

PiT-Stop®'s 10 Stages of Intimacy

Employee engagement is in the news daily. It can be a measure of how positively employees feel and speak about their employer, how likely they are to stay, achieve high morale, provide excellent customer service and how committed they are to go "above and beyond" to help achieve business objectives. PiT-Stop® demonstrates the proven ability to harness this discretionary effort. The organization wins corporate health (productivity, cost savings, hard ROI) and the employee wins personal health (recognition, being listened to and being engaged).

PiT-Stop®, the bottom-up idea generation methodology that stands for problem finding, structuring and solving in teams, offers a unique approach that values employees in many special ways ... we call it our 10 stages of employee intimacy. Here they are:

1/ Train-the-Trainer

Employees from the organization are trained in 4 areas: problem finding – interviewing, problem structuring – charting and clustering, problem decision-making – priority setting and spreadsheeting, and problem solving – one-hour facilitated group solution-setting exercises.

2/ Go to Gemba

Gemba is the place of work. Individual interviews occur at the place of work where the employee is the expert. There they can show, demonstrate and explain much better than in some seminar room. Gemba engineering ... academic knowledge may well reside in carpeted towers, but the shopfloor worker and the office administrator have practical hands-on experience.

3/ Reflective Listening

We train 2-person interview teams from the organization to listen. Being taken seriously is the highest esteem that an employee can be offered. Problems as seen from the employee's perspective are duly noted. "Clearly defined is half solved" is the mantra under which these interviews take place.

4/ Transparency

Fellow employees armed with clipboards ask simple closed questions and record problems and ideas during the actual interview. Similarly, all problems are posted on problem cards and displayed visually. Problem details are entered in a spreadsheet which is always open for all to see.

5/ Open House

Employees who have been interviewed are invited to visit our creativity centre "Find your problem" is their first task and they demonstrably see that their input is being worked with. Their questions are answered and a next stage of trust is established. Visualization is a very powerful force for changing habits and many other elements of developing ourselves and leading others.

6/ Problem Clustering and Bundling

While this stage may not seem "intimate", it does show the employees that their individual problems or ideas are part of a much larger whole. Imbedded in a cluster, or thematic area of interest, they carry the weight of many problems which address the same area.

7/ Management Decision-Making

Managers are given a 100% bottom-up view of the issues that are paramount to their staff. They assign themselves clusters of responsibility and make decisions about "who does what when". These decisions are recorded and displayed. "We listened, we took action" is the message that this stage of intimacy unequivocally demonstrates to employees.

8/ Problem Solving Sessions

During the same calendar week, individual employees are invited to attend parallel 1-hour facilitated problem solving sessions. The simple fact that they were not only listened to at their place of work but are now invited to actually help solve their own problems, sends a very important further signal of trust and respect.

9/ Recognition

There are many variations of recognition possible: be it spontaneous during the interview, whether via letter or debriefing after the week, or award-based upon implementation. Simply being listened to and taken seriously, is perhaps the greatest reward for an employee.

10/ Sustainability – Next Steps

The spreadsheet database serves as an excellent controlling and reporting instrument. Employees are kept informed and the results of the week and thereafter are visually displayed for all to see. Ongoing problem solving sessions further engage employees in addressing their own problems.

In Summary

Today's dramatically — perhaps permanently — changed business environment offers organizations the perfect opportunity to reset the baseline — taking a fresh look at the talent they have, the talent they need, and how to engage and reward their talent in the pursuit of organizational goals. PiT-Stop - Problem finding, structuring and solving in Teams – is much more than an effective and efficient bottom-up idea generation methodology. The secret to engaging employees is no secret. Giving employees a voice is the key to success.

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Bio: Bernie Sander is an international consultant, author and workshop leader. He lives in Ottawa, Canada and travels the world working with SME's and Fortune 500 organizations. He has international expertise in suggestion system design and implementation, continuous improvement processes, group facilitation and problem solving, strategic planning, recognition architectures and idea management processes. He is President of his own consulting firm, Innovation Transfer, serves on the education faculty of several international organizations and is author of the books, "A Wake-Up Call for Idea Champions" , "On Idea Management" and "PiT-Stop – Problem Finding and Problem Solving in Teams", all best practice thinking in the field of managing employee ideas. Bernie served as a past President of the North American Employee Involvement Association and speaks at many international conferences annually.