



Enhancing Effective Staff Engagement

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Introduction

The importance of effective staff engagement on productivity, customer service and profitability has been demonstrated in multiple research studies. Complex, large-scale service industries can be particularly sensitive and yet it is also these sectors that face the greatest challenges in developing and retaining well motivated staff. Allocate OneView is specially designed to address key challenges and support enhanced staff engagement. It offers management the potential to improve business performance on multiple levels, whilst also contributing to reduced staff turnover and associated recruitment costs.

Staff Engagement

Effective employee engagement creates the conditions in which all staff members have a commitment to their organisation’s goals and values, are motivated to contribute to organisational success, and to deliver individual performance to their maximum potential. But achieving effective employee engagement is far from a singular process. Rather, it is the result of broad management approaches spanning overall leadership and corporate culture, day-to-day operational management, and administrative norms. Advanced workforce scheduling and optimisation systems such as Allocate OneView can contribute to these approaches at planning, information management and process levels.

To consider the ways in which leading information systems can support staff engagement, it is useful to use the work of Frederick Herzberg to briefly consider the different aspects of personal motivation and engagement. It may be nearly sixty years since Herzberg developed his “two factor theory of motivation”, but the principles remain as true as ever. Herzberg’s research identified certain factors that cause job satisfaction (motivators), while a separate set (hygiene factors) cause dissatisfaction. His work demonstrated that dissatisfaction could be reduced by improvements in the “hygiene factors”, but these improvements alone did not provide motivation. As illustrated in the table below, the theory demonstrates how a combination of factors can influence overall satisfaction; both factors need to be high for full engagement.

In complex, resource intensive industries that frequently operate a scheduled workforce in order to deliver round the clock services, the range and depth of “hygiene factors” is greatly heightened.

(L) Motivators --> (H)	Highly motivated but lots of complaints	Highly motivated with few complaints
	Low motivation and many complaints	Few complaints but not highly motivated
(L) Hygiene factors --> (H)		

Through his work, Herzberg identified that the “motivators” that provide positive satisfaction arise primarily from the intrinsic conditions of the job itself, such as recognition, achievement, or personal growth. In contrast, “hygiene factors” are primarily extrinsic to the work itself, and include aspects such as company policies, supervisory practices, remuneration, communication, and allied administration. Allocate OneView can support positive motivators and reduce demotivators, helping to realise benefits at staff, productivity, and customer levels in the following ways.

Workforce Scheduling

In complex, resource intensive industries that frequently operate a scheduled workforce in order to deliver round the clock services, the range and depth of “hygiene factors” is greatly heightened. Principal among these factors is the scheduling process itself.

Scheduling of staff is complex, particularly during extended operational periods. There is often the need to coordinate necessary compliance requirements, including skills mix and certification, potential travel requirements, personal preferences, and holiday and training commitments for both employers and employees. Whilst this complexity carries cost and time implications for organisations, for staff it can all too frequently act as a demotivating “hygiene factor”. These issues can be further heightened where workforces are remote with attendant communication challenges.

New approaches to scheduling, delivered by Allocate OneView’s self-service capability, can greatly reduce these issues for employers, but critically also reduce frustrations for employees. In turn, this can have further benefits for the organisation. By providing staff with an online portal to maintain all information including certification, training commitments, holiday requests and other preferences, core information handling can now be greatly reduced. Similarly, communication can be simplified with increased forward visibility of upcoming tasks and deployments through the portal. Each of these aspects can improve clarity, communication, and involvement, significantly reducing the associated frustrations and demotivating impacts.

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Staff Development

At a higher level, Allocate OneView's ability to support overall staff planning, development and specific training planning can facilitate individual career development with associated motivational implications. In large, complex workforces, operational management can often vary on a matrix basis – in these cases, the ability to maintain individual focus can be restricted. OneView's capabilities help overcome these challenges by acting as the unified central resource for training, planning and records management. This in turn significantly improves the management of multi-skilled workforces and their associated training requirements, competences, and qualifications. Such aspects are critical to overall workforce development, including maximising talent, and also have clear motivational benefits for employees.

Staff Satisfaction, Recruitment and Retention

For most businesses, employees are a key organisational resource. In complex and resource intensive service businesses, this dependency is manifestly greater, with service and performance bonded by collective staff capabilities. As a result, competition to recruit and retain skilled staff is normally high.

Beyond the competitive challenge, the process of recruiting and training personnel with the right mix of ability and attitude is critically important. For growing organisations, the rate of successful recruitment can be the limiting step for overall growth. In more static environments (and even in contracting industries), the retention of critically skilled staff remains essential to maintaining service differentials with which to defend and grow market share against competitors. Consequently, the retention of existing key staff is an important common objective, regardless of the industry lifecycle stage. Where this is not achieved, the direct (re-recruitment), and indirect (opportunity cost) implications can be extremely costly.

Staff Productivity

Positive staff engagement has a direct effect on workforce coordination, cooperation, and overall productivity, each of which is critical in complex industries. Through a greater shared alignment of goals, values and objectives, each employee is better aligned to deliver his or her role, but also to interact with colleagues for improved team performance. At a higher level, it also helps ensure team and wider organisational alignment to innovate new approaches, to improve productivity and increase the delivery speed of core organisational goals.

Customer Service and Satisfaction

In parallel to productivity benefits, staff engagement can contribute to enhanced customer service. With a higher commitment to the company's values and with pride in working for their organisation, an engaged workforce is much more likely to invest their discretionary effort in order to deliver an enhanced service. Where direct customer service is a core component of the work being undertaken, this can have a major impact on customer satisfaction and by extension, the retention of the existing customer base over time

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Conclusion

Across each of the staff satisfaction, productivity and customer satisfaction domains, it is clear that enhanced employee engagement can have significant beneficial impact. In concert, these factors serve to improve overall business performance with reduced cost, higher productivity, and higher profitability. Whilst fundamental to any business, complex and resource intensive service organisations are particularly sensitive to staff performance. The management of these businesses face the greatest challenges in enhancing effective staff engagement due to the demands placed on employees and the influence they have on customers. Allocate OneView can help address key aspects of these challenges and offers the potential to improve overall business performance, whilst also contributing to reduce staff turnover and associated costs.

About this paper:

This is one of a series of papers exploring key business issues faced by complex organisations in resource scheduling and discussing the ways in which Allocate OneView can help address these challenges.

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