

According to the court, Bradford was entitled to a process that afforded him an opportunity to be heard before he was deprived of his employment. The RLA expressly provides a mechanism for the resolution of disputes through arbitration. Bradford complained that the process

had been flawed in part because he had not received a copy of the medical records from the lab that tested his urine, as required by statute. The court found this omission inconsequential because the arbitration panel had all the test results, including Bradford's hair analysis.



## WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

### Why your employee engagement efforts don't work

by Brad Federman  
F&H Solutions Group

Bersin & Associates noted in 2012 that in the United States alone, we spend more than \$720 million annually on improving employee engagement. According to sources such as the Center for Creative Leadership, PerformancePoint, Kenexa, and Gallup, between 58% and 90% of employees do not trust management, between 14% and 58% believe that management is ethical and honest, and between 15% and 30% are actually engaged. Think about it! If we spend more than \$720 million a year, why are we getting those results?

#### *It doesn't end with the survey*

We know engagement efforts work at times. Study after study demonstrates that engagement improves productivity, reduces absenteeism, improves customer satisfaction, allows organizations to be more innovative, creates a safer work environment, and improves retention. So why is it that only 16% of companies that use engagement surveys see positive results? Why is it that only 65% of employees feel they are thriving at work? There are several reasons that is happening:

- (1) **Leadership doesn't recognize it as a significant problem.** I realize it's taboo to say that. However, if we were looking at a capital expenditure, such as machinery that was functioning at the levels we just described, leadership would do something and be committed to real results.
- (2) **People see engagement efforts as simply administering a survey.** Surveys don't solve problems; they give you information. Surveys are a view of the past, much like looking in the rearview mirror of your car. They tell you very little about where you are going, but a great deal about where you have been. Surveys aren't bad; however, many organizations misuse them, and they end up not serving any purpose or sometimes hurting the company.

- (3) **We use survey results to fix symptoms and create action plans.** Action planning lasts for two to three months, and then most managers go back to "business as usual." There are no long-term substantial changes in the organization. Even when the survey concludes that there are issues with work relationships or lack of training and development, organizations respond to what they see in the data, which typically has to do with an item or a question in the survey. The problem is that the results tell you what to focus on but usually don't tell you why it's an issue. It's impossible to address the issue unless you find out why it became a problem. To determine the cause, you have to dig, and that's uncomfortable and challenging.
- (4) **We spend most of our money measuring, not changing.** If we are going to change, we need to look across the organization at the cultural attributes that cause us to struggle with achieving engagement.

#### *Send the right message*

Culture is in the stories people tell, the symbols people hold up or see, and the rituals we follow in our organizations. For instance, some organizations assign parking places based on seniority or level in the company. That describes a culture in which certain people are valued more than others and employees' value isn't built on their productivity or work product but on their status. There are organizations with beautiful, well-tended corporate headquarters, yet their manufacturing plants or retail branches need significant repairs or contain broken equipment that hinders employees' performance. That sends a message that corporate is more valued than the people in the field doing the work. What are the messages you're sending your people through your culture?



*Brad Federman is an employee engagement expert with F&H Solutions Group. He can be reached at [bfederman@fhsolutionsgroup.com](mailto:bfederman@fhsolutionsgroup.com) or 901-291-1547. ❖*