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**What ingredients are required
to retain employees' discretionary effort?
(what makes employees go the extra mile?)**

Aspire Project Report

WLGA/West Midlands Employers

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INTRODUCTION

The members of our Aspire project group are drawn from various areas of Human Resources and Organisational Development and have very different roles within our respective Councils, these encompass Equalities, Management Development/ Organisational Development and Operational HR.

We discovered early on in our cohort discussions around research topics that we have a common interest in employee engagement, albeit within our Councils we are all at different stages of progress in engaging with our employees. As a consequence we also have a common interest in discretionary effort and what makes employees "go the extra mile", after much discussion and consideration of the research already available, we decided that our research topic would be;

"What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort? (What makes employees go the extra mile?)"

More specifically through the use of research within our Councils across all levels of the organisations, we wanted a deeper understanding of discretionary effort in local government and from that understanding how we can enhance and grow it for the benefit of all our Councils.

An article in CIPD's People Management (PM editorial) in 2006 reported on how to unlock employees' discretionary effort. They acknowledge that setting hard performance targets and measures can have a detrimental impact on an employee's welfare and result in burn out. The article suggests a number of initiatives be in place to encourage discretionary effort, which includes:

- **Introduce positive feedback**
Recognising peoples' efforts and not just giving feedback when things go wrong.
- **Align personal and organisational goals**
Finding out what people like doing and seeing how they can fit in the team and organisational goals.
- **Encourage peer enforcement**
Ensuring there is a positive team spirit where successes are shared and celebrated.
- **Focus on attitude as well as skill**
The manager's attitude will have an impact on the teams' attitude – if it is negative then they are unlikely to unlock an employee's discretionary effort, attitudes needs to be positive and optimistic.
- **Rely on persuasion, not power**
Encourage buy-in from team members at an early stage, listen and involve them.
- **Nurture inspirational leadership**
The main reason for an employee to leave an organisation is a poor relationship with their immediate boss. Anyone with responsibility for managing others should therefore be encouraged to spend a few minutes each day reflecting on how far they have inspired and energised, instead of merely asking – or even worse, demanding that someone performs.

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

- **Don't underestimate the importance of fun**

High-performance cultures are fun cultures. Individuals believe in themselves and each other and enjoy what they do, making the workplace a great place to be. If you want to get the most out of employees, but you can't remember the last time you all had fun together, plan a social activity.

In addition, in the publication, *The 21st Century Public Servant* (Catherine Needham and Catherine Mangan, Birmingham University) their research identified 10 characteristics which are associated with the 21st Century Public Servant, we have considered the following four characteristics fit with our research into discretionary effort. The 21st Century Public Servant will,

1. undertake a wider range of roles, future public services require a set of workforce roles which may be different to those of the past;
2. engage with citizens in a way that expressed their shared humanity and pooled expertise, the notion of working in partnership or co-productively with citizens was the preferred approach of most people interviewed for their research;
3. be recruited and rewarded for generic skills as well as technical expertise, their research found that generic skills are becoming as important as professional skills, with 'soft skills around' communication, organisation, and caring becoming more highly prized;
4. build a career which is fluid across sectors and services, people are unlikely to stay in one sector or service area for life and require portable skills that are valued in different settings.

We set out to establish if discretionary effort is intrinsic to an individual employee or if there are extrinsic motivating factors within an organisation which contribute to discretionary effort.

BACKGROUND

In the current climate of economic austerity, organisations increasingly rely on high levels of performance from their employees. The expectation is also that they do 'more and more with less', 'engage' with organisational objectives and values and 'go the extra mile'. Public sector organisations, once having had a reputation for providing a job for life, good pay and pensions, are coming under increasing pressure to create significant financial savings. (Ref: CIPD, Dr Martin Reddington, *Employee and Organisational Engagement (OE) in Times of Austerity – A Longitudinal Study of a Public Sector Organisation*).

To date, little research has been conducted into how local authority work environments affect engagement of public sector employees within their organisations. However, growing evidence is being published that indicates that engaged employees, loosely defined as workers who are emotionally committed to their jobs, give better customer service, are more productive and are more willing to go that "extra mile" for the organisation.

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

According to MacLeod and Brady (2007) in their book 'The Extra Mile' they outline that "it is an employee's willingness to engage and put discretionary effort into their work in the form of time, brainpower and energy, above and beyond what it considered adequate. Engaged employees have the commitment and desire to always do the best job, they believe in the purpose of the organisation and demonstrate that belief through their actions and attitudes". The Extra Mile reveals why and how you should engage the other 88%, those who are not fully engaged. The route to success lies in the latent energy contained within this 88%.

