



How Cancer Research UK Achieves Top Quartile Employee Engagement

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Top performing organisations like Cancer Research UK strive for employee engagement excellence, as they know they'll be more productive, grow faster and innovate more. They develop thriving cultures and winning people practices that propel them into the upper quartile of engaging organisations.

But how exactly do they do this?

People Insight Peak Engagement Research (PIPER)

To share the exceptional practices and skills developed by organisations such as CRUK, People Insight has created a unique research project. PIPER aims to identify in practical terms what makes top quartile-performing organisations highly engaged workplaces.

PIPER uses statistical analysis to identify the drivers of each organisation's engagement scores. We then talk to highly engaged employees to identify practical examples of behaviours and activities that support them. People Insight then validates the findings with the organisation and brings to life the results with case studies that can be shared.

The fact that the research comes directly from employees' perspective is what makes this programme unique.

Read on to learn how Cancer Research UK is a highly engaged workplace and hear our key takeaways.





Cancer Research UK

CRUK is the world's leading charity dedicated to beating cancer sooner. Survival rates have doubled in the last 40 years thanks to its groundbreaking work in preventing, diagnosing, and treating cancer. With 3,400 staff across the UK, its culture is focused on passion, ambition, and groundbreaking work.

CRUK is certainly getting something right. It is one of the most engaging employers in People Insight's portfolio of clients, with their overall engagement score standing at 88%. That's 12 percentage points above average for all organisations surveyed, and 9 points above the not-for-profit average.

OVERALL ENGAGEMENT SCORE

88%



9

POINTS ABOVE
THE NOT FOR
PROFIT BENCHMARK



12

POINTS ABOVE
THE ALL SECTOR
BENCHMARK

When applying key driver analysis to CRUK's engagement survey results, three main contributing areas stand out:

1. Employees enjoy their work

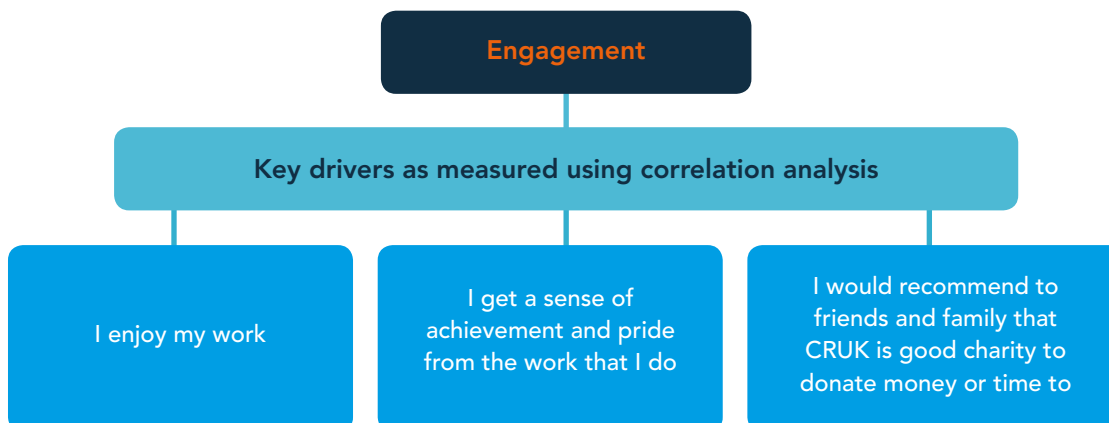
- ▶ Feeling their job makes the best use of their skills and abilities, their work is challenging

2. Employees feel a sense of achievement or pride for the work that they do

- ▶ Feeling a sense of empowerment to get on with their work how they see fit
- ▶ Being asked their opinion, consulted and involved in decisions that affect them
- ▶ Feeling valued and recognised for the work they do

3. Employees recommend to friends and family that CRUK is a good charity to donate money or time to

- ▶ This comes from having confidence in the CRUK leadership and feeling CRUK is making progress towards beating cancer





Why do CRUK's employees enjoy their work so much?

Employees feel challenged at CRUK

CRUK's purpose of beating cancer sooner means that the organisation is constantly innovating as it works to be at the forefront of new research. This creates opportunities for diverse projects that, in turn, provide employees with new challenges and ways to develop. 'Sharp' and 'brave' are included in the charity's brand beliefs, and employees are encouraged to be creative about how they accomplish the task in hand.

"Challenging work and new opportunities are motivating – no two years have been the same here and it's exciting."

Not only does change offer the chance for exciting projects, the ethos at CRUK is focused on giving employees increased responsibility. Delegation and autonomous working mean people need to work collaboratively with different parts of the business or external providers to get the job done and in turn they learn about different disciplines and ways of working.



Employees are supported to develop their skills

One of the strong themes emerging from the PIPER research is the importance of giving employees the opportunity to develop their skills in ways that motivate them but are also beneficial to the organisation. At CRUK, employee development is supported even if it means an employee may leave a role in which they are excelling.

