EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
TOOLKIT

JANUARY 2016

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

INTRODUCTION

What is the definition of employee engagement for the purposes of this toolkit?

Our Working Definition of Employee Engagement is:
"Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals."
- *Kevin Kruse, Forbes Contributor*

What is this document?

This document is a collection of tools to improve employee engagement. It includes engagement tools that specifically affect the drivers of employee engagement scores in the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). It is not a collection of random tools, nor a catalog of all available tools and best practices (there are hundreds). It is not a listing of all the great things being done in the Department of Commerce by the dedicated leaders that strive to engage the workforce. It is simply a targeted toolkit to improve employee engagement as we measure it in the federal government.

What is in it for me?

There is a direct return on investment (ROI) from achieving higher engagement scores. Parts of the DOC that have higher engagement scores have lower days of sick leave used by employee and lower number of employees using sick leave in an average pay period. Additionally, studies by the Merit System Protection Board and the General Accounting Office concur on lower sick leave results and show additional ROI from lower grievances filed, lower on the job accidents and lower EEO complaints from Agencies with higher engagement scores.

Why should I use it?

The tools in this toolkit represent the latest (2015) thinking and best practices we could pull together from the Federal sector. They include tools used in the DOC as well as many other agencies. The tools represent current approaches published by Office of Personnel Management, Office of Management and Budget and are specifically guided toward the FEVS based on the regression analysis done by GAO. If you use these tools you are guaranteed to be using the best approaches we could find to specifically raising your employee engagement scores as we currently measure them in the government.

How do I use it?

These tools are not a replacement for all of the things you currently do to engage your employees. It is not meant to replace activities but to help you focus resources and energy on the things that are most likely to affect employee engagement.
These are not morale, communication or appreciation tools. They are targeted approaches to specific issues. You use it by looking at your FEVS results for the top questions that are leading indicators of employee engagement (from below they are Q46, Q1, Q42, Q55, Q63, Q64) and where you are low in those questions look at the tools dealing with that section. As the GAO found, if an employee had higher scores in those questions they were extremely likely to have high engagement scores. Moving the needle on those questions is undoubtedly the number one way to attain higher employee engagement scores.
Each tool is no more than two pages and includes how to do it and where to get more information.

How do I make it better?

The toolkit is neither complete nor perfect but it is a start. The intention is to do a yearly refresh of it so that we can then incorporate the tools in the FEVS plans we have to do every year. If you are using, or have a tool that could specifically address what we are targeting please share it with me and I will get it to the right place:
– gabriel.a.sanchez@census.gov

How do I go beyond it?

There is a lot of literature and courses and consultants that will help you understand and approach employee engagement. The one thing you should do first is understand it yourself and share your understanding with your colleagues. Agree on your definition. I say that because one of the most frustrating parts of all this is the variety of definitions, opinions, knowledge and ignorance on the subject of employee engagement. As far as the federal government the literature and approaches lag behind the private sector. There are some good studies done by GAO and MSPB (as mentioned) but on the whole they are linked to the one measure we use for employee engagement, the FEVS. This of course represents a problem for us since it is a once a year snapshot and often to easy to dismiss the rest of the year. You can go beyond that by compiling data on ROI (sick leave, accidents etc.) and determining your agencies relation to same vis-a-vie engagement scores. That will allow a different discussion that goes beyond the once-a-year look at FEVS.

Who is responsible for all this?

A team of Executive Leadership Development Program candidates and I put this together to hopefully have something to build on in DOC and specifically help those trying to engage their employees. The ELDP team did the heavy lifting and was made up of:

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But all errors and omissions are wholly mine.

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January 2016

STRONGEST DRIVERS OF THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INDEX, 2014

DRIVER OF ENGAGEMENT	FEVS QUESTION
Constructive performance conversations	My superior provides me with constructive suggestions to improve mu job performance (Q46)
Career development and training	I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization (Q1)
Work-life balance	My supervisor supports my need to balance work and other life issues (Q42)
Inclusive work environment	Supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds (Q55)
Employee involvement	How satisfied are you with your involvement in decisions that affect your work (Q63?)
Communication from management	How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization (Q64)?

Source:GAO analysis of Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) data, 2015

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1. TOOLS FOR INCREASING EMPOWERMENT

Do you want your employees to feel mildly involved or fully empowered in decisions that affect their work?

Employee empowerment provides employees autonomy and responsibility for decision-making with regards to their specific organizational responsibilities. It allows decisions to be made at lower levels of an organization where employees may have both the most knowledge, as well as a unique view of the issues and problems facing the organization. The tools in this section will help further employee empowerment.

*"Organizations that empower folks further down the chain or try to get rid of the big hierarchical chains and allow decision making to happen on a more local level end up being more adaptive and resilient because there are more minds involved in the problem." --**Steven Johnson***

*"Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the policy you've decided upon is being carried out". --**Ronald Reagan***

Tools:

A. **Trust Building – Group Exercise for Supervisors**
B. **Follow-up Survey to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)**

1A- Trust Building – Group Exercise for Supervisors

SYNOPSIS:

This exercise will help develop the supervisors understanding of leadership enabling skills necessary to empower their employees. Successful empowerment involves both the enabling skills of leaders, as well as the initiative skills of employees.