Every manager relies on discretionary effort from their staff and these efforts contribute positively to team and organisational effectiveness and in turn have a direct impact on operational and organisational outcomes and achievements. But what is discretionary effort?

Effort sits between motivation and performance. If we are motivated, we behave in a particular way. That behaviour causes performance. From a practical perspective, the work a person does and the performance they achieve or should achieve is defined in their job description, in day to day instructions given by their manager and in day to day objectives jointly agreed between the employee and their manager, but if employees only did what was defined, they would not exhibit high performance in the eyes of their managers. There's more to achieving performance than just defined efforts. Discretionary effort can therefore be defined as all those other activities beneficial to the organisation that are not so clear.

"Employees feel inclined to undertake discretionary effort when they feel engagement with the job and are committed to the organisation. Engagement and commitment cause employees to be motivated to apply effort into those ill-defined tasks not outlined in job descriptions. Employees often cease to exhibit discretionary effort when the psychological contract is breached". (John Berry on 30th November 2015, <https://timelesstime.co.uk/knowledgebase/discretionary-behaviours>)

However, it is important to note that not all employees are engaged and, indeed, the number who are 'fully engaged', meaning that they score highly on every dimension, can be surprisingly small, often less than one in five. The search for the 'fully engaged employee' may be something of a chimera or distraction since a worker can be highly engaged in one or two aspects of work but less so in others yet still be very effective and committed.

http://www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/s/1/Building_employee_engagement-accessible-version-Jun-2012.pdf

Our organisations also need to be mindful of the question, is discretionary effort always positive? Little is known about the personal cost to employees for example research shows "that employees who regularly show discretionary effort experience higher levels of emotional exhaustion and work-family conflict. This is particularly true for those who generally carry out their responsibly at a high level".

WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE

We all want to be more productive but getting motivated enough to actually get things done can seem impossible. Social scientists have been studying motivation for decades, trying to find out what motivates our behaviour, how and why.

There are a large number of theories of motivation that have been developed over the years. The most popular theories of motivation that can help organisations to increase workplace productivity are:

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

The Two-Factor Theory of motivation (otherwise known as dual-factor theory or motivation-hygiene theory) was developed by psychologist Frederick Herzberg in the 1950s.

Analysing the responses of 200 accountants and engineers who were asked about their positive and negative feelings about their work, Herzberg found 2 factors that influence employee motivation and satisfaction...

1. **Motivator factors** – Simply put, these are factors that lead to satisfaction and motivate employees to work harder. Examples might include enjoying your work, feeling recognised and career progression.
2. **Hygiene factors** – These factors can lead to dissatisfaction and a lack of motivation if they are absent. Examples include salary, company policies, benefits, relationships with managers and co-workers.

According to Herzberg's findings, while motivator and hygiene factors both influenced motivation, they appeared to work completely independently of each other.

While motivator factors increased employee satisfaction and motivation, the absence of these factors didn't necessarily cause dissatisfaction. Likewise, the presence of hygiene factors didn't appear to increase satisfaction and motivation but their absence caused an increase in dissatisfaction.

How to apply it to the workplace

This theory implies that for the happiest and most productive workforce, you need to work on improving both motivator and hygiene factors.

To help motivate your employees, make sure they feel appreciated and supported. Give plenty of feedback and make sure your employees understand how they can grow and progress through the company.

To prevent job dissatisfaction, make sure that your employees feel that they are treated right by offering them the best possible working conditions and fair pay. Make sure you pay attention to your team and form supportive relationships with them.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The Hierarchy of Needs theory was coined by psychologist Abraham Maslow in his 1943 paper "A Theory of Human Motivation".

The central thinking of the theory is that individuals' most basic needs must be met before they become motivated to achieve higher level needs.

The hierarchy is made up of 5 levels:

1. **Physiological** – these needs must be met in order for a person to survive, such as food, water and shelter.
2. **Safety** – including personal and financial security and health and wellbeing.
3. **Love/belonging** – the need for friendships, relationships and family.
4. **Esteem** – the need to feel confident and be respected by others.
5. **Self-actualisation** – the desire to achieve everything you possibly can and become the most that you can be.

According to the hierarchy of needs, you must be in good health, safe and secure with meaningful relationships and confidence before you are able to be the most that you can be.

How to apply it to the workplace

Many managers struggle with the abstract concept of self-actualization and so focus on lower levels of the pyramid instead. In order to get the most out of your team, you should also make sure you support them in other aspects of their lives outside work. Perhaps you could offer more flexible approaches to work such as flexible working hours to give employees time to focus on their families; home working and remuneration i.e. make sure they are paid fairly to help them feel financially stable. <https://simplypsychology.org/maslow.html>

Vroom's Expectancy Theory

Expectancy Theory proposes that people will choose how to behave depending on the outcomes they expect as a result of their behaviour. In other words, we decide what to do based on what we expect the outcome to be. At work, it might be that we work longer hours because we expect a pay rise.

