

Driving a High Performance Culture at A.P. Moller-Maersk

Every organization can benefit by gathering candid feedback from its employees. However, when you have more than 110,000 people, working in 20 businesses, speaking 100 different languages and spread across 130 countries, the task of gathering that feedback becomes considerably more complex.

Kenexa® has been meeting this challenge every year since 2006, by conducting an annual global employee engagement survey for A.P. Moller-Maersk. The survey compiles employee opinions on their job, their career opportunities and their satisfaction with the organization as well as on issues such as leadership, teamwork, remuneration, performance, communication, innovation, work-life balance, corporate values, environmentalism and organizational change.

“We want to be the first choice employer for top performers,” said Thomas Hedegaard Rasmussen, General Manager of Group Human Resources at A.P. Moller-Maersk. “We created the engagement survey as a mechanism for employees to voice their opinions about their work, about the organization and about their managers. By understanding what engages our best performers, we’re able to create a stimulating workplace and to attract and retain the best talent.”

Developing the Survey

A.P. Moller-Maersk initially selected Kenexa after reviewing the leading vendors in the market.

“We were impressed with Kenexa’s science-based, data-driven approach and their understanding of how to transform the survey results into actionable initiatives,” said Rasmussen. “They worked with us to develop the engagement survey, in line with best practice, and they helped us to tailor it to take account of our

organizational context. The questions have evolved over the years and the focus is now on developing a high performance culture. By measuring this, we concentrate in the minds of our leaders and employees that this is a key priority.”

The engagement survey, translated into 16 languages, is administered in September each year. The majority of employees complete the survey online, after their direct manager emails them a weblink. Paper surveys are provided to those who do not have access to a computer. These are then shipped back to Kenexa for analysis. All responses are anonymous and remain confidential.

In 2006, the first engagement survey achieved an 80 percent response rate. This has steadily improved and last year, the response rate was 89 percent.

“People like to participate in the survey and give their input,” said Rasmussen. “We learn what is important to them, where we’re doing well and what we can do better. It’s like holding up a mirror to the organization and the findings form the basis of a wide range of decisions.”

Acting on the Feedback

As a direct result of the survey, A.P. Moller-Maersk has introduced local and Group-wide improvements in its 20 businesses, in areas such as retention, leadership, teamwork, performance, communication, innovation and organizational change.

“We use the engagement survey to improve the workplace, to focus our attention on key interventions and to track progress,” said Rasmussen. “Because it is undertaken in consecutive years, we’re able to review the impact of these interventions, monitor trends and compare results with how we scored in previous years.”



The survey shows that A.P. Moller-Maersk has highly engaged employees, who are proud to work for the group, and that engagement is clearly linked to retention. However, it does more than measure the 'temperature' of the organization. Employees are also asked to assess their direct manager. Over the past year, an index of 13 items measuring employee perceptions of their manager's effectiveness has risen from 69 percent favorable to 73 percent.

"To win in the marketplace, we need great leaders," said Rasmussen. "The feedback from the engagement survey is one of the tools we use to help our leaders to develop and improve. It's an opportunity to assess how they are performing and to gain feedback on the effectiveness of our leadership courses."

Sharing the Results

After analyzing the responses, Kenexa provides an overall report on the engagement survey results via an online portal. Around 8,000 leaders at A.P. Moller-Maersk each get their own individual report, detailing the results and the feedback from their subordinates. Kenexa also provides a 'data mining' tool that enables A.P. Moller-Maersk's HR team to drill down into the data as required. For example, they can compare the engagement levels of all female leaders in Spain with those in Denmark.

"The engagement survey results are worthless if we don't share them," said Rasmussen. "We communicate the results throughout the business."

At the group leadership level, comparisons between the 20 different business units are reviewed and the performance and engagement scores are benchmarked against Kenexa's database of the top 25 percent of high performing companies in the Global 500, Fortune's list of the world's biggest companies. Group-wide focus areas for the coming year are then developed. At the business unit level, best practice is shared and the survey results are used to launch and monitor key initiatives. At the team level, individual employees meet with their leader to go through the engagement results and to develop an action plan for improvement over the coming year.

Rasmussen says that the partnership with Kenexa goes beyond the delivery of the survey.

"Having the capacity to consistently manage the logistics and infrastructure of a project of this magnitude is certainly impressive but what keeps Kenexa at the table is the fact that they're able to provide valuable strategic advice and expertise," he said.

A.P. Moller-Maersk will continue to utilise the engagement survey in its quest to become the preferred supplier in its markets.

"Engagement is at the heart of many things that we do," said Rasmussen. "The survey gives our employees the chance to air their views and we've been able to drive high performance by taking onboard their feedback. In an economic downturn, your business results depend on having engaged employees who perform well and good leaders who ask the right questions."

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About A.P. Moller-Maersk Group

With revenues of over \$61,000 million, the A.P. Moller-Maersk Group owns the world's largest container shipping line, which operates over 550 container vessels. The Group was founded in 1904 and its business units are also active in the oil and gas, offshore drilling, ship building, retail and manufacturing industries. Website: www.maersk.com