

NEWS RELEASE

Work isn't Working because Leaders aren't Listening

26 August 2004 - Simply listening to employees could save British business millions of pounds in absenteeism and underperformance, according to sociologist Pauline Crawford, head of business and behaviour consultancy Corporate Heart. "Business leaders are getting better at understanding what motivates employees but too many are still ignoring what is right in front them," says Crawford.

When the DTI Innovation Group looked at leadership in UK organisations¹, it found that nearly two-thirds of employees felt business leaders were out of touch with employees' feelings. "In our experience, the result is often unproductive employee behaviour and loss of revenue, or potential court cases for the companies involved," comments Crawford.

A study of 12 leading UK organisations², carried out by Corporate Heart revealed that ignoring the emotional side of work can lead to damaging behaviour that ranges from the trivial to punishable offences that could leave firms open to prosecution. "When people are working hard, tempers sometimes get frayed and that's excusable," says Crawford, "but when being a bit short turns into bullying, it is bad for the business as well as for the victim."

Crawford adds: "Emotional mismanagement creates situations where people just do not want to come into work and you end up with companies offering costly bribes such as raffling a car to get people to turn up on time³. At the same time, excluding people from decision-making or encouraging them to work long hours can make them ill and that can have serious consequences for all concerned."

The Health and Safety Executive's (HSE) management standards for work related stress⁴ are due for release in November. With the HSE already inspecting stress levels within organisations and issuing improvement notices in some cases, the

risk of compensation claims against companies with ‘unwell’ cultures will increase, Crawford predicts.

Crawford offers advice to business leaders who want to energise and engage employees. “Corporate Heart’s research in the public and private sectors, showed that employees are motivated to give their best at work when leaders ‘acknowledge that employees need appropriate emotional contact and support’ (‘too many managers pretend problems do not exist’); ‘be more open and honest about what is going on within the company’ and ‘enable employees to participate in decision-making’; ‘build trust by communicating change instead of ‘dropping it’ on people; stop expecting staff to carry the work burden where economic pressures necessitate reduction in staff numbers’; ‘motivate people as individuals’; ‘don’t put pressure on staff to achieve goals that are set way too high’ and ‘genuinely look after the needs of people who are sick or injured’. Do not just try get sickness figures down.

“These and many hundreds of statements came from employees looking for inspiring leaders and not finding them,” Crawford emphasises. “Within this study it became apparent too that this is as much to do with leaders being dogged by similar human issues, pressures, and setbacks as their employees. We all need to be aware of the link between behaviour, emotional well-being and healthy businesses,” says Crawford.

Corporate Heart works with organisations, delivering diagnostic ‘wellness’ surveys and programmes that enable people to be motivated, energised professionals who can put ‘life’ back into business. This approach enhances the personal value of every employee and adds natural wellness energy back into work performance.

For more information on Corporate Heart, its research, findings and current case studies, please contact Pauline Crawford tel 0208 998 7032 or 07976 512117 or e-mail info@corporate-heart.co.uk

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Editor’s Notes:

1. When asked if their leaders genuinely got in touch with how people felt, 62% disagreed in this research by The Department of Trade and Industry Innovation Group. <http://www.dti.gov.uk/bestpractice/assets/leadership.pdf>
2. Corporate Heart’s study - Research on http://www.corporate-heart.co.uk/files/Research_Summary.pdf

3. People Management 12 Aug 2004 'Don't be sick and win a car'
<http://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/pm/articles/DontBeSick.htm?name=news&type=section>
4. <http://www.hse.gov.uk/consult/condocs/stressms.htm>
5. Corporate Heart's prime focus is on behaviour at work, using a powerful analytical tool called the Wellness Map and a holistic approach that brings about sustainable high performance.

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