

Employee ENGAGEMENT

Staff Quit Your Managers, Not Your Workplace

By Matt Rolfe



Did you know that in some hospitality operations, 60-100 per cent of staffers leave voluntarily on an annual basis? For many operators, our true competitive advantage is delivered through the human-to-human interaction that our front-line staff shares with our customers. If there is the chance that six in 10 or even three in 10 of your staff are considering leaving your company this year, how is that affecting your guest experience, your social media ratings and your profit?

These lamentable statistics are also true for management turnover. Yes, it hurts if a disengaged front-line staff member is interacting with our guests, but what if a disengaged manager is leading your front and/or back-of-house staff? Poor or unhappy leadership is like a cancer in your business, preventing it from reaching the level of success and profitability you dream of attaining.

Recent statistics show that replacing a staff member costs a business one to three times the staff member's annual salary. In my experience, most operators do not measure employee turnover or employee engagement. Merely by taking steps to install measurement systems in these two areas on a weekly, monthly, or quarterly basis, you can completely change the culture of your business.

Introducing staff engagement surveys to our clients' businesses is one of the exercises I most enjoy about my job because it's one of the most visible and high-impact things we do for the happiness and profitability of people in our industry. I first

got excited about this process when reading the book, "First Break All The Rules" by Marcus Buckingham. One of the key lessons I learned from the book is that staff quit most often because there is a problem with managers, not necessarily with the business.

If your staff are quitting your managers at the rates of 60-100 per cent on an annual basis, then monitoring staff engagement seems like a great performance indicator for your management and the overall health of your business. Below are some tips that will help you implement a staff engagement survey in your business:

FIVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS

1. Frequency – Depending on the size of your team, perform this on a monthly or quarterly basis. Keep the survey simple; we recommend the "Gallup Q12 Employment Survey" available at www.gallup.com.

2. Confidentiality – Make sure that you allow the responses from your staff to be confidential. Do not ask your staff to put their name on the survey. That said, do have them identify if they work in the front or back of house.

3. Publish the Results – One of the key things when asking for employee feedback is to share the results. More important than sharing the results is being clear on what action you are committing to taking based on the feedback.

4. Offer Incentives to the Management Team – This needs to be done carefully, but the reality is so many managers are given bonuses based on revenue or costs, and very few on how they lead their staff. In my opinion, all manager bonus programs should include employee engagement measurement and results.

5. Exit Interviews – No matter how healthy your company's culture, the fact is, people are still going to exit your business. Capture this opportunity by having an exit interview process - allow the exiting employee to speak openly and candidly. Learning from those who leave can be a very powerful exercise.

After implementing these processes in my own business and hundreds of hospitality operations, I can speak from experience that this can be the cultural game changer you are looking for.

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