Employee involvement – A DLA Distribution culture update

The Defense Logistics Agency culture survey provides the organization with the opportunity to identify areas for improvement based on the insights of employees across the enterprise. The leaders throughout DLA Distribution use the results to guide them to key areas to focus on improving their cultures. A key to any successful culture change is how involved employees are in the actual changes that are going to impact them.

Involvement is one of the four quadrants measured in the Denison Culture Model and described as "commitment… ownership…responsibility." Denison defines involvement through three traits: empowerment, teamwork, and capability development. These combined traits demonstrate that effective involvement of employees requires that leaders understand that to be involved, employees must have the capabilities to contribute, the willingness and ability to work as part of a team to accomplish goals, and must be lead through informed empowerment where employees are given the authority to make decisions within the scope of their responsibility and can have input into decisions outside the scope. Over the years of DLA's participation in the survey this quadrant has been a specific challenge area for DLA distribution, as it is for many organizations.

"There are multiple ways that employees can become involved in improving the culture of an organization," says John Destalo cuture champion and member of the DLA Distribution Organization Development team. "Leaders can involve employees by conducting employee focus groups to clarify the concerns expressed in the survey and identify specific areas that need improvement."

Leaders could also involve employees in identifying specific ways of improving the organization, such as, through a means of gathering employee suggestions or the creation of team-based local improvement efforts. The involvement can also include participating in the actual development and implementation of the organization's culture action plans. "There is not one correct answer for how an organization involves their employees in the culture change process, but employee involvement should be a consideration with every culture action plan and for that matter any change process that impacts employees," said Destalo.

One tool that is being used at numerous organizations within DLA Distribution to involve employees in the culture change process is the development of a culture committee. "While the committee tool is not being used in exactly the same way there are key commonalities," indicates Destalo. These committees are usually made up of volunteers from a cross-section of the workforce. They usually meet on a regular basis and have some level of responsibility for planning and execution. Some organizations give them broad or specific areas to focus on and use the committee to identify ways to improve in these areas. Some organizations use the committees to identify the focus areas; and some organizations have used the committee as a means of focusing on strictly climate related issues.

Examples of DLA Distribution organizations that are using this method to involve their employees in the culture change process are distribution facilities in Barstow, Calif., Texarkana, Texas, Cherry Point, N.C., Richmond, Va., Oklahoma City, Okla., Sigonella, Italy and DLA Distribution Mapping.

"Our facility in Barstow has also taken a further step in seeking to connect with other DLA Distribution organizations that have culture committees to share experiences and support each other's efforts," concluded Destalo.