



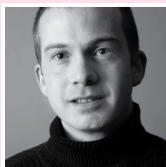
Continuing our theme of practical retention advice, we look at the role of communication in motivating employees

No-one can dispute the fact that effective communication is absolutely critical during a downturn - it impacts on employee motivation and morale and ultimately will play a role in ensuring your key talent remains with the organisation when the war for talent resumes. Melissa Gallagher, Client Partner & Project Manager at HR Solutions provider HDA, explains there can never be such a thing as too much communication: "Leaders must seek to ensure open-honest communication occurs at all levels, including; 1:1 meetings; feedback; appraisals; or even just being visible to their staff. In addition, involving employees in decisions that may affect them, where possible, will encourage acceptance of any changes that take place; thereby ensuring business continuity."

Alan Crozier, Managing Director of Q4 Consulting, believes that if tough decisions

are to be made, a major effort is required to keep employees engaged through the process so that the company can come out of the downturn in a strong position: "People will be anxious or worried based on what they hear going on outside the organisation. Inevitably what happens outside (economy, competition, customers) will eventually have an impact inside. Managers have to be straightforward and honest about the challenges facing the business and the strategies they have for dealing with them. They should be prepared to help employees think through what they can do to help the situation and this will require more contact with their people. Remember, it is impossible not to communicate. Not saying anything still sends a message – inevitably the wrong one."

Gallagher highlights a critical challenge for 21st century organisations in understanding how to engage employees in a world where geographical boundaries have no limits



Tom Crawford

Head of Internal
Communications
& Engagement



With communication, we don't assume that 'one size fits all'. So we follow the principle that you have to tell people seven times in seven different ways before it sinks in. We have a variety of media which suit different working styles, working patterns, and communication styles on a different colleague basis. For example, we've just recently made sure that large chunks of our intranet are accessible to field engineers who don't have an E.ON PC and therefore they can log on to E.ON stories at home using a username and password. We also have something called Newline, which is like a very short radio show available via telephone, so that if you are out in a van fixing cables or if you have time in your



lunch break you can dial in and listen to E.ON stories.

I think a big issue in communication is that it's not about tell, its about share and discuss; therefore we're trying to make sure that with any form of communication we have a mechanism for feeding back. It's about making colleagues feel connected and included, as if they've got a voice, as if they're able to help shape the direction of the company. They don't feel like passengers to the business strategy. A strong engagement strategy pays dividends in the current market, and should be seen as an investment, not just a nice to have in the good times.

We asked senior HR professionals for their views on employee communication



Amanda Simpson

Director, HR & Employee
Engagement Communications
AstraZeneca R&D



Communicating effectively with employees is fundamental to a successful business, regardless of the economic climate. At AstraZeneca we recognise that one of our greatest strengths is our people. It's people that make decisions and make things happen so we put a lot of effort into ensuring that people feel involved in what's going on and have the opportunity to contribute.

In addition to rewarding an individual's performance with a performance-related bonus plan, within R&D we also have a global employee recognition scheme where anyone can nominate a colleague for outstanding work and effort, based on a three level system which takes into account both the impact of what they delivered and also the way in which they did it. But it's not just about formal motivation tools and mechanisms. We also have Management Accountabilities

to which every line manager signs up. These outline the responsibility that every manager has for engaging their team and ensuring that they understand the link between their individual contributions and our company's wider strategic goals. Managers are also charged with creating a positive climate and work environment where performance is recognised and rewarded.

Our employer brand sets out the values that govern the way AstraZeneca operates. These link directly with our corporate objectives of discovering and developing new medicines that are designed to improve the health and quality of life of patients around the world. It is our aim for employees to feel valued, energised and rewarded for their ideas and contribution to AstraZeneca's success and everyone is encouraged and supported to realise their potential.



and remote working is commonplace. She believes that "effective communication is central to creating and sustaining a cohesive organisation; where staff are engaged with and committed to the organisational goals. With this in mind, developing an effective approach to communicate with remote workers will be a key influencing factor in engaging this group. This can be achieved by communicating with and engaging people in a way they are familiar with. Given that 65% of UK households currently use the Internet (National Statistics, 2008) and the majority of remote workers use the Internet to interact with the organisation; Internet-based social media applications would appear to be an obvious communication solution that is high on impact, low on cost and available on demand. Social media applications such as interactive podcasts, blogs, video-casting, or online social networks all will encourage company wide discussion and feedback, while building a cohesive organisational community."