Four Tactics to Attract and Retain Productive, Energized Employees

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When it comes to team-building, size matters --- the larger the group, the less individuals feel comfortable speaking out; the more the "get-togethers" are formal; and the harder it is to get everyone to share and participate. A group size of anything more than five and the conversation does not work so well: one or two people tend to dominate; the conversation breaks into two, even three sub-groups.

> People typically join organizations and leave bosses. To prevent this from happening to you, you need to create a reputation for being a people developer.

To help you get the most from a team of any size, here are time-tested team-building tactics for small and large groups. These tactics will work in a work-from-home, hybrid, and group-live environment --- which is what I believe our world of work will look like in the future.

Tactic #1: Develop a reputation for being a people developer. When you have a reputation like this, people want to work for you because they know they will learn things and they will grow. For most employees, continuous skill growth translates to increased capability and value in the talent market.

Tactic #2: Create a sense of belonging so that team members self-identify as a member of something bigger than themselves. One of the key employee engagement questions is whether an employee has a "best friend" at work (i.e., someone they look forward to talking to and collaborating with). When individuals have a best friend at work, they feel a deeper sense of belonging.

If you have a small team of around 5 people (e.g., your direct reports, your audit team), schedule periodic meetings that enable team members to exchange ideas about their work values --- not just the work itself. Allow time for them to share their mood via emoticons if the meeting is virtual, discuss the successes they have, and the challenges they face.

Alternatively, schedule icebreak time to enable team members to learn about each other as a whole person (i.e., not just the person's work side). A couple of games to consider are Never Have I Ever and Two Truths and a Lie. Neither requires prep work and both are an interesting way for team members to deepen their knowledge of each other.

If you have a large work group or department, create that sense of belonging by scheduling department-wide meet-ups to recognize work anniversaries, birthdays, graduations and certifications, special achievements (within and outside of the department), and personal achievements (engagements, weddings, births, marathon runners).

Part of team-building is helping team members to develop their skills and deal with change. These next two tactics can be implemented by small and large departments.

Tactic #3: Publish the critical skills needed for each job and include the types of training available to enable employees to acquire these skills. People want transparency concerning what good looks like and the behaviors they need to demonstrate on a regular basis to get promoted.

Tactic #4: Create Centers of Expertise (COE) run by team members. In every department, there are individuals who have special talents and interests that coincide with departmental needs (e.g., data analytics, agile proponents, methodology gurus).

For optimal results, choose a tactic and be patient because it will take 12 – 18 months for the team to accept the tactic as normal and ordinary. How will you use these techniques? Let me know your thoughts, results, and questions at amb@wholepersonproject.com.