

Sample and contents list for managers

Making the Difference

as a Manager

in FE and the Life Long Learning Sector

electronic text

released October 2006



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Extract from Chapter 7

Teaching and training will be inspiring, based on imaginative resources and led by subject and sectoral experts who are also skilled teachers or trainers. More and more learners will be following programmes delivered by providers that specialise in that subject area.

- DfES 2006 (1.13)

Employer engagement needs to be developed and understood in a more rounded fashion. It is about involving employers in the wider work of a college, and in the development and delivery of provision in ways that are mutually beneficial and suitable for the specific employer and the provider. There is no ‘one-size’ template which can fit all employers or providers, and nor should there be.

- McCleod and Hughes (2005) p4

(Ignorance is) the appointed lot of all born to poverty and the drudgeries of life...the only opiate capable of infusing that sensibility which can enable them to endure the miseries of the one and the fatigues of the

other.....a cordial, administered by the gracious hand of providence, of which they ought never to be deprived by an ill-judged and improper education.

- Soame Jenyns 1757, *Free Enquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*

Traditionally, one 'engages' with the enemy. Dawn breaks, bugles sound and another fine body of people is sent over the top to try to regain lost ground. It is very odd indeed to be arguing that the most vocationally-orientated sector of the education business should have to 'get in touch' with employers, as if it has been living on some other planet for a few generations and not training apprentices throughout its history. What kind of a problem is this?

There are different levels at which one may approach the question. The lowest level is when a single class tutor approaches employers to gain work experience for their students, sometimes keeping their contact list close to their chest to avoid 'poaching' by colleagues in other areas. The higher levels include re-drafting the entire shape of 14-19 education by asking employers to design the new diplomas, then planning your offer both locally and internationally in conjunction with commercial and industrial partners. If the two levels are not connected so that joined up thinking creates an effective institutional policy then time and opportunities will be wasted and the provider's public image will suffer.

To summarise very briefly, employers do not think that the services provided by the FE and LLL sectors are good enough for their purpose. It is not a quality product. When they do receive quality, the product tends to come more often from private agencies than from established colleges:

7% of employers who used FE colleges during the last year were 'not very' or 'not at all' satisfied with provision. 82% of employers did not use colleges at all - DfES 2006 (citing National Employers Skills Survey 2005)

A dissatisfaction rate of 7% may not sound much, and your marketing dept could make 83% satisfaction sound impressive, but it has to be faced that:

a perceived mismatch between the publicly funded education and training available and the needs of employers and the workforce has been a long-standing concern in the UK. Indeed, employers' representative bodies have often been sharply critical of what they see as deficiencies in government-funded provision. For example, David Lennon, former Director General of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said that "there is a gaping chasm between Further Education and local employers" and that colleges are providing inadequate preparation for students moving to the workplace. John Cridland from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has expressed similar concerns, and a recent CBI survey showed that twice as many members rated private training providers as good or excellent (76%), compared to FE colleges (38%).

- McCoshan and Souto Otero (2003) 1.2

One might object at once that complaints are by no means one-sided. The TUC report, *2020 Vision for Skills* ⁽ⁿ¹⁾ claimed that 8,377,200 workers have not been trained, while of those who are, only 11.5 per cent receive a nationally recognised qualification. But then, receiving an NVQ isn't always a necessary part of becoming increasingly useful, and to claim imperfections on both sides is no excuse to go to war with a natural ally. Ex-heads of the CBI include Sir Clive Thompson, whose European Home Retail owned Farepak, responsible in 2006 for taking money from poor savers to subsidise incompetent management. Good managers within FE need not be excessively humble when conceptualising what Forster used to call the world of anger and telegrams. Human failings exist on both sides, but that is beside the point. More importantly, how many faults are endemic or structural?

There are many strands to this debate which need to be separated, even though they are closely related.....

Extract from Chapt 2

Often, you can only change students and their results through teachers. Changing the behaviour of teachers is not so different to changing that of students, so it would be ironic if teachers were asked to alter students by applying complex psychological insights then treated to the crude language of old-fashioned transactional management when it comes to their own motivation. Layard (2005) is an economist who reminds us that, even outside education, security is more important than income targets, so that incentive and performance related pay doesn't usually improve quality. The experience of job-fulfilment, ownership, challenge and autonomy are more effective. His model is based on a more rounded view of human nature – one we might have a right to expect in an educational institution, however scarred by incorporation. FE staff could often earn more in secondary schools or in other industries. There is a reason they still work in FE and that reason, once you discover it, should be the basis of all actions that require or seek to increase their motivation.

Layard also reminds us of what all good teachers know - many assumptions about human behaviour and self-fulfilling prophecies. Tight supervision generates behaviour that requires even tighter control, so trust is an essential part of any manager/staff relationship. As Handy is quick to point out, trust can be misplaced and abused, but he also agrees that successful organisations tend to have more of it (pp 327-330,374). Management is not about direct control, which is expensive and inefficient, but about internalising the organisation's aims to facilitate successful delegation. This requires:

A clear understanding of the limits of responsibility

A clear understanding of what would constitute success and failure (although not always strict limits on the method of achieving them)

A clear understanding of how and when the employee is to be monitored and held accountable.

This may be a brief conversation about a relatively small matter, or part of the annual appraisal system. Appraisals have been known to alienate the staff they are designed to motivate (or control). They can be seen as just another set of papers to be filled in for your benefit, not theirs. But they also provide a chance to find out what motivates each individual, so you can think more carefully about ways to internalise the organisation's aims. After all,

While it may take some time to figure out how to adapt to the new management scheme, people can usually find ways around the constraints posed by innovations. - Best (2006) p102-3

so if teachers do not adopt your aims as their own, then your aims may prove to be irrelevant.

Questions to ask about how your system works, or how you apply it, include
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