MUMBA

ENGAGING
GEOGRAPHICALLY
DISTRIBUTED WORKFORCES

CHALLENGES AND TRENDS

OCTOBER 2019

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FOREWORD

It is well-documented that employee engagement is a key driver of high-performance organisations. Indeed we are in an age where there has never been a greater array of literature on the subject, and tools proclaiming to enable us to drive engagement more effectively.

On closer inspection, however, it becomes obvious that the vast majority of thinking in this space is focused on white collar, desk bound employees. What about the rest of the workforce, particularly geographically dispersed employees who have limited access to people, systems and some of the perks often associated with the 'employee experience movement'? Surely driving employee engagement in sectors considered (rightly or wrongly) less glamorous, lower paying, and more socially disconnected, is an infinitely more challenging task compared to a typical financial/professional services business?

It was this realisation that drove us to engage Dr Fiona McKenzie in developing this research piece, '*Engaging geographically distributed workforces -*

Challenges and Trends'. In this, the first whitepaper in a four-part series, we explore the challenges and trends experienced across Pink, Blue and White Collar organisations, and how they differ. We identify that communication, productivity and wellbeing emerge as key drivers having a disproportionate effect on employee engagement.

The second, third and fourth whitepapers in the series will feature more in-depth analysis on the themes of communication, productivity and wellbeing respectively, citing specific case studies, best practice approaches and practical tools business leaders can apply in their own organisations.

We hope that this paper begins a new chapter in the sharing of knowledge and best practice for the benefit of geographically dispersed employees around the world, and their employers.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is focused on geographically distributed workforces and, in particular, dispersed teams. It provides a broad synthesis of some of the latest trends and observations, with particular attention paid to implications for blue and pink collar roles.

The challenges of employee engagement is a primary focus, with a spotlight on productivity, communication and wellbeing as interlinked and important aspects of engagement. Fostering social connection, engagement and trust is all possible within a geographically distributed workforce, however it can require additional creativity and thought to come up with fit-for-purpose solutions.

What is a distributed workforce?

A distributed workforce is one that is dispersed geographically over a wide area - domestically or internationally. This typically results in a dispersed team - one in which a manager and their direct reports do not work in the same physical location for a significant period of time. This could be because team members are working in a different office, in the field, or even from home. Dispersed teams can mean individuals are working solo, or that team members may rarely meet face to face. It can also mean that the frontline team is working in a different location to their manager. The terms 'distributed' and 'dispersed' are often used interchangeably to describe workforces that are not physically located together.

Distributed workforces are not new. Retail, transport, agricultural, airline and mining companies are just some of the examples where workforces can be spread over a wide geographical area. However, workforces from other sectors such as financial and professional services are increasingly becoming dispersed by choice – whether this is to allow workers the flexibility of working from home (to telecommute) or whether this is to encourage innovation by tapping in to the global talent pool. Across all sectors, the nature of the distributed workforce is evolving due to virtual connectivity – the social, economic, cultural and political interactions that are being facilitated by technology and the internet.

Pink, white and blue

Convention defines white collar jobs as supervisor/manager roles, professional or semi-professional roles, and business owners. Pink-collar jobs include hospitality, retail, care work and administration roles. Labourer and skilled trade roles are typically referred to as blue collar jobs. When it comes to the 'future of work', a lot of the focus to date has been largely on 'white collar' roles. This is true for the discussion on geographically dispersed workforces as well as for digital innovation in the workforce. While laptops, smart phones and the internet have revolutionised white collar office work, the impact on labour and craft jobs has been much more limited (Frinault, 2018).

While companies debate the benefits of allowing their workers to work from home rather than go in to the office, there are many contexts in which a dispersed team is not a choice. Instead, it results from the intrinsic nature of 'blue collar' roles in many industries requiring manual labour, and 'pink collar' roles in the services sector. In these cases, teams are dispersed because workers are working at clients' homes, project sites, inspection sites, or even 'on the road' between sites (State Services Authority, 2013).