However, Expectancy Theory also suggests that the process by which we decide our behaviours is also influenced by how likely we perceive those rewards to be. In this instance, workers may be more likely to work harder if they had been promised a pay rise (and thus perceived that outcome as very likely) than if they had only assumed they might get one (and perceived the outcome as possible but not likely)

Expectancy Theory is based on three elements:

1. **Expectancy** – the belief that your effort will result in your desired goal. This is based on your past experience, your self-confidence and how difficult you think the goal is to achieve.

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

2. **Instrumentality** – the belief that you will receive a reward if you meet performance expectations.
3. **Valence** – the value you place on the reward.

Therefore, according to Expectancy Theory, people are most motivated if they believe that they will receive a desired reward if they hit an achievable target. They are least motivated if they don't want the reward or they don't believe that their efforts will result in the reward.

How to apply it to the workplace

The key here is to set achievable goals for your employees and provide rewards that they actually want. Rewards don't have to come in the form of pay rises or bonuses. Praise, opportunities for progression and "employee of the month" style rewards can all go a long way in motivating your employees. <http://www.leadership-central.com/expectancy-theory-of-motivation.html#axzz4hgz1zDfY>

Neuroscience

Neuroscience is the study of the nervous system and brain; it looks at how messages are transferred around our brains to become thoughts, feelings, actions and behaviours. Advances in this field are building insight and understanding in to the way we work; how we learn and the important fields of motivation and engagement.

This insight contributes to knowledge of key ingredients in discretionary effort, and as all discretionary effort starts and ends within the individual and cannot be mandated, it must be nurtured and facilitated. Due to its potential to add value to organisational performance, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness, it is vital that we get to grips with the key concepts.

Recent research has begun to provide insights into the neurological drivers of behaviour in the social environment (Lieberman, 2008; Lieberman and Oschner, 2001; Rock, 2008)

Neuroscientist Evian Gordon, in his research proposes that the organising principle of the brain is to minimise danger and maximise reward (Gordon, 2008).

We are motivated to approach or avoid situations and people based on the reward or threat content of the perceived interaction. Leaders and managers have the positional power to influence the threat and reward factors present in the work environment.

SCARF

The SCARF model (Rock, 2008) is made up of five domains;

1. **Status** - is about relative importance to others. Situations, learning or experiences that are perceived to enhance status will be motivational.
2. **Certainty** - concerns being able to predict the future. If we lack certainty about a situation our response may be to disengage.

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

3. **Autonomy** - provides a sense of control over events. If autonomy is denied it can be a factor in increased stress levels
4. **Relatedness** - is a sense of safety with others. If we feel trust, empathy and social connection, oxytocin is released in the brain, which increases desire/motivation
5. **Fairness** - a perception of fair exchanges between people. A perceived lack of fairness stirs hostility and threat

These five domains have been shown in many studies to activate the same reward circuitry that physical rewards activate, like money, and the same threat circuitry that physical threats, like pain, activate (Rock, 2009b).

It has been recognised that these domains are primary needs; if leaders and managers comprehend this then it can aid interactions that encourage engagement and activate potential discretionary effort.

RESEARCH APPROACH

Research was undertaken in two phases, quantitative and qualitative data was collected in 2016 and 2017 from employees of the three organisations and from multiple departments within each of the organisations.

Researchers collated data via interviews and questionnaires from a cross section of staff at differing grades, positions and roles in three Local Government Authorities in Wales, employing over 23,000 staff between them, this research aims to examine the factors influencing discretionary effort and what makes employee's go the extra mile in a Local Government organisation.

In the first phase of the research Managers (including Chief Officers) participated in individual meetings where their views were collected as to what they felt made their staff "go the extra mile" and what barriers (if any) stopped staff from going the extra mile. Researchers interviewed between 6 to 8 managers each within their respective Councils.

As part of the interview each manager was also asked to provide details of employees within their service areas or of whom they had knowledge, who they perceived "go the extra mile" to assist with our research.

We had discussed if we would be able to widen the scope to include employees who are perceived not to offer discretionary effort, however, we were unable to find a means by which we would be able to evaluate the data effectively whilst ensuring employees could not identify whether they were in the discretionary effort or non discretionary effort group.

The second phase consisted of the nominated employees completing an online survey containing a series of questions with a selected range of options and of three open-ended questions, providing evidence as to what they felt made them "go the extra mile" and what stopped them going the extra mile.

