

Qualification: CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

Module Name: Employee Engagement - Understanding

Activity: 1-3 On the job training

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Signed: MGoldsworthy

Date: 26/10/2020

On the job training

1. Evaluate whether or not your organisation's approach needs a review, based on your reading of current trends.

Based on my understanding of Bluestone's employee engagement approach there have already been amendments made due to the recent pandemic. Bluestone has ramped up communication and the various ways to do this in these circumstances where managers cannot meet face to face with the employees. Bluestone have a good employee engagement approach and do things like involve employees in decision making through our ECG (Employee Consultative Group) where selected employees from each department can discuss changes or things they would like to implement.

Bluestone also communicate with staff and give staff the opportunity to feed back; as there are different staff at different ages and technological abilities, Bluestone use a range of ways to communicate to employees. These consist of: 'Flow' which is our main communication platform where employees can log into their own accounts and view things like training, Family Newsletters and company information; we also utilize departmental facebook and social media pages; send text messages with links to information; and send emails with a weekly questionnaire to find out if staff are feeling safe at work. This is all to ensure we can get information to each employee and they have the opportunity to feedback. The reason we ask for feedback is to enable us to become better at protecting our employees and guests and to consider anything we might have missed

Managers are encouraged to support their teams and check in to see how employees are. Bluestone have recently paid for a 'Zoom' account for each department to ensure the managers can easily communicate with their teams in a way that is as normal as possible without having to be in the same room. Managers are also positive about our future, with their employees as we have recently announced 80 new lodges that will be created along with new jobs. HR has been heavily involved assisting managers with communicating to employees, receiving feedback and implementing changes due to the feedback, and dealing with individual employee well-being and mental health issues that come with change and the pandemic. Taylor and Woodhams, (2016) back this up by stating that factors attached with employee engagement include trust in management, satisfaction with involvement in decision-making and quality of relationships between management and employees.

Deloitte's article *What has COVID-19 taught us about employee engagement* states that business need to develop where employees instill trust in their leaders, managers create a positive work environment and support them to bring about positive changes in employee mindsets (What has COVID-19 taught us about employee engagement?, 2020).

Bluestone has committed to preserving jobs due to the pandemic and has not yet had to resort to redundancies as a measure to keep the business stable. It's not to say that this won't happen if the economy and local lockdowns keep affecting business but it's likely to be a last resort as opposed to a first one unlike JD Weatherspoon who encouraged all of their staff to find other jobs as they would be unable to pay them (Van Leeuwen, 2020).

Aside from the pandemic and issues it has caused, in more normal times employees are given opportunities to progress and receive training to make them better at their roles or help them move into another role. Bluestone have their own Learning and Development team who focus on improving the knowledge and skills of current employees through 'Be part of it' training which is a year-long course where select employees meet once a month to receive training that will help them develop into management roles in future. This training gives them advantage over other candidates,

internal or external as they must be selected through specific selection criteria for the course and receive specific training on scenarios and policies/practices that are specific to Bluestone. Employees from each department apply to take part in this course each year as they understand how valuable it is for their own development and the business. Often managers at Bluestone have been at an assistant level in their department before progressing into their managerial role; it is rare at Bluestone that managers are brought in externally to fill a position like that as they don't always understand the company culture and values. Bluestone as an employer understands how important it is for employees to understand and demonstrate the culture and values at every level.

2. Examine the employee handbook and any internal staff bulletins within your organisation and make some notes as to whether you think the content engages employees on topics that matter to them.

Within the employee handbook is all Bluestone core values, culture, mission statement and vision statement and all of the HR policies that follow. It is quite a thick handbook and hasn't changed much since 2008 when it was published. There is room for improvement for a number of reasons: firstly, we are trying to be more eco friendly so physical handbooks that use a lot of paper don't align with Bluestone's values; another reason to update and progress from the physical handbook is that policies and procedures get updated and are uploaded online – anything in the handbook from 2008 is most likely out of date and some things could be classed as politically incorrect now. There is a version online for employees if they wanted to download the entire thing but all staff have access to an online intranet called the 'HR Hub' which includes all of Bluestone policies and practices. The physical handbook in my opinion doesn't engage employees on topics for these reasons.

An alternative to the employee handbook that is more relevant is Bluestone's 'Family Newsletter' which is published every two weeks which contains up to date information on any new covid guidance, pay, job opportunities, 'stars of the week' for employees that have gone above and beyond in their roles, well-being guidance and how to contact our employee assistance program if any employee needs advice or help confidentially. This Newsletter often contains important information that employees should know but I don't know if every employee reads this. As this Newsletter is published via our 'Flow' portal, this might mean some employees who don't use technology as much don't read it. Others may not read it because they are not engaged or are actively disengaged. For those who do read it I think that they may skip to the part they want to read and ignore the rest as to read the whole Newsletter may take about 20 minutes as it is quite lengthy.

The layout of the Newsletter is good and easy to find information and read. The information is specific and relevant so those who read it understand what they are reading and why. I think that the Newsletter does generally engage employees on the topics within the newsletter as the communication is two-way. Often after an article or information is an email for employees to comment or make suggestions. In each newsletter there is an email address where employees are asked to input what they would like to see in future Newsletters; whilst this Newsletter may initially seem like one way communication, there are ways where employees can and are encouraged to respond and communicate back.

Enablers of employee engagement include strong leadership, managers who motivate, empower and support their employees, employee voice where employees are involved in decision making, and organizational integrity (Employee Engagement & Motivation | Factsheets | CIPD, 2019).

The Bluestone newsletter is a snap shot of the above enablers; we offer employees the opportunity to voice their opinions, provide positive feedback through 'starts of the week' that is generally submitted by line managers who are supporting and praising their team member(s) for good work, communications regarding the business and where it is going, and reflecting the organizations values and culture.

3. Discuss your development needs with your line manager as a result of the above activities, using the CIPD Profession Map as a basis for your discussion. Consider whether or not your skills in this area require improvement.

I discussed the above activities with my line manager in relation to development needs in these areas. We talked about how I could contribute specifically to employee engagement and about how I could coach line managers to engage their own teams. I have worked at Bluestone for over 12 years starting at an assistant level and understand the brand, values and culture; with this in mind I have the tools to be able to coach line managers to engage their teams in the way that aligns with Bluestones values, brand and culture. I also demonstrate these values in my day to day role such as 'having a can do attitude' and having a positive attitude. I am approachable for staff at all levels and am seen by each department regularly (before covid meant we were confined to our offices).

My development needs are to become better at coaching and influencing others. If I develop my skills in this area I will be able to influence others in a range of situations and challenge their behaviors, including line managers' thoughts on employee engagement. I have the opportunity to build relationships with line managers as my role means I directly work with them on a day to day basis. I understand their departments to an extent; understand their frustrations, views, concerns and needs. With this information and a strong line manager & HR relationship I will be able to achieve positive outcomes for the managers and their employees. The way I will achieve this is by: reflecting on previous situations where I said nothing and what I can do to change a similar situation; acting on feedback I have received about my communication style; and to spend time understanding my key stakeholders concerns and needs (Professional courage and influence | CIPD Profession Map, 2018).

References

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