The nature of the work demands a geographically distributed workforce for some of Australia's largest employers. These include health care and social services (12.7 per cent of employed), retailing (10.4 per cent) and construction (8.8 per cent) (Mitchell, 2017). Within each of these sectors, there are many

roles that require a large proportion of the workforce to be geographically dispersed. Much of this workforce spends little if any of their time behind a desk. They may not even own a laptop. And they are often on the frontline in terms of engagement with customers.

While in the past the focus has been on the white collar workforce, there is evidence of a shift. More and more companies and commentators are beginning to pay increased attention to the challenges and opportunities of new technologies and new management approaches for manual labour and services roles. The following provides a synthesis of recent trends and observations, with particular attention paid to implications for blue and pink collar roles.

"When employees are in different locations, with widely different skills and roles, opportunities for engagement to arise from social interaction are greatly reduced "

The focus on employee engagement

Employee engagement is often used as a general term to describe whether or not an employee is happy and committed at work. Underpinning this engagement are much more complicated and interrelated factors such as employee empowerment, learning and innovation and productivity (Exton and Totterdill, 2018). And disengagement is costly (Seppälä and Cameron, 2015). Studies in the United States (US) and Canada have shown that organisations with disengaged workers experienced: 37% higher absenteeism; 49% more accidents; 8% lower productivity; 16% lower profitability; 37% lower job growth; 65% lower share price. And news spreads. Businesses with highly engaged employees also experienced 100% more job applications. Given the importance of engagement, the question then becomes how can positive engagement be ensured,

especially in a distributed workforce facing unique challenges?

The role of social interaction

Creating successful teams and culture is hard enough when everyone is local and people share the same office space. But when employees are in different locations, with widely different skills and roles, then opportunities for engagement to arise from social interaction are greatly reduced (State Services Authority, 2013). This lack of social interaction is a critical challenge as professional and social isolation amongst dispersed teams can mean that issues with trust, coordination, conflict, communication and culture become magnified (Habyarimana et al., 2012). These in turn can lead to employee disengagement, employee turnover, the loss of organisational knowledge, and health and wellbeing issues for all concerned. The importance of social interaction can be seen when we further examine the tightly interlinked challenges of workforce productivity, communication and wellbeing. Each of these factors fuel the other. Managed poorly, they can cause cascading problems across the organisation. Managed well and operations can run smoothly. The following sections focus on challenges and trends associated with these three factors: productivity; communication and wellbeing. The caveat is that while they are divided in three categories here, any efforts to improve organisational performance should avoid focusing on isolated factors alone. The way that work is organised, the systems, procedures, management behaviours, organisational structure, corporate values and leadership all influence and reinforce the workplace context and the employee experience (Exton and Totterdill, 2018).
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CHALLENGES AND TRENDS

Productivity

At a national level, Australia has seen a modest spike in productivity growth over the last five years to 1.8% per year due to an increase in the ratio of capital to labour. This is due to capital investments in things like automation that augment employee performance. This slight increase is reassuring to worried policy makers given that the preceding five-year period saw productivity growth fall much lower and even go backwards. The slowdown isn't evenly spread. It might be surprising to learn that, compared to other sectors, the service sector has had some of the strongest productivity growth in recent years, particularly for wholesale and retail (Mitchell, 2017). Others in the services sector have fared less well. For example, the Productivity

Commission has suggested that the efficiency of the health sector could be increased by up to 20 per cent by bringing performance up to best practice across a range of areas (Mead, 2017). The caveat here is that productivity in the service sector can be hard to measure, particularly in areas like health care where measures such as the quality of the output are subjective and customer willingness to pay is distorted because the service sits outside the 'market economy'.

For the nation, productivity matters because it enables a growth in living standards. At present the goal of living standard growth of 2% a year cannot be met because it would require an average annual

increase in productivity growth of around 2.5%. Australia, along with many other developed economies, is experiencing a serious slowdown in productivity growth – one that puzzles many given the technological change and innovation that the past two decades has heralded (Green, 2017). Beyond capital investments, achieving greater productivity would require significant improvements in the efficiency with which labour and capital inputs are used, otherwise known as 'multifactor productivity' (Green, 2017).

