

A low-angle, upward-looking shot of a modern glass skyscraper. The building's facade is composed of numerous rectangular glass panels, which reflect the sky and surrounding environment in various colors, including shades of blue, pink, and purple. The perspective creates a sense of height and architectural scale.

ROBERT WALTERS

RECRUITING TIPS – DEVELOPING HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS TO DRIVE BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AND ENGAGEMENT

ROBERT WALTERS

FORWARD



It's true that well-integrated, high-performing teams are a key driver of business performance and engagement. But what is not so obvious is the formula for a successful one.

While all companies – from multinational organisations to medium and small-sized businesses – face unique challenges, there are core similarities when it comes to creating agile and high-performing teams.

In this whitepaper, we find out what those core similarities are and what companies could be doing better to increase employee engagement. From the research, we know that the process of building high-performing teams starts with recruitment. The most effective teams have a good team dynamic in terms of culture, skills and personality fit, are led with shared accountability, have clearly defined goals and objectives, and receive recognition for their good work. Conversely, poor leadership, team conflict, undefined goals and objectives and zero recognition for good work are key drivers of disengagement, dissatisfaction and underperforming teams.

In line with the research, this whitepaper also includes recommendations on how to achieve a more successful team dynamic that will boost your business performance overall. I hope you find it useful.

Jason Grundy

Managing Director - South Africa

METHODOLOGY

This whitepaper is based on the findings of research undertaken by Robert Walters. To conduct this research, Robert Walters surveyed 235 hiring managers and professionals. The respondents were between 25 and 66 years old, they were from a range of industries and organisations and have different responsibilities.

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INTRODUCTION

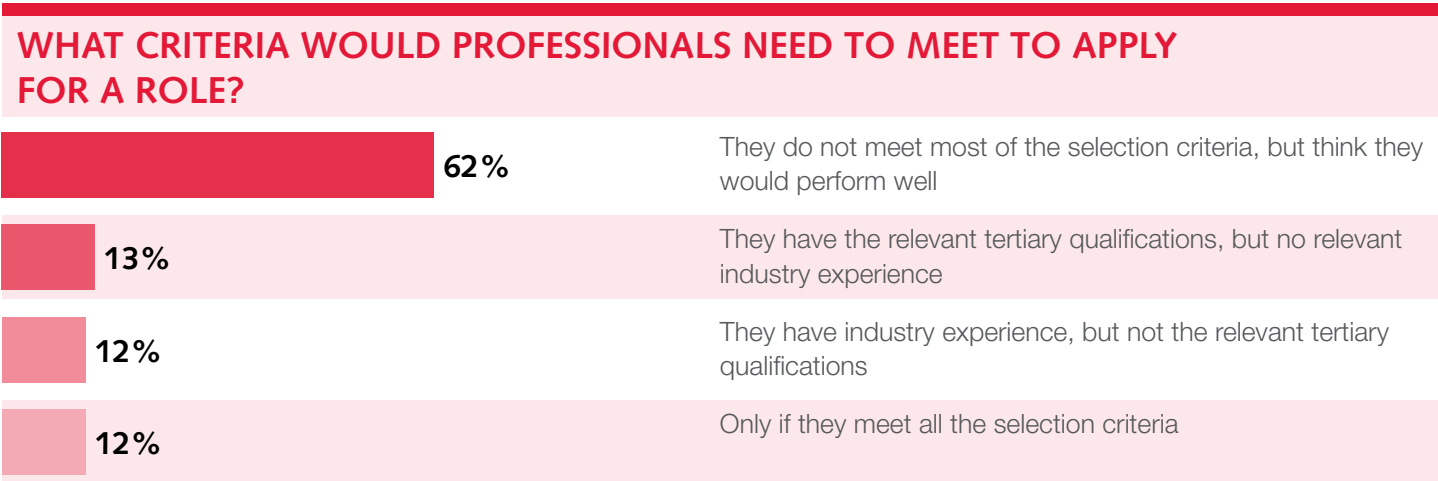
This whitepaper has been created to help employers better understand high-performing teams and how they drive business performance and engagement. Specifically this whitepaper explores:

- Which recruitment and human resource management strategies should be used to build cohesive teams and improve staff retention?
- What impact do company structures have on team performance?
- How important is leadership style in creating high-performing teams?
- How does individual success and productivity influence employee engagement?