The ability to empower your employees implies relationships between employee and supervisor with certain levels of trust, respect, and support from both parties. The issue of trust between employees and supervisors takes time and commitment to nurture. Employees can sense when supervisors are not taking their concerns seriously, and become more focused and committed to servicing their own agendas. It is essential for supervisors to demonstrate their ability to establish a working trust with employees, and a willingness to address their concerns in a sincere manner.

Employees need to know supervisors are committed to longer-term culture change that will enable them to be involved in future decisions. Building a trust relationship will have a positive impact on employee engagement and increase overall employee morale.

Use to solve: Building trust between supervisors and employees

Description of Action Steps:

1. As part of a staff meeting, management offsite, or during another applicable meeting of supervisors, conduct this exercise. Explain that many factors affect the level of employee empowerment provided by an organization. Ask individuals to volunteer what they believe to be the most critical leadership factors. The list should include at least five to seven of the below factors:

• Communication • Rewarding performance • Trust • Problem solving	• Performance management • Listening • Openness • Risk taking	• Commitment • Motivation • Confronting • Team building

2. Small Group Discussion - Divide the meeting attendees into groups of 5-7 members. Provide each group a flipchart with one of the empowerment "factors" written at the top of the sheet. Instruct groups to list the key behaviors leaders must exhibit for their respective factor which will encourage employee empowerment. Groups should then be instructed to list key behaviors employees must demonstrate to successfully embrace empowerment.

Note: If there are more headings than groups, assign two or more headings to each group.

3. Summarize the activity - Ask groups to report their ideas, and encourage other groups to make additional comments.

This discussion can be used to:

- Introduce the concept of employee empowerment to supervisors
- Develop "action plans" to take back to work program office/ directorate
- Emphasize the importance of "partnership" between leaders and employees

Resources Needed:

- Flipcharts and Markers
- A pad of same colored sticky notes for each participant
- 1 hour for exercise and discussion

Point of Contact:

For more information and help identifying interactive exercises like this one, you are encouraged to contact your Bureau's assigned training officer. To see a complete list of DOC training officers, follow the link below. http://www.hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/dev01_005766.pdf

This exercise is one of 50 identified in the book "50 Exercises for Empowerment" by Donna Berry, Charles Cadwell, Joe Fehrmann

It has been successfully used at USDA as part of their "lead at the speed of trust" initiative.

1B- Follow-up Survey to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)

SYNOPSIS:

The annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) allows employees a voice to influence change by measuring employees' perceptions of their agencies. The results of the FEVS provides insight into the workforce, and how well they are responding to improvements already placed into action. However, the annual FEVS may not provide a complete picture, as it is generic questions only once a year.

This tool provides information on conducting a more detailed, follow-up survey specific to a particular line or staff office within a bureau.

Use to solve: Increasing empowerment and voice of employees by obtaining additional, more detailed information beyond what is provided from the FEVS

Description of Action Steps:

Convene a committee with representatives from all respective divisions that will survey. This will assist later on with encouraging participation, also include any Union or affinity groups applicable. The committee should be briefed by those most knowledgeable about the current state of affairs (operations, planning, budget, etc.). Doing so is useful and lays the groundwork to creating a productive follow-on survey and set of recommendations.

1. Analyze the results of the FEVS to determine where additional information is needed. Not only to clarify things that are wrong but also high scores.
- Formulate questions that address areas where you need more information based on FEVS results.
- Solicit employees for input as they may provide valuable insight and suggested questions not thought of by management.

2. Design questions/questionnaire using Survey Monkey or other available survey tools.

3. Promote participation/Collect/Analyze Data
Outreach for participation and publication of results is critical.

4. The committee makes recommendations to management based on data analysis (as to what steps to take to address issues or further successes)

5. Depending on the type of issues work with the training officers or internal communications to address gaps.

6. Work with the training officer to develop mechanisms for employees that will enhance employee engagement based on the committee recommendations.

Resources

- Representatives from all divisions
- Purchase of appropriate Survey Monkey subscription ($0 – 780 annually). An email is sent to all participants with a link to complete.
- A contracting option exists to outsource the whole process. USPTO has used a contractor with their own analytics and survey program. This allows for different analytics.
- Census has conducted a survey in-house called the Organizational Climate Survey (using survey monkey) . It was done through their HR but sponsored by the Labor Management Council at Census. Survey ran 2 weeks, 25 minutes to complete, all via email.

Point of Contact:

The department has assigned a training officer for each Bureau. To see a complete list of DOC training officers click the link below. http://www.hr.commerce.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@cfoasa/@ohrm/documents/content/dev01_005766.pdf

2. TOOLS FOR ENHANCING TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Do supervisors really hear what employees have to say?

Fostering two-way communication between leaders and employees is a critical factor in driving employee engagement. Leaders should encourage open, two-way, substantive communication as a group and on an individual basis. Agencies should create multi-level Communication Strategy that leverages the voice of senior leaders and mid-level supervisors in the conversation. In addition, leaders should try to socialize the organization's priorities, activities, and events across the organization. Senior leadership should regularly articulate agency goals and priorities of the organization.

