

An employee voice framework as a tool to compare employees and managers viewpoints: the case of the Italian National Research Council

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Ever more organizations, both private and public, are placing a greater importance on employee engagement as a means of generating better organizational climate and higher levels of performance. Actually, employee engagement is part of the strategic management of high performance organization, which pay always more attention to human resource initiatives. Moreover, forms of involvement in the decision processes make more motivating and more satisfying the activity for employees, as they create the conditions for greater inspiration and, in turn, contribute to their well-being. Besides, several studies show that when employees believe they have opportunities for voice in decision-making, such awareness can positively affect the organisational commitment.

Based on the foregoing premise, this study proposes a new "employee voice framework" for stimulating employee voice and employee participation in strategic decision-making. The first step of the framework prescribes to organize a number of "World Cafè" events dedicated to a specific subject of the strategic decision-making. The World Cafè method is a structured conversational process for knowledge sharing in which an informal climate allows groups of voluntary participants (in this case employees) to discuss a specific topic, enhancing creativity and cross-pollination of ideas. In the second step, the proposals emerged from the World Cafè events are included in a questionnaire to be submitted to all employees that should be involved in the decision-making process. Each proposal is evaluated on the basis of two variables: "importance" and "feasibility". The top-management has to answer the same questions to which employees respond. The third step of the framework prescribes the creation of "importance/feasibility matrices" that allows comparing employee and top-management viewpoints on the proposals. The matrices offer an opportunity for employees and managers to exchange views. Therefore, the matrices give insight into which proposals should be implemented as they result the most important for employees but also feasible for the top-management.

The paper concludes with a real case study application to the Italian National Research Council (CNR), the largest research organization in Italy. The application of the "employee voice framework" involved all CNR employees and concluded with the formulation of various proposals for the design of a new performance evaluation and incentive system.

Keywords

Employee engagement, employee voice, strategic decision making, performance evaluation, incentive system