



Report of the MPF South West meeting held on Wednesday 4th July 2007

Building value through engaging people - the Managing Partner's role

Venue: Osborne Clarke, 2 Temple Back East, Temple Quay, Bristol, BS1 6EG

The session was kindly hosted by local committee member Chris Bull, COO of Osborne Clarke with the generous support of Coutts & Co Private Bank, Bristol.

Chairman:
Andrew Pitt,
London & Bath Ltd

Speakers:
Wayne Clarke,
Head of Internal Engagement & Communications - BDO Stoy Hayward
Dr. Pete Bradon,
Head of Research - Best Companies
Guy Stobart,
Managing Partner - Burges Salmon

Wayne Clarke opened the meeting by explaining the rapid growth over the past three years experienced by BDO Stoy Hayward and the strategies used to engage their 3,500 partners and staff. These include:

- An annual Employee Attitude Survey in which employee engagement (amongst other things) is measured.
- Training of 400 to 450 middle managers.
- One-to-one interviews with everyone from the senior partner to new graduates focussing on three key questions:
 - What do you want to know about the organisation?
 - How often?
 - Through what channels?
- Sessions held by the Managing Partner with all partners and staff in various locations seeking feedback on the firm's values.
- Project Starsky (BDO's code for their growth strategy) involving 3,000 people in "Starsky conversations" to develop a sense of community and sharing of a strategic message to ensure consistency of experience and quality across BDO's different locations. Features included:
 - What strategy means to 1) Department 2) The firm 3) What it means to the individual to take things forward.
 - Shared point of reference & experience.

- Renewing the focus on sustaining growth and delivery.
- A session involving all partners and staff at Wembley looking at people, clients and growth. By using a central stage approach with the audience radiating out as an aide to delivering the message large numbers could be addressed whilst at the same time retaining the intimate feel. A timeline of business development display was also used to reinforce the message and Managers were tasked with disseminating the word.

Pete Bradon of Best Companies opened by posing the question; *Is there a problem with engagement?* CIPD UK baseline data certainly tells us that, 60% of UK employees were disengaged. This was compared to Best Companies accredited organisations who have only 10% employees disengaged.

Pete then offered some practical insights from experienced gained analysing the data:

- Targeting
On a scale of Strongly Disengaged to Strongly Engaged the focus should be on moving those from the central sector (Neither Disengaged or Engaged) into the strongly engaged sector.
- Do strong values / principles matter?
Statistics derived from the Best Companies' Survey strongly support the conclusion that an organisation's values and principles make a significant difference to employee engagement. The statistics support the conclusion that there is a strong relationship between engagement and employees' belief that the organisation is built on strong values and principles. Organisations then need to go on to consider how values are formed and how to connect people with those values.
- Leadership/ values (do the senior management team live them?)
- Employee engagement and reward
Pete suggested in the correlation between retention and engagement pay played a less significant part in engaging staff compared to factors like career development structures in organisations for developing and training.

Guy Stobart stressed the importance of an organisation deciding what sort of culture it wished to create and the importance played by the behaviour of people in leadership positions throughout the organisation. It is critical for leaders at all levels to live the organisation's values. It is the small things which count and it is a minute-by-minute challenge to ensure that all leaders follow organisational values. The success or failure would depend on how effectively this could be achieved within the structure.

Examples given were how you treat people, remembering names, demonstrating that you care & human issues. Be seen to invest in people not organisations, do not mind that they may move on.

The post-presentation discussion then addressed the following:

- Whether reward and recognition was necessary to support values? There was some difference of opinion, but reward and recognition were generally considered less important than ensuring that leaders live the values. The meeting recognised that values are tested at moments of crisis and it is then when leaders' behaviours are closely scrutinised.
- Values also become tested during times of merger and rapid growth and the meeting acknowledged the difficulties of maintaining culture at this time.

- Culture and values are becoming increasingly important to “Generation Y” who look closely at the type of organisation which they wish to work for. This will become an increasing challenge for all organisations in their recruitment and retention strategies.

Before closing Andrew Pitt announced he would be standing down as Chair and Paul Jelly would succeed him.

Next meeting - 8am Weds 9th September
@ St John's Chambers, 101 Victoria Street, Bristol, BS1 6PU.
Recruitment & Retention Panel

Rob Boccock
St. Johns Chambers

Anne Compton
Rickerbys Solicitors