Phase 1 - Research with Managers

We outlined the project title and explained that by discretionary effort we mean the level of effort people could give if they wanted to, above and beyond the call of duty. The rationale for meeting with managers for the first phase was to establish if the scope of our project was relevant and if the findings would add value to our organisations.

Managers were asked the following set questions:

1. What does discretionary effort look like in your service area?
2. What value is it to your service?
3. What drives an employee to go the extra mile? For example, conditions, management.
4. What prevents employees from going the extra mile?
5. How do you acknowledge or reward employees that go the extra mile?
6. What are the implications to your service of employees not going the extra mile?
7. Do you think discretionary effort makes the organisation more resilient?
8. To what extent do existing HR practices help or hinder an employee's discretionary effort?
9. What can be done to retain discretionary effort?
10. Can you identify employees who we can speak to for our research?

Findings Phase 1 - Managers

A summary of notes from the interviews with managers is contained within Appendix 1.

All managers interviewed were candid and open with the researchers and were willing to share practices that happen within their teams that don't necessarily fit with existing Council policies and procedures.

The consensus of opinion amongst the managers interviewed is that Council services would not run without employees who provide discretionary effort. Quotes from managers regarding discretionary effort, include the following;

"The Council couldn't function",
"It can make or break a service",
"Without it the service wouldn't run smoothly".

The research also identified that no one aspect to the responses to the questions was more important than another. The findings from the managers research is summarised as follows;

People who offer discretionary effort;

- Want to work for their manager and team
- Go over and above other colleagues such as unpaid extra hours
- Care about what they do and have pride in doing things well

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

- Are best placed to identify and address issues with service users
- Feel valued, as do the service users being supported
- Are flexible in their approach
- Have autonomy and flexibility over their own work

Organisational benefits of discretionary effort;

- Changes in approach to service provision
- Services being maintained despite efficiencies and reduced staff levels
- Improved reputation to internal and external customers
- Without it deadlines may be missed
- Not limited by title or grade – it could be anyone
- Reward is not just about remuneration

Negative aspects of discretionary effort;

- It can't easily be picked up in JD's and recruitment
- Over reliance on it and it becomes the "norm"
- Fear of getting things wrong
- Leaves a bigger gap if someone leaves
- May lead to burn out
- Customers limit contact to employees they receive good service from
- Relying on people who go the extra mile to offset people who don't – if you lose these people and don't replace with a similar person the service is already at detriment

In addition, during the discussions with managers their thoughts as to what would retain employee discretionary effort and what prevents discretionary effort are;

Retention of discretionary effort;

- Engagement
- Trust
- Flexibility
- Autonomy
- Employee recognition programmes
- Non-financial rewards
- Recognising it's over and above – employees have the choice

Prevention of discretionary effort;

- Capacity / workload
- Rigid cultures / lack of flexibility
- Uncertainty about change / efficiencies
- People can be selective with it - they will do it for people but not the organisation
- Inadequate recognition and rewards

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

- People who want to do it and people who don't want to do it
- Personal feelings

Overall the research from managers identified that discretionary effort is primarily intrinsic to the individual, although there are factors that may contribute to employees' willingness to provide discretionary effort. This was explored further with the employee research.

Phase 2 - Research with Employees

The employees identified by managers were invited to complete a survey using Survey Monkey, the purpose of which was to establish their views on discretionary effort, what makes them as an individual go the extra mile and if there were any factors that influenced this.

We outlined the project title and explained that by discretionary effort we mean the level of effort people could give if they wanted to, above and beyond the call of duty

Employees were asked the following set questions, questions 1 to 6 included a series of optional choices, based upon the responses to the questions posed to managers, the full set of questions and summary of responses is contained in Appendix 2;

1. In what ways do you go the extra mile?
2. What motivates you to go the extra mile?
3. How does your line manager/service recognise that you go the extra mile?
4. What can prevent you from going the extra mile?
5. What personal rewards do you get (or would get) for going the extra mile?
6. What additional things could the Council do to encourage you to go the extra mile?
7. Would you like to share an example of when you have gone the extra mile and the impact it has had?
8. If you would like the opportunity to discuss this further and participate in our presentation please provide your details below.

Of the employees invited to complete the survey a total of 76 people responded.

Analysis of the Employee Research

The highest proportion of responses to the survey was received from Corporate Services, closely followed by Planning and Regeneration and Social Services.

Question 1, In what ways do you go the extra mile?

There were 74 responses, the top four responses fell between 85 – 92%, a 7% difference between the top answer and fourth top answer, all of these responses related to employees,

- taking pride in their work,

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

- supporting others whether it is colleagues or customers and
- supporting their teams.

