

## 5 engagement and mobilisation

The whole organisation is fully engaged by enabling them to participate in the debate, to explore implications together for their specific areas of work and to feed in their ideas.

# 5. ENGAGEMENT AND MOBILISATION

Purpose, values, vision, strategy can all be confined to the leadership ranks of any organisation but the development of the business will remain constrained without a well-defined and resourced approach to involve and engage everyone. It is also well understood that an engaged workforce drives increased business performance to both the top and bottom line<sup>[8]</sup>.

Our experience of long-term organisations suggest they spend a significant amount of energy on involving the whole of their workforce through a variety of means such as workshops, town halls, tool box talks and similar. Through this engagement process they enable people not only to take on the required changes but also help shape them to make sure they will actually work. With technology available to most, it is now much easier to involve large numbers in different locations. But still we see attempted engagement through broadcast only. Technology permits two-way communication, on-line discussion groups and mass engagement initiatives (for example an on-line Digital Jam to involve everyone in the business). No excuse for just sending out the well-honed message by email attaching selected slides from the recent leadership conference. The temptation to 'transmit' needs to be resisted.

If you look deliberately, and with appropriate focus, you will always find people who are demonstrating the characteristics you want everyone to demonstrate. Working with these role models and through socialisation techniques to spread them further (a viral change approach) can be a powerful way of involving everyone in the development of the business. These 'champions' can be a very powerful engine for change and can accelerate progress significantly.

Engagement of the workforce is only part of the story. Engaging, and not just communicating with, partners, customers and investors is increasingly important. Sustainable organisations ensure that their story is clear to all stakeholders.

It is clear to us that stock markets are not necessarily short-term. The market is excellent at processing the data they have in order to determine a market price at which they are willing to trade. Absent a story of where the longer-term value lies, they will respond to the short-term data readily available to them. Customers too will want to know where its suppliers are heading and if playing for the long-term will want to ensure that they are dealing with long-term thinkers.

Long gone are the days when you could create one story for shareholders, another for customers and yet another for the workforce. An authentic core message, the essential truth for all stakeholders, is now an ongoing requirement for sustainable organisations.

*'Our marketing department spent months on developing a new brand for an emerging service and good fortune ensured that we had time to engage our front-line people in the values we were promoting. I say 'good fortune' because they reflected the underlying belief system in the company. Our people engagement process ran in parallel with the launch program and the business exploded!'*

*'Face time with the CEO has been our preferred way of engaging our people and it takes an enormous commitment from him to get the coverage we need. He has not missed one monthly employee award event since he started'*

or

*'I make sure the leadership of each business understands the direction we are taking, but most of our workforce are on the shop floor and they are not interested in a strategy that they cannot influence.'*