01 USE OF RECRUITMENT AND ATTRACTION STRATEGIES TO BUILD COHESIVE TEAMS

When applying for a new role, the majority of surveyed professionals (62%) say they would apply if they didn't meet most of the selection criteria, but might perform well. This trend was reflected in the results of surveyed hiring managers with 31% saying that they would consider candidates with this profile. However, the majority of hiring managers (48%) say professionals would need to have the industry experience, but not the relevant tertiary qualifications in order to pass through to the next stage of the application process. Only 12% of hiring managers think candidates need to meet all of the selection criteria and 10% would choose applicants with the relevant tertiary qualifications, but no relevant industry experience.

When asked who is responsible for screening the initial applications, hiring managers named the human resource department (29%). However for the majority of respondents the first-round interview will be conducted by more than one person, including someone who works closely with the role in business (49%) or from a team leader (29%). One third of the professionals confirmed that their first-round interview was conducted by someone working closely with the business (33%) and 25% said they had been interviewed by a team leader.



01 Use of recruitment and attraction strategies to build cohesive teams

KEY LEARNING #1: LOOK FOR CANDIDATES WITH GREAT WORK ATTITUDE AND RELEVANT INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Our research shows that relevant working experience and personality fit are the most important selection criteria to look for in a candidate. Applicants with the right work attitude paired with the relevant industry experience are key to high-performing teams.

The relevant tertiary qualification is a nice-to-have, but not a decisive factor, neither for hiring managers (10%) nor for candidates (13%).

It's certainly desirable for hiring managers to hire professionals who meet all the selection criteria. However, this is not necessarily the way to source the best talent and build the best teams – increasing the scope of a talent search broadens the chance of finding complementary skill sets that are better able to adapt to a changing marketplace. In times of skills shortages we would suggest hiring managers take a flexible approach to secure the most talented manpower. The skill sets of those professionals can then be developed e.g. through training seminars.

KEY LEARNING #2: COLLABORATION DURING THE SCREENING PROCESS

Especially because the first impression of an applicant is so important, human resource managers should be involved in the recruitment process. However, hiring managers said that only 21% of candidates had been interviewed first by human resources and 17% of candidates confirmed this.

To save resources, a recruitment agency can perform this process and create a shortlist of suitable applicants from a wide range of backgrounds. Agencies are specialised to identify and to assess candidates' personality and experience. This first pre-selection helps decision makers to choose appropriate candidates.

It's important for human resources and team leaders to work together to ensure that new hires are a good fit for the team. They can create a healthy balance between what will fit the team and what is best from an organisational perspective. Including human resources as well as the team manager is the best way to achieve this balance and be certain that new hires will be able to integrate well from both perspectives.



"We continuously extend our network of international leaders and specialised professionals, so we can identify potential candidates near-term, who match the business' professional and personal criteria."

Jean Karim Vandenberghe,
Associate Director Middle East

IS ASSESSING PERSONALITY FIT A PRIORITY AT FIRST ROUND INTERVIEW?

86%
YES

14%
NO

(meeting all the selection criteria is the priority)

02 HOW CLEARLY DEFINED RESPONSIBILITIES AND REWARDS IMPACT TEAM

In order to determine how individual roles can impact team performance, professionals were asked how well their roles are defined in their teams. 34% of professionals answered that there are very clear delineations between roles, 40% say that their roles can sometimes overlap with the role of another team member and at 24% say there is no strategy for defining individual roles and accountability is not clear.

