

THE B CORPORATION WAY OF DOING WELL AND DOING GOOD

People, Purpose and Profit

**How Your
Employees are
the Link Between
Business Success
and Social Impact**



Who is this book for?

This booklet is for anyone interested in improving the performance of their organisation. It outlines real-life examples of how engaging more deeply with employees has improved productivity, reduced staff turnover and enabled companies to employ socially excluded people who otherwise struggle to join the workforce. It showcases simple examples – with tips – that any organisation can adopt to transform their relationship with their employees.

This booklet shares some examples of what has worked for others, so that business owners and managers may be able to try something new in their own businesses.

There is an accompanying set of eight case studies that provide more examples, details and advice on what other successful companies have done.

What does “the B Corp way” mean?



Most of the examples and references in this book are drawn from B Corp certified companies who have publicly committed their businesses to be a “force for good”. This means they exist for a greater purpose than profit alone.

Certified B Corporations are businesses that have opted to meet the highest standards of verified social and environmental performance, public transparency and legal accountability to balance profit and purpose, as measured by the B Impact Assessment.¹

Any company can go through the process to become a B Corp; there are currently over 3,000 Certified B Corporations in more than 70 countries.

About Footprints Africa

Footprints Africa supports SMEs to adopt future-friendly practices, address the challenges of growth and create jobs using value chains as a tool for development. Focusing on the Catering and Commercial Waste Management sectors, we are championing business as a force for good and piloting new business models that exemplify this. We advance sustainable, scalable and inclusive approaches to development of local African economies. We are a Registered UK Charity and exist for public benefit.



¹ <https://bcorporation.net/about-b-corps>

Why Invest in Employees?

We believe that purpose and profit can actually reinforce one another and that people are the vital link between the two.

There are three main reasons that investing in your employees will increase your financial performance and your capacity to be a force for good:

- 1) Engaged employees cost less, not more.
- 2) Your reputation is only as good as your least happy employee.
- 3) Changing how business is done is a revenue opportunity.

Engaged employees cost less, not more

Business owners often think employee satisfaction and happiness is tied to wages and benefits. “Engagement” goes much deeper: it involves workers being involved in the way the business is managed and in decisions about their working conditions; it reflects the extent to which they feel positive about the company and its treatment of employees and other stakeholders.²

Disengaged employees may avoid involvement with their teams, or other initiatives to keep pushing the company forward. They may even quit. All of these would directly cost the company in terms of lost sales or customers, lower productivity, or added costs of turnover and training. When taking into account all the time and costs involved in recruiting and getting new staff up to speed, this can eat up a significant portion of potential profits (see the Neighbourhood Group case below).

What does “purpose” mean to a business?

Every organisation has an impact on community life. Smart organisations make sure this impact is positive – and they start by articulating a purpose beyond ‘making a profit.’ Perhaps your purpose builds on a founder’s sense of their own personal purpose. Perhaps it responds to a clear and growing need in the world. Whatever the case, it expands your definition of the value you deliver.

Neighbourhood Group: hiring for retention

The Neighbourhood Group³ of restaurants are profitable and growing. They pay living wages and offer great benefits in a highly competitive industry known for low/minimum wages, poor labour practices and thin margins. Through “hiring for retention” (and several other innovative actions), they dramatically lowered their costs associated with turnover and achieved roughly 1% increase in net profits. Given that restaurants often have high volumes but low net profits (in the 2-3% range), this was an increase in profitability of 33% to 50%.

² <https://www.shiftboard.com/blog/real-cost-employee-disengagement/>

³ See detailed case study: Page 28

Why Invest in Employees?

Your reputation is only as good as your least happy employee

Engaged employees may tell a positive story for you through their words and actions. Disengaged employees, on the other hand, may speak negatively of the business or be more likely to be indifferent to the experience of customers or clients. How you treat your employees may overshadow any other claims to impact – i.e. we are less inclined to trust a “green” brand if we believe they treat their employees poorly.

In a market where being “green” (or adopting CSR practices in general) is the trend for leading companies, many make unsupported claims about their social and environmental actions. This makes it hard to distinguish between those truly making a difference and those peddling stories to increase sales. Employees can be your ambassadors who make that distinction.

It’s more powerful to “show” and not “tell” stakeholders (staff, customers, investors, etc.) about your commitment to impact. It can be hard to prove that your business activities have preserved a species at risk or improved the health of a local community, but engaged employees can provide testimonials and may be tangible, ‘living proof’ of your commitment to social impact.

A commitment to employee welfare helps a business to stand out because it is a visible and demonstrable action. Daproim Africa⁴ and Flow Office Wisdom⁵ have employees who act in consulting-type roles and are therefore ambassadors for the company. Customers choose them (and stay with them) because of their trust in the brand and values; in turn the employees add value in their consulting relationships, by demonstrating ways of working ‘with purpose’ that may foster innovation and create value beyond the immediate tasks they work on.

SOKO and COOK: making social purpose fun, interesting and valuable

For SOKO and COOK, purpose is embedded in their businesses, which exist to create meaningful jobs and a pathway out of social exclusion. However, they realised that they needed to go a step further to get employees to embrace the opportunities and become ambassadors for the impact they are making.

At COOK, while employees were aware that the business aims to make a positive impact, company leaders were concerned that not enough employees were bringing it to life in their work. They started onboarding new employees with board games, quizzes, small gifts and prizes and (importantly) sharing workplace and personal stories in the company newsletter. As a result, staff are more engaged and motivated to perform at their best.

By improving communications around the purpose in a way that allowed for employees to deepen their appreciation of the purpose over time – and to do so in a fun way – COOK’s leaders were able to galvanise and motivate staff to live the purpose in their daily work.

SOKO recognised the value of having a clear purpose but faced the challenge of aligning employees across the Kenyan and American offices. By creating an anonymous survey and hosting twice yearly whole-company online meetings, they encouraged less confident staff to be curious and ask questions, resulting in a stronger sense of a unified team, more self-direction, autonomy and innovation.

For both SOKO and COOK, communicating with employees about the company’s purpose built the kind of enthusiasm and engagement that drives performance, innovation and business success. This had the knock-on effect that staff became strong ambassadors for the brand as they were enthusiastic to communicate outside of the business about the company’s impact.

⁴ See detailed case study: Page 20

⁵ See detailed case study: Page 22

Why Invest in Employees?

Changing how business is done is a revenue opportunity

A significant opportunity to gain business and market share is through changing the way business is done in industries/sectors that are the 'worst offenders'.

Companies who are lagging in social purpose are at risk of public relations crises or regulatory consequences when their irresponsible actions are exposed e.g. Uber has twice lost its licence to operate in London over passenger safety concerns. Leading companies are rewarded with consumer preference, with repeat sales and referrals driving up revenue. For investors, companies who commit to and report on Environmental, Social and Governance matters (e.g. B Corps and other reporting standards⁶) routinely financially outperform other companies^{7,8}.

Certifying B Corporations revealed that they believed "the major crises of our time are a result of the way we conduct business," and they became a Certified B Corporation to "join the movement of creating a new economy with a new set of rules" and "redefine the way people perceive success in the business world."⁹

Daproim: gaining customers attracted by their social mission

Many of Daproim's customers are international companies who choose Daproim because their services and rates are competitive, but also because the B Corp certification fosters trust in a competitive labour market. The company encourages and rewards even its most junior employees – some of them students – for bringing in new customers and projects.

What is "employee engagement"?

A Gallup poll reported that 67% US workers feel disengaged or actively disengaged in their jobs, as measured by a "disengagement calculator"¹⁰.

