Building an excellent employee experience

M&S

EST. 1884

Case study

Marks & Spencer has almost 1,500 stores worldwide including around 1,025 across the UK. At peak times they employ around 100,000 people.

We first began working with M&S in 2012 and continue to have a flourishing partnership.

CHALLENGE

The challenge for us has been to build on what M&S already had in place and evolve the programme in line with their needs. The most recent brief has been to enable M&S 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:

“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.”

SOLUTION

Talking straight

With our help M&S runs the ‘Talk Straight’ survey on a quarterly basis. 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 enables a rapid turnaround of results, helping to get thousands of reports into managers’ hands very shortly after the survey closes.
ANALYSING THE SURVEY DATA
Following every survey at M&S, the store or business division 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.

REDUCING ABSENTEEISM
We worked with M&S to analyse the link between engagement levels and organisational performance, finding a strong correlation between engagement and employee absence (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. An important financial consideration for a company the size of M&S.

TARGETING ACTION
We also 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.

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

"Better understanding employees
After seeking the views of its employee and manager stakeholders, M&S came to us to seek our advice on making changes to their survey programme. We encouraged a significant shift in the way they think about and measure engagement. This involved looking beyond a singular metric for employee engagement to consider two further metrics alongside it, namely empowerment and enablement. We believed 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 revised the survey questionnaires to reflect these changes.

Supporting managers
M&S offers managers lots of support to help them to better engage their teams day-to-day. Specific initiatives have included hosting engagement events aimed at creating 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.

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."

OUTCOMES

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

"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."