*"The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said".- **Peter F. Drucker***

*"To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others". - **Anthony Robbins***

Tools:

A. **Interactive Senior Leadership Road Shows/ Listening Tours**
B. **Provide Employees Opportunities to Comment on Policies**

2A- Interactive Senior Leadership Road Shows/ Listening Tours/ Communication

SYNOPSIS:

Conduct senior leadership listening tours periodically, preferably without supervisors present, to listen and address employee concerns. Hold all-hands town hall meetings each year, and have a part that covers topics as selected by the employees, whose attendance should increase their feeling of engagement.

A listening tour is a time set aside not to make new decisions, but to gather information and input. One of the best ways to enhance two-way communication from senior leaders is to conduct listening sessions that solicit employee input on how to improve the workplace, followed by an action plan with short and long-term goals to implement suggested improvements.

Other ways to accomplish effective two-way communication include holding open conference calls, walking the halls to talk with employees, and holding informal coffee breaks or brown bag sessions to hear from employees. *You cannot over-communicate!* It takes a substantial effort to saturate an audience with the message you want them to hear.

Use to solve: Employees who feel disconnected and feel like they don't have input

Description of Action Steps:

For a listening tour:

1. Determine who you should be listening to (branches, divisions, areas depending on your time commitment and scope).
2. Let the organization know you will be doing this and when.
3. Line up questions before hand to spur the conversation.
4. Schedule the meetings and listen.
5. After, communicate what you heard and your action plan.

Work with the organization's Communications Office for marketing and promotion of senior leadership road shows or listening tours. Work with conference staff and/or IT staff for videoconference or other methods of allowing the meeting to be attended remotely, if necessary.

Leverage existing social networks, when applicable, to promote listening tours and/or road shows. Provide open mics for employees to ask questions and give feedback to senior leadership. In addition, to receive questions/feedback from multiple communication channels, texting software may be used to field incoming questions from employees during the event, creating the ability to receive questions/feedback from multiple communication channels simultaneously.

A road show would be used more for communicating what you will be doing after a listening tour or as part of a new initiative or strategy, you are implementing. Determine the frequency of the road shows and varying audience levels. Use plain language, and ensure the tone and focus of the message is applicable to the levels or functions of the people you're looking to reach. Memorable and easy to consume is key.

Alternatives:

At the Department of Commerce, Office of the Secretary/Office of the Chief Information Officer (OS/OCIO), all senior executives established a recurring weekly "open door" office hour. In addition, OS/OCIO established regular cross-office representation at office-level staff meetings to communicate current priorities and project status. In addition, OS/OCIO rotates facilitation of "All Hands" meetings ensuring each facilitating office has an opportunity to detail current projects and priorities.

The National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) agency head and senior leaders communicate with employees (mostly in the field) through quarterly webinar meetings. The meetings start with "hot topics" and continue with discussion of agency efforts to meet mission goals. The agency head takes questions both in advance and during the webinar and, when needed, participants research and share responses with agency employees. **These regular, substantive conversations demonstrate top leadership's commitment and respect for all employees as valued business partners.**

Resources Needed:
Marketing and promotion for events, including printing of materials, videos or other communication vehicles to promote the event, etc. Auditorium or appropriately sized room for staff to attend in-person with option to attend remotely, as necessary. Executive calendar time for listening tours

2B- Provide Employees Opportunities to Comment on Policies

SYNOPSIS:

Encourage employees to have input or provide feedback into the policies and activities of an organization. Build a culture of trust and confidence by encouraging frequent communication among employees. Senior leaders must address employees via multiple communication channels and acknowledge their role in improving the workplace.
Through two-way communication, employees should be provided the opportunity to comment on agency polices.

For example, one method of giving employees the opportunity to comment on policies is to provide the option to comment on internal blog postings with the commitment to respond to comments.

Use to solve: Multi-directional communication between all levels of staff

Description of Action Steps:
Offer employees opportunities to ask direct questions and receive meaningful answers. Gather ideas and communicate expectations and feedback. Develop and implement a internal communications plan that details ways of soliciting employee input on policies, including suggestion boxes, blogs, or other feedback mechanisms. Ensure that processes are in place to collect feedback and that supervisors are trained to encourage differing viewpoints from employees.

Use the intranet as a means to share information and resources throughout the organization, including programmatic information and guidance as needed. Create engaging content for employees which is easy to consume. Establish and/or rebrand (if existing) internal blogs on the intranet to allow employee feedback and comments.

All communications need to have a way for employees to comment openly and ask questions. Those questions should be answered and where possible the exchange should be shared with all.

Communications need to be screened before they are put out for all in case an employee improperly discloses something but it is **crucial** that at some point employees see that people comment and ask questions and that they are answered. The act of commenting and getting a response if often more valuable than the comment itself.

Best Practices:

The U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) launched an internal, interactive campaign on the USCB Intranet site called Future On, which engages Census Bureau employees on the new direction of the agency. USCB is actively promoting the changes through employee communications. On the USCB Intranet, in emails, and on monitors throughout the building, Future On is now an integral part of the USCB culture. The Future On blog gives employees the opportunity to comment and engage in discussion with colleagues and all levels of management.

The Department of Education (DOE), Office of General Counsel (OGC) management seeks feedback from staff to evaluate the effectiveness of improvement efforts, which strengthens two-way communication and improves employee engagement and organizational performance.