- **Engaged:** Employees are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work and workplace. They are psychological "owners", drive performance and innovation and move the organisation forward.
- **Disengaged:** Employees are psychologically unattached to their work and company. Because their engagement needs are not being fully met, they're putting time – but not energy or passion – into their work.
- **Actively disengaged:** Employees aren't just unhappy at work – they are resentful that their needs aren't being met and are acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers potentially undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish.

Disengagement Calculator

☹ = disengaged

	number of workers		☹ workers	
1	<input type="text"/>	x 16% =	<input type="text"/>	
<hr/>				
	average hourly wage	x	average hours per week	x 52 wks x 34% =
2	<input type="text"/>	x	<input type="text"/>	= <input type="text"/>
<hr/>				
	☹ workers	x	average cost of ☹ worker	=
3	<input type="text"/>	x	<input type="text"/>	= <input type="text"/>

⁶ See the [Common Approach to Impact Measurement](#) which describes Stakeholder Engagement as "the glue" that ties together the five fundamental practices for measuring and achieving social impact.

⁷ <https://corpgov.law.harvard.edu/2019/03/21/esg-rating-and-momentum/>

⁸ [https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-purpose-driven-leadership/\\$File/ey-purpose-driven-leadership.pdf](https://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-purpose-driven-leadership/$File/ey-purpose-driven-leadership.pdf)

⁹ <https://hbr.org/2016/06/why-companies-are-becoming-b-corporations>

¹⁰ Interactive disengagement calculator:
<https://www.shiftboard.com/hourly-employee-engagement-how-to/#active-disengagement-calculator>

What is a Good Employer?

This paper covers the full range of “the employee lifecycle” for which an employer is responsible: the whole journey from recruitment, through training and development, to ongoing performance management, growth and leadership development.

Rather than move through these stages chronologically, we have emphasised the “quick wins” – immediate actions that business owners can take – that will help you to grow your capacity as a good employer from a strong foundation.

The pages that follow outline the characteristics of three areas of management competency, each one supporting the next:

Careful Listening

Leaders of companies considered as best employers talk to employees on average three times more than other leaders. They provide clarity and focus and encourage openness and involvement.

Leaders make spaces where employees feel safe to speak up when challenges arise and the employees believe there will be change as a result of their feedback. In a good employer’s workplace, employees trust senior leaders, and feel positive about their working relationship with their managers.

Growth Mosaic¹¹ uses specific techniques to make sure that everyone’s voice is heard, not just the loudest or most powerful people in the room. Their leader deliberately “makes his own voice smaller” by speaking less, or letting others respond to questions he could answer, to make space for others. For certain discussions, he will do “a round” where each person speaks at least once before returning to open conversation where people can jump in and respond to each other.

Building Culture

Good employers show their values and purpose through their actions. By deliberately making space for employees to do the same, a culture develops where employees who understand the values provide suggestions, get involved and reinforce the behaviours that generate success.

Employees in purpose-driven companies are inspired by what they do and share their inspiration inside and outside the workplace.

Where others have failed to deter poachers and illegal loggers, BioCarbon Partners¹² is able to successfully protect wilderness areas from encroachment because they partner with, and employ, local communities and residents. Reinforcement of a strong and shared ownership of the conservation mission flows in both directions between the company and the community.

Leadership & Growth

Leaders of companies considered as best employers create an environment that drives performance. Their employees feel that they receive the training and resources needed to do their current job and that there are career development opportunities for them to perform at their highest level, leading to personal success.¹³

Leaders set inspiring goals and targets that reflect not just financial performance but also goals for community or social wellbeing. What really matters to employees is the ability to positively impact a company and through it, wider society.

Footprints Africa has leadership development embedded into every aspect of providing their services – employees receive copious amounts of feedback, reviews and a short but intense coaching programme. Junior staff are given responsibility early but with access to a technical mentor who can guide them and develop their technical skills. This support helps them and the organisation, achieve peak performance for themselves, their clients and the community they serve.

¹¹ See detailed case study: Page 26

¹² See detailed case study: Page 16

¹³ Examples drawn from https://mystarjob.com/articles/story.aspx?file=/2013/3/16/mystarjob_careerguide/12797221&sec=mystarjob_careerguide and <https://www.careersinafrica.com/blog/the-100-best-companies-to-work-for-in-africa/>

Careful Listening

Engaging Current and Prospective Employees

Employees want to feel that their concerns are heard and acted upon

A business owner or manager can't assume what employees might want without asking and then listening carefully. Most employees have in common the desire for good pay and not being mistreated, but many entrepreneurs make assumptions about what motivates employee performance.

Listening makes employees feel valued and unique. When employees are listened to, they listen back and take on responsibility for their activities at work.

How to listen

- Make it a company culture – the CEO should take the lead and set an example of what the listening culture should be. This begins with the prospective employee's first interactions with the company.
- Provide a clear, formal framework that makes it easy for employees to 'raise their hands' and give feedback. Use both in-person and anonymous methods.
- Respond – soliciting feedback and not responding has a worse impact on morale than not taking employee feedback in the first place.
- Acknowledge the feedback – document employee feedback and the responses
- Show that you've taken action to solve issues that were raised and, in cases where managers decide not to act on employee suggestions, explain the rationale or business reasons for the decision.

BioCarbon Partners

BioCarbon Partners takes a very structured approach to listening to current and prospective employees. They formally approached local chiefs and Resource Planning Boards in communities adjacent to their project area near Lower Zambezi National Park, to hear about the communities' priorities and concerns. By listening carefully to their needs and identifying the strengths and capacities in those communities, BioCarbon Partners saw an opportunity to employ several young men and women in their Forest Monitoring team.

85% of the people in the communities near the boundary of the conservation area live below the poverty line, which is why they engage in illegal logging and poaching. By listening carefully to people who might otherwise be their adversaries and then offering economic alternatives (employment) through a process of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, BioCarbon Partners set the foundation for strong community partnerships and highly engaged employees they can trust.



Careful Listening

Making Space for Conversation

The core of employee engagement is bidirectional listening (listening to and being listened to). Good employers create a safe and respectful forum that empowers employees to speak genuinely and honestly.

Managers (with the power to hire, fire, reward and discipline) must make a deliberate effort to counteract their power imbalance with employees which can discourage valuable feedback. This is not just about what managers say but includes the structural aspects of the workplace i.e. not just saying “come to me any time with your concerns” but also (for example) keeping fixed office hours for open conversations, or closely monitoring workplace safety hazards or injuries.

Fair policies for employee wellbeing

Put kindness into action¹⁴: here are some practical ideas for a good work environment that may help you show that you sincerely care about employee health, wellbeing and engagement:¹⁵

- **Allow social time for team members to bond** with each other and with managers, especially when they may not interact socially in their normal workday. Casual socialising helps to build trust, teamwork and helps managers to engage each employee according to what works for their unique personality.
- **Simplify and/or automate processes for feedback.** Clear processes empower employees to take responsibility and ownership of project and process outcomes. They strengthen projects, ensuring any challenges are picked up and strengths optimised. Organisations can even utilise increasingly sophisticated software to manage employee engagement and feedback.
- **Promote health and wellness** among your employees with daily or weekly team exercise programmes. Ensure that employees are taking breaks, not skipping meals and eating healthily through the day.

Physical spaces

A physical work environment can reflect and reinforce a business's core values and impact how employees feel in the space. Absolute minimum requirements are adhering to health and safety regulations, especially where machinery or toxic/dangerous substances are concerned. Other basics include well-lit spaces, ergonomic furniture and access to healthy food options.