Approximately half of professionals say that team functions within their wider organisation can sometimes overlap (48%). This is confirmed by more than the half (53%) of hiring managers. In contrast 42% of hiring managers stated that there are very clear delineations between roles and 6% of hiring managers said there is no strategy for defining individual roles and accountability is not clear.

In addition, almost the half of professionals (47%) feel that not all teams are an integrated part of the business, working towards the same overall objectives. The majority of hiring managers disagree however, with 78% stating the opposite. In this context it's considerable that 84% of

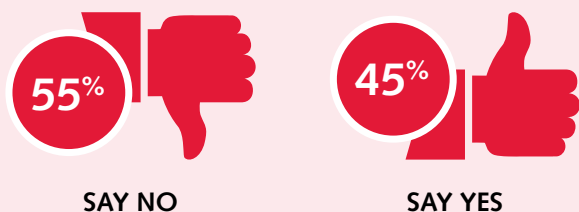
professionals think, that a lack of integration affects individual performances, a position that all hiring managers (100%) confirmed.

When hiring managers were asked if their organisation does enough to reward high performance, more than half of them said yes (64%). But only 45% of professionals do felt the same, with 55% wanting to see an improvement in terms of their reward.

The most popular reward for high performance realised by hiring managers and candidates was money (hiring managers 69%, candidates 49%). For professionals, this was followed by opportunities for promotion (67%) and for hiring managers, it was recognition through internal communication (58%).

DO ORGANISATIONS DO ENOUGH TO REWARD HIGH PERFORMANCE?

PROFESSIONALS:



HIRING MANAGERS:



02 How clearly defined responsibilities and rewards impact team

KEY LEARNING #3: DEFINE TEAM OBJECTIVES

A key to employee engagement and motivation is having clearly defined objectives and goals at both an individual and team level. According to the results, most professionals experienced some overlapping of their individual roles (40%), as well as overlapping team functions (48%) within the wider organisation. Another very important point for employee engagement is the integration of teams within the company and working towards the same overall objectives. However, almost half of professionals don't think all teams are integrated and working towards the same objectives (47%).

Team leaders should spend time developing very clear individual and team goals, by creating suitable job descriptions and complementary day-to-day responsibilities. It's also important to define how the performance of a position is measured as well as continually keeping teams informed of these key performance indicators in order to stop team members from becoming lost or disengaged. At a macro level, companies should think about strategies to ensure individuals can be informed about wider company vision to improve integration.

KEY LEARNING #4: LEARNING THE ART OF RECOGNITION

A crucial factor in high-performing teams is rewarding good performers and adequately addressing poor performers. As the survey indicated, more than half of the professionals surveyed feel that their organisation doesn't do enough to reward high performers (55%) and more one third of hiring managers agreed (36%). Hiring managers had a more positive perception than professionals.

While the survey found that the most popular way of rewarding high performance was through monetary incentives. 58% of hiring managers said recognition happens through internal communication, but only 37% of candidates agreed with this. But simple recognition can go a long way to help team members feel engaged and valued. Words of praise for effective performance – whether through team meetings or through internal communications like emails – can ensure team members maintain a high level of motivation and wellbeing.

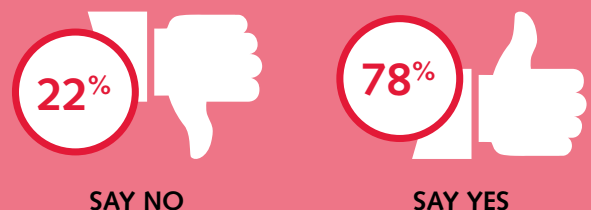
Equally, recognising where a team member is struggling or not achieving their target and giving constructive feedback to help enhance their performance, will help encourage respect within the team, a conclusion supported by the fact that 78% of employees want genuine and open communication.

