



Staff Motivation

Staff have been through a very unsettling period. Uncertainty about families, health and job security may have caused upset, demotivation and mental health issues. Therefore, the leadership team needs to set out a clear vision for the future. If part of the future is unclear to the leadership team, you have a responsibility to set out the parts of the vision which are fixed, and a process for gaining clarity around the elements of the plan where there is still a state of flux.

Ensure each individual must have the opportunity to share their concerns and experience of the lockdown. Each journey will be different depending on whether they have been working, furloughed, unwell, lost a loved one or facing potential redundancy. At the end of this meeting set out their 90-day stretch targets to settle back into the rhythm of work. The 90-day plan will ensure staff are not left wondering where they fit in and how they add value.

If staff have been separated into two separate teams (working and furloughed), it will be essential to reintegrate all these different threads back into a cohesive unit. Make sure your teams are mixed to include workers and furlough staff. Treat both groups with equal value and recognition. Do not promote as workers as heroes and furloughers as slackers. Activities can help this process of reintegration. It may be possible to set up joint working, and mixed teams to problem solve new service requirements.

Staff will struggle if they are just thrown back into their old job if they have been furloughed. It is essential to recognise their journey and ensure they have a sense of their value to the company. For many people, their job can be a necessary part of "who" they are. It makes people feel needed and valued by their peers. If a member of staff has been furloughed and the business has continued to trade without their input, this can be very challenging to realise "no one is indispensable". This realisation can be very unsettling as there is the potential for redundancies.

Take a look at your premises and the working environment. Make sure it is positive, signs and messages on the wall underlining the importance of a positive mindset. Encourage a healthy lifestyle by providing fresh fruit, exercise sessions (i.e. whole team stand up and stretch for 90 seconds), lunchtime walks and supply plenty of clean water.

Encourage a positive mindset in all staff. Positiveness starts with you. As a leader in the company, you set an example one way or another. You need to be a force for positive energy; you need to be the person who leads with a smile; you need to be the leader

who reaches out to celebrate and inspire your team. The staff are looking at you and will take your lead. Demonstrate you are excited about the future.

If there is a need to resize the staff resource to take the company forward, do this sooner rather than later. Setting out a transparent process, engaging staff, keeping them upto date, encouraging input and being available to answer team and personal questions in an open fashion will make a complicated process less painful. No one likes to lead a redundancy program; no one wants to be under a cloud of potential redundancy, and no one likes to lose their job. A redundancy program is uncomfortable for everybody. Therefore, we must retain a consistent, open, transparent, positive and progressive style. Redundant staff need to have a forward plan, and offering post-employment planning can help a great deal. It will also be observed how the leadership team supports team members who are departing. This can improve or damage the motivation of the staff who remain.

Once the business has clarity on what their customers need in a post-COVID-19 arena, this should throw up new skills required in the market. Engage staff in learning new insights, skills and knowledge. Your commitment to their training will help staff feel involved and more secure in their ability to add value in the future.

The pandemic has been severe, there are many examples of trauma for families, and the mood has been dark. However, as you move forward, it is vital that you also start to find light and bring fun back into your workplaces. This needs to be done with sensitivity, but as leaders, you have to set the agenda. Recognise achievements, gamify with incentives and reward achievement. Ensure all teams in the business can participate not just sales. Fun will drive energy, and energy is the lifeblood of the business.

Finally, rebuild trust with your staff and teams. Trust is the prerequisite for a motivated workforce, and the pandemic has stress-tested the trust in companies between all parties. Leaders should be clear that they have a responsibility to reach out and strengthen the trust in all parts of the business.