“As soon as I mentioned I was interested in a different role my manager helped me prepare for the interview and I felt supported in my development, even though it meant potentially leaving my team.”

Employees are encouraged to take the initiative for their development and move around the organisation to learn, network and stretch skill sets. All development opportunities are advertised through the learning management system (LearnZone) and Career Development Zone (an online learning hub complete with tools). For instance, the New and Aspiring Manager programme enables staff to experience and prepare for being line managers via self-survey worksheets and online exercises.

“Here you are the master of your own destiny, there are opportunities to do different things and stretch yourself. You can make the role your own and there are lots of opportunities to develop upward and laterally.”

TAKEAWAYS

Support staff to embrace the challenge

1. Change doesn't have to mean difficult times; it can be an opportunity to support employees to adopt new challenges, develop new skills, and innovate
2. If employees show an interest in developing a new skill or moving into a new role, even when they are excelling in their current role, supporting them to develop can ensure their motivation remains high
3. Empowering staff to learn, to become 'masters of their own destiny' is highly engaging



How has CRUK helped staff to get a sense of achievement and pride from the work they do?

Employees have a sense of empowerment and autonomy in their work

Autonomy at CRUK is the result of proven ability to meet targets and trust between managers and their teams. It is a reward for great performance. Where it happens, managers are hands-off and even distance-manage. Employees feel that working autonomously allows them to be creative and take more risks.

"I was allowed and trusted to manage the project. It was a learning curve and I was expected to manage the project with little guidance but felt I was able to reach out for support from my manager if I needed help. I feel more confident in my ability to deliver projects and feel like I have added value to the team and organisation. I also feel like I was able to stretch my skill set."

In the background, CRUK managers help staff prioritise challenging workloads while managing expectations of senior leaders above them. One-to-one meetings feel like a quality conversation.

"What is massively important to engagement, and perhaps the singularly most important thing, is the relationship you have with your manager. Managers are generally approachable, communicative, available, and supportive."

Employees feel valued as they are consulted

Employees feel they are consulted on decisions that impact their work. They are encouraged to comment through the employee engagement survey and a year-round email address. A recent charity-wide programme (Fit For the Future) got more than a third of staff involved in ideas workshops on how the organisation could be more efficient.

Managers actively encourage employees to 'challenge them constructively'. This might mean inputting to the strategy, or projects that have an impact on their team's day to day work. Employees feel like they can give input to the leadership team because they are open and approachable.

"You can tell that leaders think things through and take all the input into consideration before giving a response to employees."



Employees feel recognised for their work

Recognition is a priority at CRUK and leaders realise that different rewards work well for different employees and situations. It starts at the top; senior leaders frequently give positive feedback to teams and individuals.

For example, when an employee working on a high profile project managed to raise £670,000 for the charity with a small team and tight deadlines, leaders gave significant, visible thanks. There was great celebration across head office in recognition.

'Merit' the toy slug is an example of an unstructured and creative way to recognise employees without attaching a monetary value to recognition. Employees in the Strategy and Research Funding Directorate can win a picture with Merit as a way of promoting good work. The photo and the individual's accomplishment are shared so everyone can see what has been achieved. Merit then gets passed along when staff feel someone else should be recognised.

"Its less about the reward aspect and more about feeling valued and recognised."

The success of recognition at CRUK is, in part, due to the fact that it comes in various guises.



Employees feel recognised for their work

Other recognition programmes include:

Recognition at directorate away days - colleagues can nominate each other for recognition, specifying why their achievement is in line with the organisation's values.

Annual 'Our Heroes' Awards - this is a cross-directorate recognition scheme where employees nominate, recognise and celebrate one another. It is also an opportunity for

employees to learn about what's happening across the organisation in different teams and learn about their achievements.

"Employees need different forms of recognition; for some people Merit the slug works but for others, where a lot of effort is put forth, a more formal way to be recognised may be better. It varies and is based on the type of work and effort that's been put forth by the employee."

TAKEAWAYS

Empowering, consulting and recognising staff helps their sense of achievement

1. Give employees the freedom to work autonomously. Provided employees understand the end goal, how they work to get there could open up opportunities for new innovations and improved systems and process
2. Decisions made at the top influence those on the front line. Consult and co-create with employees to find the solutions that work best for everyone
3. Encourage employees to constructively challenge their peers and the senior members of the team; they often have much-needed knowledge from working at the client face and can contribute to achieving more effective solutions
4. Recognising effort and achievements does wonders for motivation, and can come in many guises



Why do CRUK employees feel compelled to recommend the charity?

Staff have confidence in senior leaders

One of the engagement drivers for CRUK is 'I have confidence in the overall leadership', and employees articulate how leaders:

- ▶ Make the effort to connect with employees
- ▶ Build trust through communicating authentically and transparently

One of the contributors to this success is the transformational leadership development programme for the 92 heads called 'Making Headway.'

