

Editorial

Javier Bajer

Collaboration above silos

Honestly, I do not think I could stand yet another “on-brand” presentation, where grown-up people are lectured on the importance of collaboration. If, by any chance, I am stuck inside a meeting of this type, I often ask a simple question: Do you really believe that telling people to collaborate is going to make them do so? Has it worked in the past, two years’ ago, when another (now outdated, but then “on-brand”) presentation was used to roll out a company-wide campaign to get people to work better together? The mind boggles.

After years of working inside very testing environments, I learned one thing: people do not change because we tell them to. And that is that! I have yet to see sustainable results as a consequence of engaging people in conversations “about” collaboration, measuring their behaviours through (often subjective) performance reviews and even getting them to play fun games in a training environment, where they are taught that collaboration is better than not-collaboration after Team A managed to build the puzzle faster than Team B. Has that really work for you before? Happy to be convinced. . . .

The issue with collaboration (like many other behaviours we all strive to build in our cultures) is that it is an output, not an input. A bit like when a dog wags their tail – they first are content and then (and only then), they show it. When it comes to human behaviour, there is great news: we do not need to be told to collaborate (or even be bribed to do so). We will do it naturally and abundantly when we feel that it is safe to do so, when it makes sense because we are part of a group of people working together to create value for clients, patients or even investors.

I am convinced that, rather than trying to get people to collaborate, we should feed the appetite for collaboration by turning up the volume of the conversations around creating value, while we remove the processes, policies and reward systems that make collaboration hard to show up.

Enjoy this issue of Strategic HR Review.

Warmly,

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