Interestingly, giving office workers a say in the design of their workspace may increase productivity by 32%.



¹⁴ <https://bthechange.com/4-practices-to-cultivate-kindness-in-business-613a03f05d2a>

¹⁵ <https://inside.6q.io/creating-a-healthy-workplace-environment/>

Careful Listening

Having Healthy Conversations

Performance monitoring and positive feedback loops¹⁶

Feedback is often misunderstood to be giving compliments or criticism. For feedback on an employee's actions to be valuable, it should be:

- **timely** (i.e. close in time to the action discussed),
- delivered **without threat of reprisal**, and
- employee responses/reaction **heard without judgment or prejudice**.

Feedback should include:

- what the employee is doing right,
- what doesn't have to be changed,
- how the results show up for the broader team,
- how to sustain the desired performance, and
- a healthy opportunity to work towards better behaviours if needed.¹⁷

If you are leading a team and want to create a positive feedback loop, you can:

- Lead by listening: listen to the whole story before reacting.
- Make time to speak with the employee in person or at least on the phone; feedback is authentic when it is personal.
- Control your emotions: make space between emotional and rational thinking in order to be fully present for employees.

Positive feedback example

Rosie feels that her performance might be affected by a current process established before she was hired. She wants to be proactive on investigating and suggesting alternatives but doesn't know if her supervisor wants her to do this work.

Here are the questions she asked to start a positive feedback loop on the topic:

- Context – I would like to review our process to see if it can become more efficient. Are you happy for me to do so?
- What is going right – Can you share with me what you feel is going right with our current process?
- What does not have to change – What do you feel does not need to change?
- What that looks like from the other's perspective – Can you share with me how you currently see this process evolving?
- Creating the loop – I'd like to look at the parts that might need improving. Can I come back to you and review what I find and get your perspective again?

The supervisor can ask for her to wait or proceed with the project. Either way, Rosie has started a conversation she can follow up on to identify improvements.

¹⁶ Research undertaken by PRISM and the University of Exeter:
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/news/featurednews/title_98638_en.html
http://plantsatwork.org.uk/images/Knights_research.pdf

¹⁷ <https://relevant-insight.com/2018/05/02/positive-feedback-loop-definition-at-work-and-how-to-start-one/>

Building Culture

Building a Culture Around Mission and Purpose

Recruitment for retention

The easiest way to attract employees who share your social values is to make sure that information about your company's purpose appears in your hiring materials. 77% millennials say their "company's purpose was part of the reason they chose to work there"¹⁸ and this group will grow to 75% of the workforce by 2025. This is another strength of the B Corp certification – it gives prospective employees confidence that a company is verifiably committed to their stated mission and values.

Neighbourhood Group: employees first

Neighbourhood Group's pivot to "hiring for retention" – asking right away what benefits prospective hires want, before even inquiring about skills – signalled to prospective hires the management's priority of serving employees. This, in turn, translated to better service for customers – front of house staff had better relationships with 'regulars', kitchen staff made fewer wasteful errors. Most restaurants approach with a "customer first" (and employees last) mentality and pay the cost in higher turnover and higher food waste.

TMI Consulting: they come looking for us

The CEO of TMI Consulting noted how they were able to attract millennials to their company after joining the B Corp community. Rather than having to spend time and resources seeking qualified candidates, high potential hires come seeking jobs without the company requesting it.¹⁹

She Geeks Out: small is beautiful

Solopreneurs and microenterprises aren't too small to contribute to a more inclusive economy.²⁰ She Geeks Out joined the B Corp Inclusive Economy Challenge²¹ before hiring their first employee. The process helped them to prepare a competitive employee package which included how they wrote the job description, review resumes, interview and how they make offers.

¹⁸ <https://benefitcorp.net/businesses/why-become-benefit-corp>

¹⁹ https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-b-corps-have-great-em_b_7488564

²⁰ <https://bthechange.com/solopreneurs-and-microenterprises-arent-too-small-to-contribute-to-a-more-inclusive-economy-ddae938f18d5>

²¹ <https://bcorporation.net/for-b-corps/inclusive-economy-challenge>

Building Culture

Onboarding into Purpose and Culture

“Onboarding” means making new employees comfortable and competent to do their job in their workplace and that includes a focus on the company culture.

New employees who are taken through a structured onboarding process are able to understand the company’s operations better and are up to 58 percent more likely to still be with the organisation after three years.²²

Greyston Bakery: training the whole person

Greyston describe their employment mission with the quip “we don’t hire people to bake brownies, we bake brownies to hire people”. Management at Greyston Bakery designed an onboarding process that suited their mission and policy for open hiring – anyone who applies is hired without interviews, background checks, or any of the traditional filtering that’s normally part of the hiring process.²³

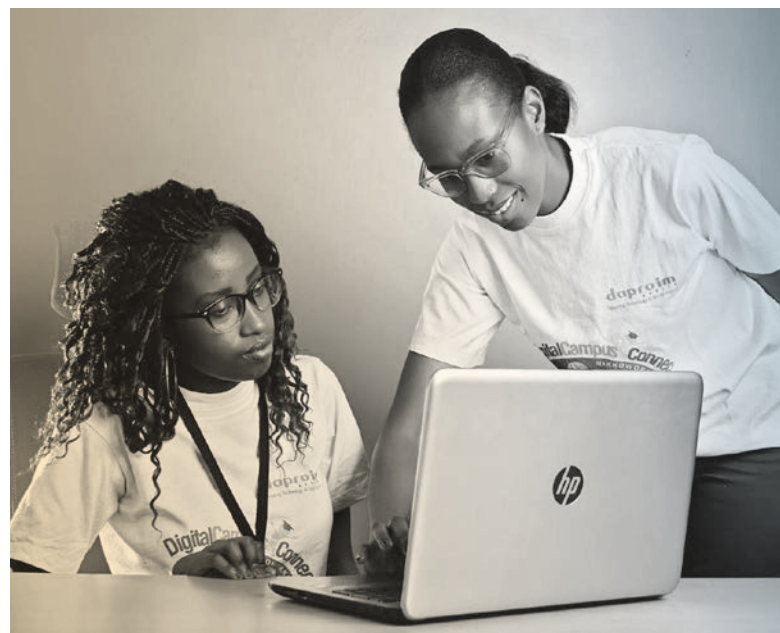
During an initial apprenticeship, employees are evaluated weekly and, together with supervisors, review any areas where further improvement is needed. Greyston trains on food safety and quality and manufacturing skills. Although many new employees arrive with some skills, they are often inexperienced when it comes to certain work practices. Greyston Bakery introduces basic expectations, including topics such as attendance, communication tools, teamwork and problem solving.

Greyston also supports employees to achieve “wholeness” (self-sufficiency) that comes from having a well-balanced, satisfying and integrated personal, spiritual and professional life. They provide training and guidance in continuing education, health and wellness, nutrition, mental health, literacy, personal finance, budgeting and saving.

The strong onboarding structure of Greyston helped create a palpable culture for the company. This has a ripple effect to the greater community: as individuals become more self-sufficient and self-assured, they become stronger participating members of the community and the community becomes stronger as a whole.²⁴

What is a good onboarding process?

