



Employee Engagement Strategy

Speaker 1: 0:07

We are talking today. So thanks for everybody joining us today as our audience. So looking forward to a great conversation with a, with a friend and partner of mine, Tom Horn. And Tom is with the Organization People Element. So Tom is a, a sales executive, an account executive with People Element, and I know he's gonna be the expert here, so I'm going to just let Tom get started with this conversation. But Tom, why don't you just go ahead and if you could for the audience, give them an introduction of yourself, who you are and what you do with People Element.

Speaker 2: 0:40

Yeah, thanks Mark . Really appreciate you having me on the show. Uh, again, Tom Horn, I , uh, grew up at West Point Military Academy, so I really grew up with a real structured focus on leadership. So throughout my career, I've always been really focused on leadership and how to make teams better. So you mentioned I'm a enterprise account executive at People Element, but I don't really approach the HR space from a sales perspective. I spent 15 years managing hotels, restaurants, I , and athletic clubs, and I had varying amounts of hr , uh, varying experience of hr. So when I had great hr, I was a better manager and that always stuck with me. And some of the places I worked at didn't have a lot of structure or systems for hr, and that really hurt. And at one point I ran my own business and got to build HR structures from scratch. So I've always understood the power of HR from either having great resources or the pain of not having the resources and expertise of hr, which is why I'm at People Element today. I spend all of my waking hours trying to make the workplace better, help partner with hr, help enable hr, and help enable organizations to make sure that they're making the workplace as good as it can be for their , uh, uh, for their employees. So I got rid of my Facebook and my Instagram. All I do is talk HR these days. So really excited to have this conversation with you, mark .

Speaker 1: 2:11

Great, thanks, Tom . That's awesome. So, so what was the driving force behind you joining People Element? What's the story behind there? And because you obviously have

a very, you have a strong operational and, you know, GM background, so what was kind of that driving force to actually have you , uh, join the organization? How did that occur?

Speaker 2: 2:30

Yeah, I I , I love this story, at least a , a good part of this story. Uh, one of my good friends from college , uh, works at People Element and he always just spoke very highly of people Element . I met the C E O Chris Coley several years before I joined, and was just always impressed with the approach of people element . And their approach really was, we care about people. You know, you see a lot of names of people in companies, but they embody that and they've been around 30 years just focused on giving employees a voice. And I just loved their approach. And I had , uh, I had just closed down one of, I had three restaurants in California that I owned in , uh, in Rand and closed them down and was looking to , uh, find a great organization and , and go back to tech. I have always been in kind of tech sales and picked up the conversation with people element, and it's been great. We've been , uh, we've been growing and, and three years in, they're true to who they say they are, which unfortunately is, is pretty rare out there in the , in the workplace these days. Sure . At least in my experience,

Speaker 1: 3:37

<laugh>. Yeah , no, that is so true. A lot of times it's a real sales pitch to get you in the door. And then once you once , uh, once the reality sets in, then you're like, huh . You know , uh, it , it could be a different , uh, situation in reality. So , um, so there's a lot of buzz and there's been a huge amount of , uh, you know, discussion around employee engagement and the challenges in today's workforce and around that. So , uh, you know, why do companies, so, you know, because a lot of the companies that you know, myself and and our company focus on are lower middle market size companies . So let's say, you know, below 300 employees, maybe 500 employees. So why do companies of that size, who are maybe do not have the most sophisticated HR processes just yet, why do these companies really need to understand and really get feedback around employee engagement? What's the big driving force behind that?

Speaker 2: 4:31

You know, I, I think step one is people, whether you're a thousand people company, a 10,000 people company or a 200 people company, you still have 200 individual people at your organization. So step one is you do have people, you know, human resources, the people are the resources that drive your business, whether you're in technology, manufacturing, marketing, whatever it is, has to start with people. So that's step one. The other thing is business outcomes. Hmm . You know, we just released our annual , um, our annual engagement report, and some of the data from that is lower turnover, 43% lower turnover. When you have high engagement, 64% lower accidents, 43% lower absenteeism, 14% increase in productivity. So it's about getting business outcomes as well. And it, there's, there's two sides to it. It's, and this is where, you know, I think we'll get into it, but your employees will go, is this about me or is this about the work that I do? And I think employees today are starting to realize it has to be both. That if you can

take care of the employees, you can get those outcomes. And in the under 300 populations, you know, resources are limited, resources are scarce. I think that's true for a lot of sizes today, but especially in that demographic you talked about. So, you know, it really comes down to, I think a lot of that space knew it was important, but it was a nice to have . I think Covid really showed employers and organizations of all sizes that it's an absolute need to have your people create your business outcomes. You have to find a way to take care of them. Hmm .

