



How to build and maintain a high-performance workforce

The process of creating and maintaining a high-performance workforce is complex, especially with high competition for talented and skilled employees in the agri-food industry. Below are three cost-saving and productivity-enhancing suggestions that can lead to higher profitability and more sustainable growth.

1. Fine-tune and clearly communicate your business strategy

Due to changes in today's employee, customer and consumer expectations, fine tuning your business and corporate strategy may be necessary. A clear and concise written vision, mission and values statement should be progressive, continuously build trust, encourage a culture of innovativeness throughout your organization, and establish your organizations' position on sustainability. A well-thought and communicated strategy can provide a solid foundation for a high-performance workforce.

2. Deploy engagement-building technologies

Studies have proven a highly engaged workforce can result in increased collaboration, innovation and productivity, while also reducing costs related to retention, hiring and training employees. However, everyone is time starved. Organizations that help their employees, customers and



consumers save time can be rewarded.

One way to save time and increase engagement is with video conferencing, which has quickly become a new norm for businesses of all sizes. Not only does it increase collaboration with employees and customers, it can reduce travel expenses and travel-related GHG emissions. It can result in faster decision making, and a more satisfied workforce and customers.

Soapbox Innovations Inc. offers an engagement technology for idea-insight collection and management. Their Saas platform helps bring the best ideas and insights forward to innovation champions. Employees are more productive, engaged and rewarded as they provide ideas, as well as vote and comment on others. Ultimately, the technology also helps large organizations with product and process improvements, and business optimization. This technology is designed for larger companies with about 500 or more connected employees. It is also being used by some clients to open dialogue with customers or the general public.

3. Measure and monitor your company and team culture

If you can't measure it, and enable your workforce to compare with other companies, you can't build more productive teams. The process of auditing employees,

to get an individual and collective perception of the corporate culture, can also serve as an engagement tool, leading to growing pride, collaboration and overall improvements in corporate performance.

Great Place to Work Institute Inc. offers one such survey-based tool, which examines and measures each employee's relationships, rather than behaviours. Credibility, respect and fairness are measured to gauge the level of trust, pride and camaraderie within an organization. This enables progressive companies to address differences and build a solid foundation for high-performance teams. Great Place to Work says that companies with the best cultures outperform their peers close to three-fold. Between 1997 and 2011, the ROI of *Fortune's 100* "Best (Public) Companies to Work for" had a combined return of 10.3 per cent, versus 3.7 per cent for the S&P 500 index over the same time period. Great Place to Work conducts 2.5 million employee surveys annually, across 52 countries.

It is often said "you join an organization, but leave a manager." In most instances the cost of annual culture audits and putting measures in place to improve and maintain a good culture will outweigh the cost of lost productivity, hiring and retraining.

Your feedback is welcome. Please feel free to recommend other techniques that can be employed to increase engagement, collaboration and innovation. ●

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