At an organisational level, productivity is critical to survival. Indeed, it would be hard to find a market-driven organisation that doesn't wish to see high productivity and performance from their employees. Put simply, productivity for the organisation means the output produced per worker, measured by the number of hours worked. But creating a more productivite workforce isn't just about working harder. In fact, overworking and 'presenteeism' are the new threats to productivity. Studies even suggest that sharp productivity falls occur after an employee works more than 50 hours a week (The Economist, 2019). So what does influence worker productivity? There are many factors at play but for distributed workforces the following have been found to be particularly important: the flow of information; the ability to 'clock off'; and worker affinity and attitude.

Information flows

Everyone needs to be on the same page for a business to operate smoothly. When this isn't the case, a lot of time can be lost. For example, in the US construction industry, it is estimated that only 30 percent of a craftsman's day is spent on building, or 'wrench time'. The remainder is taken up by tasks such as data entry, paperwork and gathering equipment. This lack of efficient information management systems for exchanging and accessing data is estimated to cost the US construction industry $15.8 billion per year. While simply verifying that all parties have the same information sounds simple, it is made harder by the fact that teams like those in construction are often transitioning back and forth between paper-based and electronic systems, leading to redundant labour costs for companies (Frinault, 2018).

This information management challenge extends to other industries where paper based and ad-hoc systems can exist for essentials like annual leave, rosters, timesheets, approvals and pay slips.

In dispersed workforces, remote access to centralised and consistent information matters - whether for blueprints, spare parts diagrams, rosters, or even inductions. Increasingly, technological solutions are being sought to resolve these problems. And while technology can help, it shouldn't be in the driver's seat. The introduction of new technology is a great opportunity to listen to the employee experience, including where the bottlenecks exist, and ensure this informs any solution design - rather than imposing off-the-shelf solutions.

'Clocking off'

While the focus can be on ensuring employees work their allocated hours and deliver the appropriate outputs, there is a growing realisation that many remote workers are struggling to 'clock off'.

While technology can help create information flows, attention also needs to be paid to the signals that the organisation send that can make workers feel that they can never be truly 'out of the office'. For example, as smart phones put work right into the worker's pocket, it isn't possible to simply say 'I'm not at work'. Employees can assume that, by being increasingly contactable, there are expectations of increased availability too. Individuals working away from their managers can also feel compelled to work longer hours to demonstrate their work performance. This is driven by a concern that their work isn't visible, which is discussed further below.

Behaviours such as working outside normal business hours and checking emails late at night can be signs of employee anxiety about clocking off (State Services Authority, 2013). Having hard working employees may not sound like a problem but there is a shadow side to this – longer hours worked with lower outputs.

Affinity and attitude

The distance between workers in a dispersed workforce isn't just physical distance. It can also result in what has been referred to as 'operational' and 'affinity' distance.

Operational distance refers to the distance created (or bridged) by the quality of communications, conflicting demands on a worker's time (for example, from multiple projects or managers), the number of team members that are co-located or dispersed, and technological capability.

Affinity distance refers to the distance created by organisation hierarchy, communication styles, cultural differences and team interdependence. Teams with high distance across these aspects have been found to experience significantly lower levels of both trust and effectiveness. And interestingly, it is affinity rather than physical distance that has the greatest effect on productivity as this is about how well the worker identifies with the organisation and engages across it. Given the importance of affinity, managers need to carefully monitor the quality of relationships between team members and pay attention to how culture and communication might encourage (or discourage) social inclusion (State Services Authority, 2013).