Speaker 1: 6:15

Well that's great. No , that's, no , that's a really very insightful. So I know, I know you also within, you know, the, within employee engagement, that's one facet, which you, you focus on a lot of people element, but so how does this, you know, how does employee engagement, you know, how does that really tie into your culture supporting a team environment within the organization? How does that all kind of, does it, does it directly correlate? How's that kind of wrapped into , um, you know, just kind of that total HR strategy?

Speaker 2: 6:44

Yeah, so we have at people , we have an engagement index, and these are items that directly can connect to employee engagement. And one of the things I like to talk about, you know, I , in that is employee engagement is real. It's a real thing. And there's real , uh, science psychology that connects that to business outcomes. And I think one of the mistakes early on, and one of the things people mistake with employee engagement is that employee engagement equals no , uh, equals better culture. Or if we have a great culture, then it equals employee engagement. And those things are definitely correlated. But you can't just say, we're gonna create en engagement. You can't just say you're creating culture. You need to have the companies that have the most engagement have the best culture. I e we are going to do this survey to support our people. And then the outcomes become the employees feel like they have a voice, you understand what drives them. And then you can take that and take action on it . That will create a better culture. Um, it most often, right? There's a lot of , sure, sure. So , um, it , it , I think one of the places where people missed your question is , uh, you can't just create it. And if you do, it changes. When we do our engagement report, you'll see different quarters go up and down every year it changes. So if you're doing an annual engagement type of survey, your team might be engaged when you're doing it in July, but they might be disengaged in November, December. So how do you understand that? So I think when you're trying to look at this strategically from a business is know that it does change, that once you understand engagement, you have to take action on it. Um, or else that engagement will, it , it will change, but can you take action to make a change in a positive way? I think those are some of the bedrocks when you start trying to like wrap your head around what it does, it's not going to solve your problems. Understanding employee engagement's gonna help you know what problems and opportunities you have to go pull the levers within your organization to maximize your opportunities.

Speaker 1: 8:53

Right. Oh, great. No, that's, that's, that's really, that's, that's an awesome, I was just listening in and it's amazing how when I, when I speak to experts like you, how I, I, I learned something and I've been in this craft for a long time, you know, 30 plus years now. But it's always a, it's insightful for me to actually talk to, you know, have some really good guests on the program who, who know their craft extremely well. So, um, you know, a lot of things that I run into with clients too is that we, you know, a lot of times they wanna do an employee engagement survey annually, they wanna do it every 18 months, you know, get a baseline and then do it 18 months, every 18 months to do this pulse check. Or what is your, what are your thoughts around that, around frequency of running an employee engagement survey? What, what are, what would you say in your opinion is, is a another best practice if you're gonna say that annual is probably not the best way to do it,

Speaker 2: 9:46

You know, that could be a long-winded answer. So I'm gonna do my best to be really concise here. Um, you know, step one is define your purpose. You know, why are you doing it? Are you doing it because somebody at the top says to do it? Are you doing it because you really want to understand the culture? Get a baseline of where are we at? We've never done this. Are you doing it to push back on turnover? We're seeing increased turnover. Why, what, like, what is causing these employees to leave us? Um, are you trying to increase productivity cuz you feel like that's coming off? Or is it your workplace has gone more remote and you just don't have that water cooler where you go, yeah, Mark's in a great mood today, or Mark seems happy, you don't really have that pulse. So step one is like, what are you trying to accomplish? Because there's a lot of ways, and that can define your approach. The second rule of thumb is only survey as much as you can take action on. Mm-hmm. So, you know, we, we saw a lot of, and it's gone a little bit away, was this, you know, weekly one question, well, after three or four weeks people are just gonna go, ah, I'm tired of these questions. Or I gave an answer three weeks ago. I haven't seen 'em change anything. The coffee's still the same in the break room. We hate that saying cut. Um, so when you're doing, you know, a survey, whether it's once a year, twice a year or three times a year, kind of a baseline is whatever you do, make sure you take action. Make sure you communicate that action to your, to your employees. We appreciate you taking the time to take this survey cuz who likes taking a survey? Right? Right. Like most people aren't like yay surveys. So you have to talk about what you're gonna do with it, what's in it for them and what your intent of the survey is. And when you do that, your team will take it, you can get good data and then you can take action on that data and they will have faith knowing you're taking action on it so they will participate. So it's like, it's this big circle, right? Well it's complex, but it's all, it's all detail. And then the final piece, and I think this is the real question you're asking is annual, what's the cadence? Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. So there's I at People Limit, we do employee journey and we don't just do it to get, you know, hey, we got a new customer doing exits and we already had them doing engagement. We include everything at one cost because doing this in 30 years, we really understood that. Get a

