



# ENGAGING YOUR EMPLOYEES

**Employee engagement is all about commitment, says Bob Urichuck**

**M**uch as HR practitioners and employers understand that employee engagement is one of the key areas crucial for business, most spend tireless hours formulating employment engagement strategies that simply do not work. As an employer, are you sure you understand what engagement exactly is, and that you are addressing the issue with the right approach? How do you define a successful employee engagement strategy in your organisation?



"A successful employee engagement strategy is no different than a parent engaging a child, a salesperson engaging a client, or a leader engaging his followers," Bob Urichuck, international professional speaker, trainer, consultant and author, remarks. Simply put, he explains, successfully engaging employees means "obtaining a commitment from them".

#### The ways to look at it

There are many ways of getting your employees engaged and committed. First of all, he says, there is the old carrot and stick method, which many employers still believe in. Urichuck calls it the "do it my way" or "take the highway" approach. Unfortunately, these traditional methods do not really work, as they are temporary in nature, he warns.

Alternatively, there are commitment-based strategies which run on a partnership/relationship approach – from gaining trust, getting to know each other on a personal level, recognising each other for work well done and seeking advice, among other things. However, he cautions, the question that needs to be addressed is how does one gains commitment. Is it by telling people or by asking people? And that is the key differential. "If you tell people, it is your answer, not theirs; therefore, you own the answer and there is no commitment on behalf of the other party. When you ask people, they own the answer and the commitment, not you," he observes.

In other words, he feels, the best employee engagement strategy is a partnership/relationship approach, whereby you "always ask questions and listen to the answers. Then follow the rule of 3+ by questioning the answers, listening, questioning, listening and then asking questions to clarify the commitment made".

By doing so, leaders will be able to find out "what their hot buttons are, what motivates them. That just requires one to be a good listener. It doesn't need a solution," he says.

### TIPS TO ENGAGE EMPLOYEES

- 1** Know yourself. Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- 2** Know what motivates you, what demotivates you.
- 3** Understand your fears, barriers and limitations.
- 4** Take a good internal look.
- 5** Start taking control of the things that you can control – your attitude, actions, reactions, thoughts, etc.
- 6** Learn the power of asking- not just asking others, but also yourself.

#### The happily engaged employee

Once the approach is right, employees naturally respond positively to the strategies. "Employees love to be engaged. It gives them a sense of belonging," he adds. Further, it makes them feel that they are contributing to the overall success of the organisation or the team. "It makes them feel trusted, important and empowered. As a result, they become more motivated, their self-confidence and self-esteem grows and they become more positive, supportive and loyal," he observes. Beyond that, a happy and engaged employee will bring in happy customers and thus add value to the business; bottomlines. "Employees will go the extra mile and provide outstanding service. Besides, they will partner and build relationships with customers. Customers, in turn, will provide word-of-mouth and go out of their way to refer others to you."

#### Focusing on the people

As a result, leaders need to spend more time understanding their people's needs, desires and wants, and also their strengths and weaknesses. Only by doing so, he feels, can they find the way ahead. "A lot of it is about being people focused," Urichuck stresses.

This ties in closely with empowerment and recognition – the number one

motivating factor in organisations, he says. "The secret is [that] any behaviour that's recognised or rewarded gets repeated," he says. But, more often than not, recognition is hard to find.

He feels the answer to this lies with the managers and the leaders themselves. "If I am going to criticise myself all day, it's natural that I am going to criticise anyone around me. But if I get around to changing my attitude and recognising myself for the good that's in me, it becomes easier to recognise it sincerely in others." His management philosophy asks us to look within, because a person who can manage himself/herself is one who can manage others.

He recommends soul searching and openness to changing one's attitude in leaders in order to keep abreast with employees' needs. "What we need to do is go back and take a look at our beliefs and change our beliefs. It is our beliefs that determine our attitudes. Our attitudes determine how we feel. How we feel determines the actions we take. It is the actions we take that determine the result. So if you want to improve the results, you have got to work backwards," he says.

Summing it up, he adds, "The greatest resource in your business is your people. Take care of the people and your people will take care of the bottomline!" **HRM**

### PROFILE

**B**ob Urichuck is an international professional speaker, trainer, consultant and author of *Up Your Bottom Line, Featuring the ABC, 123 Sales Results System* and *Online for Life: The 12 Disciplines for Living Your Dreams*. He is recognised as an international sales expert in the new book *Sales Gurus Speak Out*, a platinum speaker for Meeting Planners International (MPI) and the consummate speaker of the year by *Sharing Ideas News* magazine. He is also the founding president of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers (CAPS) Ottawa and is a Certified Sales Professional (CSP). For more information, please refer to [www.BobU.com](http://www.BobU.com).