Putting Your Leadership Purpose to Work

Part Three

You’ve been putting your written leadership purpose to work and maximizing the benefits of those efforts by being intentional in its application (part one). You’ve also discovered the value in sharing your written leadership purpose with your team (part two). Now, let’s revisit some of what we discussed during the symposium in how to use the power of purpose to build employee engagement in your organization. You may recall from the symposium there are three key components involved in doing this:

1. Enhancing employees’ sense of meaningful work.
2. Supporting autonomy in your employees.
3. Supporting values congruence in your employee.

Getting started on this process typically creates two common thoughts in business executives that get in the way of actually doing what they know will certainly help their employees and company:

1. "I just don’t have the time to do this!"
2. "I don’t even know where to begin!"

One of the ways we can help with both of these limiting beliefs is to give you our best advice as to where and how to begin in a way that is not unbearably time consuming and will generate the greatest positive impact. So, here are two pieces of advice:

First, as with all company initiatives, change must start at the top. Begin with your team. Many business leaders skip this step, believing their own team already has the mindset and benefits created by a sense of purpose. Don’t make the mistake of making that assumption! Your ultimate goal is not to just give your team the powerful engagement tool of purpose, but to model for your team what you want them doing for their own teams. That way, you are the catalyst to help cascade the leadership practices you want deep into your organization. In a sense, you create an army of disciples taking the message and the process throughout the organization. That will take a huge bite out of your time commitment.

Second, start small with your own team. Start with just one of the three key components listed above. We recommend starting with the first listed – enhancing your employees’ sense of meaningful work. Helping them understand how their efforts have a positive impact on others is a great starting point because this is the essence of purpose. Recall from the symposium, this step helps create a sense that their work is important, bigger than themselves and their role in the company makes a difference. You are enhancing your team’s feeling of meaningful work. You may recall there are four steps to this process, and you may want to refer to your worksheet from the symposium to help you execute on these steps:

1. Explain how their job contributes to the company success. Be specific and provide concrete examples.
2. Share testimonials and other communications from your clients/customers that demonstrate how their lives were improved or touched by the company’s products.
3. Give your employees some dedicated time to help other employees. What a terrific way to build engagement while sharing expertise and resources, all while building employee relationships.

4. Encourage and empower your employees to take on new challenges and propose how to minimize hindrances.

Once you’ve successfully launched this key component with your team, turn to the second key component, repeat the process and then tackle the third.

One final caveat: The deeper this process goes into your organization, the more help your leadership at those lower levels may need to deliver the right messages in the right way. There are two reasons for this: One is the deeper you go, the less experienced your leaders tend to be, so they may need some skill building to effectively pull off the task (see step 3 from the four-step process listed above to assist with this!). Also, the deeper you go, the more difficult it can be complete the steps just because the nature of the work being done may have shifted to more routine tasks. However, recall one of the busted myths from the symposium: Purpose and meaning can’t be applied to “dirty jobs” or manual labor. Sometimes it takes a little effort, but all jobs in an organization provide meaning, otherwise they wouldn’t exist. People in all kinds of jobs can and do find meaning in them. Spending time doing “spot checks” on how the process is moving down your organization will help you identify leaders who need help in these areas.

Thank you for joining us for the 2019 Executive Symposium! We hope this has been an impactful experience that has encouraged you forward in your leadership journey. Your journey doesn’t need to stop here. The BB&T Leadership Institute is a uniquely qualified leadership development partner that creates dynamic leaders, increases employee retention and improves the bottom line. Beginning with each company’s specific goals and challenges, our business advisors will work with you to identify optimal solutions to address your needs. Email us at LeadershipInstitute@BBandT.com to schedule a free consultation.

We also recommend

Article: When Tradition Embraces Change

White paper: A Leader’s Guide to Change Management

Video: The BB&T Leadership Series: Jon Gordon – Developing Positive People, Part 1

Podcast: Leadership Amplitude Episode 2: The Other Half of the Solution