baseline, do that annual engagement survey, find out what's going on. But I had already mentioned that's a point in time, right? They may not be as happy a couple months later. Also, when you're looking at turnover and people leaving, a lot of companies will say, let's do exits. Find out why they're leaving. So you get that exit data, you now know why people are leaving. Most people don't know why they're leaving an organization until they're leaving an organization. So just because someone's happy in July and then they leave in November and you go, Hey, I thought you were happy, right? They were happy, but they're not <laugh> and they didn't know or they were happy, but something's driving them. Like maybe it was always pay, but they love the job. So exit data will give you that insight, but then you know why they left. Do you know why they chose you? So then you look at new hire data, is there, why did they choose to work at your organization? So when you can understand why they chose to work there and then why they chose to left or why they're choosing to leave, you now understand the gap, you know, what happened in the middle . And the annual survey helps you get there. And if you can do a , a pulse survey a quarter later, we know growth and development was a low scoring item, let's just do a five question pulse survey quick for them. Quick for us, is it getting better with the actions we took from our annual engagement survey? So there's a lot you can do with it, and I know it can seem overwhelming, but the real key is start with at least getting your baseline and then look at what that data tells you, and then you can kind of fill in your employee experience journey from there.

Speaker 1: 13:39

Hmm . Okay . Yeah, that's, no, that's, that really is, you know, when you think about two engagement because you have, like you said there , you know, you have so many points of engagement depending on where the employee is with their life cycle with a company, it's gonna be very different for somebody that's been there for 10 for 10 years versus somebody who's been there for 10 weeks. And so there's gonna be, you know, a lot of insightful information there. So , um, what are your thoughts now? And I'm sure again, you know, because of, you know, the organization you're with, you've seen this and I don't know if there's, it's, it really is a question I I , I don't know, you know, hopefully you can share some insights here, but with the whole push , um, whatever area era we're in now with the, let's say pre, you know, post covid and kind of getting back to working as usual and, and now so many organizations have moved to a remote , uh, either a fully remote or some positions remote, a hybrid workforce, you know, a couple days in the office, couple days at home. Um, what has that had a direct impact or any correlation on engagement from the data that you've been seeing?

Speaker 2: 14:48

Um, yes. There a big separation between the employees and the employer. And I can go all the way back to Covid . When we look at our annual engagement year over year data, surprisingly COVID 2020 had the best engagement we've seen over the last five years. And the reason was employees and employees really came together, how do we solve this? How do I, how do we keep these people in their jobs? How do I move them from the office to remote? How do we, if they can't do that, how do we support them? What

tools do they need? What do we do? Everybody was just in it together and companies and employees really aligned with just like keeping the world moving. And that was really shocking to me when I saw that data. But since then, you know, it used to be employers had all the power, everyone get into the office by eight and you don't leave till like five. And that was just , that was work, right ? Like that was work as we knew it. And now employees are going, Hey, I can be in my slippers and I can hang in, I can have coffee and I'm saving an hour of travel and I can spend more time with my kids. They love working remote. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>. Right? And when you look at the data, I'm gonna pull another number from , uh, from our, our our new annual engagement , uh, report that comes out next week. I think we'll talk about that a little bit later, but sure , 87% of employees report they feel productive at work. 12% of leaders say they have full confidence, their team is productive. I mean, that is a massive, that's as big a gap as I've seen in any category. So, you know, I think it's unstable right now. Um, I think both sides are kind of jockeying. I think both sides realize that neither of them are a hundred percent correct. So , um, you know, it's , uh, every and , and the other is I'm talking, I I wanna be really clear we're talking at a high level. If you're listening and you're going, Tom, you're completely full of it. That's not how it is in my organization. <laugh> most likely correct. Um, I might be full of it for your organization, that's why it's important to do this employee listening to understand what works for your organization, what works for people in engagement might not be what works for your organization, mark , or for one of your client's organizations. That's why this is so important, is to understand your population. Mm-hmm . Give your employees a voice and find out what your data is. Everybody reads headlines. Now. That's our kind of American culture, right. You know, it's, have you seen, I'll turn the podcast outta you . Have you seen a headline about declining , uh, you know, hiring? Have you seen a headline about companies pulling the purse strings that they're unsure of the economy? Have you seen that? Right? Sure, exactly. There's some of that, but you look into the data, the southeast is still hiring small to mid companies are also hiring because the competition, the big companies that are throwing massive paychecks that people are starting to reel that back. So now you're more competitive. So when you get granular with your data mm-hmm . <affirmative> , you will find ways to win. And that's really what our whole goal is. So to your question, yes, there's a , a divergence, yes, it is starting to come back. Hybrids kind of that middle ground that's moving up. Um, but it is different for each organization. And each organization doesn't need to have a C E O just looking at headlines or going, I'm a smart person. I can, I know how to lead this. You need the data to understand what your employees are telling you and what the results of your culture are. And that will guide you as to, as to what will drive your productivity these days.

