

Creating an Advantage - Engage Employees

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Ever hear the term employee engagement and wondered how engaged your employees are? If they were headhunted by the opposition, what would make them stay?

In research conducted by Gallup Consulting, a firm specialising in behavioural economics, they state that only 18% of employees are engaged with their work, with the overwhelming majority of Australians (82%) actually expending little or no effort whilst at work.

The survey found that 62% of Australians are 'not engaged' with their work. Gallup describes these workers as zombies 'sleepwalking through their workday, putting time – but not energy or passion – into their work'.

At some point in our careers most of us have been part of this majority, and if not then we have worked with or employed individuals and witnessed them sleepwalking through their day.

So how do you wake the sleepwalkers and create an advantage over your competitors?

Employee Engagement is not a new concept; over 80 years ago it was being tested in the USA by a factory complex called Western Electric. Workers were studied under varying conditions. It was found that when the "employer consulted with co-workers about their work environment – breaks, lighting, chairs and other factors – then, surprise, surprise morale and productivity both rose".

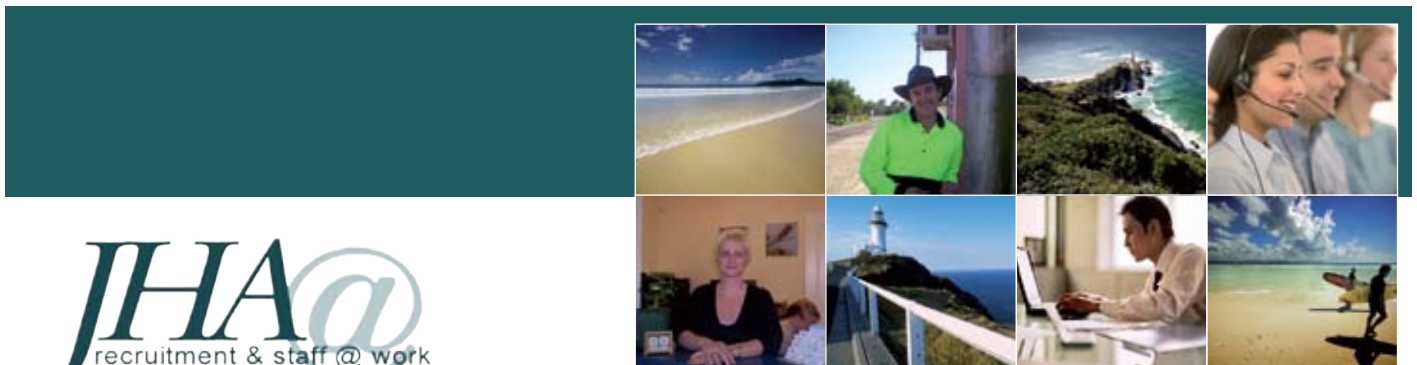
Although it sounds simple to achieve, it is hard work. However, there are some simple steps you can take today to address engagement

and get ahead of the competition:

1. **Ask** – when is the last time (if ever) staff were invited to give their feedback on the organisation – what they think is going well and what could be improved? Identifying the problems staff raise is the first step to getting them engaged.
2. **Listen** - to what employees tell you, often employees do not understand where they or the organisation are heading and how to get there
3. **Act** - be prepared to make changes and communicate them to staff. Involve employees in change and decision-making which in turn will raise awareness
4. **Report** - make a public commitment to fix problems that are identified

We are all capable of adjusting our behaviour in the workplace, and when employees see positive changes occurring – which usually starts with business owners and leaders listening to staff -they feel more valued. An engaged workforce will be more productive, less likely to leave you for a competitor and put you ahead of the competition.

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