

What do tribes have to do with employee engagement?

If I ask you the question “Who is in your tribe?” - Who would you think of? By tribe, I mean those people closest to you, the people you trust with your most intimate fears and successes, the people you love and who love you...

The people you are genuinely connected to. The people you look to for support and encouragement in the tough times and whom you celebrate and share your successes with in the good times. Who immediately springs to mind? Is it your spouse, the family you came from, perhaps the family you made, your closest group of friends, or a social or faith group? Perhaps you thought of one or two of these key groups.

Now thinking about the people in your tribe, consider all the things you would do for them. Would you do more for your tribe than the neighbor next door whom you do not know at all? It is likely that most of us would? Doing more could look like many things. It could look like spending quality time together doing things you enjoy, or arranging a special meal to celebrate, or offering loving words of encouragement, or providing tough love when necessary, or perhaps it is just offering an ear to listen. Most of us would do some or all of these things for our tribe, and in turn, our tribe would also offer these things to us. Why do we do this? Our tribes provide safety and security to help us survive life's most difficult challenges. Our tribes also help encourage and support us to grow, learn and create effective and productive lives.

Thinking about your tribe, did your current work team as a whole (not just an individual) make it to the list of people in your tribe?

If your answer is no, then you are not alone. Some of us may have one or two close connections at work, and for most these may not even be the people in our work teams! Many people around the world are not connected to their work team as they are connected to their tribes. This is reflected

in global engagement reports which show people have staggeringly high levels of disengagement with their work.

What if our work team as a collective was one of our tribes? Imagine what would happen? How would people start to feel about their work, and how would they work differently with their team members? Would they do more, support more, collaborate more, offer more honest and helpful input to shared problems? If work teams were strong, connected tribes, imagine what would happen to engagement and performance.

Given that the key to engagement is a sense of connection – why do so many organisations seem to be repeating a cycle of creating survey fatigue through topdown engagement surveys? Organisations continue to ask people to complete an annual survey (some more frequently) and based on this data the organisation or department devise strategies that are intended to address the issues identified.

Yet all the while people across organisations are watching and saying ‘why don't they listen? Moreover, organisations cannot make people engaged.

Connecting people with each other around meaningful work gets them engaged.

What if we turned engagement on its head and instead of traditional organisational engagement surveys, we looked at engagement at a local level – at the level of the tribe? What if we empowered teams to influence their own engagement by enabling them to create their own ways of working that foster a healthy team climate and create their own pocket of brilliance that fosters strong engagement within the team. At Pockets of Brilliance we focus on teams as a way of tackling the engagement dilemma in organisations.