Resources Needed:

Intranet site and the ability to create an internal blog with a mechanism for feedback.
Assigned person to shepherd Q/A

3. TOOLS FOR CONNECTING EMPLOYEES TO MISSION

Do employees understand how their work supports the overall strategy and direction of the organization?

Leaders can take action to ensure employees understand how their jobs tie into organizational goals. They can communicate how results of their work impacts stakeholders, both within and outside the organization. When employees learn how their work ties into the mission of the organization, their increased understanding and connection leads to increased employee engagement.

"Connect the dots between individual roles and the goals of the organization. When people see that connection, they get a lot of energy out of work. They feel the importance, dignity, and meaning in their job." – ***Ken Blanchard and Scott Blanchard, Do People Really Know What You Expect from Them?", Fast Company***

"Efforts and courage are not enough without purpose and direction." -- ***John F. Kennedy***

Tools:

A. **Site Visits**
B. **Bureau Trailer Videos**

3A- Site Visits

SYNOPSIS:

Employees need to understand why they come to work every day. Further, management needs to help employees understand how their work supports the overall organizational strategy and goal. Immersion into the mission leads to an increased understanding and connection to the mission, which leads to increased employee engagement.

Coordinating site tours and allowing employees the opportunity to spend a day in a lab, a day on a ship, or a day completing Census surveys is an effective tool to immerse them directly into the mission. Employees will become more familiar with the mission as they have an opportunity to experience and ask questions that have gone unanswered in their minds. In addition, it is a great way for them to meet face to face with others to better understand how it all comes together.

Use to solve: Employees whom are not familiar with the bureau's mission or do not fully understand their role in fulfilling the mission

Description of Action Steps:

Reach out to individuals of the organization that can provide site tours and other experiential opportunities. Encourage all employees to participate and focus on opportunities in your building or campus, expanding outward as needed. These opportunities don't always have to be technical in nature; spending a day in Human Resources, Acquisition, Finance, or Public Affairs will help employees better understand the organization.

Resources Needed:

For local site tours, minimal resources are needed. Once a point of contact is identified, a site tour can be easily scheduled. As you expand outward, travel costs will become a consideration.
The key resource is scheduling and allocating the day for the employee to do this. One day a quarter will make an impact on the employee. Work across the organization to identify places your employee would benefit going.

3B- Bureau Trailer Videos

SYNOPSIS:

Employees, especially new employees, frequently do not understand the mission of the bureau for which they work, nor its connection to the other parts of DOC. In addition, employees are often consumed by their respective assignments and never fully understand their agency's mission and how that mission has a direct impact on America. Viewing short (3-5 minute) videos highlighting what each agency does will aide in connecting employees to the mission.

Use to solve: New employee orientation and staff whom are disconnected from the mission of the organization

Description of Action Steps:
Bureau communications director or press office will need to create or update a short video on their organization. The more intriguing, dramatic, passionate, and motivating these videos, the greater the opportunity to inspire and connect employees to the mission. Videos should be made available for New Employee Orientations. A communication roll out to reach current employees (email announcements, DOC homepage, social media) will also increase current employee understanding and connection to the bureau's goals and purpose.

Examples:
NIST: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2j9BGVKbzS4
NOAA: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBnCsMYm2yQ

Resources Needed:
Place where employees can access the video. Creation of the video, especially editing/production may be an issue for those with limited resources. DOC Office or Public Affairs may be able to assist - publicaffairs@doc.gov
Additionally, you could consider a competition (with a time off prize) among your employees to create a video to show at orientation. Many today can create fantastic videos with personal equipment.

4. TOOLS FOR EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES IN THEIR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

How can supervisors support employees with career development?

Career Development planning provides a roadmap for employees and their supervisor to fill an organization's competency gaps by developing its employees. The process is also tied into succession planning. If an employee feels empowered in their career, they will be engaged in their work.

"In regards to planning your career, you need to treat it (your career) just like a business."
— ***Auliq Ice***

"If you want to go to places worth going, you have to be open to personal growth. No matter how much your job pays you, if it doesn't offer you the opportunity to grow, your efforts would only go to waste. There are really just some things that money can't buy. Never stop learning!"
— K***evin J. Donaldson***

Tools:

A. **Developing Employee Competency Models**
B. **Individual Development Planning**

4A- Developing Employee Competency Models

SYNOPSIS:

Without a competency model, supervisors can waste time and money approving training which may not be the most critical competency to develop in a particular employee, the office, or within the budget at a given time. It is a best practice to collaborate with the Human Resources Office to develop competency models for all occupations, but placing first priority on Mission Critical Occupations. These models define the competencies needed for each pay band/grade, how they are demonstrated, and how they are developed. They are also used to assess competency gaps, to write individual development plans, help with succession planning and to provide a path for employees to develop accordingly.

Use to solve: Employees want to develop and become more valuable and promotable. Additionally they want to be engaged and motivated in their work. Competency Models serve as the list of the competencies needed at each grade level or pay band which provides them a path to engage in their own careers and develop. Additionally, Career Development and Training is a strong driver of employee engagement.

