

Peopletopia

creating the perfect workplace



Welcome to the latest Peopletopia Newsletter.

In this issue we cover:

- Latest survey shows customer satisfaction is on the decline
- How unengaged employees can sabotage your business
- The start of our series of tips on engaging without blowing the budget
- What is MBTI and why use it?
- The benefits of remote working - and the drawbacks

Battling the elements to deliver

Peopletopia have just come back from a great trip to Ireland where we've been working with the Irish colleagues of one of our UK clients. We battled through snow and freezing fog, with a few nervous moments deciding whether one of us would make it out of Heathrow despite their flight cancellations, to deliver our commitment to our client.

We're lucky enough to really believe in what we do, and are completely committed to delivering the best solutions that we can to help our clients improve engagement, and improve the performance of their business. But how many companies could confidently say that they know their employees are also committed to their clients? A report by the Temkin Group identifies that engaged staff are 480% more committed to helping the company to succeed, and with Blessing White reporting that 69% of employees are not engaged, it further highlights the business benefits of engaging your people – you never know when you're going to need them to go that extra mile.

Declining customer satisfaction levels can only be bad for business

In a recent YouGov survey, over two thirds of UK homeowners believe customer service has either stayed the same or deteriorated over the past three years. Almost half (49%) of those surveyed cited unfriendly and impolite staff as the most common reason for poor customer service. When you consider that a dissatisfied customer won't just keep their experience to themselves, but tell their friends and family, the problem magnifies even more in importance. And satisfied customers are critical. As Henry Ford said, "It's not the employer who pays the wages. Employers only handle the money. The customer pays the wages".

So what can you do?

Engaging your employees and ensuring they have the training and the tools they need to successfully do their job is key to turning this situation around. When companies are struggling, the tendency is to cut back on everything that is seen as non-essential expenditure such as training and engagement programmes, but what's a business without customers? In most businesses, it's a lot more cost effective to keep an existing customer than acquire a new one. To not invest in engaging your employees is madness, and it needn't cost you a fortune. The first step is to make sure your employees are being managed properly. Are your managers setting meaningful objectives for their team and showing them how achievement of these objectives contributes to business? Are they recognising great performance and challenging poor performance? Ensuring your managers are giving great feedback to their teams is essential.

Read our tipsheet on 'why feedback' on our website for more information. It won't solve everything, but it is a great place to start.

Is there something you'd like to see in a future edition of Peopletopia? If so, get in touch contactus@peopletopia.co.uk



Engaging your people without blowing the budget – Tip # 1

We're keen on all things engagement here at Peopletopia - we are also committed to finding ways to help build engagement without blowing the budget. Here's tip number 1:

Carry out an engagement audit

Many companies feel that they should be reinventing the wheel and coming up with something new when it comes to engagement. You may well find that there's a lot of activity already going on around engagement, find out what this is and make sure that you're making the most of it.

We often see the launch of initiatives designed to improve engagement, and a box on an action plan is ticked, but the actual embedding of the initiative is forgotten.

Have a look at what you've got and how you've promoted it – it could purely be a communication breakdown, saving you time and money in developing something new.

An innovative way to engage - or a risk of exposure?

At Peopletopia we like to think that we admire and encourage innovative ways of engaging employees at work. Opportunities to bond as a team, to get to know one another as individuals and to break down the barriers that exist between people are really positive ways of encouraging effective co-working. But perhaps we're more prudish than we thought, as we're not sure that being **NAKED AT WORK** will be added to our list of recommended strategies! Advertising agency Onebestway invited its staff to work for one full day completely starkers.

In a bid to engage and motivate employees at the company, Michael Owen, the firm's managing director suggested the workforce strip off for a 'naked Friday' in an attempt to build confidence and trust among colleagues. Please let us know if you try it!

Home working? A question of trust

There is much excitement about the Olympics coming to London and many people feel a sense of unity in Olympic related activity and medal hopes.

It's a great opportunity for employers (particularly those in and around London and the other Olympic sites) to show trust in their employees through providing a bit of flexibility to working practices during the games. There are many practical transportation issues facing those living near the Olympic sites, meaning that home working could provide a viable alternative to office working. I was shocked to hear a news report discussing the pros and cons of homeworking where a major employer actually called this practice "home shirking" and asked how any employer could possibly trust their employees to actually work from home. I am sure that they are not alone in their opinion, but I do find it very sad when an employer is unable to recognise that showing trust and giving a little flexibility could reap rewards in terms of employee engagement. In a well-managed workforce, and if practical for the business, it is entirely feasible that an employer could consider the following options during an exceptional time:

- Homeworking – to avoid travel disruption and to provide flexibility
- Flexible hours – to allow time away from the office for particular events
- Showing some key events in the workplace during working hours – e.g. showing some of the more popular events in the coffee room

The benefits

In return, your organisation may benefit from increased engagement, a sense of mutual trust, improved productivity with employees keen to show that they are trustworthy and committed, an increased sense of team belonging and less unauthorised absence.

Surely the question that employers need to ask is how else could the work get done? If your employees are still able to produce high quality work and to meet the deadlines that are set, then flexibility with working hours and practices is doing you no harm. Of course, any solution needs to be practical, customer needs must be met and quality must not suffer.

So, perhaps you could look at ways in which your organisation could provide some greater flexibility for your employees. Maybe you could ask your employees for their ideas too – it's only for a couple of weeks and the good will that you could build during this time may well have a really positive impact on your business.

