

# ORC International Leads The Search For The Key To Employee Engagement

Contributed by ORC  
Thursday, 30 July 2009  
Last Updated Thursday, 30 July 2009

The challenge of managing employee engagement during difficult times was a key theme at the 14th annual employee engagement conference, presented by ORC International. Â

Speakers from well known organisations such as Morrisons, Arqiva and the Ministry of Justice gave their views on the secret to successful employee engagement during turbulent times amidst redundancy programmes, takeovers and budget squeezes.

The conference attracted delegates from blue chip companies such as Boots and Nationwide, as well as from major public sector organisations, including local authorities, government offices and higher education institutions.

Kate Pritchard, director of employee research at ORC International, said:

“During this recession, and as we move forward into a more positive economic climate, the attitudes of workforces across the country are going to be key to our success.

“Whether it’s encouraging staff to go the extra mile to improve a company’s commercial performance, or succeeding in stimulating necessary innovation in the public sector, we need employees that are working to their full potential.

“To achieve that, we need inspirational leadership and innovative internal communications. Our speakers this year have reinforced the value of employee engagement, and delivered some fresh thinking on how organisations can improve their own approach to this vital area.”

## Engagement Champions

Delegates heard forward-thinking insights on employee engagement from experts such as Rob Neil, head of Engagement Champions Networks at the Ministry of Justice. Neil spearheaded the development of the Ministry’s Employee Engagement Project in 2007.

Innovations introduced by Neil have included the use of theatre to explain employee engagement, and the development of engagement champions throughout the organisation, an initiative that is becoming increasingly important as the department’s workload increases and budget falls.

Next month, the MoJ will be launching its own online “e-community” space for Engagement Champions to share ideas and examples of good practice.

“Our engagement champions are now acting as internal consultants to review new ways of working within the organisation and we are attracting new sorts of inquiry from employees in a way that we weren’t doing a year ago,” said Neil.

## Communicating the way forward

Innovations in employee engagement were also discussed by Derek Bradbury, Group HR Director for broadcasting company Arqiva.

The company completed a merger with National Grid Wireless in 2008, in an acquisition worth Â£2.5 billion. During turbulent times for both organisations, Bradbury stressed the need for excellent communications and leadership.

“Leaders need to be authentic and consistent,” he said. “In difficult economic times, it’s easy to take a directive approach and be polarised in our relationships with employees. But that’s a recipe for meltdown in terms of motivation and commitment from your workforce.”

## Underpinning business success

Employee engagement expert David MacLeod also spoke at the conference, to outline some results of a major review of employee engagement, which he is due to deliver to Government’s Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, this summer.

The review looks at new ways to boost the performance of employees and improve British business success.

A key recommendation, said MacLeod, would be that organisations would be invited to share their expertise in all levels of employee engagement, and that dialogue would pave the way for the launch of practical help and guidance next

spring.

“We want to raise the whole topic of employee engagement up the agenda for organisations so that, in the end, we can all be doing a better job. That will mean a win for the organisation, a win for those at work and, if you put those together, a win for the UK,” said MacLeod.

14 July 2009