

Employee Engagement – on the job training tasks

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Task 1b – Word count: 735

When looking at engagement within Tai Tarian I considered the outcome of the most recent engagement surveys, which took place in May 2020. The outcome of the survey suggested that the communication tools within the organisation were not being delivered effectively, with a small percentage of employees being disengaged as a result.

Recent research conducted Gallup claims that, *“three quarters of UK workers are not engaged”* (engageforsuccess.org,2019) it is no surprise that there may be Tai Tarian employees who fall within this demographic.

The organisation has *“Speak in Confidence”* which is a virtual tool used as a confidential, suggestion box. Barber (2018) states these are *“rarely productive”*, which is shown with 78% of participants who took part in the engagement survey confirmed they had never used this facility. When asked *“why”*, the comments ranged from *“Never needed too”*, *“didn’t know about it”*, *“Not confidential”* and *“pointless using it as nothing changes if you do”* indicating that it may have been developed as a tick box exercise, which *“will breed cynicism and distrust”* (ipa-involve.com, 2019) having more of a detrimental effect than not having employee voice mechanisms at all, factors such as this may cause disengagement (CIPD 2013).

Tai Tarian’s approach to communication consists of all staff emails, staff intranet site and at present due to COVID-19 restrictions, zoom / skype conference calls. Along with an *“all staff”* Facebook group, which was set up after the start of the pandemic to encourage a safe place for staff to chat casually and keep up communication whilst being isolated at home.

The organisation has a communications team of two staff which falls within the organisational development team. The main communications are via the weekly *“Advisor”* (newsletter) goes out to all employees via, all employees are encouraged to read to ensure they are aware of upcoming changes and future plans. This is the most used communication tool for Senior Management to inform employees of key changes, so the results of the recent engagement survey that concluded that 57% always read the contents are encouraging, but the 36% sometimes and 7% Never read, show that key messages may be being missed. This could be the reason that only 25% of employees feel that they receive effective communication about changes to Policies and Procedures, maybe they have missed communications by not reading or it may suggest that that the communication via this method is not effective for changes in Policy and Procedure.

Research has also shown that a valuable tool for creating engagement starts at the point of employment with a clear onboarding process (Peterson,2020). The purpose of onboarding is to get new employees involved, included and to feel happy and settled at their work, (more key points of higher engagement) (CIPD,2019), positive onboarding experiences and higher retention figures are also linked (Peterson,2020), just like higher retention figures and higher engagement figures (Bingham,2016).

Up until March 2020, all new starters at Tai Tarian would meet with a member of the HR team, run through a checklist of ‘Key points’ and have the chance to ask any questions. A ‘Corporate Induction’ was then provided to all new starters, once a month, which included, breakfast with the chief executive, and then a day of PowerPoints with employees from different departments(www.taitarian.co.uk).

As it stands any new starters since March 2020 have had the ‘first day’ meeting with HR delivered via Zoom meetings. New starters have then been sent the slides of the Corporate inductions, along with links to all policies and procedures. As a result, I feel new starters are not getting the welcoming onboarding experience they deserve, especially in the currently circumstances where staff would be office based and therefore are now working from home.

Tai Tarian's expectations, behaviours and values are set out at the forefront of employment within the organisation. This is set out within the Tai Tarian 'Behaviour framework' and 'Tai Tarian 'Mission and goals' . HR advise managers to go through these documents along with the "Employee handbook" and the employees "Getting started pack" which offers basic points for managers to cover, but this is not mandatory, leaving an employee's first impression of the organisation differential and based upon management capability (www.taitarian.co.uk).

There is clear need for a revised onboarding process, which is streamlined, interesting and set for all employees to experience the same way. Along with a review of the communications processes – as it has been highlighted, they are not reaching enough employees, according to Gallup *"companies must achieve a 4-to-1 ratio of engaged to disengaged employees in order to counteract the negative effects of disengaged workers"* (Riley,2019).

