

If your Culture Stinks, Blame it on the CEO!

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According to a recent Gallup global survey, in any given company at one point in time, **only 20% of staff are engaged** i.e. feel a strong affiliation with their organisation and are passionate about what they do – that's 1 in 5! **50% are not engaged** so are effectively indifferent in that they kind of drift in and out of things as they feel like it. That leaves a staggering 30% who are not only "un-engaged" but are actively **undermining** the good work and achievements of their engaged colleagues. If your customers aren't satisfied it's the CEO's fault – that was one of the messages coming out loud and clear at two Customer Management conferences ICD attended in Edinburgh in November.

The first (which was for practitioners) had a number of international speakers, who were remarkably consistent in their message – if you're not measuring customer satisfaction adequately, or you are, and the scores are bad, your culture isn't right and that's down to the CEO and senior team.

Unsurprisingly, top companies all cite good leadership and strong values demonstrated from the top as being key to creating the kind of culture that will allow a company to deliver great service. Customers have to be at the heart of the vision and raison d'être of the organisation. Leaders have to create the right environment that makes staff want to make a positive difference to customers and come into work each day – engaged! All the usual leaderships qualities apply – clarity of purpose, clarity of performance criteria with constructive feedback, rewarding the right behaviours, empowerment and great two-way communication; teamwork and above all, no compromise on putting customers first. CEO's have to take responsibility for the organisational politics that can lead to complacency – by always striving for improvement – but also expediency. Top companies don't simply do what is easiest but seek to do what is best.

The second conference was for academics participating in a European wide project on contact centre training, development and the impact of emotional intelligence on customer satisfaction. This time, again it became quite clear that there is a direct relationship in how employees are directed, managed, measured and rewarded on their capacity to deliver consistently good service.

At the ICD workshop held in September '06 we discussed service measurement and the relationship between customer and employee satisfaction. People drive the value in companies and customer satisfaction drives the bottom line. If you don't understand what customers value or

understand how to create the right culture then you have little chance of employees being engaged enough to do a great job for customers.

So what do we conclude from this? Well number 1 – I guess you want to know who your 1 in 5's are and then figure out a way to bring the 50% on board. So if the CEO doesn't have customer satisfaction on the agenda, forget about a customer centric culture and just hope that the efforts of your 20% outweigh the millstone of the other 80% round their neck. Most speakers felt that the rest had to go as they were beyond redemption!

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