Description of Action Steps:

1. Supervisors can collaborate with HR to define the competencies needed in each pay band/grade, how they are demonstrated, and how they are developed. Competency models are normally developed by a group of subject matter experts led by an HR facilitator. Many models are already available and are actively being used across both the Department and the Federal Government.

2. Supervisors can then determine their individual employee's competency gaps by comparing their employees' performance against the competency model.

3. Supervisors can provide their employees with career development planning/opportunities based on organizational competency gaps, and organizational training resources.

4. In the event that funding or training time is not available, employees may use the competency models to develop the required skills on their own time, or use whatever resources are available inside or outside the agency, including online courses, detail assignments, and volunteer work.

Resources Needed:
While it is not an easy process, it is well worth it. Once it is done it can be a very strong building block for engaging employees with their career. Supervisors should work with their Human Resources Office to develop competency models.

Point of Contact:
1. The Office of Personnel Management's Human Resources University lists competency models that record both general and leadership proficiency levels needed in 12 career paths and at different pay grades. https://hru.gov/Career_Paths/Development_expert.aspx. Some instructor lead and E-learning courses in these competencies is also available on the aforementioned website (many free).

2. DOC OHRM staff developed or possesses competency models for the following job series:

   - 0201 Workforce Development and Performance Management
   - 1101 Business and Industry Specialist
   - 1140 Trade Specialist
   - 1801 Compliance Analysis
   - Market Access and Compliance competency model
   - MBDA 1101 Business Development Specialist

3. For competency models for your own bureau, contact your HRO.

4B- Individual Development Planning

SYNOPSIS:

Employees want to develop their skill sets, become more valuable and promotable, and to be engaged and motivated in their work. It is a best practice to determine and prioritize which competency gaps to fill on an individual development plan. An IDP is a discussion, discovery, and engagement tool, but is not mandatory to use nor a contract between employee and supervisor.

Use to solve: Individual Development Plans (IDPs) help both the supervisor and the employee prioritize development in accordance with office resources. They will help the employee who wishes to get involved and discuss their career development.

Description of Action Steps:

1. Supervisors are advised to delegate drafting of IDP to their employees which empowers them and connects them to the mission, both of which are drivers of engagement. If possible provide them a clear picture of what resources are available for development so they can plan accordingly.

2. Employees are advised to study the Strategic Plan and the competency requirements for their job series if they are available (see tool 4a).

3. Employees should determine which of their competency gaps are most critical to the organization's success, and prioritize them for development. Employees should use these gaps to draft an IDP for their supervisor's approval.

4. Supervisors should edit and discuss the IDP, collaborating with their employee on available developmental opportunities including on the job training, E-Learning, and Instructor Led Training (cost and free as appropriate).

Resources Needed:
As a ballpark for costs, The Association for Talent Development's Benchmarking report documented that average supervisors invested 40 hours and $700 in each employee's development. However those organizations with the greatest return on investment invest 60 hours and $1,400 in current employees; and 120 hours and $1,400 in new employees.

Employee and supervisor need knowledge of Individual Development Plans, time commitment to develop them and discuss. There are training modules on IDPs in most Human Resources Offices.

Point of Contact:
Your Bureau's HR.
Additionally all SES are required to have an IPD in place hence any SES in your agency can discuss this as well.
OPM site also details best practices and agency uses - http://www.opm.gov/wiki/training/Individual-Development-Plans.ashx

5. TOOLS FOR CREATING/FOSTERING AN INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT

Do employees feel that supervisors are able to work well with employees of different backgrounds?

Diversity includes dimensions of ethnicity, gender, age, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, education, and religion, as well as the variety of experience and uniqueness of individuals present. Inclusion takes account of supporting, valuing, and respecting that diversity. Inclusion of diverse perspectives, work experiences, life styles and culture is essential for organizations to attain maximum contribution from their employees. While the importance of inclusion has generally been given less attention and metrics than diversity, when employees feel that their workplace is inclusive of diverse backgrounds and thought, they feel more valued, empowered, and engaged in its mission.

"We choose forward. We choose inclusion. We choose growing together". - ***Cory Booker***

"Civilization is the process in which one gradually increases the number of people included in the term 'we' or 'us' and at the same time decreases those labeled 'you' or 'them' until that category has no one left in it". - ***Howard Winters***

Tools:

A. **Executive Champion - Personal Importance in Diversity & Inclusion (D&I)**
B. **Diversity & Inclusion Training: Power and Privilege Workshop**
C. **Diversity Dialogue Project**
D. **Are you IN? Focus Month on Inclusion**

5A- Executive Champion - Personal Importance in Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)

SYNOPSIS:

Set the tone at the top. When a high profile executive tells a story on the importance of diversity and inclusion, a message is sent to the whole organization on values and expectations. The importance of D&I becomes more personalized, and more likely to change the organizational culture to apply this best practice.

The administrator of NOAA, Dr. Kathy Sullivan, was in the first class of astronauts to include women and ethnic minorities. In her efforts to stress the importance of inclusion, she sent a video message to all NOAA employees on D&I. The video highlighted her personal experiences, expectations of the organization, and how shortcomings were addressed head on.

The video message is available here: https://youtu.be/JyA0vM19xy4 (Please allow it a minute to load or refresh if you are behind a firewall that causes a delay in playing the video)

Use to solve: Increasing inclusion by messaging the importance of inclusion.