All other responses were above 50% and included;

- customer service
- contributing to efficiency
- working unpaid hours

Question 2, What motivates you to go the extra mile?

There were 75 responses to question 2 which were more varied;

- 84%, the highest responded that it was their own desire to do so that motivated them to go the extra mile.

50 – 75%, these were a combination of;

- providing excellent customer service/contributing to service delivery
- feeling that their work matters/achieving targets
- personal development and
- not letting others down

25 - 49% were linked to people, colleagues or managers;

- Expectations of others
- Encouragement from or pleasing line manager or senior manager

0 – 25%, the lowest aspects were receiving praise 16% and salary 12%

Question 3, How does your line manager/service recognise that you go the extra mile?

There were 73 responses, again, the responses to question 3 were more varied with the by far the widest differential in percentage of the six questions.

They ranged from 82% as the highest response to 0% for the lowest, with the majority of responses falling within the 25-49 percentiles;

- 82% responded that their line manager praised and/or thanked them

50 – 75%, only two responses fell within this percentile

- Praise and/or thanks from customers and
- Positive relationships

25 - 49% were linked to feedback and opportunities;

- Feedback relating to timely and structured methods

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

- Opportunities for development and working on other tasks/projects

0 – 24%, were linked to promotion opportunities 8%, recognition 1% and rewards 0%

Question 4, What can prevent you from going the extra mile?

There were only 55 responses to questions 4 and 5, the lowest number of responses to the questions with optional answers.

None of the responses to question 4 were above 50% with a fairly even split of responses in the 25 – 49% and 0 –24% ranges.

25% - 49%, these were linked to expectations, support and motivation;

- Expectations being unreasonably high of them, demotivated, lack of support, having nothing back
- Not having clear expectations about the job, lack of job satisfaction

0% - 24% were mainly linked to the individual and motivation;

- Job security
- Didn't feel the need to, didn't feel that belonged to the team, others don't do it
- 16% also stated the manager

Question 5, What personal rewards do you get (or would get) for going the extra mile?

As stated previously there were 55 responses to the question, the two highest responses were linked to the individual, the remaining all fall within the 25- 49% percentile;

- 93% knowledge they had done a good job
- 85% self-satisfaction

25 - 49%, within this percentile feedback from the customer and manager are the highest and the same at 44%, the remaining are linked to;

- Confidence
- New opportunities/skills
- Making a name for them self
- Boosting their resilience

Question 6, What additional things could the Council do to encourage you to go the extra mile?

There were 70 responses, only one of the options achieved above 50%; six fell within 25 - 49% and seven within 0 - 25% although there were no responses below 10%.

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

51% good working conditions

25 - 49% are linked to trust, job expectations and recognition;

- Trusted to get on with job and trust from the Council
- Clear job expectations
- Able to use strengths and skills
- More recognition for effort

0 - 24% are also linked to recognition along with, praise, performance and policies;

- A formal recognition scheme, such as employee of the month
- Manager dealing with under performance
- Support and praise
- Providing interesting work
- Better HR policies

Summary of employee research

A recurring theme from the research we have undertaken with employees is that discretionary effort is driven by the individual and whilst there may be some external factors that may be motivators, for our employees primarily it is about them as individuals.

The highest responses to our research are that it is the knowledge they have done a good job, self-satisfaction and their own desire to do so which drives discretionary effort. The main themes are providing good customer service, supporting colleagues, that their work matters and taking pride in their work.

Within the research we also identified that the factors which motivate employees the least are reward and recognition.

Findings Phase 2 - Employees

From our research with employees we have identified that;

People who offer discretionary effort;

- Do so by their own desire
- Take pride in their work and the knowledge they have done a good job
- Support others, colleagues, customers and teams
- Provide excellent customer service
- Go over and above other colleagues such as unpaid extra hours
- Appreciate praise and thanks from their line manager
- Are flexible in their approach
- Are not driven by reward or formal recognition

Detrimental factors for employees;

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

- Unreasonable expectations leading to demotivation
- Lack of support
- Not having any form of feedback
- Job security
- Lack of promotion opportunities
- Managers not dealing with under performance of colleagues

Factors which may encourage discretionary effort

- Good working conditions
- Trust to get on with the job
- Trust from the Council
- Clear job expectations
- More formal recognition, not linked to financial reward

OVERALL SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There is much correlation between the findings from the research we undertook with managers and employees, indeed, our research has identified that discretionary effort is intrinsic to an employee, and isn't tied to reward or formal recognition, as employees who are inclined to offer discretionary effort will do so regardless of any other factors.

Managers and employees are both of the view that employees who offer discretionary effort do so inherently out of caring about what they do and taking pride in doing things well.