- It commences in **the recruitment process**, before even the first day of work, and lasts at least 3 months
- It **clearly sets expectations**
- It involves a **structured approach**: a checklist helps to track the progress of activities in their right order
- It is **versatile** enough to suit all employees (consider level of education, language, etc.)
- It focuses on company **culture, purpose and values**
- It is a **comprehensive company introduction**, ensuring employees understand the roles of different departments and establishing how they will interact with them
- It encompasses **regular check-ins**.



²² <http://thewynhurstgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Help-New-Hires-Succeed.pdf>, references “SHRM Presentation” by The Wynhurst Group, April 2007

²³ <https://bthechange.com/can-you-create-conscious-culture-without-using-hiring-filters-926bfe8564e>

²⁴ <https://cornerstonecapinc.com/open-hiring-a-culture-of-training-and-learning/>

Leadership & Growth

Pathways for Growth

Training, development and advancement

Developing employees adds value to a company's operations. Effective employee development is achieved when employees are involved in planning their career advancement. Employers should consult with employees; help identify their needs and goals, and together design a plan to achieve them.²⁵

Training can address skill or knowledge deficits. Training will not overcome issues where the root cause is the absence of one or more of: effective decision-making processes, effective delegation of authority, motivation, clear and measurable goals, appropriate tools or technologies, or other management issues.²⁶



What does a good training and development programme look like?

- **Train for skills, not values** – look out for kind, knowledgeable and curious applicants and train them with the hard skills needed for their job. It's hard if not impossible to change someone's values or personality through training.
- **Serve individual needs** – train employees according to their needs, whilst encouraging and reinforcing knowledge sharing amongst team members. Ask what the employees need to learn, and seek relevant training.²⁷
- **Encourage in-house mentorship** - try "co-piloting" (pairing junior team members with experienced staff or with peers) per project or per week. Ensure staff are not overwhelmed with work by regularly checking in on them. Pairing helps employees to solve problems and hone skills. This **creates business resilience as they learn one another's roles**.
- **Formalise knowledge sharing** - internship programmes are one way of disseminating the company's knowledge and building a bank of potential future employees.
- **Look for free online resources** - sites such as Coursera and YouTube provide a myriad of high-quality courses for free. Coursera allows for certificates to be purchased after completion, putting the onus on employees and allowing employers to reward their commitment.

Neighbourhood Group: removing barriers to training

Neighbourhood Group invests in employees by providing funds for employees to pursue professional development courses, for example butchering classes for prep cooks aspiring to more advanced chef roles. Employees decide on courses for themselves, get approval from management that the course is eligible, pay for the course and, when the course is complete, get reimbursed. When managers audited the use of this benefit, they saw that some junior staff were not using it because it was a significant cost to cover. In response, they started a system of short-term loans that employees could use to pay for the training up front – as well as covering other short-term credit needs that employees might have.

²⁵ <https://www.insperity.com/blog/5-steps-to-creating-employee-development-plans-that-truly-work/>

²⁶ <https://hbr.org/2018/10/when-companies-should-invest-in-training-their-employees-and-when-they-shouldnt>

²⁷ <https://www.fastcompany.com/90432648/you-dont-have-to-spend-big-to-train-your-employees>

Leadership & Growth

Employee Motivation, Incentives, Health & Wellbeing

What really motivates employees?

The research for this project repeatedly revealed that employees may be motivated in part by wages and benefits, but that their decision to commit a higher level of effort, care and concern into their work is inspired by **reciprocal kindness, care and concern from management**.

Management may show this care and concern for employees directly, as with the tips for active listening, feedback and employee development cited above, and it may also include formalising a commitment to demonstrate care and concern outside the company. Simply Business, a UK-based B Corp, created a Give as You Earn scheme, making donations on behalf of employees to community and social causes.

For all the elements of the employee-employer relationship described to add up to something greater, there needs to be a clear purpose at the core of the business and employees must understand it and find it compelling and relatable.

What is the purpose of your business?

Incentivising desired behaviour isn't transactional though – it's more than exchanging certain compensation and working conditions for a certain quality of labour or effort. For all the elements of the employee-employer relationship described to add up to something greater, there needs to be a clear purpose at the core of the business and employees must understand it and find it compelling and relatable.

"People need to know what they're working towards and to feel empowered to make their own unique contribution. Rather than being some lofty aspiration disconnected from operations, purpose must connect and inspire diverse people across the whole organisation: staff, management, leadership and external stakeholders including customers, investors, even suppliers."

–Junxion Strategy²⁸

The "Impact Business Model" aspect of the B Impact Assessment requires companies to consider their purpose beyond profits. Mightybytes' employee Amber had not heard of B Corps before joining the company. "It didn't really sink in until I went to the retreat; that's when I got the full experience of what it means to be an employee of a B Corp." With a better understanding of Mightybytes' purpose to make their city more liveable and sustainable through their client work, Amber went on to start an internal "B Mighty" team that makes sure the company looks first to B Corporations and local businesses in terms of vendor and provider relationships.²⁹

Cook Foods: selfies for motivation

Cook developed their own way to put questions of motivation back in employees' hands – the "Selfie", a self-review template for self-motivation³⁰. This tool encourages employees to bridge a personal sense of purpose with their work experience through goal setting.

²⁸ <https://junxion.com/know-your-purpose/>

²⁹ <https://bthechange.com/an-example-of-purpose-and-employee-engagement-7dca4e8f86c6>

³⁰ <https://www.cookfood.net/info/jobs/essential-ingredients/culture/selfie/>

Leadership & Growth

Employee Motivation, Incentives, Health & Wellbeing, *cont.*

Policies and programmes for the purpose-driven workplace

- **Supporting work/life balance:** This can include flexible scheduling, working from home or enabling support for specific employee needs, like transit passes or on-site day-care.
- **Skilled volunteering:** It is a win-win to challenge employees to apply their skills in a new context, i.e. the marketing team supports a local charity to develop a new giving campaign. This generates more meaningful outcomes for the beneficiaries and a greater sense of meaning in the work and their own skills for employees, than some traditional forms of volunteering.
- **Employee ownership:** Going beyond the metaphorical sense of employees ‘owning’ the mission and strategy of the company, formal commitments to profit sharing or employee share ownership plans (ESOPs) are powerful tools to build a committed team for the long term.

Cotopaxi: “In The Wild” Time

An employee at Cotopaxi, a Certified B Corporation manufacturer of outdoor products and apparel says “work/life balance is better than any other place I have worked. We have flexible time each week to get outside or volunteer... If it’s a powder [snow] day, I don’t expect to see my team in before noon.”³¹

Cotopaxi has launched a skills-based volunteering initiative that leverages the time and talent of employees and responds to a clear need in the community. Employees enjoy “in-the-wild” time, where they spend 10% of their work time adventuring outdoors or performing volunteer or community service.³²

New Belgium Brewing: open book management

All New Belgium employees are eligible to buy into an employee ownership plan after their first year. To complement the programme and encourage buy-in, New Belgium operates an open book management system that encourages fiscal transparency, communication and innovation:

- All new hires learn basic financial concepts and tools during orientation
- Managers share department finances with their teams on a routine basis
- Monthly all-staff sessions are convened to discuss business performance and to enable employees to ask questions
- Employees access a variety of information from the company intranet, which provides financials, dashboard metrics with progress updates and a means to interact with other employees and management.