ARE TEAMS AN INTEGRATED PART OF THE BUSINESS, WORKING TOWARDS THE SAME OVERALL OBJECTIVES?

PROFESSIONALS:



HIRING MANAGERS:





55%

OF PROFESSIONALS FEEL THEIR
ORGANISATION DOES NOT DO ENOUGH
TO REWARD HIGH PERFORMANCE.

03 LEADERSHIP STYLE AND HOW IT PLAYS A PART IN HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS

When asked about how their teams are led within the business, 36% of candidates say the method was traditional, “top-down” leadership where leaders make decisions without consulting team members. However, only 2% of professionals felt that this leadership style engages and motivates them, with the vast majority (59%) preferring shared leadership and accountability. The second most preferred leadership style among professionals was self-directing, with 39% of survey candidates believing they would be most engaged and motivated, if leaders gave them a lot of freedom and let them set their own deadlines.

The survey results indicate that most hiring managers (66%) believe that their teams are led with shared accountability while only 47% of professionals agreed this.

When it comes to the top three most important personal qualities of team leaders, hiring managers and professionals choose the same categories, but with different priorities: The majority of both think genuine and open communication is the most important characteristic (hiring managers 86%, candidates 78%), Professionals rated “supports team

members” as the second most important quality (67%) while hiring managers rated this with 54% to the third place. Hiring managers think that having business acumen is second most important (77%) while for candidates is this is the third most important reason (55%).

When asked about problems that poor leadership causes in their teams, hiring managers and professionals mostly have the same opinion again and think poor leadership decreases trust and openness (hiring manager 91%, professionals 75%). This is followed by 54% of professionals who say poor leadership inhibits communication. Hiring managers agree with 60% agreeing with this statement. Furthermore, candidates think poor leadership blocks performance (53%) and team conflict is not effectively managed (49%).

HOW PROFESSIONALS AND HIRING MANAGERS VIEW LEADERSHIP WITHIN THEIR ORGANISATION

TRADITIONAL TOP-DOWN LEADERSHIP:



SHARED LEADERSHIP AND ACCOUNTABILITY:



SELF-DIRECTING:



03 Leadership style and how it plays a part in high-performing teams

KEY LEARNING #5: LEADERS NEED TO BE CONSTANTLY COMMUNICATING

The survey results revealed a disconnect between how professionals feel they are being managed versus how hiring managers believe the organisation is being run. It's important to review leadership methods to see whether a participatory style in fact works for the organisation and its wider goals.

For those organisations that have an established leadership style that is more “top-down” and where this works best, we recommended hiring managers encourage leaders to communicate with the team to make decisions appear to be more consultative, which helps to boost employee morale.

17% of professionals think that the broader goals and values of an organisation are only communicated to senior management. That's why team communication is especially important, e.g. when changes need to occur, as employees will be able to accept change more easily when they have clear direction and feel involved in the decision-making process.



75%

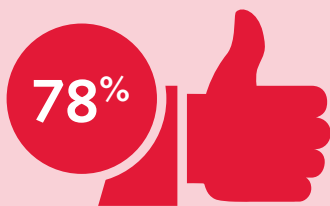
OF PROFESSIONALS AND

91%

OF HIRING MANAGERS THINK POOR LEADERSHIP DECREASES TRUST AND OPENNESS.

KEY LEARNING #6: COMMUNICATE POOR PERFORMANCE AND SEE IT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE

Hiring managers as well as candidates want genuine and open communication. This is also important for the communication about poor performance, e. g. through constructive feedback. Our survey shows 37% of surveyed professionals don't know how poor performance is addressed within the organisation. 6% of hiring managers don't know it as well. Further, 50% of decision makers say there are no formal procedures in place to address poor performance and 38% of candidates confirm this. Our suggestion is to establish standardised procedures to speed up open and genuine communication in case of poor performance and give employees the opportunity to learn from their mistakes, helping to increase team performance. Doing so can remove concerns about discussing negative things by doing so in a constructive way.



of professionals rate genuine and open communication as the most important quality in their team leaders.