Conversely, we have also identified that over reliance on discretionary effort may have an adverse effect on individuals and teams, especially if it becomes the perceived "norm". If expectations of an individual are unreasonably high this may lead to demotivation, lack of job satisfaction and ultimately to burn out.

Our Councils need to be mindful of burn out, we need to recognise the signs and support our employees by providing feedback, ensuring expectations are not set too high, monitor workload levels and provide choice and autonomy in the way we work.

It has also become apparent that there are extrinsic factors that may influence the offer of discretionary effort examples of these being good working conditions, trust, clear job expectations, opportunities for development and praise from managers

Our findings show that many of the theories relating to motivation are still relevant today and our Council's need to be considerate of the value of these in providing the environment and factors to influence employees to offer discretionary effort.

Herzberg's two factor theory of motivation which influences employee motivation through motivator and hygiene factors are indicated in the findings that employees

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take pride in a job well done, receive praise and thanks from managers and provide support for colleagues.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs thinking which is linked to basic needs being met are indicated in our findings that good working conditions, the desire to go the extra mile, support for colleagues and customers are important to our employees.

Our data also shows commonalities with current neuroscience research which offers insight into the key ingredients necessary for the offer of discretionary effort from employees, what they put into their job in terms of their thinking, performance and behaviours and the conditions that can destroy the choice to "go the extra mile".

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we believe that we have identified the ingredients to retain discretionary effort, that it is of significant value to our Councils and many services have come to rely on it.

"The ingredients to retain employees' discretionary effort are,"

- **A safe and positive culture** which allows risks to be taken, whereby employees can bend the rules
- **Trust** that the employee has the interest of the customer and organisation at their heart
- **Autonomy** for employees to try new ways of working
- **Recognition of the extra mile** through some kind of acknowledgement, sometimes a "thank you" is enough
- **A good working environment** which is aesthetically pleasing and provides basic facilities
- **Employing the right people** by using recruitment processes to identify people with the right values and beliefs at the recruitment stage.

We have also concluded through our discussions with managers and employees that Discretionary effort is;

- Of huge value to the Council's involved
- That many of our Council services rely on it
- It looks different for individuals
- It's intrinsic to individuals and they have a strong desire to go the extra mile
- It can cause conflict with workplace procedures
- It is not universal
- There are a number of motivating factors but helping others or customers was a strong motivator
- That managers encourage it by employee engagement, developing trust and relationships
- That some employees feel that their managers don't recognise it but they still do it for the team or customer

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

- Individuals get personal rewards from going the extra mile

RECOMMENDATIONS

In undertaking this research and considering our conclusion we believe our Councils have an opportunity to develop a culture in which discretionary effort will thrive.

We have identified the ingredients to retain discretionary effort and in doing so our organisations have an opportunity to ensure that managers have the skills to promote an environment where discretionary effort is offered by our employees, we recommend that managers should:

- Be clear on expectations of their team members
- Recognise the value and contribution of team members
- Provide timely feedback to their teams
- Provide opportunities for employees to develop
- Be mindful of workloads and demands on individuals
- Provide an environment where employees feel trusted and are able to work with autonomy
- Be flexible in their approach

In addition we feel that we have identified a very real opportunity for our Councils to benefit from our research with potential employees and should consider the following approach to hiring new employees;

Hire for attitude, train for skill

- Recruitment practices need to be modernised to recognise candidates who have the right attitude to go the extra mile
- Consider general skills versus technical skills
- Assess which current employees are high performers and use interview questions that reflect this
- Be clear about your organisation culture - who are you trying to attract

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What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

Summary of Manager Research Findings

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Debra Paskell – Highways, Planning and Regeneration, Chief Executive

Kevin Mort – Residential Child Care, Social Services, Education

1. What does discretionary effort look like in your service area?

- People do it off their own back
 - People care about what they do
 - Pride and quality – doing things well
 - Knock on effect to the service users – both employee and service user feel valued
 - Working from home / extra hours
 - Not limited by title or grade – it could be anyone
 - Can't easily pick up in JDs and recruitment
 - More autonomy over their own work – able to try things out, sharing knowledge
 - Staff care about the service
 - Staff can identify safeguarding issues i.e. children not eating / child welfare is a priority
 - Staff will to cover other staff in other areas – sickness is a big problem so this is needed often
 - People go over an above – work weekends when needed (not always paid!)
 - People want to work for you – they respect the manager
 - Team working/building the team/respect
- Negatives**
- Over reliance on discretionary effort
 - Staff are worn out – people regularly taking work home
 - Not considered as discretionary effort “it's part of the norm”
 - Fear of getting things wrong
 - Leaves a bigger gap if somebody leaves
 - Customers only contact those they get a better service from
 - The service can go the extra mile and not just individuals e.g.