Speaker 1: 18:31

Yeah, that's a great point too. Now those are , no , those are some wonderful nuggets. So , um, one more question before we take a short break. So what, so what about, you know, because uh, you , you know, and , and I'm sure you , within the world you live in and the , and the clients you, you work with. Uh, same for myself and the clients we work, you know, some of them are very low tech . So I have, so I have organizations that

are construction, you know, construction manufacturing organizations that have a lot of folks who don't have a lot of technology and they, you know, their technology is their phone. They don't have computers at the desk and what have you. So , um, so what about, you know, just having the right tools to survey the company or Right. Tools to check engagement with the company. What are your, what are your thoughts there, Tom? If you're, if you're trying to actually just have a discussion with a manufacturing company, how do you deal with the question around technology and how do we get good engagement , um, survey data?

Speaker 2: 19:28

So , um, that's a great question. Um, I I, I love that question. I wish I was asked some version of that more often. But technology is a tool. You know , our people on the platform, it's a tool. We, technology's not going to solve your problems. What you need to do is find a solution, whether it's technology or not, most often technology will create the most efficiencies. So the key is to find a tool that it matches with , um, with your budget, with the amount of people you have to manage the tool and the out outputs that you need. So you need to look at all these different things. And in the employee experience, employee engagement space, there are a million tools. So I always encourage organizations, don't chase the shiny object. Right? Be really true about what your needs are. I talk to, especially in the under 300, I have, I'm a one person HR team, <laugh> , or my HR is outsourced. I have one person that can manage this function. So you need, especially in the space we're talking about, it needs to be simplified mm-hmm. <affirmative> , right? And that's really where people and IT spends most of our time, is simplifying the process. Let's make it easy to build the survey, easy to deploy the survey, easy to understand the data from the survey. Is there action planning? How do you take action on that? So, you know, that's a plug for people element and I think we do it the best in the space, but some organizations say, I got 20 people in HR and I want three people only to live in your platform and build wild matrix reporting. Cool. Like, there are solutions for that. Um, and buying the one that works for you, so simple, you don't need to spend too much. There's great solutions out there at a , at a great cost mm-hmm. <affirmative>, and we can probably talk about costs later, but when you look at cost, it shouldn't be a cost in this conversation. This should create action to help you save employees. And if you know what your turnover costs are, you know what your cost of acquiring a team member are manufacturing, you know what your loss of productivity is, it is very easy to justify NCA X XX increase by just I understanding your employees while looking at it. So , um, don't chase the shiny object, find what matches for you, simplify the process. Mm-hmm . <affirmative> . And then finally people, we've been doing this 30 years, so we're not just reliant on email. We can send surveys. You know, we did paper, we used to have the old, like, what , what do you call the printers with the dots on the side, like, I mean we , yeah .

Speaker 1: 21:59

Do dot matrix.

Speaker 2: 22:00

Sure . We did surveys of like those kind of printers way back then. Um, but because of that, we look at ourselves as experts at reaching a hard to reach environment. So if you're looking at manufacturing, someone's not at their computer, how do you reach it? So people, we can deploy a survey to their personal email, their work email. We can deploy a , um, a link that can be embedded on a centralized time clock computer, a tablet, and then you can even create a QR code. So everybody has a cell phone , they can pull it out, click that, you can put that in with their paycheck. Now it's easy to take the survey. You get better participation, better data you're often running. Right ? That is a key factor. You gotta make sure you know, you can get good participation rates so you get strong data sets . Yeah.

Speaker 1: 22:43

That is great. Wow. Now this has been so really helpful and I know we're just kind of roughly halfway through a podcast. So we're just gonna take a short break and we're gonna hear from our sponsor and we'll be back with Tom Horn and people element in just a minute. Thanks so much.

Speaker 3: 22:57

You want to grow your business, but people issues are getting in the way. Managing the people side of your business is complex and can feel overwhelming. Does this sound familiar at hr Catalyst People strategy is our business. We create and implement a people strategy with you. So you can give back to growing your business. HR Catalyst was founded in 2013 with the goal of bringing the best in class HR practices to small and middle market companies. We are your outsourced strategic people experts. We help you solve the people issues in your business that are slowing you down. If you have HR concerns, you can schedule a complimentary call on our website@hrcatalystconsulting.com.

