

## Gain employee commitment

High levels of employee commitment of individual projects or to the business as a whole are considered to be indicators of an organisation's success. Commitment, however, cannot be assumed. Rather, it requires continuing, credible and confident actions that gain employees' trust and support. Although there is no single way of gaining commitment, there are some key considerations:

### 1. Be clear about what is required

There are many examples of the lengths people are prepared to go in support of causes to which they are committed. As a manager, you can't expect your employees to be committed to something that they, and perhaps you, don't understand. So before your employees commit their time and resources, they have every right to know exactly what it is they are letting themselves in for. And, of course, any confusion you have will soon be communicated to employees – so be clear about what you want.

### 2. Focus on action goals

Assemble those employees whose commitment you are seeking, explain the situation as you see it, and describe the outcomes envisaged. Explain any short-term goals and the specific actions needed for their achievement. Outline the benefits (including what's in it for them) to be derived from successful accomplishment of those goals. The noblest dream and the most appealing strategy are worthless until those involved make a commitment to achieve the objectives.

### 3. Adopt a problem-solving approach

Use group facilitation skills (eg a force-field analysis) to identify blockages preventing achievement of goals. Involve employees in planning for the elimination or reduction of those blockages. Allocate responsibilities to agreed actions and confirm individual commitment. Document all actions agreed on and circulate them to everyone involved.

### 4. Measure progress

If possible, decide how goals and their progress can be measured. Rarely will employees be prepared to make or maintain a commitment when there are no measures of their progress and achievement. You will need to use measures as a means of assessing levels of commitment – if you can't measure it, you can't manage it.

### 5. Monitor employee responses

Employees will be waiting to see what you do. Even if they appear to show little interest towards your proposal or project, they will be keeping your subsequent actions under observation. Gaining and building commitment cannot be rushed and what you do will lead the way. If you find that commitment is not forthcoming, you will need to decide whether to persevere, to adopt another approach, or to scrap the idea.

## 6. Foster interdependence among employees

The development of strong links among employees benefits you and the organisation. One of those benefits, for example, is a decrease in absenteeism – staff realise how others are affected by their non-attendance. Interdependence helps to build ownership, trust and commitment among employees as they see how their individual contributions affect, or are affected by, fellow workers.

## 7. Develop a work environment where commitment grows

Make your workplace one where employees want to be. A harmonious working environment brings out the best in people. Employees will be prepared to commit to a project or organisation they feel part of.

## 8. Recognise achievements

When employee commitment has resulted in goal achievement, provide rewards and other forms of recognition that individual employee's value. Recognition should cater for individuals, work groups and even families. After all, the success of many projects depends, in part, on the support provided by life partners and other family members.

## 9. Find reasons for declining commitment

When working on a new project, the initial exuberance and commitment of employees can sometimes wane. One of the following factors, or a combination, could cause this problem:

- Did you take too long to get the project started after the planning phase? In the meantime, other demands might have intervened and “cooled off” your employees.
- In the initial planning stage, did you account for any events or conditions that might distract your employees? Did you spend time trying to foresee and plan for such obstacles?
- Has the momentum slowed down because of vacation periods, eg Christmas holidays, or the shorter breaks? Timing is an essential ingredient in any new project.
- Did you set attainable objectives? Or were your employees running around in circles?
- Are your employees having difficulty with some activity early in the program?
- Did you plan periodic feedback sessions to identify and remedy any difficulties encountered? Feedback and evaluation keep commitment high.

## Further information

The following fact sheets provide further information on these issues:

- Boost employee morale
- Business management tips
- Business values
- Business vision – introduction
- Change management
- Conduct a SWOT analysis
- Develop a succession plan
- Implement change
- Leadership - introduction
- Maintain a business vision
- Manage an effective team
- Motivate employees
- Performance appraisal
- Set achievable goals
- Verbal communication