

Engaging with your future: tips on goals and empowerment

This month we had the privilege and pleasure of working within a large Health Trust, working to increase staff engagement. You may wonder what this means, as terms like engagement, coaching cultures, culture change and so on are often bandied around without explanation.

Well, in our case, it meant introducing a number of *strategies* – training Managers to Certificate in Coaching level, introducing NLP as a great approach to communication, and exploring executive coaching. We focused on some very powerful challenges, to beat disempowerment and increase motivation. The feedback from participants was exceptionally positive, and everyone found at least one way to take more charge of their work, with the outcome of making a difference in performance levels – how well they do their job – and stress levels – how their work affects their health.

You can imagine how powerful this approach can be. One of the key challenges that we find ourselves introducing time and time again is in helping people to establish real, well thought out goals. Most people seem to get trapped in strategies – what they are doing – or targets – numerical evaluations of a service. But if you know your *real goals* – then you can measure every single thing you do against those goals, in order to honestly appraise where you're at.

So, take 'My manager won't listen to me.' A common enough lament. In fact, left untreated, this could become a whine. You can tell your friends, and they can agree with you, firmly blaming the aforesaid manager. You can collude in believing that this is a situation you can all do nothing about. Moaning, whining, is a *strategy*. Not very effective, everybody's BP goes up, and you still don't feel listened to.

But let's try a different approach. Let's try a **goal** challenge - 'so your manager won't listen to you, what would you like instead of that?'

Probably, to feel listened to. But, do you know what, that's a *wish*, not a **goal** – because you can't control your manager.

But if you ask the question –as we did - 'so what would being listened to by your manager achieve for you?', then we start to get a different slant. People answer by identifying that they will begin to have feelings of satisfaction, equality, self respect.

Now we can work. Within the safety of the training environment, they can look at what it is that they are doing that leads them to be a tad lacking in these departments, and work on what skills are needed to help them get more of what they want. So the moaning employee can revisit the skills of careful listening and clear communication, to do what they can with the non listening manager. Now they can tell their colleagues 'well, I made a point of asking for some time with my manager, and went through the points I wanted to make. I also listened carefully to *her*, and noticed that she seemed to feel a touch overwhelmed at present. I followed this up with a written summary of the points I wanted to make, and feel now that I've done all that I can.'

Very gratifying. And you know, small changes in attitude and behaviour can make huge differences in all sorts of ways. And using your energy to focus on what you *can* control, not what you *can't*, has to be a win win all round.

So we really enjoyed our work this month. If you would like to know more about the psychology and approaches of effective goal setting, you can download some free hints and tips by going to

Clear goals make for more effective working.

So, all for now, and we hope that this next month will be one to put a real spring in your step.

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