03 Leadership style and how it plays a part in high-performing teams

KEY LEARNING #7: IMPLEMENT MENTORING PROGRAMS

The survey revealed that professionals rate genuine and open communication as the most important quality in their team leaders (78%). For those team leaders who have too many immediate reports and not enough time, we recommend implementing a mentoring program to encourage communication within the team, to show senior employees more trust and to ensure all staff are getting the support they need.

Alternatively, reducing the number of direct reports may be a solution for team leaders who feel they do not have the time to adequately support their team members.



“A mentor can be anyone who is a role model and can share knowledge and advice to help another employee grow professionally. The benefits of mentoring include greater productivity, higher job satisfaction and a more positive working environment for both the mentor and mentee.”

Nicholas Jones, Senior Manager Middle East

TOP THREE QUALITIES OF A TEAM LEADER:

1. GENUINE AND OPEN COMMUNICATOR:



2. SUPPORTS TEAM MEMBERS:



3. BUSINESS ACUMEN:



04 THE KEY TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

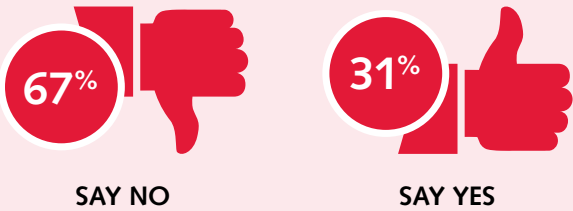
The majority of surveyed candidates (48%) say their companies invest in a good work-life balance which is a key factor in keeping them engaged. This was followed by salary and bonuses (41%) and varied and interesting work (39%). However, 67% of professionals still believe that their organisation does not do enough to keep them engaged, and 42% believe that the turnover rates in their organisation are too high.

Hiring managers have a totally different perspective: they say they keep employees most engaged with opportunities for career progression (62%). Varied and interesting work (53%) is the second most widely used strategy. This is followed by opportunities for training and development (50%). Interestingly, salary and bonuses are listed by 47% of hiring managers as the fourth most popular motivation for their staff. More than half of hiring managers (56%) say that their organisation does not do enough to keep employees engaged, while 41% think that staff turnover rates are too high.

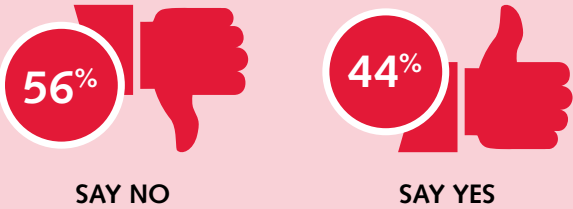
When it came to what they believed negatively impacted on their performance most, 41% of surveyed professionals said poor leadership and a significant number of hiring managers (41%) agreed.

DOES YOUR ORGANISATION DO ENOUGH TO KEEP EMPLOYEES ENGAGED?

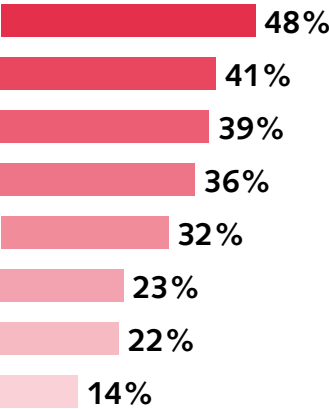
PROFESSIONALS:



HIRING MANAGERS:



HOW ORGANISATIONS KEEP THEIR EMPLOYEES ENGAGED AT WORK:



1. Good work-life balance
2. Salary and bonuses
3. Varied and interesting work
4. Opportunities for career progression
5. Opportunities for training and development
6. Recognition and rewards
7. Team work
8. Strong organisational culture and leadership

KEY LEARNING #8: INVESTING IN DESIRABLE INCENTIVES FOR EMPLOYEES

According to the results, companies have already tried to motivate their employees with different incentives, which is also acknowledged by candidates. However, 67% of professionals still believe that their organisation does not do enough to keep them engaged. More than half of hiring managers (56%) also felt that this is the case. In addition, they identify different factors or priorities which they use to motivate employees.