Task 2 – Word count: 490

When studying the staff handbook, I realised how non-engaging it was. The handbook is currently up for review by the HR team. It was developed quickly by the previous HR team during a time where there was a large disruption and restructure. Now that the team is full and restructure complete, we have the capacity to look at and develop the handbook.

The handbook is plain, lacks structure and uses language which does not engage or may not make sense to all staff and in places refers to policies / procedures no longer in place, which poses a great issue. Considering this I feel this should be made a priority for the HR team.

With no structured plan for the first few days of a new starter the HR team recommend using the staff handbook as a guideline with new employees, this must leave a poor first impression. *"Organisations with a robust onboarding process improve new hire retention by 82% and productivity by over 70%"* (Laurano,2015) this is due to the first impressions of the new employee, if we considered the employee handbook this may affect Tai Tarian's new hire retention figures and future productivity if not improved.

Results of the 2013 Harvard Business Review on employee engagement survey revealed *"that 70% of people surveyed say that they are most engaged when senior leadership continually updates and communicates company strategy"* (hbr.org,2013). This is said to make employees *"feel part of the bigger picture, working towards a collective end goal"* (hbr.org,2013).

When considering the communication in Tai Tarian I noticed that all messages that are sent from the Senior Management Team are passed on by the Communication team, which I feel may not have the same impact if they came directly from a member of the senior management team, which would make the message more personalised and meaning full . Messages from the chief executive are also delivered in this way, I feel these would especially benefit from being sent directly from the chief executive herself to employees, this will also show strong leadership and guidance in these unprecedented times, which is what an organisation needs in times of uncertainty (Forbes,2020).

I also noticed that some detail included within the weekly 'advisor' (newsletter) for example in relation to a new process may not be clear and this has been highlighted by employees then contacting the HR department with questions and confusion. Often employees have been told to contact the HR department to discuss something and we are not aware of this, resulting in confusion and a clear lack of communication, which causes frustration for both the HR team and employees, making the HR team look unprofessional and therefore creating a lack of confidence in the team. Making these communications as clear as possible is important at any time, but now more than ever with the majority of staff home working and not being able to discuss things in coffee catch up around the office or come and visit the HR team makes things even more difficult to understand (CIPD,2020).

The detail included with the advisor and communication is generally relevant to employees and includes detail of information staff need to know. Although since starting Tai Tarian I am not aware that staff have been asked what they would like the content to include, I feel going forward this may be the key to developing engagement with all employees.

Task 3 - Word count: 338

When considering my own skills and potential development needs in relation to employee engagement, I discussed my own performance with my line manager. Having the knowledge of the importance of engagement and its benefits to both organisation and staff going forward we have decided that both myself and the HR team will devise an engagement strategy which will line with that of the overall organisational strategy. Recently the organisation has delivered its next 5-year corporate plan, and when discussing this with the HR team we felt it lacked a “people strategy”, in turn lacking an Engagement strategy” which caused frustration amongst the team. This will be key in developing my skills and knowledge and gaining confidence to coach and mentor my line managers on the importance of, and engaging their own teams going forward. This will ensure to bring employee contribution and voice as key to deciding what and how to provide engagement in the future, encouraging a team atmosphere and trust and confidence in the organisation going forward. Immediate Key points of improvement will be in developing the onboarding practices at Tai Tarian and the employee handbook

As mentioned previously during task 2 there is also some frustration for both the HR team and employees in relation to detail included within the weekly ‘advisor’ (newsletter) where often employees have been told to contact the HR department to discuss something and we are not aware. To combat this, I have suggested with my line manger that we focus on developing a relationship with the communication team. This will enable us to find out why this is happening and make changes to stop this going froward. Developing these relationships with the communications team will hopefully gain trust amongst the departments to give feedback and suggestions that will be taken on board to improve the communications and give myself and the HR team chance to contribute.

All points mentioned will provide the basis to implement the theory learnt though my employee engagement assignment and put into practice to develop my confidence and skills further.

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