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	<p>in bad weather serviced redirected to day care centres, funerals etc. Also clean up areas that are not necessarily council property but do it anyway.</p>
<p>2. What value is it to your service?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huge value • Change approached to service planning /partnership approach • Improve services • Without it service would have struggled due to efficiencies and staff losses allowed us to maintain service • Potentially missing deadlines • “Sometimes the extra miles looks like sticking your neck out on the line” (but doing for the right reason) • “it can make or break a service” • Relying on people who go the extra mile to offset people who don't – if you lose this people and don't replace with a similar person the service is already at detriment • Can improve reputation • Puts in good stead with Councillors • Couldn't do without it – staff flexibility
<p>3. What drives and employee to go the extra mile?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intrinsic to the employee - personal • Self-reward – people can get something out of it • Caring about the reputation of the service • The opportunity to grow and have freedom • People want to work in that way • When recruiting looks for the personality at the interview – looks for people to get the job done. • Management style • Flexibility – recognising that this flexibility isn't within current flexi process – managers discretion • Positive working environment • Need to step in when employees are doing too much to protect their well being • Managing expectations of what is required and achievable

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets are well known • Staff know where they fit in the jigsaw • Positive stories in service newsletter • Recognition • They care • The way their manager treats them • Part of a big team – if one doesn't do it, it will drag the rest of the team down • Understanding the impact of doing it • Same ambitions • Most people want to do a good job
<p>4. What prevents employees from going the extra mile?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not being too prescriptive • Not having too many constraints • Not giving flexibility • Capacity / workload • People who want to do it or those who don't want to • Needless activities – motivation can be sapped – duplication of work • It's not expected – It's not a requirement of the job • Personal factors • Peer pressure – money / job evaluation e.g. Living wage • Peer pressure – high flyer perception as go to person • Culture in service areas – rigid • Some people complain about everything • Red tape • Uncertainty about change/efficiencies • Dealing with negativity • Not happy with T&Cs • People can be selective with discretionary effort – they will do it for people but not the organisation • People can be discontented but it's not affecting the service – they still go the extra mile • Often down to the person – set in their ways – not prepared to

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

	<p>change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity and workload
<p>5. How do you acknowledge or reward employees that do the extra mile?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing flexibility – not formalised arrangements • Saying thank you when people leave at end of the day • Acknowledging when someone's done a good piece of work • No formal rewards – wine/chocolates • Acknowledge and pass on other appreciate and comments • Celebrate achievements • Give people the opportunity to grow and have freedom • Involve and value people • Look at distance travelled • Due to lack of promotional opportunities need to use one to ones positively to provide feedback and recognition. • Encourage recognitions and pass up to senior levels • Customer compliments are fed directly to the staff concerned • Know who are good staff but can be seen to be favouring them • Sometimes hard to distinguish what is over and above over normal job • Being honest – engaging with them • The way you behave with them
<p>6. What are the implications to your service of employees not going the extra mile?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not getting the job done • The system fails – children go into care • Services can be in crisis • Sickness levels rise • Toxic atmosphere – people don't feel value • Moral and motivation drops • Not meeting statutory timescales • Missing deadlines • Not being self-starting – not looking a different ways of doing thinks • Only dealing with statutory requirements e.g. not providing

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> care packages • People have different values • Not delivering the service • Service provided not effective – we'd just have to manage • It becomes harder to manage a service – has an impact on the service e.g. “Service user is just looked after and not loved” • Perception of service can be higher than reality – if public always rely on staff who offer discretionary effort • More complaints – council reputation • The service will stop
<p>7. Do you think discretionary effort makes the organisation more resilient?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can get tired and fatigue • If not managed its affects peoples wellbeing • People need to managed carefully “it’s not a never ending supply” • It can leave the service more vulnerable because if the person leaves need to pick up extra to do the job • Often pick up the pieces from other areas of the service as we have implemented a lot of positive change • Shows we can manage and go about what is needed
<p>8. To what extent do existing HR practices help or hinder and employee's discretionary effort?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More flexibility around staff and clients • Using common sense • Building trust • Time management • Smarter working • Do we need policies • Seen as a safety net – backup from HR if something goes wrong • Recruitment process – not able to advertise all jobs externally • Pay structure for social workers • Job evaluation structure • No recognition from individuals • Capability procedures are cumbersome

