



Case Study - Achieving high performance in the Civil Service

The Civil Service employs 496,000 people in the UK today. Helping them to deliver ever higher standards of public service is a challenge that the Cabinet Office is supporting through several cross-Government strategies, including leadership, diversity and now, employee engagement. For years the commercial world has debated and defined employee engagement; now the Cabinet Office is bringing together best practice from around the Civil Service and providing a framework for departments to adopt an engagement approach that will help deliver high performance.

To prepare the ground for this type of approach, the Government Communication team at the Cabinet Office were charged with embedding the concept of employee engagement across the Civil Service, with full support from Permanent Secretary Howell James. They appointed HarknessKennett to work with them to deliver a toolkit of communication materials that would help 'key enablers' throughout Government understand the implications of an engagement approach. 'Key enablers' include Internal Communicators, HR, Change and Organisational Development professionals who will also need to work together to deliver an effective and integrated engagement approach.

The team worked with some of these key enablers through the cross-government Employee Engagement Implementation Group, drawing on their experiences and views on best practice. The resulting toolkit includes research evidence for the benefits of employee engagement, examples of workplace experiences that drive engagement levels, and case studies from public and private sector organisations. The toolkit was launched in April on the Civil Service website www.civilservice.gov.uk/ and at Civil Service Live!, an event attended by 6,000 civil servants.

The next stage of support for key enablers is training for internal communicators. The Cabinet Office team selected HarknessKennett to design a workshop-based course to bring the toolkit to life, help internal communicators to understand the approach and to share experiences on employee engagement. The first course will be run in the early summer and, following evaluation, will be extended to other key enabler groups.

"We wanted the toolkit and training experience to help our colleagues understand why employee engagement is critical in government and to enable them to go back to their organisations able to convince others of its value. HarknessKennett has worked in partnership with us to deliver a concise and clear toolkit and a highly interactive workshop that will provide our colleagues with the support they need to play their part in introducing an employee engagement approach in their own organisation."

Jillian Cameron
Government Communications