

Marks & Spencer

Building an excellent employee experience

Marks & Spencer is a British multinational retailer with almost 1,500 stores worldwide including around 1,025 across the UK. In total at peak times they employ some 100,000 people.

They first began working with ETS in 2012, giving us the brief to help them improve and grow their employee survey and broader engagement programme.

From the outset it was clear that M&S is a business with a great understanding of employee engagement, a point backed up by their mature employee engagement survey programme. They've been formally measuring engagement as far back as 2000 with the 'Your Say' survey having been run in some form for a decade. And, moreover, they've also been heavily involved with the government-backed Engage for Success movement.

Challenge:

The challenge for us has been to build on what M&S already had in place and, over the years we've been working with them, we've been able to become their strategic partner. In forging such close ties, we've really come to know their business well, which has enabled us to continually grow and evolve their engagement survey programme in line with often fast-changing needs and strategies.

The most recent brief has been to enable M&S, through their employee research programme, to make the transition from measuring employee engagement to the employee experience in a more holistic sense.

Alex Nelson, Senior Colleague Experience Manager at M&S, explains more about this:

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At M&S we wanted to understand not only how engaged our colleagues are, but also what we can do as a business to make sure everyone feels trusted to do their job, and what barriers we can remove to take frustration out of our roles.

Alongside this, we also wanted to know what we can do to make the 'important moments' with us, even better – be it joining, becoming a manager or leaving us. demonstrate that and support us in our ambitions.

This programme allows us to not only have a complete view of how people are feeling, but also to simply see the impact our work has across the entire colleague lifecycle

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Solution:

We have supported M&S in a number of ways with their programme, which has recently included further development of their survey technology platform, a significant update to their questionnaire and lots of work post-survey on reporting their results and exploring the exciting new dimension of data analytics.

Having your say

M&S has ensured that measuring engagement and the employee experience is not just a focus for managers once a year but rather part of their daily practices.

With our help M&S runs the 'Your Say' survey on a quarterly basis using a custom-built ETS survey platform. The latest one went out in 10 different languages, had over 70,000 responses and generated some 12,000 reports for managers.

The survey platform we provide for M&S also offers access to real-time reporting while surveys are live and enables a rapid turnaround of results. The speed of this process is crucial for them, helping to get thousands of manager reports released into managers' hands very shortly after the survey closes to ensure no loss of momentum.

Better understanding employees

During the last 18 months M&S has sought the views of its employee and manager stakeholders on how they approach employee research. Off the back of this, they came to us to seek our advice on what changes they might make to their survey programme. We have encouraged a significant shift in the way they think about and measure engagement at M&S. This has involved looking beyond a singular metric for employee engagement to consider two further metrics alongside it, namely empowerment and enablement. Our belief was that this would help them better understand how employees feel, what drives them, what is holding them back and why some choose to leave.

Our business psychologists then set to work to revise the survey questionnaires M&S uses, to include empowerment and enablement indices alongside the one on engagement to provide a more holistic picture of the employee experience for their people.

Supporting managers

Having long recognised the key role that line managers play in employee engagement, M&S has offered managers lots of support to help them to better engage their teams day-to-day. Specific initiatives have included hosting engagement events for 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 giving a positive impact on business performance.

Result:

Using survey results

As referenced earlier, the ability to track survey responses in real-time, as well as reading the comments daily report means that, by the time each survey closes, leaders and administrators already have a clear picture of how things look.

Following each and every survey at M&S, the store or business division are expected to sit down and discuss their results. And, using key themes arising from the survey, they are encouraged to come up with three commitments to work on. To make it easy for managers, they're provided with intuitive reports to help them turn data into actions.

The addition of empowerment and enablement indices alongside engagement has helped to identify underlying cultural differences across M&S. This has deepened managers' understanding of their people, what drives them and what areas they must address to further improve engagement and the employee experience as a whole.

Analysing the data

M&S wanted to understand the value of higher employee engagement. We worked with them to analyse the link between engagement levels and organisational performance. The results of the linkage analysis found a strong correlation between engagement and employee absence so, as engagement improves, absence declines. It showed that, for every one unit increase in an engagement score, this results in 9.34 hours less sick leave in 12 months for that employee. When multiplied across a company the size of M&S, this promises considerable business value.

Further to this, our business psychologists led some employee segmentation based on how people responded to various questions. This identified different profiles of people across M&S, each with quite distinct drivers of engagement. This insight has helped M&S to target action planning initiatives based not only on the business area, but also the profile of people.

Lastly, M&S is also now looking at survey data alongside data from new starters, leavers and colleagues who have recently been promoted to better understand the employee lifecycle and identify issues before they become critical.

Alex Nelson explains a bit more about the value they're getting from this:

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Using robust data and analytics is vital to us in understanding how we can ensure that M&S is a great place to join and work. Our growing use of analytics is already enabling us to make well-

informed decisions for our future direction and letting us focus our resources on the areas that really matter to our colleagues. It is also helping to deepen our understanding of our people with a view to better engaging them, improving their experience of working at M&S and boosting both their career and our performance

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➔ Partnering with ETS:

Alex Nelson comments on how they find the experience of working with ETS:

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Working with ETS for a number of years, we have built a strong collaborative relationship focused on developing new programmes that provide insightful and action-driven outcomes as well as a range of exciting research initiatives helping us to better understand diversity, progression and retention.

ETS have a keen understanding of what the future of employee experience is, and a strong team who provide us valuable insight into a range of HR problems, in a data-driven way

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



Call us on **+44 (0)1932 222700**



Or e-mail us at **info@etsplc.com**