An employee said “the open book policy made it realistic for us to keep count of every keg and case damaged, it all adds up”.³³ A proposal from employees to eliminate 12-bottle pack dividers has saved the company \$280,000, 150 tons of paper and reduced machine downtime.³⁴

³¹ <https://www.glassdoor.com/Reviews/Cotopaxi-Reviews-E923851.htm>
³² <https://bcorporation.net/directory/cotopaxi>

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xPhypYaWHm8>
³⁴ <http://sjfinstitute.org/sites/default/files/Embracing%20Open%20Book%20Management%20-%20Final.pdf>

Case Studies



BioCarbon Partners

Nature Conservation,
Zambia

Footprints Africa

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COOK

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Kenya

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SOKO

Jewelry and Fashion
Accessories, Kenya

CASE STUDY:

BioCarbon Partners

Area of Speciality:**Nature Conservation****Location:****Zambia**

BioCarbon Partners' Success

By offering income alternatives and sourcing talent locally, BioCarbon Partners is reinventing environmental protection in rural Africa. BioCarbon Partners uses carbon economy investments to create employment opportunities for local community members to protect wildlife and local ecosystems instead of harming them through poaching and illegal harvesting.

BioCarbon Partners employees' connection to the land they work on is critical to the organisation's success. Nature conservation strategies risk failure if they displace local people from their source of livelihood, rather than offering them an alternative, but this is not possible without first building trust and relationships with the people and communities you wish to employ. Their innovative business model is centred around local job creation, a community-engaged hiring process, and a long-term view on managing community relationships.

Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Connect with the location.

Consider your relationship to the land where your company operates, and the people that live there. Is there an opportunity to align interests that you haven't explored?

Engage respectfully and systematically.

To understand what opportunities you might find in local hiring, take time to understand local social hierarchies and communities - be respectful, formal, and systematic when navigating new community relationships. You must engage with multiple stakeholders and gatekeepers in order to attain Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Give value to get value.

Hire or acquire local knowledge and expertise, expect to pay competitive wages and offer other meaningful incentives. Reciprocity builds trust and goodwill with employees and community stakeholders.

Initiate through youth.

Where adults may be more traditional, or cautious of innovative businesses, engaging young people may help you to access the talent, expertise, and support of elders. Youth are a knowledge resource in many households who can educate parents and siblings about the value your project may bring to the community.

Overview of the Business

BioCarbon Partners works with trusted community partnerships throughout Zambia to protect forests and wildlife. Over 140 staff across eleven Chiefdoms and two Provinces are helping to conserve more than 1 million hectares of threatened wildlife habitat.

BioCarbon Partners makes conserving wildlife and habitat valuable to communities by employing local community members to safeguard endangered forest regions and wildlife.

BioCarbon Partners was founded in 2012 and has been a Certified B Corporation since 2015. In 2017, they became the world's third-highest ranked B Corp.

What They Did

BioCarbon Partners' policy is to always look for talent locally first. Roughly 85% of the people in the target communities live below the poverty line, which is why illegal poaching and harvesting are common. Even though many community members support protecting the environment in principle, they previously did not have economic alternatives.

Their success was inspired in part by other wildlife conservation organisations that have hired poachers to police and catch other poachers – their 'insider' knowledge of the tricks and methods that poachers use could not easily be acquired from other sources of potential employees.

Local community members are employed at every level of their operations. They have deliberately created positions that are accessible to people with no formal schooling or education. Education levels vary widely in the area, and BioCarbon Partners has proved that it doesn't matter if someone can only write their own name – they can grow as employees and in value if provided the right opportunities.

Specifically, they have adapted administrative work and processes for roles like drivers, security guards and caretakers so that people without even basic reading or writing skills can perform them effectively. Over time, some local employees have undertaken training and some have been promoted to mid-level manager roles.

Their strategic approach to sourcing local talent has earned BioCarbon Partners trust from local communities, increased their own in-house knowledge and expertise about the land they protect, and significantly contributed to the success of their projects.



CASE STUDY:

COOK

Area of Speciality:

Frozen Foods

Location:

England



COOK's Success

COOK aims to create a thriving workplace community where people can have meaningful relationships with their work and each other. This environment should be one where people can discover and realise their potential – both as individuals and in teams. They believe this will ripple out and benefit employees' families, friends and wider communities.

By improving communications around the company's purpose in a way that allowed for employees to deepen their appreciation of the purpose over time – and to do so in a fun way – COOK's leaders were able to galvanise and motivate staff to live the purpose in their daily work.

Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Keep it light and fun.

Yes a social purpose is important but it doesn't have to be dry. Games, quizzes and branded goods with messages are all fun ways to drive home your purpose.

Understand that communicating is not a one-time event.

Keep finding new ways to get across the same key points. Recognise that learning something so it's second nature takes time.

Make it real.

Actions speak louder than words. Create real-life opportunities for people to live your purpose.

People buy people.

Your staff are your best advocates for your business. If they are evangelists for your purpose then new joiners will believe it.

Targets can help.

Setting, sharing and reporting on purpose based targets can provide an engaging way for people to better understand what you are trying to achieve

Overview of the Business

COOK makes high-quality frozen food and then sells it through a network of its own stores around the UK. They have more than 1,000 employees based in a small town about 30 miles south-east of London. The company was started by two friends in 1997 who dreamed of being the world's best-ever maker of ready meals and of doing business differently from the crowd. COOK became one of the UK's first Certified B Corporations in 2013.

COOK sees itself as being in business to 'nourish relationships' in four ways between business and society, with their people and their work, with their customers and communities and with food and where it comes from.

What They Did

While employees were aware that COOK was a business aiming to make a positive impact, company leaders were concerned that not enough employees were bringing it to life in their work.

One challenge was that employees were in different roles and geographical locations, either in the office, in the kitchen, in logistics (delivery) or in shops around the country. COOK felt sure that if they communicated their purpose better it would motivate people and help them be more inspired to work at COOK, and to become more active ambassadors for their brand.

The key insight was that employees needed to go on a 'learning journey' to become enthusiastic supporters of the company's purpose. Being clear on the stage of the journey that different engagement activities are attempting to achieve can result in a clear and more effective message.

The Employment Journey



1) Awareness:

In the onboarding process, COOK created a board game about the business and its purpose. This introduced each department, and staff were invited to suggest how the purpose would apply in that area.

2) Understanding:

Quizzes were used as a fun way to test understanding and drive it home.

3) Affinity:

Fun items that people want like mugs with messages were created. They baked cupcakes together and ran roadshows to explain the purpose.

4) Action:

Making it tangible and easy for people to take action around the purpose was key. Offering opportunities to volunteer, creating buddies for new joiners, and allowing staff to gift product discount 'Care cards' to people in need made the purpose real.

5) Advocacy:

Encouraging people who had taken part in the actions to write about their experiences in the staff newsletter created internal advocates for the purpose – an activity that generated good feelings with little or no additional funding allocated.



CASE STUDY:

Daproim Africa

Area of Speciality:

**Human Capital
Sourcing**

Location:

Kenya



Daproim's Success

Youth from disadvantaged backgrounds in Kenya lack access to formal training that makes them competitive in the job market. Even when training is available, it may not reflect the changing needs of the labour market.

Employing its triple bottom line business model, Daproim seeks to provide cost-effective, customer-focused service provision while ensuring transformational impact on the youth through extensive training and employment opportunities.³⁵

The key part of Daproim's purpose is building skills of young people who may otherwise struggle to find work to prepare them for the digital economy. Their focus on ensuring that their young employees, and not just their clients, benefit from their business relationships is what continues to attract youth to their organisations, and customers from around the world.

Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Build your people's soft skills.

Take the time to build employees' core skills at the beginning of their employment through standardised training modules. Provide training in "soft skills" (interpersonal communications, personal money management) to grow the skill and potential of your employees. This addresses critical gaps sooner than can hinder productivity and learning.