Speaker 1: 23:42

We are , we are back now with Tom Horn from People Element . Had a great discussion for the first half of our podcast today. And so we are , uh, Tom, thanks so much for just the insightful information you've shared. But I wanted to start out with, you referenced earlier that you had your annual engagement survey, the data for 2022 was going to be coming out next week, and we are recording this near the end of January, 2023. So , um, so with that, if you wouldn't mind maybe just giving a really nice synopsis, summarization of what people can expect in the survey and also how they can get their hands on it. Um, after you, you tell 'em a little bit about it, that'd be great.

Speaker 2: 24:23

Yeah, absolutely. Uh , I'm really excited. This is our biggest data share annually. So we take all of our data that we've collected from 2022 and then we publish it in a really easy to digest , uh, format. And it really covers everything. You know , we start by talking about the economic pressures , uh, the talent shortages, the flexibility of work. We, we

set the stage and give some insights that you, the reader, you the listener, really have felt. So, um, and it really is, it's not just our data, but we connect the dots. We talk about the impact of engagement and disengagement. What's the state of engagement? What's our benchmark of how engaged are i, is the market as a whole? What are some of the trends in the workplace? Um, and then we get a little more granular with what's driving engagement. And when I can tell you from 2022 is growth and development, company communication, feeling valued, giving them a voice. We had talked about that earlier. Just giving your people a voice, giving them the chance to confidentially give their feedback has a massive, uh, impact. And then wellbeing. We saw that start to really rise up, um, as a driver of engagement, you know, through covid, but it's still here, it's still there to stay, which is great. So we wrap all that together. There's a lot of great data and data points and the goal is in informational, it's not a sales booklet mm-hmm . <affirmative>, uh, it's informational. And some of the data we give can help empower organizations. When you're going to your, uh, chief human Resource officer or you're going to the C O O or c e o with an ask or a need, we can give you some data to enable you to make a better business case, to get some more resources and commit a little bit more to, to employee engagement. And that's really the goal is to empower HR power organizations to have the data they need to make those best decisions.

Speaker 1: 26:20

Hmm . Okay. That's great. That's awesome. Thank you so much. So, so let's go ahead and just start out with the four organizations that haven't done an employee engagement survey before. You know, what's the process they need to follow to get the, get the rollout done right? Cuz I know it's, you know, occasionally I'll see an organization that does this so haphazard that you know, it, it, it, you, you know, it's gonna be a disaster from the front end just because it's done so poorly. So, you know, so I'm sure you know, you've, you, you work with organizations all the time around this. So what are, what's kind of that recipe? What is that? So, you know, what are some of the key, you know, the key guidelines, what does that look like and, and what do you suggest, um, in from and what is this? What is something that you would actually suggest from people? Element is to, this is the best practice around communications and the rollout plan and things like that.

Speaker 2: 27:10

Yeah. Last year we actually released a pre-survey, uh, success, uh, P D F report. Um, I'm happy to share that as well. But again, it's not rocket science, so you don't need to like overthink this, but it is about nuances in following proper steps. Just like, just like anything else. So, you know, step one, you, I've talked about some of this and I wanna tie it all together in this, in this question, so I'm glad you asked. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, step one is define your purpose. What are you trying to do? If you just want a benchmark, what are you trying to get? Because what you're trying to understand will drive what you put into the survey. Step two is building your survey questions. You know, what you're trying to get to. Let's ask the right questions. Now, part of the benefits of working with a a really experienced team is having a validated question set .

