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Utilise your employee's talent... or lose them | Dynamic Business – Small Business Advice – Forums

by Paul Findlay

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Employers must pay greater attention to the strengths and skills of their staff – or risk losing talented employees.

That was the key take-away message from a national Wellness in the Workplace survey by professional development firm PDT involving 530 employees across the private, government and non-profit sectors.

Of the 27% of respondents who didn't believe their strengths were being well utilised in the workplace, almost half (48%) indicated their intentions to jump ship within the next 12 months

Recognising employees' strengths and empowering them to deliver on their full potential is crucial if an employer hopes to optimise the performance and profitability of their business.

Other factors critical to business success include generating optimism, developing resilience and demonstrating gratitude.

Life throws challenges at us personally and at work. The difference in having an optimistic inquisitive mindset across your team, compared to a fatalistic closed mindset, is dramatic to say the least.

Having optimistic people in the workplace has an uplifting effect on those around them and garners enthusiasm for finding ways to solve problems, improve outcomes, or move beyond challenges and difficulties.

The opposite mindset focuses on problems, creating negativity and generally a self-fulfilling mindset of failure and short comings.

These people also often bring everyone else down around them and can create a negative culture.

Wellbeing taken for granted

Many employers take the wellbeing of their employees for granted. Unless there are serious and obvious issues such as complaints about sexual harassment, bullying or workflow delays, the prevailing assumption is that everything is okay.

But there are other less visible issues that impact on wellbeing, such as when people are feeling flat, when people are off sick or when there is regular absenteeism.

When people are physically or emotionally depleted they often get distracted, distract their colleagues and, as a result, stymie productivity in a workplace. They can be more short-fused with customers and colleagues, or just generally less considerate and less proactive.

Those behaviours may not seem as significant. But if you find yourself with a team of people not feeling like going the extra mile, or having a sloppy approach to work or communication, you will have a completely different experience.

Workplace studies show that 50% of staff are disengaged (not

doing everything they could) and 24% are actively sabotaging (stirring the pot). When you have a team of engaged, supportive people who are physically and mentally in the right place, your organization feels alive and thrives.

Distractions of social media

Today there are more pressures than ever within work environments that range from economic demands and job security to the various impacts of social media.

In my experience personal social media like Facebook and Twitter can constantly take the collective conscious off work. They're a source of distraction, disruption and switches mindset from the goals and tasks at hand to everything other than work.

These distractions are not usually timely – especially with message notifications now on every device. Companies have blocked sites like Facebook and YouTube from being accessed on PC's. But now it's all-pervasive as we get constant messages on our smartphones or tablets.

It comes back to the mindset of the people. If you are focusing on controlling access to social media by policy and rule, you are better off working on mindsets so people are motivated to focus on work.

We know from extensive experience that employees' strengths derive from a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking or feeling that is authentic and energising.

When people use their strengths they are happier, more confident, more resilient, and are generally more proactive and productive in the workplace. These also flow into positive relationships with

fellow employees and helps to create a pro-active and collaborative team atmosphere.

The survey also found:

- Regular changes that affects people's mindset and job security, such as restructures or job descriptions, impacts personal resilience. 72% say change affects their resilience and ability to bounce back – 22% say it happens frequently or all the time.
- Some respondents feel underappreciated: 39% say their organisation's culture frequently or always promotes gratitude towards staff, 24% say it happens generally, and 37% say it occurs occasionally, rarely or never.
- While 39% say their organisation is always or frequently an optimistic place, and 34% say it's generally that way, 27% say their workplace is never, rarely or occasionally optimistic.

As well as the 530 employees, PDT also surveyed 85 Australian HR professionals and found they overwhelmingly believe that organisational change impacts workers' resilience – 53% say it happens frequently or all the time.

The message is clear from the more than 600 HR professionals and individual employees who responded to the survey: Constant change affects a person's capacity to withstand and adapt to life's challenges.

It's vital to invest in change management, as by default people see change as negative, despite the fact that change is always intended for good from the bigger picture perspective.

Sometimes individuals are affected in ways that mean they need to change jobs, or even professions, but no one implements change

for bad.

The change management investment needs to focus on how people think, how they see change and the mindset they take to working through the changes. As well as how it may influence their family and colleagues.

It is also evident that showing employees how the brain, body and emotions are linked and that providing activities to boost positive mood and manage negative emotions can improve resilience.

Ultimately, that is critical to organisational success.

The survey indicated disenchantment follows lack of appreciation, with 36% of those who said a grateful culture was not the norm, and was a direct cause for them saying they were planning to leave.

Appreciation of a colleague's work effort, or attitude in the workplace, can be a priceless motivator and a major contributor to wellness in the workplace.

Moreover, it's important to remember that gratitude can come from everywhere; it's not just a manager or employer's responsibility but a culture of gratitude throughout the organisation that can make a difference.

About the survey:

- The survey of 530 people, comprising 52% from the private sector, 32% from government and 16% from non-profit organisations, was conducted by PDT in the past month.
- Almost 6% were aged 18-25, 34% were 26-39, 44% were 40-54 and 16% were 55 and over.
- A quarter have spent 10 years or more at their current workplace.

- Of the 85 HR professionals, most have spent 15 to 20 years in the industry.
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About the author

Paul Findlay is Managing Director of [PDT](#) an Australian-owned professional development training company operating in 10 countries. It delivers Camp Quality's ORANGES program – covering Optimism, Resilience, Attitude, Now (mindfulness), Gratitude, Energy and Strengths – to corporate and government workplaces.