Offer both intrinsic and extrinsic motivators.

Intrinsic motivators are intangible – like recognition, or autonomy. Extrinsic motivators are tangible, like money or health benefits. Both are important for keeping employees motivated. Monetary rewards and recognition drive short-term motivation, but opportunities for employees to positively impact someone's life – like the opportunity to mentor someone – are more meaningful.

Flexibility attracts.

Where most employers look only for full-time employees, you may tap underused talent by offering part-time or flexible scheduling.

Your social mission is a draw.

You can attract talent and customers through your company's social mission. B-Corp status can help attract international clients and build strong brand recognition.

³⁵ <https://daproim.com/future-proofing-youth-in-kenya-with-digital-skills-training-and-quality-employment-opportunities-at-daproim-africa/>

Overview of the Business

Founded in 2006, Daproim currently employs 120 full-time and 400 part-time staff, and provides IT-enabled services to local and international organisations. Daproim has been a Certified B Corporation since 2012.

What They Did

Digital Campus Connect (DCC) is a Daproim program initiated in 2012. It has so far engaged over 11,000 young people through training and a further 1,200 through employment. Most of the youth they've engaged attend university and have a social or physical disadvantage to gaining employment.

Daproim begins by inviting youth in for interviews, looking for personality, drive and 'trainability'. If there is a fit, existing employees quickly bring them up to speed through a week-long skills-training program. The training assesses and refines both hard and soft skills. This includes transcription training, communications, and money management.

There are a few ways that they have designed their approach to be flexible and adaptive to the unique needs of the young demographic they target. Initial and ongoing skills training by staff members is offered both in-person and online to make it as accessible as possible. Work schedules are likewise flexible, and Daproim affords opportunities for part time work, and work outside of regular business hours – something that many are not able to find at a traditional employer.

Daproim continuously invests in its pipeline for younger recruits – sourcing talent and training are key drivers of both social impact and business value. The end result is that Daproim is sought-after by international firms who trust the quality of their work (by virtue of the investment they make in their employees), and as represented by their B Corp certification.

Daproim has made a commitment to provide quality IT outsourcing solutions that brings about transformational impact by training 9,000 youth with little or no formal work experience. It has also committed to provide direct and indirect part-time employment opportunities on transcription, data entry and micro tasks to 5,000 youth, half of which are girls.



CASE STUDY:

Flow Office Wisdom

Area of Speciality:

**Business and
Administrative
Services**

Location:

Canada



Flow Office Wisdom's Success

Flow Office Wisdom's purpose is "to inspire and empower leaders by supporting their vision, mobilising plans and getting tasks done", or alternately as stated on their home page, "We get s#!% done and we do it B Corp style!".

Over the course of the company's history, the founders of Flow Office Wisdom have made their vision of an empowered team ever clearer. Crystal Wilson, partner, says "we want business leaders to work in their sweet spot, and we want our staff to do the same."

Women in the administrative workforce may be told what opportunities to pursue, rather than asked about their interests. At Flow Office Wisdom, they are empowered to lead both inside the business and with clients. They currently have an almost all-female team of 11 well-paid professionals, and have plans to grow.

Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Hire for cultural fit.

Screen candidates carefully for personality, values and commitment. Hire for cultural fit; skills can be developed over time.

Written policies have power.

Develop specific policies and work processes that support the team and your clients to grow. Put your policies in writing; they don't have to be perfect on the first try.

Be clear on your expectations when recruiting.

Make it clear to prospective employees that participation in management decisions is not just expected, but mandatory, if that is the level of engagement you want from your team. Some people do not want this level of responsibility but may not say so up front.

Communicate to collaborate.

Language used is important. Communicate in team-based, collaborative, co-creative terms.

Play to your people's strengths.

Assign people to their areas of strength and review regularly. This can be as simple as asking someone their strengths and observing their work, or you can use more structured assessments like CliftonStrengths³⁶ or Enneagram³⁷.

Break down silos.

Break down organisational 'silos' so that decisions are informed by multiple perspectives – e.g. make time for people in Marketing, Operations, and Finance ask 'appreciative questions' of each other's work. This builds trust and mutual understanding.

³⁶ <https://www.gallup.com/cliftonstrengths/en/253832/cliftonstrengths-for-teams.aspx>

³⁷ <https://theenneagramatwork.com/the-enneagram-and-teams>

Overview of the Business

Flow offers a comprehensive range of business services: executive assistance and administration; fundraising, events, and project management; bookkeeping and finance; human resources; websites and design; and social media and communication. Flow Office Wisdom was certified as a B Corp in 2015.

What They Did

Flow Office Wisdom was founded with the vision of being a “flat” organisation with little or no hierarchy and a team of empowered employees sharing ownership of the purpose and the work. Some of the nuances of how that would work in practice took time to make it from ‘in the owners’s heads’ into clear expectations, policies and processes, but on the whole their approach has been very successful: Flow has very high rates of retention and employee engagement and very satisfied clients.

Flow’s advice is to be as clear as possible, as early as possible, about the expected level of staff commitment. Flow attracts and selects quality candidates by paying Living Wages, selecting for personality and values, and emphasising that hires must make a strong commitment to participate in Flow’s growth and development. This has created a tight-knit team skilled in giving and receiving constructive feedback internally, which builds knowledge, skills and confidence.

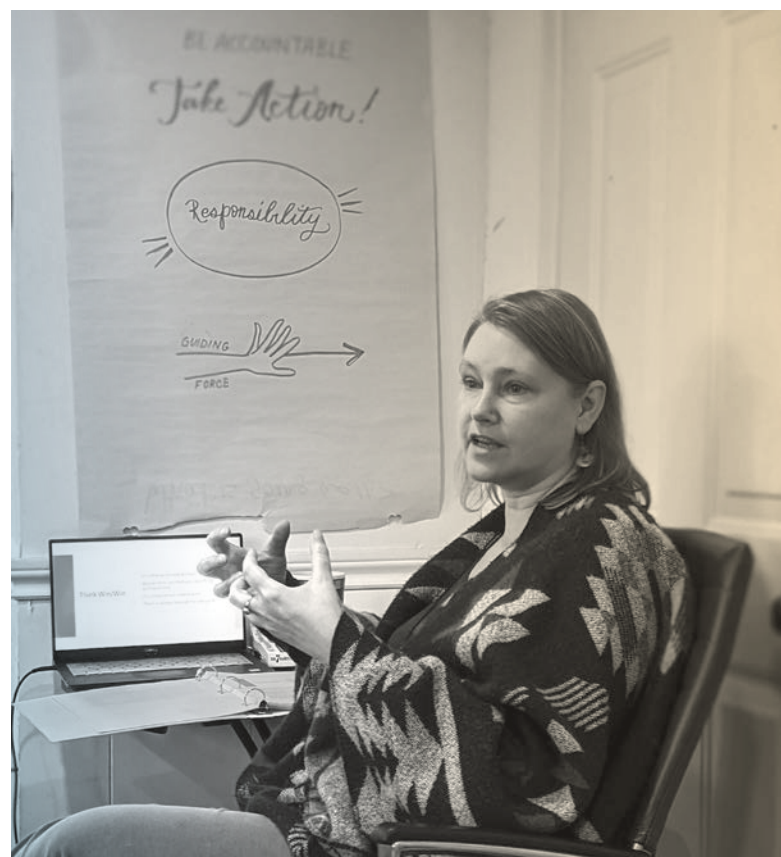
The recruitment process at Flow Office Wisdom stands out: their primary focus is on cultural fit rather than skills; the first stage of their application process is to submit not just a resume, but answers to several questions that help to assess personality and values, e.g. “What is the greatest event you have ever been to? What made it stand out to you?”, and “What have you done lately to develop your emotional intelligence?”. The main focus is testing whether employees will “buy in” to the shared purpose, and contribute to and honour the team. Since implementing these early screening tools, the quality of candidates interviewed has risen.

