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Business Vantage 3 Reading

Business Result Upper Intermediate

Student's name: _____ Final grade:

Approximate time: 30 minutes

Part 1

Read the text about employees and answer the questions. Look at the example (0).

How to Engage your Employees
By Michael Skapinker

Ade Sodeinde, a 17-year-old Nigerian, became famous last week for making some of Britain's trains run on time. Sodeinde, in her year working for Central Trains before going to university, solved the puzzle of why trains leaving the depot ran late. She found that the tracks in the depot needed upgrading and were slowing the trains' journeys to their starting platforms. Drivers and conductors also had to wait before boarding because of the time taken for safety inspections and cleaning. By refurbishing the tracks and reorganizing inspection and cleaning, Central was able to eliminate the problem, potentially saving itself £750, 000 ($1.37m) a year in fines for running late – and vastly reducing passenger frustration and delay.

Miss Sodeinde will no doubt be in great demand when she graduates. But just how large, established companies persuade employees to put in that extra effort is one of management's great puzzles. Staff know where the problems and opportunities lie and there will always be employees with ideas for new products or better service. All that is required is for them to speak up and for someone to listen.

Most companies say they listen to their people – but as managers are often unhappy to have their current strategies disrupted and new ideas become trapped in corporate bureaucracy, would-be innovators become jaded, and cynical.

Yet there is a link between engaged employees, satisfied customers and corporate profitability – according to a recent study by the Forum for People Performance Management & Measurement at Northwestern University. The forum studied 100 US companies to find out how engaged their staff were and whether this had any effect on corporate profitability. The Northwestern researchers solely wanted to look at employees, such as Miss Sodeinde, who did not deal directly with customers. What impact did their attitudes have on the company's success? Well, the results were clear. The companies with the happiest and most engaged employees had the most satisfied, highest-spending customers.

So, do we need to make employees more engaged and content? Roger Martin, dean of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, argues that people are happiest not only when they are respected members of a team they admire but when the team and the company are respected by the world outside.

Being part of a trusted, honest group is an indispensable component of employee happiness and engagement. So is establishing ties with colleagues you respect. When groups appear to be performing, companies should hesitate before disrupting them. The vogue for forming new teams for each task may work in companies small enough for everyone to know each other. When people constantly have to establish new links of trust, customers will probably suffer. Companies should think hard, too, before they outsource the work of a functioning team. The company you outsource to may be a happy, engaged bunch, but I wouldn't count on it.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

0. What were the problems with the trains leaving the depot?

The tracks in the depot were in poor condition. The train drivers had to wait for the cleaning and safety inspections to be carried out

1. Why is it important for companies to persuade staff to put in that extra effort?

_____

2. What are the problems people with good ideas might face?

_____

3. What was special about those surveyed in the Northwestern University research?

_____

4. Who needs to respect whom, for employees to be happiest?

_____

5. What is the danger of large companies forming new teams for each task?

_____

Part 2

Read the text again and answer True (T) or False (F). There is an example at the beginning (0).

0. The Forum at Northwestern University wanted to find out whether the degree of staff commitment in a company has an influence on their profitability. **T / F**

1. They only interviewed employees who dealt directly with customers. **T / F**

2. They found that customers were more satisfied and spent more money with companies who had the most committed staff. **T / F**

3. According to Roger Martin, the happiest employees are part of a team that respects and admires its customers and the world outside. **T / F**

4. Forming new teams can be a good idea, but just in small companies. **T / F**

5. Changing teams in a company will not affect customers. **T / F**

LIVEWORKSHEETS