

## STAFF ENGAGEMENT



By proactively improving such practices, the end game is to establish more welcoming, tolerant, enjoyable and rewarding places to work

INGIMAGE®



# SECRET SAUCE FOR SUCCESS

Leaders in workplaces are being called upon to make time to connect with employees – **Merilee Kern**

**I**t would not be an understatement to say that the devastating impact of COVID-19 and the collective response by businesses have prompted a seismic shift in how organisations intend to operate in the post-pandemic era.

A particularly notable pivot is as regards

staff empathy and engagement. This profound cultural shift is requiring business leadership at all levels – from C-suite executives, divisional and departmental heads, and team leaders to entrepreneurs of every ilk – to evolve their managerial skill sets to meet new occupational expectations.

One business, which is famed for helping professionals develop the type of leadership and communication skills that have inspired and motivated others over the course of a century, is professional training purveyor Dale Carnegie.

It assesses and addresses the burgeoning need, and demand, for leadership and com-

munication skills. In fact, executives throughout this iconic leadership and development organisation are helping employers worldwide become more compassionate, engage with staff and celebrate workforce successes – both individually and as a group.

By proactively improving such practices, the end game is to establish more welcoming, tolerant, enjoyable and rewarding places to work.

“What we’ve found is that our own employees and those at the companies we work with around the world, are increasingly looking for meaningful purpose in their jobs to reduce stress and achieve better



Merilee Kern (MBA) is an internationally regarded brand strategist and analyst. She is also the creator and host of the Savvy Ventures business TV show that airs on FOX Business TV and Bloomberg TV (she can be contacted at [www.TheLuxeList.com](http://www.TheLuxeList.com) and [www.SavvyVentures.tv](http://www.SavvyVentures.tv)).



work-life balance,” says President and CEO of Dale Carnegie Training Joe Hart.

He adds: “The current trend of ‘quiet quitting’ is one glaring example that too many companies are falling short. Recent published reports cite that remote and hybrid work is proving to be more physically and mentally stressful.”

Amidst these new and fluid dynamics, numerous Dale Carnegie executives have unsurprisingly indicated that businesses are approaching them for training on new ways to adapt their workplace cultures to become more attuned to employee needs and better engaged in general.

“As leaders, we’re entering new territory,” Hart highlights. He explains: “What’s important is that today’s breed of businesses takes the time to encourage employees to ensure that they feel good about their work and themselves.”

This indubitably includes managers at all levels being accessible and proactive, and taking the time and effort to carve out more one-on-one time with team members to lis-

ten, learn, commiserate and congratulate. “We must take time to stop long enough to truly celebrate successes,” urges Managing Partner of Dale Carnegie Training in the Mid-South Seth Mohorn.

Author of *Lead From The Heart: Transformational Leadership For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century* Mark Crowley is following emerging science supporting the idea that human beings are not as rational as we’ve always believed.

He notes: “Up to 95 percent of the decisions we make every day are driven by feelings and emotions.” And adds: “That means employee engagement is a decision made by the heart; and managers who want to drive the greatest loyalty, commitment and productivity need to intentionally focus on how their employees feel.”

Managing Partner for Dale Carnegie Training Central and Eastern North Carolina Neville De Lucia observes: “Today’s managers and executives must engage in staff conversations that glean insight into the whole person in order to understand what’s happening holistically in an employee’s life,

and not simply what is going on at work.” “No longer optional, it’s imperative to create time and opportunity to have meaningful human to human conversations about ‘them’... be it over lunch, Zoom or by telephone,” he asserts.

A recent Better Business Bureau (BBB) bulletin that was distributed in August for National Wellness Month indicates the need for employers to implement practices that support a positive workplace mental health culture.

Some of the tips they offer include ‘taking the time to connect.’ BBB cites a Harvard Business Review (HBR) report emphasising that “a culture of connection is key.”

It further underscores the importance of stepping up manager training to better equip workplace leaders to navigate sensitive conversations, build trust and create authentic staff relationships.

Another notable in the BBB report promoting the importance of work-life balance cites findings in *The Happiness Index*. This is a platform that’s dedicated to happiness and engagement in the workplace, and it underscores how ‘maintaining a healthy work-life balance can enrich health and relationships, improve productivity and performance, and minimise burnout.’

Dale Carnegie Training location owner and Master Trainer for Southwest Michigan Phillip Zeller concurs with these top-line tips, and says: “It’s key to take quality time to connect with team members in ways that foster a mental health check while also seeking a better understanding of that person’s talents and personal aspirations.”

Zeller adds: “In doing so that leader can then identify and address any wellness concerns, work-life imbalances and otherwise

help align the employee’s purpose with that of the organisation. Employees can better understand and appreciate the meaningful difference that they are making through their work while also feeling seen, heard and cared for by the leadership.”

According to him, now is the time for leaders and staffers to have the type of discussion that will help them mutually reassess, review and realign. It means specifically reassessing the job role, reviewing what projects are being worked on and realigning tasks to be linear with the organisation’s goals.

This can result in a powerful perception and motivational shift as employees realise with far more clarity the amount they are contributing to the overall success of the enterprise while also feeding their own desires to live a purposeful life.