They believe supportive policies are critical to institutionalise and protect their culture. Wilson’s experience was that the first iterations of policies are usually insufficient, but they don’t have to be perfect.

You can expect to spend time working with staff to make policies more realistic or user friendly over time. Engaging staff in the process helps them to “own” and act on the policies that result; just because a policy is written doesn’t mean people will read it!

Flow have a form-based feedback system that encourages staff to reflect on clients’ strategic options not just in their own service area, but across service lines. This formalised collaboration across teams and disciplines is a great value-add for clients and strong learning opportunity for staff.

Engaging staff in business growth and development helps them bring a management mindset to their client work. If a client asks for things they might want, but don’t need, staff are more likely to serve the client well by suggesting alternatives, therefore making beneficial, not superficial, inside sales.



CASE STUDY:

Footprints Africa

Area of Speciality:

Business Development Programmes

Location:

Ghana



Footprints Africa's Success

Footprints Africa “practices what they preach” – they support organisations they work with to utilise the B Impact Assessment to target areas for improvement and, in turn, continuously use this tool to review their own practices. Footprints aims to develop a group of changemakers and role models. They believe that change is led by people hence the desire to develop their own employees as leaders for themselves and not just to suit the company’s needs. Footprints’ concern for employees goes beyond the legal requirements.

Going through the B Impact Assessment positively influenced Footprints Africa’s development of policies and procedures, especially their Governance Manual and employee contracts. The assessment questions push them to strive for the highest level of performance in both areas.

Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Develop policies with specific performance benchmarks in mind.

The B Impact Assessment questions give guidance for different maternity and secondary caregiver leave, flexible working arrangements, professional development, etc.

Catalyse through coaching.

Provide individualised and expert coaching to support employee personal development and openness to learning. Pair employees to peer support one another through this process so that what is learnt is brought into daily practice.

Make policy review great again.

Review all policies annually, in detail, with all employees and ask for volunteers to take responsibility for improvements (the BIA is a great guide for this).

Jumpstart junior management.

Take on interns and allow junior team members to manage them. It helps them learn how to manage their own managers better if they have management experience early

Knowledge is power.

Identify free online courses related to employees’ professional development goals. Allocate time for them to complete the courses and hold them accountable.

Autonomous training.

Give employees autonomy in planning and evaluating their own training and development and provide flexible funds for professional development.

Overview of the Business

Footprints Africa is on a mission to prove that businesses can be a force for good.

They have a team of 5 people working with Ghanaian companies to help them improve their social and environmental performance. They do this using the B Impact Assessment tool and inspiring companies to certify as B Corps. Their goal is to ensure the companies they work with and employees within them become socially and environmentally conscious. They believe that, with a little encouragement and evidence of the tangible commercial benefits, businesses will become proactive in addressing their shared responsibility to do good for people and the environment.

What They Did

As a UK-based charity operating in Ghana, Footprints Africa has committed that its Board, employees and suppliers should be representative of the communities they seek to support. This commitment is enshrined in policy and decision-making so that future leaders of the organisation will be obliged to uphold it. Taking the B Impact Assessment reinforced their commitments and validated their choices in this regard³⁸.

Footprints Africa has several policies and practices that support its goal to embed purpose and employee engagement at every level of activity.

Employee engagement in policy development: all new employees must review the Employee Handbook and Contracts in detail as part of onboarding. Even if they don't have the relevant expertise, staff are asked to draft and update organisational policies – it is an invaluable learning experience that helps them understand business policies differently than simply reading them “as given”. The draft policies are then reviewed by a lawyer. Following an annual review of their B Impact Assessment, employees volunteer to revise and update policies and practices to improve impact (and hopefully the assessment score).



Commitment to equity in benefits: even though requirements in Ghana are lower than the UK, Footprints Africa upholds B Corp standards and the Ghanaian and UK staff have the same or comparable benefits (for example, health insurance is hard for small companies in Ghana so there is an employee spending allowance rather than a defined-benefit plan).

Commitment to development and learning: each employee goes through a coaching programme to develop their own leadership style and uncover areas where they may be holding themselves back. Beginning with their initial onboarding, employees are assigned responsibility to develop and present their own work plans and personal development plans. Footprints pays for regular skills development workshops and courses for employees.

Commitment to acting on values: beyond making the B Corp commitment to be “a force for good”, Footprints Africa has invested in having lawyers review their policies and contracts to make sure they safeguard stakeholders and that they are appropriate in the local context. In addition, all staff sign a “Hippocratic Oath”³⁹ (designed by the staff themselves) which lays out their values.

³⁸ As a non-profit, Footprints is not eligible for B Corp certification, which is for profit-making organisations only. However, they continue to measure themselves using the B Impact Assessment, which they take the organisation through it annually.

³⁹ <https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/40a0e554/files/uploaded/Footprints%20oath.docx>

CASE STUDY:

Growth Mosaic

Area of Speciality:**Social Venture
Investment
and Advisory****Location:****Ghana**

Growth Mosaic's Success

Growth Mosaic uses feedback loops in order to ensure that employees feel supported, comfortable, and engaged. Growth Mosaic lets this methodology shape their management style and company culture.

Although their services have been refined over the years, Growth Mosaic's focus on employee feedback continues to be a big reason why they are able to attract top talent and maintain low employee churn.



Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Purpose power.

Make your organisation's purpose and impact story clear. Your narrative will shape culture and customer relations.

Feed off feedback.

Ensure management provides opportunities for employees to give feedback e.g. through surveys, meetings, both anonymously and in-person. If employees feel heard, they will feel their presence has an impact and take greater pride in their work.

Open up decision-making.

Big management decisions should not be imposed without first being explained to the team members. Ideally, employees would be part of problem solving along the way. Not all will agree with the solutions decided upon, but enforcement is a team responsibility and understanding how decisions were reached is more likely to garner support.

Amplify accordingly.

In meetings, specifically make space for those with quieter voices to have their say, so that dialogue is not dominated by the same few loud voices. Different personality types bring different ideas but will need different opportunities to express themselves.

Overview of the Business

Growth Mosaic helps socially driven ventures scale-up through market intelligence, venture building, and capital advisory.

Growth Mosaic is part of the social innovation movement in Ghana and West Africa. They are reshaping how purpose-driven ventures access resources throughout the region.

Growth Mosaic believes in doing well by doing good. Their team works out of offices in Accra. Since their founding in 2011, they have helped to connect dozens of ventures to the resources they need to thrive. Growth Mosaic became a Certified B Corporation in October, 2018. In 2019, they were a Best For The World Overall Honoree.

What They Did

Intimately listening, understanding and connecting ventures to the resources they need is the essence of Growth Mosaic's work. Consequently, open communication has become one of Growth Mosaic's core values.

Growth Mosaic works hard to create an environment where employees feel heard. While not every opinion can be adopted, Growth Mosaic ensures team members have the time, space, and ability to express their thoughts and desires.

Growth Mosaic believes creating a healthy company culture means that the management prioritises empowering employees to feel strong – this requires emotional flexibility at a personal and institutional level.