So what does that mean At People Limit ? We have validated question sets. So you might say, ask a question, we value our employees at, you know , uh, Acme Corp . But Mark might read that and go, oh, my manager doesn't really seem to care about me, so I'm gonna give it a two. But, and I'm thinking, you know, I love the company picnics and I love that they asked me a survey. I'm gonna give 'em a five. We both answer the same question, but those are two different data sets . You're now talking about how you feel valued by your manager. And I'm talking about the company and the questions about the company. So when you ask a validated question, a validated equation gets all your respondents to answer the exact same question. And that's when you get really strong data. So I'm not gonna go totally down the rabbit hole, but having strong questions is really important. The next real piece is once you've built out your survey and there's a lot more nuance, again, I , I can't say that enough, but , um, communication planning and a lot of the technology providers glaze right over this. Look at our technology and it can do this and that, but communication planning, we have founded people, Iman is one of the biggest drivers for success. Talking about, and I mentioned this earlier, why an employee should take a survey. What you'll do with the survey data that it's confidential. If you're doing it in-house, you need to talk about the confidentiality and how and why using people element or another organization, trusted third party vendor. Um, you know, we have, you can control through your survey, do you want your reporting data thresholds? So most commonly it's three, which means when you tell people it's confidential, we will not give you survey data unless at least three respondents come into any demographic group. You might wanna make that five or 10. So some of that helps. Employees know it's confidential. People in our links are anonymous, so they click it, they take the survey, they don't have to sign in, they don't have to enter their data, they don't have to say what department they're in. And when you don't do that, you feel a lot more confident <laugh> , right? That it's confidential. So whether it's that strategy or not, just talking about that confidentiality. Um, and then talk about what you're gonna do with it. We're gonna talk about this at our next , um, survey. If you're going to , you know, we do three year agreements, it's better for the business lowers cost , but a lot of our employees take that to, Hey team, we're committing to to this, we're committing to you, we're committing to your voice. We're gonna do this every year and we're gonna look at it every year. We're gonna talk about it at our spring town hall meeting or whatever that is. When you do that, it has more power, right? Um, so the communication planning is ex , I can't talk about that enough. Um, have a good communication strategy. Organizations come to us and say, Hey, how quickly can I roll this out? And I always say, three, four weeks, because you need at least three weeks to get people to see and be aware of this. Cuz in if you rush it, people are gonna , I didn't know there's a survey. I didn't see the link, I didn't know that <laugh> . Um , so it , it's really important. And then that will drive your participation, drive people's confidence in giving real answers, and then , um, have a good user experience. Make it easy for them to get to meet them where they're at. If they're , um, if everyone gets a paper paycheck, attach a link there. Start with having the CEO talk about it at a all company type of event and then filter that down to regional, all the way down to a department manager level. Um, have links in multiple places. Uh, put it in , uh, internal communication. Uh , I always talk about, I worked in a hotel, my first job after college, and you had to bring your parking ticket to the front desk to get it

validated. There was 27 signs you had to see if you parked in our parking garage before you got to the front desk. And I'd say 30% of the people still didn't bring their ticket. So <laugh> , just as an example, you , it , it's sure harder than it seems. Um, and then , uh, you know , uh, make sure we always encourage people to have qualitative and quantitative data, which is, you know, we use a multi-rater from somewhat agree, you know, really agree, somewhat disagree, fully disagree, that type of zero to five multi-rater. But we also ask for open-ended questions so that people can speak in their own voice, in their own terms and give their own opinions. And if you have the right solution, it can really streamline turning that, you know, long-winded, sometimes emotional. Mm-hmm . <affirmative> , uh, comment questions. We can streamline that at people into actual data and themes. You don't have to read every little thing. And it doesn't have to be 10 hours of reading comments to know what they say. You can know that instantly. So it is important to have that piece in when you're, when you're building out the survey.

Speaker 1: 32:59

That's great. So what about when you, so you do the survey, you've had the , uh, you've done, you've done everything so far around the, the communications you've actually conducted, you know, you come up with your, with your suite of questions, you've done the survey. So what, what, what happens now? What , when you look at crunching, analyzing the data, so what does that look like and, and , and what should organizations, especially those and audiences, business owners that are listening to this, what are they really looking for , uh, within, when that , uh, the , the , the data is actually truly analyzed to see what, what, what are they kind of looking for? Trends or other data points? What are your thoughts there?

Speaker 2: 33:40

Yeah , so there , there's a couple things. Um, one of the first things I tell folks is you're going to bring a bias to your data. So if your reporting can help be broad and wide and give different perspectives to help try to remove the bias every manager and every person kind of brings when they're looking at their data , um, that can be really helpful. So, you know, everyone knows the Gallup 12. That's some of the most famous questions you can ask and I would never debunk that. Um, but those are outcomes and it's unders it's important to understand what your outcomes are. Um, from, from, you know, we've got an engagement index, it's six questions, but those are your , really, your outcomes. I feel great about the organization. Um, I love working , um, for Mark Mitford and company, you know, I like those are your outcomes, but it's important to understand what's driving those outcomes. Why do they like this? What parts of it do they like most? Which parts are detracting that could make you like it more? So step one is don't just look at your outcomes. Make sure you're asking questions in your surveys to understand what's driving those outcomes. And then looking, being able to look at where you're aligned and then where your outliers are. So it's a heat map type of , uh, type of piece. And then of course, being able to look at it demographically. We have organizations that go , oh my gosh, we're 55% , um, engagement, we need to be at 65%. We're so low. And then they look at it and find, oh, we're actually above 65%, three

