

M&S

Building excellent employee engagement

Case study at a glance

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Challenge

Build on existing platform, make engagement more inclusive and increase global participation

2

Solution

Created an employee survey programme that measures engagement, enables a quick turnaround of results and shows where to take action

3

Result

Clear understanding of the business value of engagement and survey results are informing commitments undertaken to drive improved performance

Marks & Spencer is a global, multi-channel retailer of mainly own brand high-quality, great value food, clothing and home products. There are over 1,300 M&S stores worldwide including over 800 stores across the UK and they employ 83,000 people.

M&S appointed ETS in 2012 to help improve and grow its employee survey and engagement programme.

Challenge:

Employee engagement has long been a major focus for M&S and today it is one of their main business priorities. The board at M&S recognise that a highly engaged workforce is key to business success. They began formally measuring engagement by first running an employee survey in 2000.

More recently, they brought ETS in to help develop a more flexible and intuitive employee survey programme for global use. Our first job was to understand the culture at M&S and the engagement challenges they face. This included getting managers to buy-in to the employee survey and engagement in general.

Fliss Morehen, Head of Employee Engagement at M&S, briefly explains what they were looking for in an engagement partner:

“ We were seeking a provider who could really understand us as an organisation, our needs and our aspirations. As a global company, we needed a supplier with a global reach and we found that ETS, with their solution, was able to demonstrate that and support us in our ambitions.

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➔ Solution:

M&S has, over the last five years, worked closely with Engage for Success and this work has informed their engagement strategy. And, working with our ETS business psychologists, they've also been able to apply this knowledge to shape and develop their engagement survey programme.

M&S has aimed to embed engagement into the company's daily practices in order to ensure it is a lived experience for employees, rather than just an area of focus once a year (in a survey).

The questionnaire

The survey questionnaire at M&S was designed to provide the measurement and insight for the following strategically-important areas:

- Maximising business initiatives
- Employer brand
- Employee voice
- Developing engaging line managers
- Inclusion and wellbeing.

The survey captures employee views on the company, their job and their manager. Each business area or store receives three scores following the survey: an engagement score, a positivity score and a manager score.

Survey technology

We created a bespoke survey programme for M&S, which featured an online survey platform and reporting outputs for executives, line manager and different business areas.

A particular strength of the technology introduced is the speed with which results can be processed. M&S is now able to generate results within seven days of the survey closing, including almost 5,000 manager reports, helping them to maintain momentum after the survey closes.

The survey technology enables them to accurately measure and report on engagement annually through the 'Your Say' survey. M&S also use it to run 'pulse' surveys, providing managers with regular insight to support their development.

Embedding engagement

Recognising the key role that line managers play in employee engagement, M&S has offered them lots of support to help them to better engage their teams day-to-day.

Specific initiatives have included hosting engagement events for their 3,500 section managers, front line managers who line manage 92% of the retail population, and customer assistants. These events aimed to create a networked community of managers who are inspired to lead their teams in the best way, driving an improved customer experience and business performance.

➔ Result:

Using survey results

M&S reports a tremendously positive response from employees to the survey results and also to the approach to measuring employee engagement.

Global participation has improved markedly with 40 countries now taking part compared with just 12 in 2012.

Identifying development needs

Fliss Morehen explains how results are being used to drive improvement in a number of ways:

“ We use the survey results at different levels. At a corporate level, we look at how people are thinking and feeling about our strategies and plans. Our employees' views then inform changes to our plans going forward. At a local level, we use the individual store reports to pull together a set of 3 to 5 commitments that managers and teams can focus on to drive improved engagement. ”

Additionally, M&S provides all line managers with five or more direct line reports a manager's personal report. This really helps to drive line manager ownership of team engagement.

In the analysis of this year's results, it was found that the engagement levels of stores in the top quartile of manager scores was 11% higher than those in the bottom quartile. To highlight the importance of line managers in getting the best out of their people, M&S publically recognises and celebrates those managers and stores who achieved exceptional or the most improved manager scores.

Analysing the data

M&S wanted to understand the value of higher employee engagement. They previously used

historical survey results as part of an in-depth study to explore how engagement influences performance. This indicated a link to long term sales performance, as stores with improving engagement significantly outperformed stores where engagement levels were declining.

Following the latest survey, we worked with M&S to analyse the link between engagement levels and organisational performance to understand the impact of having a highly engaged workforce. The results identified that there was a strong correlation between employee engagement and customer satisfaction, as well as employee absence:

- Stores in the top quartile of engagement scores are more than twice as likely to achieve the highest service score rating compared to stores in the bottom quartile (43% of stores in the top quartile of engagement scores achieved the top rating compared to only 19% of stores in the bottom quartile)
- Absence levels of stores in the top quartile of engagement scores were 25% lower than those in the bottom quartile.

Fliss Morehen explains the value of highlighting such links:

“ Naturally, being able to demonstrate these links creates powerful messages and helps us to build the story about the importance of engagement. This has been instrumental in transforming managers’ understanding and prioritisation of engagement. To ensure that it’s an on-going focus for managers, we’ve included it as a key performance indicator.

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➔ Summary:

Business impact of the employee survey

- M&S has a clear idea of how employees are feeling and what drives engagement
- Analysis has shown the business value of increased engagement with a positive impact on sales, customer service and length of service
- Results are being used by managers to inform the commitments they undertake, all geared to driving improved engagement within stores.

If you’d like help with your engagement programme or a related survey challenge, please contact us:



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