As part of Growth Mosaic's desire to support and engage employees, management introduced an anonymous satisfaction survey, undertaken monthly. Employees are allocated work time to complete it and the results are discussed among management and employees in subsequent meetings. Several recommendations are then implemented with the goal of increasing employee satisfaction.

One example implemented by Growth Mosaic was working from home. This provides employees flexibility in when and where they work. Growth Mosaic also introduced flexible start times as some employees have transportation challenges, family, or other everyday responsibilities to attend to.

Moving forward, Growth Mosaic has installed a permanent management system that includes monthly feedback sessions, key performance indicators (both for individuals and the company), clear work timelines, and ongoing surveys. While not all suggested issues can be resolved immediately, employees feel more heard and are more motivated.

Growth Mosaic's company values, open-door policy, and iterative management methodology continue to attract and retain some of the best and brightest. Growth Mosaic has gone through hard times along with the local economy, but employee engagement and buy-in has kept attrition down and productivity up.



CASE STUDY:

Neighbourhood Group

Area of Speciality:

Restaurants

Location:

Canada



Neighbourhood Group's Success

Neighbourhood Group has connected management, kitchen and servers to the B Corp brand and principles of employee engagement.

Part of Neighbourhood Group's re-established company mission is to give greater decision-making power to employees.

They continue to be profitable because of the commitments made by management and staff to one another.

Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Analyse attrition.

Monitor employee turnover carefully to understand why employees stay, or go. Even before asking about skills, ask prospective employees what would make them stay in the job. Hire for retention and train for skills and performance.

Intentional wellbeing.

Show your staff that their wellbeing is important by tailoring benefits and workplace policies to their specific needs and interests – start by asking about what they need. Consider using expert researchers or specialists to gather relevant information.

Changes require inquiry.

Making significant changes to policies or practices (like sweeping changes to compensation structure or benefits) will need buy-in from key employees – first be sure that you understand employee concerns and established ways of working.

Listen carefully.

Demonstrate mutual respect by investing in a good process for listening to employees. Consider using third-party facilitators to open a dialogue between employees and management if relations are tense or trust is low.

Overview of the Business

Neighbourhood Group is a group of four restaurants “by neighbours, for neighbours” in Guelph and Kitchener, Canada, with a focus on local, sustainable food. They have hundreds of employees and earned their B Corp certification in 2016.

The restaurant industry is highly competitive and there is little room for error – one bad experience and customers won’t return. The industry is also commonly associated with poor pay, long hours, and tip-based incentives that don’t serve kitchen staff well, despite the importance of their role.

Some of Neighbourhood Group’s owners believed that they could do business differently – that by focusing on employee retention, and engaging employees in management decision-making, it would lead to a better customer experience, and in turn lead to reduced costs and increased revenues.

What They Did

In 2011 Neighbourhood Group was having trouble with turnover and the associated high cost of training new employees. They knew if they kept losing staff, they would continue to remain unprofitable. Inspired by the B Impact Assessment, they started exploring some ideas to improve employee satisfaction and wellbeing.

Neighbourhood Group first contracted a specialist from a local university to conduct a health and wellness survey. The insights gathered from this work led to an overhaul of the health and affordability plan for employees. This included covering the cost of transportation for younger employees, healthy snacks on the job, access to mental health services, and opt-in health benefits. They started “hiring for retention”: seeking employees who valued these benefits.

Later, they adopted a Living Wage. In 2017, their servers (with tips) were averaging double the pay of kitchen staff, who mostly made \$14.50 per hour. Management proposed to increase servers’ tip-out to kitchen staff to bring them to the \$16.50 Living Wage, to improve retention. The management team created a presentation for all staff to see exactly how the funds would be shared, and asserted that improving retention in kitchen roles would improve food quality, revenue, and tips – benefiting everyone.

Neighbourhood Group’s managers allowed servers to decide on the proposal by an anonymous, binding vote – if they voted it down, management would abandon it. The servers passed the proposal nearly unanimously. While they ended up losing three servers in the end, managers were satisfied. They wanted employees to (literally in this case) buy into the change, as it is employees who believe in the larger vision who will stay for the long haul.

Management predictions were correct too – by improving retention, they increased net profits approximately 50% over prior years’ averages. When employees are taken care of, all facets of business, including customer experience, can improve. Neighbourhood Group believes you can expect more from your employees if you prioritise their wellbeing and include them in the decision making process.



CASE STUDY:

SOKO

Area of Speciality:

**Jewelry and
Fashion
Accessories**

Location:

Kenya

SOKO

SOKO's Success

SOKO created multiple avenues for staff to communicate, share feedback and receive company updates, which resulted in bridging cultural divides in the business and generating new ideas for growth from across the whole organisation. Their approach of having twice yearly all staff meetings is valuable even for those not split across geographies.

SOKO staff feel empowered to ask questions of management and planning and reviews now happen in a collaborative environment. Their staff have developed the skills and thinking required to take an idea from generation to implementation which has led to innovations that help the artisans on the platform to grow their businesses.

Top Tips *(What you can do)*

Online gatherings for offline results.

Hold online group meetings or “town halls” for all staff where ideas are shared and discussed. For remote employees, this can be managed with online video conferencing, and segments can be recorded for later use in training.

Surveys that serve.

Anonymous surveys can surface important concerns and questions that may not come up in meetings. SOKO's use of surveys was successful because they anticipated questions and introduced the survey carefully.

Utilise newsletters.

Internal newsletters are an opportunity to ask for contributions from, and showcase the achievements of, different groups or departments in your team.

Formalise the ideas process.

Establish a formal process to develop staff ideas (particularly for process efficiency) with support from colleagues or management.

Overview of the Business

SOKO is an online jewellery retailer that connects artisans in Kenya to customers primarily in the United States and worldwide⁴⁰. They have 85 employees split between Kenya and the US and have worked with 2,300 artisans to date. SOKO has been a B Corp since 2018.

It was originally founded in 2012 to create a platform for local artisans to have greater market access, and since 2015 has turned its focus to its own brand and to maximising their social impact.

Through the efforts of its engaged workforce, SOKO has helped more than 2,300 Kenyan artisans earn five times more than an average artisan workshop, benefitting more than 11,400 people as a result.

What They Did

The key challenge the business had to overcome was around communication, exacerbated by the cultural challenge that most supply chain and production staff are based in Kenya (nearer the artisans) and sales and marketing in the USA, nearer many of the customers.

The solution lay in streamlining communications across the whole company. Collaboration apps such as Asana and Slack helped as did quarterly newsletters with contributions from each department sharing what they were excited about and what they had achieved.

But staff still felt nervous about asking questions. A minimum of four town hall in-person meetings a year were then introduced. To ensure an open and honest Q&A session in these town halls, staff complete surveys and post questions of management for them to answer during the sessions, which are moderated by a staff member from HR.

To encourage contributions beyond the town halls, SOKO established an innovation space for staff to pitch ideas for developing the business. In this platform, staff can request support from colleagues and funding from management. A series of questions prompts the contributing staff member to think critically about what the project needs to be brought to life. The final project plan is then presented to management and if accepted, is tested further and implemented. If not, the staff member receives feedback on how it needs to be refined or what lessons can be drawn from it.

Through this broad range of communication tools, staff feel informed and empowered to contribute to the ongoing success of the business.



⁴⁰ <https://shopsoko.com/pages/stockists>



See www.footprintsafrica.co for more information on the programmes Footprints Africa runs to support companies in Ghana to develop purpose-driven cultures and so empower their employees to improve their social and environmental impact.

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a Certified B Corporation, junxion.com