Physical, operational and affinity distance all affect worker attitudes, which have also been closely linked to work productivity. For example, in health care, poor work attitudes have been linked to poor performance, decreased patient safety, and quality care. Other research has shown a strong relationship between work attitudes and work behaviours linked to performance. Factors such as employee communication, transparency, interaction, support, and performance evaluation all have an impact (Perreira et al., 2018). It is important to consider these factors when implementing new technologies. For example, some organisations are introducing technology that monitors employees to provide immediate feedback on customer service or task completion. This can deliver results however, studies have found that there is a fine line between achieving optimal engagement and professionalisation, versus employees feeling overwhelmed and overpoliced. The impact of communication styles and performance evaluation are increasingly relevant as new digital technologies enable real time customer feedback ratings and data

analytics that are transforming the nature of working life (Lehdonvirta, 2019). As is evident from these examples, communication and productivity are closely interlinked, with communication explored further below.

Communications

As described above, communication is critical to both engagement and productivity. Here the 'why' and 'how' to communicate - as well as the 'what' needs communicating - is brought in to focus.

The 'why'

Communication can too often be viewed as nothing more than a management function to communicate on behalf of the organisation's employees (Lemon and Palenchar, 2018). Yet, it is a powerful means to enable employees to feel a sense of intrinsic value and wellbeing. Good communication can create a sense of purpose and role clarity. This includes ensuring everyone has a clear picture of organisational objectives, deadlines and how each team member makes a contribution to these wider goals (Institute of Leadership and Management, 2015).

Further, communications can reinforce (or detract from) identity and dignity. Dignity comes from recognising the inherent worth and value of all roles across an organisation, regardless of hierarchical position or distance from head office. It is linked to wellbeing, in that it is an essential requirement for meaningful work (Lucas, 2011). Unfortunately, research has shown that many blue collar workers do not believe they are regularly considered by others to be valuable and important organisational members. They also sense that their competence is often dismissed (Lucas, 2011). Poor communication can reinforce a negative narrative. Effective communication it can signal value and positively influence a worker's self-perception and sense of higher purpose.

The 'how'

Communication is not just about attending meetings, exchanging information or using technology. It is also about how people interact. This includes communication style as well as preferences in terms of communication frequency and format.

A unique challenge created by the physical distance of distributed workforces is the lack of opportunity for regular, informal communication. This matters because informal interactions are critical for establishing trust and rapport between members of the team (State Services Authority, 2013). While social interaction is a challenge for all workplaces, these issues are amplified for distributed workforces where staff members are not physically present and miss out on non-verbal signs of problems. The literature particularly emphasises this challenge of non-verbal signals (State Services Authority, 2013, Habyarimana et al., 2012). Anyone who has ever received or sent an email that was perceived as being aggressive or 'short' in tone will understand this point.

"Affinity rather than physical distance that has the greatest effect on productivity as this is about how well the worker identifies with the organisation and engages across it"

Poor communication can cause misunderstandings, disengagement, reduced productivity, and even damage to work relationships and career prospects. Given that emails or phone calls do not provide the non-verbal clues that are the foundation of face-to-face communication, it is important to consider when and how virtual and physical communications can include visual communication.

The importance of free-flowing information for productivity was mentioned above. Effective communication is critical for this to happen. This includes the flow of

information about what is working, what is not working, and what problems need to be solved or shared. This can happen through digital information centres, such as dashboards and feedback systems. It can also be encouraged by an open and transparent culture (Deloitte, 2016).

Typically, feedback loops are created through regular interactions and social bonding. For distributed workforces, regular interactions is more difficult but can still be achieved by actions such as regular manager drop-ins on site to 'touch base', or through the many video conferencing platforms that now exist.

In the effort to communicate better it is also important to avoid information overload. Many employees are already feeling overwhelmed. In one study, it was found that the average US worker now spends 25% of their day just reading or answering emails (Bersin, 2017). Another study of US remote workers found that 88% struggle with inconsistent working practices and miscommunication, while 83% feel overwhelmed by emails (Institute of Leadership and

Management, 2015).

The 'what'

When it comes to the 'what', communication should support engagement around values and culture, critical and timely information (including feedback), and the recognition of worker achievements.