Description of Action Steps:

1. View sample video.

2. Identify a senior leader in the executive team of your Bureau with a personal interest in D&I to be an executive champion and create a similar story and video.

3. Write speech, edit, record video. (Tip: This video was made in the DOC studio that is set up for this purpose and used by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary in their videos.)

4. Upload to share via organizational media (e-mail, Intranet).

Resources Needed:

Cost of 3-4 minute video production and edit, clearance by Communications, upload to networks of communication.

5B- Diversity & Inclusion Training: Power and Privilege Workshop

SYNOPSIS:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center has an intensive, 2-day workshop called the Power and Privilege Series. This is a workshop about culture change, promoting inclusive behaviors and making the overall environment more equitable, and developing a comprehensive strategy to solidify the culture change that is essential to this process. The workshop has been well-received, and has been delivered 2-4 times per year for more than five years.

Use to solve: Train supervisors to be able to work well with employees of different backgrounds.

Description of Action Steps:
Power and Privilege Workshop: Conduct the 2-day diversity and inclusion training, currently offered at Goddard Space Flight Center on a regular basis. This training is highly regarded and has been sought after by other agencies looking to improve this dimension of their FEVS score. It is particularly effective at addressing unconscious biases and action planning.

Resources Needed:
Power and Privilege Workshop: $25,000 per 2-day in-person training (for 35 employees max comes out to $715 per employee for a two day course).

Alternative: The Commerce Learning Center has two online courses on inclusion: one for supervisors, and one for hiring. HR University (HRU) at www.HRU.gov has online diversity training for supervisors to increase skills in working with people of different backgrounds. All of these alternatives are available at no cost.

5C- Diversity Dialogue Project

SYNOPSIS:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Goddard Space Flight Center established the Diversity Dialogue Project (DDP) – a series of facilitated workshops with small groups of employees. The DDP is a facilitated dialog process in which small groups of employees come together in an open, non-judgmental and comfortable environment to discuss differences based on many dimensions of diversity that are brought into the workplace on a daily basis.

Use to solve: Ensure that supervisors are able to work well with employees of different backgrounds.

Description of Action Steps:
Diversity Dialogue Project (DDP): Establish a series of facilitated workshops on diversity and inclusion for a group of staff who are selected as a leadership skill development for them. Each session builds on the skills learned in the previous workshops, and upon conclusion of the project, participants can spread the message through the organization.

Long term, employees can be trained as facilitators of these workshops, which further spreads the value, culture, and content of the workshops throughout the organization. More immediately, a facilitator can be hired to run these workshops.

Resources Needed:
Cost of facilitator or cost of training employees to be facilitators.

Point of Contact:
NASA Goddard Space Flight Center – Diversity and Inclusion Committee
http://diversity.gsfc.nasa.gov/diversity.cfm

5D- Are you IN? Focus Month on Inclusion

SYNOPSIS:

Communicating the importance and value of diversity & inclusion is essential to realize organizational change. NASA has a focus month on inclusion, which has generally been given less attention than diversity. Captivating visual messaging is displayed in areas with high foot traffic which helps set the tone for the day. The visual itself is a training tool on what inclusion is and why it is important, and advertises applicable in-person training occurring throughout the month.

Use to solve: Publicity on the importance of inclusion.

Description of Action Steps:
Establish a focal month on inclusion. Use captivating, educational visual displays, uniformly displayed, articulating what "inclusion" is, how it's applied, and an upcoming talk at the organization. Ensure the speaker and presentation on inclusion is available to all employees – in person and remotely.

Resources Needed:
Cost of creating and printing visual messaging on inclusion. Cost of organizing a speaker on inclusion.

Source:
NASA Headquarters - Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO)
http://odeo.hq.nasa.gov/contact.html

SAMPLE OF PUBLICITY FOR INCLUSION MONTH:

6. TOOLS FOR HELPING EMPLOYEES HAVE WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Are employees aware of work-life resources available in their workplace?

Work-life balance is the business practice of creating a flexible, supportive environment to engage employees and maximize organizational performance. Well-planned and implemented work-life programs inspire diversity, innovation, and high performance. Key work-life programs in the Federal Government include worksite health and wellness, telework, dependent care, and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs).

"The only pride of her workday was not that it had been lived, but that it had been survived. It was wrong, she thought, it was viciously wrong that one should ever be forced to say that about any hour of one's life." — ***Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged***

"Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person – not just an employee – are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability." – ***Anne M. Mulcahy***

Tools:

A. **Employee Support**

6A- Employee Support

SYNOPSIS:

Employees continue to do more with less, and are working harder than ever before. Supervisor support for employees' need for work-life balance is a strong driver of employee engagement. Expanding workplace flexibilities engage employees and improves performance. Agency commitment to employee programs encourages supervisor support for work-life balance, and employee's use of them. Supervisors should develop and share tools and resources, which provide and encourage employee's use of work-life programs.

Use to solve: Employee ignorance of programs to assist balance of work and life.

Description of Action Steps:
Provide workplace flexibilities where possible. Promote and support employee programs offered by the organization. As applicable, communicate employee programs such as wellness programs, continuing non-work-related education, telework, self-care, childcare, family support, and support programs (e.g., weight control, eldercare, emergency childcare services).