quarters of our departments, there's three departments that are dragging down everybody. Or Ace particular demographic, oh , the Gen Z is not happy in our building. And the people that, or the people that have been here less than two years are happy. The people have been here more than four are not. So understanding not just your total engagement number , um, understanding where it's aligned, where it's not, and then be able to look at that by demographic. And when you can look at that, especially in the 300 hundred , you don't have a ton of resources. You can't be throwing your whole Sure . You know, HR force into everything. So it's important to find out exactly where to point , um, uh, appoint your, your resources to get the best pushback. Mm-hmm . One of the things everyone asks for, where's our high and low? I want my top five, bottom five. Really important to know, good to get an idea. But a lot of the time the data is in the middle. Mm-hmm . If you can raise some of these median average scores, you can get a bigger impact. And it's easier to do that because they're not all the way at the bottom and you're not shooting for the stars. And if you can move those up, they're gonna pull some other areas along with them most often as well. And you're gonna get a lot more bang for your buck with a lot less resources. Right.

Speaker 1: 36:24

Oh, interesting. So , um, no, that's, that's, that's great. It's, it's really nice to kind of see the roadmap and, and how to kinda lay things out and, and then also looking at the data. So, so what is , so survey's done, you've done a good job with that. Data's come back. So what, so , so, so the rubber meets the road. So on the execution side, the take action side, what are the, what are your thoughts there? What are some best practices that you'd recommend? Um, so I'd love to hear your thoughts on taking action when you really start take , okay, you got the data now what are we gonna do? So what is that, what are some recommendations you have for, for organizations that you work with?

Speaker 2: 37:03

Yeah, absolutely. So it , this is another, it's gonna be different for every organization. So I'm a broad , many times will recommend an engagement committee, a group that will look at this data and collectively make decisions on what to do. And you want it to be representative, not just your, you know , can't just be your executive committee is your engagement committee. You want to have some department, some regional, you want mm-hmm. <affirmative> , you want to have a good spread that can look at the data , um, from different angles, whether it's strategic or operational and, and , and pull those pieces out. So very often we um, you know, recommend an engagement type of committee. We also believe in democratizing the data. You've heard me on this, this conversation, say it a lot of the times mm-hmm . <affirmative> , but communicate the data, get as much information as you can to as many people in the organization. So people, we give as many logins as possible. We have reporting that's intended for line level managers that are not often very , um, you know, experienced in looking at this. They're often super busy just trying to get their schedules and get through their day that don't have a lot of time to deal with this. So how can you get the data to them in a meaningful way that they can take action? So trying to share it, if you just keep all the

data just at the corporate level, it can erode some trust, it can make it hard to take action. So it's important to get that out. So engagement committees can help with that as well. A tier , getting the right information to the right people. Um, another is to take action and have different actions. So, and , and not too many actions have actions that you can actually see through. So we recommend, and , and I also want to give a star to my experience, and we have people, of people that have spent years in IO psychology in organizational development , um, in analyzing this data deeply and providing recommendations. So I just want to give a disclaimer, there's a lot smarter people on this than me that can give a lot more detail , um, to individual organizations. But at a high level, get the data out, create and create a committee, and then take action. Don't mind off more than you can chew. And also for everybody that's not done this, just because people say something you like, don't survey cuz you know, they're all gonna say pay. Mm-hmm . <affirmative> , you don't have to take action on that. You can say, Hey, we hear you. There's some things that we are not going to be able to, but we want to give you a voice so that we can take actions in ways to help you. You know, this isn't all, you answer 50 questions, there's gonna be 50 actions. Um, we want to look at the actions that most often directly impact your experience. Mm-hmm . And by the way, if you're listening, pay is not even in the top three exit factors. Um, and most often in engagement factors , uh, for organizations, people say pay, but when you look at the key drivers, it's not pay. It's do they have the resources? How comfortable is it to work there? I'm not getting paid enough to deal with X, Y, and Z. Right.

Speaker 1: 40:12

Right. <laugh> .

Speaker 2: 40:14

So , um, really understanding those and take action on those items. Don't feel like you have to take action on everything.

Speaker 1: 40:20

Right. Oh , no, that's great. Now those, that is th that is awesome. This has been such a great conversation. Tom. Any, any final thoughts before we kind of move to a couple of fun things and, and also find out how people can get in touch with you to learn more. So any final thoughts you wanted to say on engagement itself, Tom, of any, any golden nuggets that you, you, you forgot to mention earlier today?

