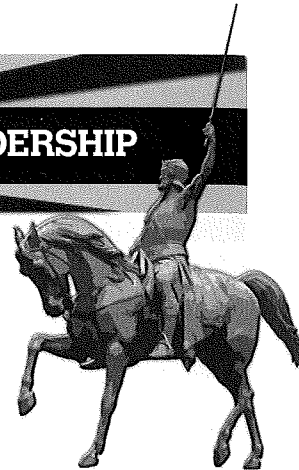


DARRYL COOKE ON LEADERSHIP

MAINTAINING STAFF ENGAGEMENT AND LOYALTY IS VITAL TO MOST SUCCESSFUL BUSINESSES. DARRYL COOKE SETS OUT HIS TOP MOTIVATIONAL TIPS.



Money where your mouth is

In last month's column I wrote, "*It is not the leader's job to execute every excruciating detail but to see the bigger picture and surround him or herself with great people who can be trusted to do their jobs*". And in an earlier column I wrote of the need for a leader to show his ability to lead and gain followers: "*Without followers you are simply taking a walk.*"

Some find that good people skills come naturally, some learn by mistakes, but no matter how sophisticated our skills are we can all learn from the experiences of others. Below are my top ten tips on bringing your people with you, gleaned from my own experiences or from talking to or researching some of our best global leaders.

- Encourage feedback at all times. Use surveys as well as the views of your surrounding management. Take your own soundings: meet with staff face-to-face and encourage them to contact you with their concerns and suggestions. Organise in-house lunches, brownbag or otherwise, to meet with a cross section of your people on a regular basis. Be a good listener. Never lose contact with the business.
- Avoid killing people's ideas and imagination by acting as if only the directors' or management's ideas matter. There is a well-known story of a board of directors of a number of golf clubs considering the management accounts which revealed

the business but great motivators are hard to find. The effect that enthusiastic positive people can have on a business should not be underestimated.

- Focus your company on corporate social responsibility. Employees like to be part of something worthwhile, and to believe that their efforts are doing good. A recent survey of over 80-year-olds showed that one of the top three things that they wished they had done differently in their lives was to leave a legacy. Help staff to achieve that through your organisation and reap the benefits of their loyalty and happiness at work. Chart your performance and ensure you walk the walk.
- Remember at all times that satisfaction counts. If your staff are happy, your customers will be happy, and business prospers. Put a team in charge of finding innovative ways of doing this and make them report directly to you. Let people know it's your most important meeting. Challenge the team to look at how other organisations achieve this and report back to you.
- Build a team ethic. Strive to create shared values. Involve everyone. Draw up your values. Communicate the values. Make them specific. Draw up agreed actions against each value. Talk numbers less and focus more on the values. Of course numbers must be discussed – but not all day. Focus on key behaviours and actions that will delight customers. Focus on these and you will win new business and achieve the numbers. Remember numbers are an output – an end result.
- Make sure that you are known for your integrity, for putting the business first. Don't shirk from making tough decisions but never work to a personal agenda. Leave the politics behind and be known for your integrity.

“ NEVER BE FRIGHTENED OF HIRING MANAGERS BETTER THAN YOU – IN FACT ACTIVELY CHOOSE BETTER PEOPLE THAN YOU.”

- Work closely with your key management team – get to know them closely, their spouses and children, what drives them, their ambitions, where they have come from. Your vision is like ripples in a pond. It starts with you and spreads through your key management team to your workforce. Be loyal and supportive. Always go the extra mile for them. And, in return, they will walk through fire for you. Never be frightened of hiring managers better than you – in fact actively choose better people than you. But at all times maintain your focus on the business and, if you have done everything you can to help and support them and they are not taking the business forward in the way you want them to, then for the sake of the business you have to remain dispassionate and deal with it even if it means parting company.
- Spend money on building a reputation as the best and most caring employer. Make sure it shines through all your communication lines, emails, website, PR, speeches, surrounding management etc. This way you will attract the best people and will nurture and retain a strong set of motivated employees. Go out of your way to create a family atmosphere.

that they were providing expensive eau de cologne in the men's locker rooms that was proving very costly because the bottles were continually being taken. The board debated it at length before one director said, "I'll ask John." John was the caretaker in charge of one of the locker rooms. "Don't worry," said John. "I'll take the tops off." Problem solved. Create a culture where everyone's views are relevant. If you organise the in-house lunches referred to earlier, you can use this as a forum to take on your employees' ideas.

- Focus on training. Employees get some of their greatest satisfaction from growing as people. Focus not just on their technical development but on their personal growth as well. Offer people the best opportunity to pursue further education. Offer financial support for fees and books. Education and training not only improve people's performance but also encourage company loyalty.
- Hire the best educated people you can but also ensure there is room for people with no qualifications who have learned lessons in life. Ensure that you also recruit good communicators. Any manager can master

Clearly there is no agreed route to successfully motivating your staff but all employees appreciate a leader with energy, passion, integrity and commitment. Let your employees know that their day-to-day performance determines the success of the company. ■

Darryl Cooke LLM is a partner and leads the corporate team of lawyers at Hill Dickinson LLP. He is the author of a number of books.