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review if we need policies in the first place • Tackling sickness can be seen as positive by those who are working hard – it can be seen as a hidden benefit • Annual leave entitlement – change leave year to birthday to birthday • E-recruitment doesn't help – people struggle with online applicants – can't get the right staff • Living wage will have huge implications • Lots have 3 or 4 different contracts – often these are not permanent so they don't have security
<p>9. What can be done to retain discretionary effort?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports including tools to support e.g. laptop/phones to work from home • Rewards – thanks/flexibility • Building trust • Consistency • Acknowledging it is discretionary and not expecting it to be standard working practices • Create the conditions e.g. culture, autonomy, safe • Staff recognition programme • Acknowledge it is discretionary and not the norm • When things don't go well spread the load • Real judge is the person and not the manager • Recognise the team as a whole • Continue to recognise • Need to bolster own staff –skills needs • Pay is the biggest problem to recruit – pay is greater in the public sector • Knowing your staff and being interested in them

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

Employee Questionnaire – “Go the extra mile”

Myself and 3 other colleagues are attending a HR Leadership programme. As part of this we are undertaking a project which we believe is relevant to the challenges we faced in our organisations. However, we need your help in determining whether this is the case or not.

Our project title is:

“What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort? (what makes employees go the extra mile?)”

We would very much appreciate if you could complete this **anonymous** questionnaire. The findings will be summarised in a project report and be reported to peers and HR leads in Councils.

By discretionary effort we mean the level of effort people could give if they wanted to, above and beyond the call of duty.

What organisation do you work for?

Neath Port Talbot Council

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council

Vale of Glamorgan

What area do you work in?

Education e.g. catering, schools, psychologists

Environmental e.g. highways, waste

Corporate e.g. finance, HR, performance

Planning

Social Services

Other

1. In what ways do you go the extra mile?

	%	Number
providing excellent customer service	73	54
contributing to greater efficiency	62	46
Working additional unpaid hours	58	43
Feeling you make a difference	55	41
Supporting the team	86	64
Seeing the outcome/end product	62	46
Help my colleagues when needed	92	68
Taking pride in my work	89	66
Striving to help others e.g. service users, residents,	85	63

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

customers		
Believing we're all in it together	59	44
Total responses: 74		

2. What motivates you to go the extra mile?

	%	Number
Your own desire to do so	84	63
You want to please your line manager/senior manager	31	23
You're happy to go out of your way for customers	68	51
Your salary	12	9
Expectations of others	27	20
You feel your work matters	68	51
Your work contributes to the service delivery	57	43
Achievement of targets /goals	60	45
Receiving praise	16	12
Your personal development	53	40
Encouragement from your manager	32	24
You don't want to let others down	72	54
Total responses: 75		

3. How does your line manager/service recognise that you go the extra mile?

	%	Number
Praise and/or thanks from your line manager	82	60
Praise and/or thanks from customers/service users	53	39
Timely feedback specifically about your effort	32	23
Structured feedback from your line manager e.g. at supervision, one to one, performance appraisal.	48	35
Rewards	0	0
Promotion opportunities	8	6
Opportunities for development	33	24
Chance to work on other tasks/projects	27	20

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

Recognition schemes .e.g. Employee of the Month	1	1
Positive relationships	60	44
Total responses: 73		

4. What can prevent you from going the extra mile?

	%	Number
Your manager	16	9
Lack of clear expectations about your job, tasks etc.	42	23
Lack of job security	22	12
Don't feel I need to	9	5
Don't feel you belong to the team	11	6
You get nothing back	33	18
You are de-motivated	40	22
Lack of job satisfaction	29	16
Lack of support	33	18
Others don't do it	22	12
Unreasonably high expectations	35	19
Total responses: 55		

5. What personal rewards do you get (or would get) for going the extra mile?

	%	Number
Self-satisfaction	85	64
Knowledge you've done a good job	93	70
Customer/service user feedback	44	33
It boosts your resilience	28	21
Positive line manager feedback	44	33
Increased confidence	43	32
New opportunities	28	21
New skills	37	28

What ingredients are required to retain employees' discretionary effort?

Makes a name for yourself	31	23
Total responses: 55		

6. What additional things could the Council do to encourage you to go the extra mile?

	%	Number
More recognition for my effort	44	31
Regular praise	19	13
Allow me to use my strengths/skills	36	25
More effective management	27	19
Provide interesting work	21	15
Clear job expectations	30	21
Increased trust	26	18
Support from manager	20	14
A formal recognition scheme e.g. Employee of the Month	16	11
I'm trusted to get on with my job	40	28
Manager deals effectively with under performance	23	16
Better HR policies	16	11
Good work conditions e.g. environment and facilities	51	36
A sense of belonging	20	14
Total responses: 70		

7. Would you like to share an example of when you have gone the extra mile and the impact it has had?

25 responses received

8. If you would like the opportunity to discuss this further and participate in our presentation please provide your details below.

5 responses received only 2 people indicated a willingness to be contacted