In terms of values and culture, the big trend today is ensuring alignment with company culture. To this end, being explicit rather than just assuming values are known, is important. This means ensuring that workers have the guidelines and value systems to help them decide what to do and how to arrive at decisions can help ensure alignment across dispersed workforces (Deloitte, 2016).

For critical and timely information, be it a change in plans or a safety alert, it is important that operationally critical information is communicated in a way that makes sense for team members. Given the above information on email overload, this information is probably not best communicated through the inbox. It may be necessary to set guidelines on email usage versus using other chat tools wherever appropriate. Delays in the communication of vital information can prove hugely frustrating for dispersed staff members (State Services Authority, 2013).

Critical information extends to enabling and taking action on feedback. Feedback won't always happen automatically. It requires an open culture where employees feel they can raise concerns. Because geographically dispersed team members lack

regular face time, team leaders need to make sure they build 'deliberate moments' for feedback through routine interactions as well as unstructured time for organic conversations to emerge - and time to disagree (Neeley, 2015).

Feedback can come directly from employees but it can also come from observation – through monitoring workloads, and watching out for signs of stress or isolation (Institute of Leadership and Management, 2015). When feedback has been received, it is important that it is acknowledged and acted upon. This is especially true where worker voices have been overlooked in the past.

In many organisations, the biggest reason for withholding ideas and concerns isn't fear but, rather, the belief that managers wouldn't do anything about them anyway. And this isn't unfounded. In 'blue collar' industries, there have been many cases where 'white collar' managers either ignore or are perceived to ignore the feedback of their team. In other cases, employee engagement and feedback has gone in to overdrive (Deloitte, 2016).
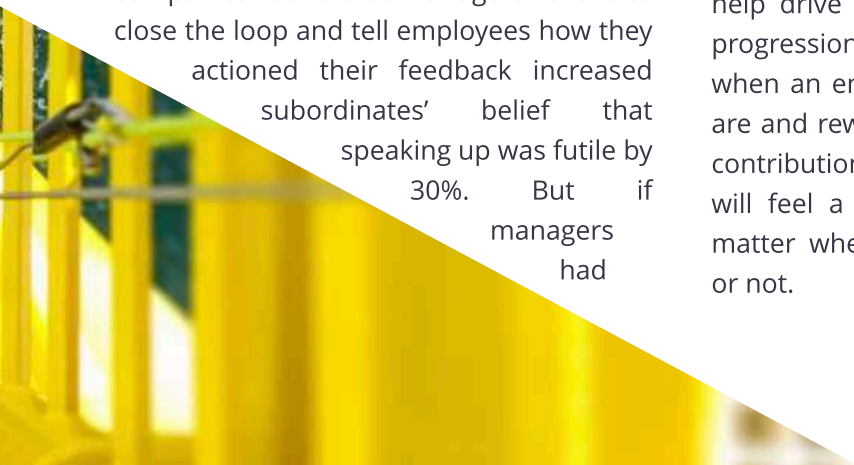
Some leaders can spend millions of dollars collecting ideas but then never actually review them. This is often because resources aren't allocated to a systematic evaluation process or the resulting improvement projects that might need to arise to address the issues raised (Detert and Burris, 2016). On the flipside, employees feel inspired when they see you advocating for them. One study of more than 3,500 employees in multiple companies found that managers' failure to close the loop and tell employees how they actioned their feedback increased subordinates' belief that speaking up was futile by 30%. But if managers had

closed the loop in the past, their reports spoke up 19% more frequently (Detert and Burris, 2016). Other studies have found that when blue collar workers have voice in their teams, they will be more motivated and engaged (Tran, 2016).

Underpinning the points above is the importance of trust. Managers and their dispersed teams cannot rely solely on technology, processes or performance plans to facilitate the flow of information. Good communication arises from the existence of trust between managers, workers and their peers (State Services Authority, 2013). Power also comes in to play. When geographically dispersed team members perceive a power imbalance, they often come to feel that there are in-groups and out-groups and that they are somehow missing out (Neeley, 2015). To be able to build thriving teams in a dynamic context where change and learning are constant and informed by feedback, managers may also need to develop their skills in adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009).

