"We, Not Me" – Beyond Service Awards

Mrs. Sylvia Carrillo-Trevino – Corpus Christi, TX
Mr. Willie Morales – Sandisfield, MA
Mr. Steven H. Taylor – Sherburne County, MN

ICMA Conference Presenters

#ICMA2018
Learn to build a “we not me” environment

• How do you build a culture of success, employee trust and engagement, and staff retention?

• Fostering team cohesion.

• Culture trumps strategy every time.

• Build an organizational culture you’re proud of.

• Using strategies other than Service Awards and/or Anniversary Celebrations
Four Areas to be Addressed

1. **Problem Identification/Impacts on the Organization:** What were the concerns in terms of trust & engagement with staff if any? Or were there no mechanisms in place? Use of an employee survey to identify needs?

2. **Ideas on Corrective Action/Organizational Changes:** How were your ideas created and vetted? Who was involved e.g., unions, governing body, administration, or a committee?

3. **Implementation of Those Ideas:** How did you go about implementing changes to foster commitment and engagement? How long did it take? Were there key people who took the lead or was it more organic? Were there costs involved or just time?

4. **Results & Lessons Learned:** What happened? Can your results be measured? How can your plan be replicated in other jurisdictions? Where there unexpected results? What would you have done differently? What will you do moving forward if anything?
1. Problem Identification/Impacts on the Organization

Sylvia (Corpus Christi):
• Staff was coming off of a recently terminated manager and some high level investigations - distrust of staff led to fraud hotline creation.
• Investigations abounded, many of which led nowhere, but had staff on edge.
• Morale was poor.
• The City Champion program was formulated to not only improve morale, but to change the culture where staff were trusted and valued.
1. Problem Identification/Impacts on the Organization (cont.)

Willie (City of Sandisfield, MA)

• Staff was traumatized and so riddled with the fear of small town scandal that they were paralyzed.
• Staff had essentially checked out.
• A survey was sent out in my first week to obtain ideas of what was happening - little response.
• The only thing on the staff’s mind was how to protect themselves from being blamed from the fallout regarding the town’s financial issues.
1. Problem Identification/Impacts on the Organization (cont.)

Steve (Sherburne County, MN)

- In Sherburne County there were no blatant or obvious concerns in terms of trust or engagement issues.
- Occasional comments made by staff finding out about important county issues by reading the local paper before hearing them from management.
- 11 union groups and over the past several years no mention of poor communication or morale issues.
- Less than a year after I started thought about asking staff a series of questions to ascertain their level of satisfaction in terms of their work environment.
2. Ideas on Corrective Action/Organizational Changes
Sylvia:

• A committee of staff in the HR department as well as directors and the City Manager were put together to vet the ideas and discussing scope and funding.
• The fraud/tip line still exist, the department directors are given the opportunity to research/investigate the allegation and put it to rest much more quickly than an outside investigation of the City Auditor and Police Department can provide.
• City Champion Program developed
2. Ideas on Corrective Action/Organizational Changes (cont.)

Willie:
• Learned that trust was needed between Town Manager & staff
• Did not issue directives
• Listened to staff
• Demonstrated to employees that their work was respected and understood the challenges they faced.
2. Ideas on Corrective Action/Organizational Changes (cont.)

Steve:

• I initially passed the idea of an anonymous Employee Engagement survey by HR Director and Assistant.
• I thought Okay, so what happens once we get all the responses back?
• Passed survey by Department Heads for input. One issue that I wanted to do was aggregate information by department but there was major pushback
• I advised the County Board of intentions and they were supportive.
3. Implementation of Those Ideas

Sylvia:
• The idea was introduced at the executive leadership level (directors and assistant directors) for their buy in.
• The beauty of the program is that while the input of executive staff is important, the nominations of the employees selected as City Champions come from their peers and counterparts.
• The executive team is recognized at the award program, but their input is minimal save a few kind words at the event. We found that while staff enjoys recognition of the executive team, they value their peer recognition much more.
3. Implementation of Those Ideas (cont.)

Willie:

• Had to first hand the Board a major win through the use of my management approach before they considered my suggestions.

• Worked with appointed treasurer, town accountant, and public finance consultant to reconcile FY 15 and 16 with the State’s Division of Local Services so that we could open FY 17 on solid footing (can you say journal entries)!

• The Board was elated with this news and I took care to inform them that I alone did not deliver said outcome. I expressed to the Board the process and what it required from the staff in order for the successful outcome
3. Implementation of Those Ideas (cont.)

Steve:

- Survey Monkey questionnaire was completed and emailed to staff both in 2014 and 2017.
- Desire to use the same questions to benchmark changes
- The first survey took almost three months to develop and get buy-in
- This effort was free as our broker was already under contract. It did take a fair amount of my HR Director’s and my time especially in 2014 when the first survey was completed.
- In 2017 it was just a matter of coordinating with Department Heads that I was going to do a second survey.
4. Results & Lessons Learned

Sylvia:

• The program is time intensive into what an average citizen may call "waste" - Setting up and taking down celebration areas throughout city departments, purchase of food and other party items, etc.

• We had a complaint of a staff shopping at a local "Party City" during office hours. We wanted to invest in our staff and thought the investment worthwhile.

• Unexpected results have led to a very friendly "rivalry" among departments

• It definitely improved morale and we will continue the program
4. Results & Lessons Learned (cont.)

Willie:

• Through establishment of financial policies the Board felt more comfortable
• Culture shifted as there wasn’t a feeling of arbitrary staff decisions being made
• Staff felt they weren’t being micro-managed anymore
4. Results & Lessons Learned (cont.)

Steve:
Nearly a 70% response rate from staff for both surveys in 2014 and 2017

Response to questions ranked by number agreeing:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>% Agreement 2014</th>
<th>% Agreement 2017</th>
<th>Diff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I know what is expected of me at work.</td>
<td>91.5%</td>
<td>92.1%</td>
<td>+0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I have the training I need to meet my job expectations.</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td>+1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The workplace is neat, clean and professional.</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
<td>74.1%</td>
<td>+2.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. My fellow employees are committed to doing quality work</td>
<td>71.5%</td>
<td>71.1%</td>
<td>-0.4%</td>
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4. Results & Lessons Learned (cont.)

<table>
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<th>% Agreement 2014</th>
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<th>Diff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. I am satisfied with Sherburne County as a place to work.</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
<td>+0.7%</td>
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<td>6. There is someone at work who encourages me.</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>+4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I receive adequate feedback from my supervisor about how I am doing.</td>
<td>59.7%</td>
<td>67.6%</td>
<td>+7.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. In a typical week, I often feel stressed at work.</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
<td>54.6%</td>
<td>-2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. At work, my opinions seem to count.</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
<td>55.6%</td>
<td>+4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. In Sherburne County, employees at all levels treat one another with respect.</td>
<td>48.1%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>+4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Communication is encouraged in this organization</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>+6.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Management is genuinely interested in employee opinions and ideas.</td>
<td>38.5%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td>+7.1%</td>
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</table>
Conclusion

• There are different approaches to enhancing morale and creating a positive organizational culture.

• You have heard experiences from a large city, a small community and a county.

• What you haven’t heard are the words Service Awards or Anniversary Awards which tend to recognize an individual while not necessarily bolstering teamwork and organizational culture.

• What strategies have you used; what has worked or not worked as intended?