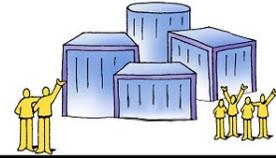


ENGAGING WORKPLACE PARTNERS

QUALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONS



INTRODUCTION

Organizations that do a good job of engaging employers and other workplace partners¹ in their work share five common quality characteristics. These organizations are effective in bringing partners to the table as supporters or advisors and directly involving them as classroom speakers, career mentors, tutors, presenters, and as participants at career and job fairs. These partners also provide work-based experiences such as internships and job shadows for youth at their place of business and serve as potential placement sites for entry-level jobs. Effective organizations all view the workplace as a primary customer, maintain a strong customer service and sales orientation, target resources to the engagement effort, embrace a systems approach, and practice continuous improvement. The following quality characteristics outline the effectiveness indicators for organizations who excel at engaging employers and other workplace partners.²

VIEW THE WORKPLACE PARTNER AS A PRIMARY CUSTOMER

Effective organizations define and prioritize employers and other potential workplace partners (including labor organizations, government, and community groups) as their primary customers. Resources, staffing, and organizational decisions reflect that priority.

Effectiveness Indicators

- Engaging workplace partners is a clear and stated priority in the organization.
- The local labor market is researched on a regular basis, and target markets for engagement are set.
- All staff are aware of and utilize local labor market trends and forecasts to guide their work.
- The benefits to employers and other workplace partners are defined and are reflected in outreach materials and strategies.
- Materials specifically targeted to employers and other workplace partners have been created and are readily available to all staff.
- A sequenced range of participation options has been defined for workplace partner involvement.
- All employer and workplace partner commitments are equally valued by staff and the organization.
- Systems are in place to promote long term partnerships with workplace partners and employers.

¹ “Workplace Partners” refers to the range of potential partners outside of schools and youth programs that can participate in program activities, serve on advisory boards, and/or provide work-based experiences for youth. They include large and small employers, labor organizations, corporations, non-profit organizations, government, and a range of other public and private institutions.

² Engagement Specialists (anyone whose job function includes recruiting or engaging employers or workplace partners) also play a critical role in supporting workplace partner engagement. There are four easy steps Engagement Specialist play to ensure the successful engagement of employers, labor, government, community organizations and others to support organizational efforts. For more information, see the *Quick Guide for Engagement Specialists* available online at www.newwaystowork.org.

MAINTAIN A SALES & CUSTOMER SERVICE ORIENTATION

Effective organizations have a culture that reflects a sales and customer service orientation. All staff and organizational services serve as evidence of this culture.

Effectiveness Indicators

- A full range of services are offered, targeted to meet employer and workplace partner identified needs.
- The organization's offices are professional and reflect a business-oriented environment.
- All staff understand their role in delivering high quality customer service to all prospective customers.
- Staff are comfortable with and skilled in their role as salespersons.
- All work reflects a customer service and sales culture.
- Staff seek to solve problems and provide resources for customers outside the scope of their organization's ability to respond.
- Ongoing support is provided for workplace partners and worksite supervisors.

ENSURE RESOURCES ARE TARGETED TO THE ENGAGEMENT EFFORT

Effective organizations develop and target resources, both human and capital, to support their engagement efforts. Budgets and staff support a range of marketing, service, support, and evaluation activities.

Effectiveness Indicators

- Staff are identified and dedicated to the engagement effort.
- Appropriate staff time is allocated to activities.
- Staff are skilled in marketing, sales, and customer service, have experience in a range of workplaces, and are conversant in local economic development and business practices.
- The organization's budget clearly supports marketing, services, support, and evaluation.
- New programs and activities have programmatic and budgetary connections to the engagement effort.
- A formal advisory group of business and workplace partner leadership guides the engagement effort.
- The organization conducts staff development activities related to workplace partner engagement on a regular basis.

UTILIZE QUALITY PRACTICES

Effective organizations apply continuous improvement practices to gauge the effectiveness of their efforts and guide their work. They are focused on quality and use a variety of measures to evaluate and improve their practice.

Effectiveness Indicators

- The organization has set clear and quantifiable goals for employer and workplace partner engagement.
- Staff performance is measured against quantifiable goals.
- The organization measures success against a clear set of goals and objectives.
- The organization uses data and evaluation results to adjust program strategies.
- The organization holds regular program/activity reviews with their workplace partners.
- Customer satisfaction surveys and focus groups are conducted regularly.
- Internal assessments of organizational capacity, resource alignment, and staff experience and skills are conducted.
- Results are communicated and celebrated with organizational staff, partners, leadership, and the community.

EMPLOY A SYSTEM APPROACH

Effective organizations embrace a systems approach through their work, applying clear and detailed plans, and utilizing appropriate technologies. They work closely with others seeking to connect with and engage a range of community and workplace partners and are formally connected to a larger, broader system.

Effectiveness Indicators

- A clear and detailed marketing plan guides the engagement effort and is consistent with the organization's strategic plan.
- The marketing plan reflects market research, industry and local labor market trends, and the appropriate sequencing of a full range of continuous marketing and awareness efforts.
- The marketing plan identifies targeted partners, includes specific strategies, key activities, measurable goals, and a calendar of activity.
- The organization and engagement staff use a common contact management system.
- Effective communication tools and methodologies are in place.
- The organization and engagement team work closely with others seeking to engage employers and other workplace partners, and have developed and applied strategies to share and leverage efforts in the community.
- Work is aligned with local economic development organizations, industry associations, and labor organizations.
- The organization and engagement staff are formally connected to a broader system.