"Rewarding people for their contribution (rather than their status) can help drive engagement as well as career progression."

Many dispersed workers feel that their work and achievements are not visible to their colleagues or managers. This makes recognition of achievements even more essential for distributed workforces. Consistent with a growing move towards team networks, rather than hierarchical structures, rewarding people for the contribution (rather than their status) can help drive engagement as well as career progression (Deloitte, 2016). Ultimately, when an employee is valued for who they are and rewarded and recognised for their contribution to the business success, they will feel a sense of wellbeing. It doesn't matter whether they are remote working or not.

Wellbeing

High performance and productivity is closely related to a high quality of working life and wellbeing at work (Exton and Totterdill, 2018). Wellbeing is driven by many things. At the top of this list is meaningful work. Meaningful work can be defined as the subjective experience of work as purposeful and significant and is linked to a sense of identity. Meaningful work positively predicts job satisfaction, engagement, commitment, and wellbeing. It negatively predicts absenteeism (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016).

While pink and blue collar jobs can be lower paying and have lower prestige, they aren't necessarily lower skilled. Nor are they inherently less meaningful. It is often job design rather than the role itself that affects meaning (such as repetitive tasks, little self-determination and few opportunities to advance) (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). This is why, in any workplace, it is highly recommended that jobs and practices are created that allow employees 'to use and develop their full range of knowledge, skills, experience and creativity in their day-to-day work' (Exton and Totterdill, 2018). This should be

happening at every level of the organisation, not just for senior staff.

In a study of the importance placed on meaningful work by employees in blue, pink, and white collar occupations, many commonalities were found. For example, 'unity with others' and 'developing the inner self' were regarded as equally important for white, blue, and pink collar workers. Contrastingly, white collar workers placed more importance on 'expressing full potential' and 'serving others' than blue collar workers. This was felt to be explained by the higher frequency in which white collar workers actually experienced 'unity with others', 'expressing full potential', and 'serving others'.

For those that don't get these opportunities, it was suggested that preferences have been adjusted in response to likelihood and to avoid disappointment. While everyone should have the chance for development and progression, unfortunately that is not always the case. The other implication here is that, given the difference in experiences, white collar managers may need to do more to effectively understand and respond to the need for meaningful

work in blue and pink collar workers (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016).

Lack of wellbeing has serious human, social and economic costs. Work-related stress is one of the most compensated workplace injuries in Australia. For dispersed teams, it becomes even more important to detect and respond to mental health and wellbeing issues as early as possible (State Services Authority, 2013). This is for the sake of the worker as well as the organisation.

Research is increasingly showing that rather than drive employees to work more and faster, a high-stress and high-pressure environment is harmful to productivity over time (Seppälä and Cameron, 2015). It can lead to increased voluntary turnover and the costs of ongoing recruiting and lost expertise. Stress is also thought to contribute to the majority of workplace accidents. There have even been links shown between leadership behaviour and heart disease in employees.

Above all, happy staff means happy customers and this still matters, no matter the trend towards digitalisation. For example, industries such as retail still remain heavily reliant on interactions between customers and staff. It is a relationship focused business - even for online stores. From a customer experience perspective, the retailer's relationship extends all the way from the point of sale to the delivery of the purchase (Dudley, 2015). Fostering wellbeing should be a priority across the supply chain.

On the plus side, positive work climates have shown that employees tend to have lower heart rates and blood pressure as well as a stronger immune systems (Seppälä and Cameron, 2015). It is somewhat of a catch 22 in that lack of wellbeing results in employee disengagement, while studies show that employee engagement predicts employer wellbeing – far above and beyond any material benefits. Given that wellbeing comes from a positive culture, we loop back to the importance of communication driving culture in distributed workforces. As stated above, productivity, communication and wellbeing are all tightly interlinked.

CONCLUSION

6 WAYS TO FOSTER EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Good people management will always be a key driver of employee engagement. However, within a geographically distributed workforce, additional creativity and thinking is required to come up with fit-for-purpose solutions that foster social connection, engagement and, perhaps most importantly, trust. A dispersed team will function best when there is a culture of support within the organisation and trust between managers, workers and peers.