Collaborate with the organization's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or equivalent program at the agency to provide support for specific employee needs, and communicate information about available flexible work schedules, telework options, and other employee services.

Access the Work-Life Webinar & Trainings available at https://hru.gov/Studio_Work-Life/Work-Life_Training.aspx on the HR University (HRU) website, which is Federal Government's "one stop" Human Resources Career Development Center. The webinars and trainings include topics on dependent care, employee assistance programs, general work-life, telework, and worksite health and wellness.

Encourage the use of on-site gym facilities, when applicable, and use appropriate communication vehicles to promote the importance of physical fitness to employees. For example, email broadcast messages to employees promoting free gym events/challenge for employees to reach specified goals. Try to have "healthy lunch" meetings or always have healthy options at events.

Work with the agency's health center to communicate messages about healthy living to all employees. If there is an agency-wide health fair, promote the agency's employee support offerings. Get brochures from your health center or any other employee programs and get them out at all-staff meetings.

Develop telework policies, provide telework training for supervisors and employees, and improve infrastructure to make telework as effective as time spent in the office.

Best Practices:
The Bureau of Economic Analysis's (BEA) Alternative Work Schedules (AWS), includes credit hours and a flexible AWS policy with five schedule options available to staff. In addition, BEA updated its telework policy increasing the number of days available to employees for telework each pay period.

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) implemented an outreach strategy to inform staff about child and elder care resources after learning employees were not aware of the services or did not know that they qualified for these services.

Resources Needed:
Telework policies, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) or equivalent program, Work-Life Agency Coordinator contact, and/or Health/Fitness Center facilities. Materials for messaging and repetition of messaging on available resources.

Point of Contact:
Supervisors may use the Work-Life Agency Coordinators tool located at https://www.opm.gov/CCLContact/ to find their agency's work-life coordinator.
Please contact :
worklife@opm.gov with any related questions.

7. TOOLS FOR EMPOWERING EMPLOYEES IN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

What are some ways that performance management can help to engage employees?

Performance management is a process by which supervisors and employees collaborate to plan, monitor and review an employee's work objectives and overall contribution to the organization. More than just an annual performance review, performance management is the continuous process of setting objectives, assessing progress, and providing on-going coaching and feedback to ensure that employees are meeting their objectives and career goals.

"Appreciate everything your associates do for the business. Nothing else can quite substitute for a few well-chosen, well-timed, sincere words of praise. They're absolutely free and worth a fortune." – ***Sam Walton***

"Good leaders make people feel that they're at the very heart of things, not at the periphery. Everyone feels that he or she makes a difference to the success of the organization. When that happens people feel centered and that gives their work meaning." – ***Warren G. Bennis***

Tools:

A. **Performance Planning Conversations**
B. **Coaching Conversations**
C. **Appraisal Conversations**
D. **Conversations Regarding Recognition**

7A- Performance Planning Conversations

SYNOPSIS:

The starting point for performance conversations is developing Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time Based (S.M.A.R.T) performance plans. A best practice is to train employees to develop their own performance plans for their supervisor's consideration, which achieves several positive outcomes:

1. Developing their own performance plan empowers the employee to have greater control over his or her work life. Empowerment is a powerful way to engage employees.
2. Employees drafting their own performance plan increases the probability of the employees studying the organization's strategic plan and connecting to the mission, which is another driver of engagement.
3. The average employee is a subject matter expert on the tasks they are expected to perform.
4. Statistically, employees are harder on themselves than their supervisors would be, so supervisors are safe in delegating this task to their employees.
5. This practice gets lower level work off of the supervisor's desk.

Use to solve: Performance planning is the starting point for performance conversations and a significant driver of employee engagement.

Description of Action Steps:
Educate supervisors that employees are subject matter experts for the duties in which they will draft performance plans.

2. Include the above benefits including "Developing S.M.A.R.T. performance plans," type classes which are currently conducted within the Department.

3. Provide employees with copies of both the Department and their office's strategic plan, sample performance plans from the Office of the Secretary (O/S), Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) performance plan library, and any critical elements from the critical element library. Train those employees on drafting performance plans within the first 60 days of employment so their plans are implemented in a timely fashion.

Resources Needed:
Additional time devoted to training employees and supervisors in doing their plans.

Point of Contact:

- O/S OHRM developed a Department-wide critical performance plan library from which supervisors can pick and choose both plans and elements appropriate for their employees. O/S OHRM Performance Plan Reference Library: http://hr.commerce.gov/Practitioners/PerformanceManagementandAwards/DEV01_006170.

- International Trade Administration (ITA) developed a standard critical element library from which supervisors can pick and choose elements appropriate for their employees.

- O/S OHRM trains supervisors in "Developing S.M.A.R.T. Performance Plans." Supervisors are trained to delegate performance planning, documenting employee performance accomplishments, and more to employees. Additionally, the supervisor can contact their Human Resource Office to request training within their Bureau.