The programme focuses on:

- ▶ Clarifying purpose for teams
- ▶ Acting with agility and courage
- ▶ Working effectively together
- ▶ Raising the performance bar

CRUK continues to invest in leadership development to ensure leaders empower and coach consistently across the charity.

"The executive board is good at painting the vision and getting people behind it."

Effective communication from leaders helps staff believe in CRUK's mission.

It's not easy to unite an organisation towards a common goal yet CRUK manages this, in part due to the effective launch of the new strategy by, as staff put it, 'credible, trusted, open minded and authentic' leaders, and their transparent communications along the journey. This includes acknowledgement that achieving the strategy cannot be done without teamwork and that learning from errors, or failing fast, will be crucial.

From regional roadshows and passion talks to visual overviews of the strategy and regular email updates, every single person knows where the charity is heading. In many ways it's breaking down the enormity into manageable chunks so that regular successes build momentum.

"This is the first place where people know the mission and vision by heart and believe it. We are very good at reinforcing this through passion talks and we are always learning; that's what makes the mission a reality."

CRUK brings the strategy to life and treats every exercise as an opportunity to engage people internally as well as externally:

WORLD CANCER DAY

Celebrated on 4th of February, the aim was to make the world's biggest fundraising day. The focus for staff was on uniting everyone for one day, both inside the organisation – with all staff linking arms to create a chain of people going around the office – and outside as well, asking the nation to make a small donation of £2 to wear a unity band, which became a symbol of the event.



CREATE THE CHANGE

This campaign aims to raise £100m towards building the Francis Crick Institute by engaging philanthropists and high value donors. The institute is equipped with cutting edge technology to encourage research collaboration and a multidisciplinary approach. The public phase of the campaign is an example of how the organisation has come together – with briefings from our CEO on progress and sharing of milestones. The Major Giving team organised a DNA sculpture competition, and the winner had their design turned into an actual sculpture, which is on show at the Angel head office.



DIRECTORATE AWAY DAYS

Each directorate holds away days throughout the year. This is a chance to come together and talk about the progress of the charity, with external speakers, recognition and a chance to network.



AMBASSADORS PROGRAMME

Staff are encouraged to support this external initiative that asks volunteers to help roll out CRUK's political campaigns in the local community – persuading decision makers to bring in new laws and investments in cancer services.



Inspiring employees and listening to their input to achieve the strategy

Leaders keep staff updated on progress in meaningful and inspiring ways. The CEO and executive board give quarterly briefings to all staff. Local discussions happen through 'hit the floor' style directorate gatherings. Some directorates have launched an internal 'Progress and Insights' newsletter, whilst others have 'lunches with leadership'.

Through the various two-way communications, leaders make an effort to be accessible, to listen to feedback and truly understand what is happening across the organisation.

Indeed, gaining feedback on the strategy has been key in the success of its implementation. Leaders encourage employees to suggest ideas to take the strategy forward rather than dictating it as a 'done deal' and actively encourage them to challenge the status quo.

"It's very collaborative and we are working toward a common goal; you don't get that everywhere. Employees are very focused on end goals and shared values."

TAKEAWAYS

Leaders motivate and inspire through strategy communications

1. Be brave and transparent. Commitment from the CEO, acknowledging that achieving the ambition could not be done without teamwork and would be difficult at times, shows candour
2. Don't allow the leadership team to work alone to create strategy; empower employees to co-create the future of the organisation to get maximum buy-in
3. Communicate often, through various mediums, and welcome constructive criticism and feedback to get the best outcomes for the whole organisation
4. Show how everything you do links to your strategic objectives

PIPER shares insight into the employee engagement successes at CRUK

People Insight's PIPER research project has brought the factors that contribute towards achieving engagement success at CRUK to the fore, through detailed analysis of the examples of behaviours and activities that have gained the most traction.

As a leading charity dedicated to beating cancer, Cancer Research UK, of course, has many advocates, but the work done inside of the organisation to make the vision of beating cancer a reality makes the organisation a great place to work, and ensures employees stay engaged in achieving their mission.

"Curing cancer is the number one reason I am here. However it is not the only thing that keeps me here; it's many factors, such as: feeling satisfied in my job, feeling trusted, being a part of something that is bigger than you, and having the empowerment to get things done."

Is your organisation in the top quartile of engaging organisations?

Talk to us:

twitter: @PeopleInsightUK

e: enquiry@peopleinsight.co.uk

t: 0203 142 6511

Find out how your engagement levels compare with your peers, and how you can improve.

We'd love to hear from you!



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Mel provides fantastic account management support to a broad range of People Insight clients. As a business psychologist practitioner she goes beyond this, to deliver effective focus groups, statistical analysis and interpretation workshops. She has a wealth of experience analysing and providing recommendations on people management, cultural practices and policies.

Mel graduated from City University in 2011 with an MSc in Occupational Psychology, having first completed a BA in Psychology from The College of Saint Rose in New York. She is a member of both the British Psychological Society and the Association of Business Psychologists.