The Challenge of remote teams

Remote teams are becoming more and more of a reality for managers in business today. Employees work in satellite offices away from their teams, out on the road travelling between clients, and at home. This presents some great opportunities in terms of flexibility, cost reductions and geographic coverage, but it also throws up a range of difficulties for a manager trying to motivate individuals, build relationships with team members and build team cohesion.

Technology supports both the remote worker and the team manager in terms of being able to keep updated on changes and developments, but many managers fail to recognise the importance of personal and regular communication, relying heavily on email, rather than choosing communication strategies that will help to build up trust, motivate and help remote workers to feel part of a wider organisation.

Managers are crucial to its success

Managers are one of the most important influences that you have on employee engagement in your organisation, so have you spent enough effort equipping your managers to get the best from remote teams? It's easy to let remote workers fall by the wayside, as long as there are no problems, it's easy to assume that everything is fine and working well. Hopefully, this assumption is correct, but in reality, your remote workers need the same encouragement, recognition and development as all of your other office based employees. Make sure that those managers who look after these employees have the knowledge, skills and tools to make sure that they are getting the best from their team.

Peopletopia bring remote people together!

If you have teams whose members are based at different sites, work from home or remote locations, Peopletopia can help you to ensure that your team managers know how to get the best out of them. We run a one-day course focused on setting out some practical steps that a manager can take to help them to build a high performing remote team.

This course covers:

- What is a remote worker? Exploring the different ways in which people work remotely
- Exploring the benefits and challenges of remote working – identifying the key issues faced by managers of remote teams
- Motivating your remote team members. How to find the right ways to motivate, how develop your people and how to keep them on track
- Fostering trust - monitoring work and productivity without jeopardising trust
- Working together whilst apart – building team cohesion
- Understanding your team members and getting the best out of them

Get in touch with us to find out more or to discuss your needs. We're offering 25% off this course if you book before Friday 16th March, so get in touch soon!

Business Tools Review - MBTI

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator (or MBTI) is designed to make Jung's theory of psychological types understandable and useful in everyday life. It explores the differences between the types which often lead to misunderstanding and frustration. The Jung framework was developed further by mother and daughter team Isabel Briggs Myers and Katharine Cook Briggs who sought to make it a valid measurement tool that was accessible to everyone. There are 8 preferences, organised into 4 dichotomies and whilst Jung felt these preferences were innate most of us have learned to flex our style and can often be seen using the other preference type when needed.

Why is it useful in the workplace?

MBTI can:

- Improve working relationships by giving employees a common framework to feedback to others on their behaviour. It helps avoid finger pointing by giving employees a way to explore why they might be working differently
- Increase team performance, as teams work out who's good at what and play to these strengths, whilst also allowing room for development
- Improve communication within an organisation

How unengaged employees sabotage your business

A man from British Gas came today to service our boiler- Richard. He was polite and friendly, and we struck up a conversation. I asked him how long his days were and what time he was finishing tonight (I wasn't flirting, just making polite conversation!) He was very enthusiastic and told me what a brilliant scheme British Gas operated; over the winter the engineers worked longer hours to ensure that they could meet the needs of their customers, but reduced them in the summer when their customers weren't going to need them as much. He was very appreciative of this, and the hours suited him (he was a cricket fan). He was, in short, an excellent advocate for British Gas, showing they were thinking about their **employees** but also their **customers**. The experience for me was a great one and I was a satisfied customer.

Compare this with last week, where we had someone (not from British Gas) come to do some work. He moaned about his company, told me he was thinking of leaving them to move to the competition as they paid more with better hours. Don't get me wrong, he was a nice guy, but the **experience was not a pleasant one** and left me questioning the company he worked for. Without realising it, he was quietly sabotaging his company and if we weren't tied in to a contract, I would have thought about taking my business elsewhere.

If your employees have direct contact with customers, you need to ensure that they are engaged and demonstrate pride and loyalty to your company. In this case, there is a **direct link between employee engagement and customer satisfaction**. British Gas had got it right, and the other company had got it really wrong. Often a small investment in engagement or a bit of 'out the box' thinking such as changing the hours people work can make a big difference. How many saboteurs have you got in your company?



About Peopletopia

At Peopletopia our experience tells us that the best results come from businesses who give the best to their people and who get the best from their people.

We partner with businesses through consultancy and through training to:

- Engage your employees more effectively, thus saving money by reducing absence & attrition and increasing innovation and productivity
- Provide the right Learning and Development solutions to ensure your employees are equipped to perform their best

We are employee engagement experts who know that if you put the effort into engaging your people in the right way, your organisation will reap the benefits – a balanced relationship between employee and employer is the most effective and productive approach.

Charity Calendar

Partnering with charities is a great way of engaging your employees and giving them an opportunity to give back – if you have an event that you'd like us to publish here, let us know.

Events coming up:

11th March – Bath Half Marathon

1st April – Reading Half Marathon

22nd April – Virgin London Marathon

29th April – Greater Manchester Marathon

Good luck to everyone taking part

Finding out more and getting in touch

For latest news, useful information and hints and tips on engaging employees, visit

www.peopletopia.co.uk

Email us:

contactus@peopletopia.co.uk

Call us: 0845 415 4106 or 0845 415 4107

We've sent you our newsletter as we thought you might find it interesting and useful, if you'd rather not receive future editions, please email us at contactus@peopletopia.co.uk with *no thanks* in the subject line.