feedback
- Work with them to create a good balance in their lives
- Work with them on their personal development and create opportunities for them
- Make them feel safe and secure in the workplace
- Create an inclusive space
- Create an employee-first space in their teams

A good people leader will be open to insights on the engagement of their team and be willing to make any changes necessary for success.

They may also be in tune with their team without the data and insights and know when team members need more support and time spent with them to re-engage them.

Spending time regularly with employees will be a huge help in this area, opening up conversations and providing the opportunity for coaching and guidance to address any dip in engagement before it becomes an issue. Don't skip one to ones and development reviews!

Individual Responsibilities
Employee's Accountability

But where does the accountability come in for the employee themselves? Well their responsibilities are to raise with their people leaders when they feel their engagement has dropped and to have a conversation with their leader about why that is.

Or to share their honest feedback in engagement surveys and share their concerns and ideas in a constructive way. This can often set the tone for the elements of employee engagement and force employees to consider if they are themselves engaged.

And here comes the brutal bit.... Sometimes engagement can't be repaired and it is just time for an employee to move on. Employees can help to have the awareness that this might be an option, so that they can take their own action.

It can be really damaging to engagement, when we try to lock in employees who don't fit the culture anymore. Sometimes we have to accept that it's time for them to go and we can support their next steps.

This approach often helps protect the engagement of others in the team and helps to protect the reputation of the organisation as they move elsewhere.

Always thinking about engagement, from top to bottom and beginning to end!

Summary

We hope this guide has made the case for top-to-bottom accountability when it comes to engagement, along with giving some guidance on how that can be achieved.

It isn't an overnight thing, but it pays to ensure that accountability is built into any employee engagement plans from the beginning to ensure that everyone is clear on the impact they can have on success.

Key Points

1 Creating culture and engagement doesn't just lie with the HR team, everyone in the organisation needs to be responsible, including individuals

2 Having a clear grip on where your culture and engagement are today is the starting point, so you understand the work to be done

3 Engage senior leaders on the current position with data and by sharing what the business case for improvement is

4 Help senior leaders to understand the impact that they have, on people leaders and the wider organisation and the part they play in being a role model

5 Help people leaders to translate what the culture and engagement actions are for their own team and the local work they need to focus on

6 Help them to be role models and to directly address examples of poor culture and engagement

7 Help employees through great people leadership to be engaged and ensure they are bringing their best selves to work

8 Be open to the fact that sometimes it is time for employees to move on when the culture doesn't suit them and don't work to retain bad fits for longer than needed

Stay Ahead

We'd recommend that you check in on a regular basis with your teams, to make sure you understand where your teams are at and what action might need to be taken.

A regular engagement survey can create a clear employee voice for teams and ensure that you have a continual flow of insight to ensure you remain ahead.

Keep an eye on that business strategy, so you understand exactly what is needed for success and go out and LISTEN!
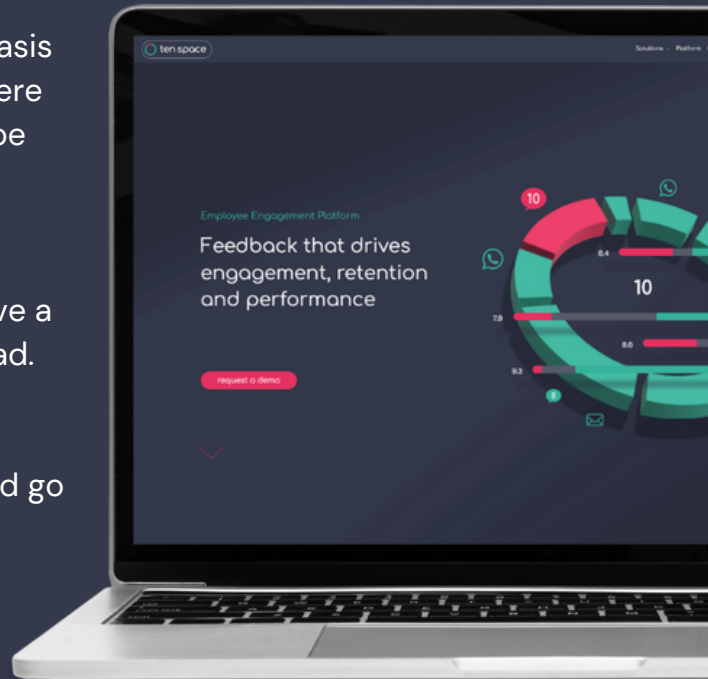
At Ten Space we have developed an employee survey platform that supports organisations to build highly engaged, high performing teams.

We elevate the employee experience by bringing efficiency, professionalism and simplicity to gathering employee feedback.

For People teams, it reduces months of work into minutes, with built in tools to help you understand your feedback and quickly action it. For employees, it offers a simple, trustworthy & engaging way to provide anonymous feedback – via WhatsApp, SMS and email.

We support teams of all shapes and sizes, in different phases of growth and development, to get the feedback and insight you need to improve engagement, retention & performance.

Contact us:

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