Speaker 2: 40:40

Golden nugget is do something, anything <laugh> , whether it's, whether it's a once a year, whether it's a small survey , um, give your employees a voice , um, especially in this day and age, especially in our culture. Especially in this economic climate, especially with def dispersed and remote working. Your team needs it, your company needs it, people need it. Do something, whatever that is,

Speaker 1: 41:04

<laugh>. That's awesome. So , uh, so okay, so we're gonna , we're gonna , we're gonna pick your brain a little bit and ask you a couple of things that , uh, um, hope , hopefully you've got some, you , I I'm sure you will have some good comments here, so I'll just jump in with the questions and stop rambling. So , um, so three favorite your all-time, three favorite business books that the audience that they're on your must read list for any audience member. What are those three books?

Speaker 2: 41:31

Five Dysfunctions of a Team? Yep . It's easy, it's timeless and it's right on point. It, it's, it's right there. Um, QBQ, it's about being a leader, asking questions. It was the best thing I got as a, as a young manager was don't tell people what to do. Ask lots of questions. And I don't know if I'm gonna say all time , but it's recent. It's another , uh, Texas person, but Firestarter by April Bell. It's really about empathy and I think empathy has a real place in the workplace actually. Uh, the book talks about empathy combined with , um, process and how empathy can be combined with process, which I thought was a really interesting take. So that was a recent one , uh, I really enjoyed reading.

Speaker 1: 42:20

Hmm . Oh, that's great. Yeah, thanks for that. So how about , um, two podcasts, two podcasts that you really enjoy listening to? I'm not sure if you're a , a huge podcast and I'm thinking you might be. So I just wanted to see if there's any two favorite podcasts you have that you'd really, you'd you'd recommend to the audience.

Speaker 2: 42:36

Yeah, if you're in the , uh, HR space, the HR social hour, half hour , um, they have over 300 episodes with , uh, John and Wendy. It's really fun. Some of these HR podcasts can get really dry <laugh> , um, not this one , this has been great. Um , but if you listen to some of 'em that they get really in the weeds, it's really fun. There's a great network. They have a Twitter chat, you can go out on Twitter and just, it's a great community. They, they can open you up to . Um, and then I, I, it's simple, but I listen to the daily , uh, New York Times. Every morning I read, you know, you hear all the headlines. I don't have time to read the articles and they take a deep dive into, into something and everything and uh, it , it kind of helps me go, oh, okay, now I know about that. So those are, those are my big two recently

Speaker 1: 43:19

<laugh>. And so what would you say? That's great. Um, so what would you say , what would you, what would you tell your 16 year old self today

Speaker 2: 43:30

Experience over opinions? Hmm . You can, you can think you know what you know until you've done what you know for years and years and years. Then keep, keep that mind open, keep asking questions. So experience over opinion.

Speaker 1: 43:44

Right. Oh , that is awesome. So last but not least, question for you sir. Favorite eighties band?

Speaker 2: 43:52

Favorite eighties band? Um,

Speaker 1: 43:56

You're probably a young pup in the eighties too, so

Speaker 2: 43:58

Yeah, I mean, I, I like Van Halen. Neil Young in the eighties is a classic, but he's stunk in the eighties. He was more of favorite seventies <laugh> . Uh, most of my eighties vans rolled over. So , uh, I'll go with, I'll go with Van Halen. You can't beat some , uh, you can't beat some just pure Eddie Van Halen on that guitar . Yeah,

Speaker 1: 44:15

There you go. No, no argument there sir. So with that, so Tom Horn, how can people find you, how can people find out more about people element if they want to continue the conversation, what are, what are some ways they can actually reach out to you?

Speaker 2: 44:30

I'll send you my full list, but uh , I'd love to talk to anybody. My email is tom people element.com . That's my work email. I'm on Twitter, very active. My handle is at Tom's Engaging hr. I'm on LinkedIn, pretty active there as well. Uh, look for Tom Horn, h o r n e and then find my podcast wherever you get your podcasts. All about hr, we delve into a lot of these type of topics. Uh, you might even find a podcast with Mark on there as well , <laugh> . So those are the big areas. I'll send some links to you as well.

Speaker 1: 45:03

Great. Thank you. Uh , that , that is awesome. So again, Tom, just thank you for your time. I do this and I , I'm very sincere about this too. I learned some things , uh, about just employee engagement and the right , it's always just good to have a refresher course. And I started my career in 1990, so it's been a while and I've been through , around the block a few times here in 1990. And , uh, so yeah, I'm , I'm , I , I always en I enjoyed the conversation, learn some really good things. Hopefully as an audience member you'll learned a couple of really good things here too. So with that, we're gonna wrap up and thanks Tom for your time and we'll look forward to our next episode next month. Thanks so much and we'll, we'll talk to you soon. Bye-Bye.