New Research Points to ‘Culture of Fear’ in UK Management

Contributed by Hillcroft House
Wednesday, 24 April 2013
Last Updated Tuesday, 03 September 2013

New research carried out by Hillcroft House suggests that, increasingly, UK employees are working in a culture of fear. The research shows that, between 2008 and 2012, the number of employees who felt that their manager did not communicate effectively had risen from 58% to almost three quarters (72%). In addition, nine out of ten employees were definitely considering leaving their current employer.

The research was carried out with 350 employees in 2008 and a larger sample of 800 in 2012; the respondents were sourced from the same seven UK regions in both instances.

Detailed analysis of the results suggests that employees do not feel they are being communicated with effectively â€“ particularly prior to annual reviews when feedback is often a surprise. Employees also generally felt that managers are becoming increasingly ineffective. Those who strongly agreed that their manager was calm under pressure fell by 62%, to less than a fifth (16%). Those who strongly agreed that their manager actively listened to constructive ideas fell by two thirds (66%) to only 23% of respondents, whilst the number who strongly agreed that their manager clarified departmental objectives halved to less than a third of respondents (29%) between 2008 and 2012.

Worryingly, less than a third (31%) of respondents strongly agreed that their manager had the â€˜necessary skills and knowledge to take the department forwardâ€™ â€“ a figure which has halved between 2008 and 2012 and which demonstrates lack of trust in senior management.

These fears have led a huge reduction in job satisfaction. In 2008, a fifth (21%) of respondents strongly agreed that they were satisfied with their current job. In 2012, this figure has fallen by 90% to a mere 2% of respondents. In addition, 93% of respondents in 2012 â€˜strongly agreedâ€™ that they would definitely consider leaving their current job â€“ up from 49% in 20

Adam Crizzle, Managing Director at Hillcroft House, a consultancy dealing with performance management, research and personnel development, had the following to say about the research:

"We believe these results may have been caused by training cuts due to the current economic position. If so, a big message to HR that has come out of the report is: don't cut training for middle management."

He added: "What the board needs to understand is that if it is not investing in the essential training for their managers, critical leadership and engagement skills will be lost. Their people will just jump from one crisis to the next, resulting in lost opportunities for growth."

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