Therefore, companies have already invested in numerous motivation strategies, but they aren't widely seen as ineffective by employees. We suggest companies that companies should consider consulting with their employees to identify the right motivation factors. Accordingly companies can invest into the most desired motivational incentives which will yield the best results.

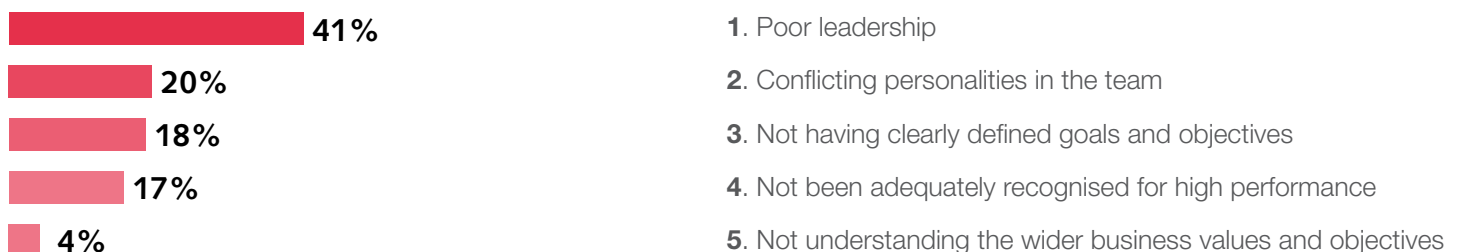
KEY LEARNING #9: ACCOUNTABILITY

41% of hiring managers and 41% of professionals agreed that poor leadership impacts on individual performance the most. This is also confirmed with only 8% of candidates and 3% of hiring managers stating that leadership style doesn't have any large impact on the team. Furthermore both state that poor leadership decreases trust and openness with 91% of hiring managers and 75% of candidates agreeing on this point.

In many organisations, engagement is seen purely as the remit of the HR department. In order to prevent poor leadership from infiltrating a business, it's important for team leaders to take on some of the accountability and work with HR to ensure all is well from both a team and an organisational perspective.

Constructive ways for team leaders to address the issue include discussions with team members, setting goals and time for regular catch-ups about how the team and individuals are progressing, and by establishing an open environment to encourage team members to provide feedback at all times.

CANDIDATE PERSPECTIVE: THESE FACTORS HAVE THE LARGEST NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL PERFORMANCE



06 CONCLUSION

1. EFFECTIVE RECRUITMENT PROCESSES

As the survey has found, many organisations could establish better performing teams with a simple review of recruitment strategies. A key learning to take away from the results has been to include both team leaders and human resources professionals in decision-making, in order to ensure a balance of the team and organisational perspectives.

2. CLEARLY DEFINED TEAM STRUCTURES

To motivate employees, clearly defined tasks and targets are important for individuals as well as teams. Structured guidelines and processes are key drivers of business performance and engagement.

3. A SATISFACTORY LEADERSHIP STYLE

Strong leadership is a vital component of the high-performance formula, as was particularly evident in the section of the survey concerning leadership style. For organisations that have an established a top-down leadership style, it is especially important that leaders communicate with their teams to make decisions appear to be more consultative, which helps to boost employee morale.

4. ENCOURAGE AND CHALLENGE EMPLOYEES

To keep high-performing employees motivated over the long-term, companies should think about appropriate rewards. The risks of disengagement in poor performing teams is certainly reason enough to address the issue and make positive changes to team structures that will ensure high performance and growth in the long term.

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