7B- Coaching Conversations

SYNOPSIS:

The typical supervisor-employee relationship quickly reduces to "get this report to me by X date," "this is wrong," or "verify your time sheet." Some supervisors would benefit by increasing their skills in performance coaching. Doing so achieves several best practices:

1. It improves the supervisor's relationship with the employee.
2. Employees trust of their supervisor increases which is a driver of engagement.
3. "Catching" or immediately recognizing the positive results employees make motivates continuous improvement.
4. Decreases the sting of supervisors correcting employees when necessary.
5. Increases the probability of employees taking risks to achieve results, which reduces the speed and resources necessary to produce.
6. Verifies that the employee made an error, and immediately correcting those errors decreases the likelihood of the employee making larger or continuous mistakes in the future.

Use to solve: A supervisor's inability to properly coach their employees

Description of Action Steps:

1. Educate supervisors that it is their responsibility to lead their employees to full performance, and that proactive performance coaching rather than reactive task management, is the most effective and efficient way to do so.

2. Educate supervisors on having their employees create their own performance plans (see tool 7A) and using that as a coaching opportunity.
3. Train supervisors in coaching through coaching, E-Learning or Instructor Led Training.

4. Include steps 1, 2 and 3 in "Coaching employees to full performance at mid-year" type classes currently presented at the Department of Commerce.

5. Revise vacancy announcements to include coaching competencies in supervisory positions.

Best Practice:

The Economic Development Administration, International Trade Administration, Minority Business Development Agency, and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration trained "100%" of supervisors on "Coaching employees to full performance". Those offices that did so had notably fewer grievances.

Resources Needed:

Additional training time and consistent messaging to supervisors on coaching.

Point of Contact:

There are currently 9 free courses on different aspects of coaching on the DOC Learning Center – https://doc.csod.com/GlobalSearch/search.aspx?s=&q=#q=coaching&s=1&a=

7C- Appraisal Conversations

SYNOPSIS:

It is a best practice for supervisors to train their employees to document and submit their performance results, and to invite employees to discuss their accomplishments with them. Doing so makes the supervisor aware of the employee's accomplishments and mission impact, making it easier for them to write the highest appraisal possible for their employees. This practice will also mitigate requests for reconsiderations and grievances, which will add value to the supervisor-employee relationship, while also motivating and engaging the employee. Only after receiving employee input and engaging in meaningful conversations should the supervisor draft the appraisal for their approving official's signature.

Use to solve: Accurate and meaningful performance conversations are a very strong driver of employee engagement. They are especially important as a reward for performance when there are limits on monetary awards.

Description of Action Steps:

1. Train employees to document their performance results and impact in accordance with their critical elements, metrics, and milestones.

2. Have supervisors set up appointments with employees to discuss the results achieved, the value added, and their impact to the mission.

3. Train supervisors to write appraisals based on results achieved and value added in light of critical elements, metrics, and milestones.

4. Supervisors should draft appraisals for their approving official's signature.

5. After receiving approval official signature on appraisals, should supervisors schedule and present the official appraisal to employees verbally.

Best Practice:

The International Trade Administration's (ITA) performance management system increased performance so much that it was benchmarked by five foreign countries, as well as the Department of the Navy. The ITA system outlined the procedure for employees to submit their performance accomplishments and their impact, and the protocol to discuss these with their supervisor before the supervisor drafted their performance appraisal. The service bureaus that trained "100%" of their supervisors in these skills had fewer grievances.

Resources Needed:
Additional time devoted to training employees and supervisors in these skills. Additional conversations between supervisors and employees. Additional note taking and information gathering throughout the performance period.

Point of contact:
Many supervisors develop a template for their employees to list accomplishments prior to their performance review.

USDA strongly encourages this practice and uses a guide - http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/employeerelations/docs/PerfAccomplishmentsSelfAssessment.pdf

There are several business guides on self-assessments including a wikihow page:
http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Self-Evaluation

7D- Recognition Conversations

SYNOPSIS:

Recognition is not about what the supervisor wants but about what the employee wants. The supervisor should ask employees what means of recognition best rewards them. Recognition can include cash awards, time-off awards, developmental opportunities, assignment to high visibility projects, autonomy, special training opportunities, and Quality Step Increases. Employees will seek different award types based on their own goal/life situations. Additionally, if recognition is awarded publicly, it may motivate other employees to achieve high results.

Use to solve: Recognition is a way of motivating rewarding employees for the results they achieved, the value they added, and their impact on the mission. Done wisely, it can also be used to motivate other employees to achieve results as well.

Description of Action Steps:
Supervisors are advised to ask their employees which method of recognition motivates them proactively, at mid-year performance review, and at performance appraisal time.

2. Supervisors should provide recognition to their employees, when resources allow, by the method they desire, even if it involves more paperwork or is more complicated. Individually tailored awards mean so much more than just "dividing up the money".

3. As often as possible, recognition should be provided in front of the employee's peers to reward him or her for the results achieved, the value added, and their impact; and to motivate others to achieve the same. The public recognition can be as simple as being recognized at an all hands meeting, or as complex as an awards ceremony.

Resources Needed:
Additional conversations between supervisors and employees. Supervisors thinking about and developing some options for their employees along with a means to determine what amount of cash award equals a time off award, a prestigious temporary duty, high visibility, autonomy, special training opportunities, etc.

Point of Contact:
There are many alternatives to rewarding for performance, contact your bureau's Human Resource Office.

END