The following six practical steps are strategies that can be used to assist in driving higher engagement of geographically distributed workforces.

1

CENTRALISE INFORMATION

In blue and pink collar sectors, there is a lot more that can be done to make access to systems, processes and information fairer. In dispersed workforces, remote access to centralised and consistent information matters - whether for updates, reporting on achievements, blueprints, rosters, or even inductions. This can even be extended to rewards programs. Increasingly, technological solutions are being sought to resolve these problems, and it is important that blue- and pink- collar workers aren't overlooked. The centralisation of information for key documents and processes ensures all staff are on a level playing field.

2

COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY THROUGH 'FIT-FOR-PURPOSE' CHANNELS

Different sectors, roles and situations require different communication strategies. Utilizing a single tool such as email for all scenarios can become overwhelming for employees and can also result in a lack of cut through on important messages. It is important that team members can interact in different ways for different purposes without becoming overwhelmed, including through visual communication methods. It is also important to have appropriate pathways for the distribution of critical and timely information, for example a change of plans or a safety alert. These scenarios need a strategy to cut through to the team while avoiding lost productivity, confusion and/or conflicting information.

3

ESTABLISH FEEDBACK LOOPS BACKED UP BY ACTION

Multi-directional communication that goes beyond company messaging enables the development of effective feedback loops for employees to communicate information back to management. Feedback in isolation achieves nothing and must be backed up by action and resources to address the matters raised in order to drive trust and engagement of the workforce.

4

FOSTER AFFINITY AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Encourage quality relationships between team members by utilising communication strategies that help overcome social isolation. This includes taking the time to build trust through regular informal interactions, whether via technology or in person. These informal interactions build trust, underpinning effective communication and fostering stronger relationships between managers, workers and their peers.

5

MAKE WORK MEANINGFUL

All human beings seek significance and are more engaged when they feel like they are part of something bigger, that what they do matters. This feeling of connectedness and purpose can be fostered again through regular formal and informal communication about the organisation and how each employee fits into it, and is accelerated where employees are actively encouraged to use and develop their full range of knowledge, skills, experience and creativity in their day-to-day work. Recognising & celebrating individual achievements ensures that dispersed workers feel that their work and achievements are visible to their colleagues and managers. When an employee is valued for who they are and rewarded and recognised for their contribution to the business success, they will feel a greater sense of overall wellbeing.

6

FOSTER WELLBEING BEYOND '9 TO 5'

Recognising that an employer's duty of care for employees goes beyond the workday is important. For a healthy, engaged and productive workforce, employers are creating environments and cultures where their workers can thrive and health and wellbeing is signalled as important. Much of the employee wellbeing evolution has occurred in corporate office environments, but there is no reason that this shouldn't extend to distributed workforces outside the office. Extending financial, health and general benefits to dispersed workers can have a significant impact on their happiness and engagement, both during work hours and at home. Encouraging 'clocking off' and respecting personal time/commitments demonstrates the value an employer places on employees' lives outside a work context. By clearly signalling permission to be offline after hours and implementing strategies to avoid overwork and presenteeism, employers can ensure heightened wellness of their workers and accelerated engagement and productivity between the 9-5.

The above are generalised findings that studies show have helped to improve employee engagement in distributed workforces. It is important to note that context matters. Trends in productivity differ from sector to sector while communication and wellbeing challenges are also deeply affected by the roles and responsibilities of the workforce. Regardless of sector, it is clear that productivity, communication and wellbeing are critical and interrelated aspects of the employee experience, and are key to engaging geographically distributed workforces.

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MUMBA

Mumba is an HR tech company. Our Employee Engagement Platform is designed to make work easier and life better for large geographically distributed workforces. Mumba brings all your key HR and business systems together in a single user interface, accessible from any device, adding powerful communication and wellbeing tools to drive productivity and employee engagement.