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How To Build Trust and Engage Supervisors

Holleran has released new findings from its national employee engagement benchmark showing that 57% of campus supervisors are engaged. This number, gleaned from a database of nearly 59,000 current cases, is a positive discovery, according to Connie Wolfe, Executive Vice President.

"Supervisors are the key to campus engagement," states Wolfe, who regularly shares employee engagement data with senior living communities and helps them make sense of the findings. "We know that employees usually don't leave their organizations--they leave their bosses." And, she continues, "if the boss is not engaged, there's only a remote chance that his or her direct reports will be engaged."

While the 57% engagement number is encouraging, the flip side is that more than 40% of supervisors in senior living are NOT engaged. "Our percentage compares favorably to corporate America, where 65% of managers are disengaged, but we need to do better if we are going to stem the turnover crisis in our field," Wolfe says.

In corporate America, 75% of employees say their number one stressor at work is their boss. Wolfe hypothesizes that the percentages are better in the not for profit senior living sector. "We know from our benchmark that over 70% of our workforce says their supervisor recognizes their work in a positive manner. Recognition is one of the most important determinants of engagement."

Where the field is not performing as well as it might is in the area of trust. Holleran's benchmark reveals that only 62% of employees agree with the statement "I trust the leadership of our organization." Wolfe says that supervisors in particular can increase the trust levels with their team members in three important ways:

1. Get to know them personally, and allow them to know you. Trust levels go up dramatically when people who work together get to know one another beyond their professional relationship. "When people know your values, what makes you tick, how you see the world, they appreciate you in a whole new way," believes Wolfe.
2. Don't micromanage. Set goals and expectations, but don't tell people HOW to do the work-- trust that they are competent and will figure it out. "As long as people are ethical and legal in the way they approach work, it is best to let them do it how they see fit. Coach along the way if they need it to complete a task or challenge, but let them put their own stamp on their work."
3. Encourage the heart. "What this basically means is--inspire them, recognize them, thank them. When they hit a roadblock, ask 'what does help look like from me?' We all get discouraged from time to time and have setbacks. Your job as a leader is to be there in a supportive role, removing roadblocks as you are able," says Wolfe.

Increasing trust levels at the team level, is also an effective way for supervisors to become more engaged themselves. "Developing relationships with those you interact with on a daily basis is one key to self-engagement. We look forward to coming to work when we have positive, nurturing relationships with fellow team members. And when we feel like we are having an influence on the passion of others about the mission and purpose of our organizations."

Holleran is the premier provider of employee and resident engagement and satisfaction research and benchmarks, serving more than 1,000 not-for-profit senior living provider organizations nationally.

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