



5 Ways To Achieve Top Results From Your Short-Staffed Team

Business is booming for warehouses. But staffing struggles are keeping many from seizing this opportunity.



Demand for warehouses has never been higher: investment has doubled during the pandemic, powered by rapid eCommerce growth.¹

Online sellers need roughly

3x more

warehouse space than bricks-and-mortar businesses², and this has led to a 'warehouse boom'.

But the disastrous joint impact of lockdowns and Brexit has created serious problems. Dubbed the 'Staffing Crunch', businesses across the country are struggling to fill roles; they are left with teams which are small and heavily overworked. This is not only limiting their ability to meet consumer demand - it is creating a sub-optimal environment for both staff and customers.

Leaders should not be disheartened though. Efforts to reimagine workforce strategies - often by introducing more temporary workers - have been highly successful. And there are a number of ways businesses can change the way they treat staff in order to get more out of their limited teams.

In this eBook, we explore five vital ways to engage your staff and produce exceptional results from short-staffed teams.

¹<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry/timeseries/j4mc/drsi>

²<https://www.economist.com/briefing/2020/05/16/businesses-are-proving-quite-resilient-to-the-pandemic>

1

Unite Employees Behind a Purpose



Employee engagement sees a 20-30 point improvement when employees feel they have a clear mission - **McKinsey**³

Staff have always craved a sense of meaning in their work, but the pandemic has led many to feel far more strongly about the matter. Warehouse workers often report seeing their job as uninspiring or purely transactional. But leaders that want to make the most of their limited staff need to connect the dots so that their teams see what they do as vital and impactful.

This doesn't have to be about creating a false sense of social engagement: it can be as simple as reminding them that they are helping give consumers a great experience. Every part of the warehousing and fulfilment process is essential - if anything goes wrong, the entire supply chain falters. So reminding employees that what they do is important for a large, important system can create a powerful motivation to work harder.

How to create a sense of purpose:

Lead with purpose

Management and leaders need to lead the way, instilling a sense of purpose both through their words and actions.

Communicate transparency

Too often, staff don't feel connected to the business because they are kept in the dark. Being open about what is happening with the business will encourage a sense of ownership and investment in workers.

Be authentic

The purpose of your business must be honest and real. Workers will see through false moralising or sentimentality.



³<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/enterprise-agility-buzz-or-business-impact>



2

Embrace Agility and Flexibility



Nearly half of employees regularly feel undue pressure to conform in their organisation
- **Harvard Business Review**⁴

The word agility is thrown around a lot, especially when it comes to supply chains. But the principle is far simpler - and more effective - than it often seems. Agility means removing rigid structures and enabling your business to respond in real-time to changing needs. Not only will it produce a more effective workflow - it will increase employee satisfaction and retention.

This is particularly relevant to warehousing, where even small delays or friction in the system can cascade, leading to late deliveries or damaged goods. By enabling employees to move more fluidly between roles, you create more variety in individuals' roles and avoid wasted time. A carefully managed division of labour might increase efficiency in a warehouse when it is heavily staffed, but when numbers are limited you need to embrace an 'all hands on deck' approach.

The keys to flexibility and agility:

Create a dialogue

Leaders should tell staff directly how and why the normally rigid working structures are going to be loosened.

Locate central nodes

Some workers are particularly adept across numerous areas of a business, and leaders should focus on putting them in the most flexible positions possible.

Help staff see the big picture

Just as workers want a purpose to unite behind, they will have an easier time embracing flexibility and adapting to changing demands if they can understand the reasons for doing so.

⁴<https://hbr.org/2016/10/let-your-workers-rebel>

3

Reward and Recognise Staff



Employers could see a 55% increase in employee engagement by addressing employees' need for recognition - **McKinsey**⁵

One of the most common problems cited by warehouse workers is the perceived low-status and lack of recognition they experience in their jobs. From low wages to long, punishing hours, these roles are notoriously tough. And while many switched to work in supply chain-related roles during the pandemic, many have turned their backs on the industry following the easing of restrictions - largely because they didn't feel adequately valued in their roles.

Some businesses have tried to redress this, offering new hires handsome signing-on bonuses - for roles which have historically never provided such benefits. But leaders looking to get more from their short-staffed teams should consider how they reward and recognise the efforts of their entire workforce. And don't be afraid to ask your employees directly what kind of rewards they want - it will help them feel included in the decision making process and therefore valued.

How leaders can reward and recognise their teams:

Wage increases

Even a relatively small boost to wages has been found to actively increase engagement and loyalty.

Personalised recognition

From handwritten notes to public social media 'shout outs', leaders have numerous means of recognising their staff available to them.

Opportunities for growth

Provide workers with the capacity to learn new skills and improve their prospects, especially skills which are directly related to their performance at work.



⁵<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/covid-19-and-the-employee-experience-how-leaders-can-seize-the-moment#:~:text=For%20example%2C%20while%20organizations%20may,work%20recognition%20through%20nonfinancial%20means.>

4

Empower Teams and Individuals



52% of all employees feel they lack autonomy in their roles - **Effectory**⁶

When you are short-staffed, each individual employee constitutes a larger part of your overall workforce. Successful businesses will understand this and respond by increasing the amount of freedom and personal autonomy their employees feel. In part, this encourages individuals to feel truly part of the business - enabling them to make more decisions and exert more influence. But it

also ensures there are fewer obstacles to flexibility.

Rather than constantly having to defer to an authority, individuals will be given the power to respond to queries, fix problems and generally engage with their customers organically and directly. It also means management doesn't waste time micromanaging their workers.

The keys to employee empowerment:

Make it explicit

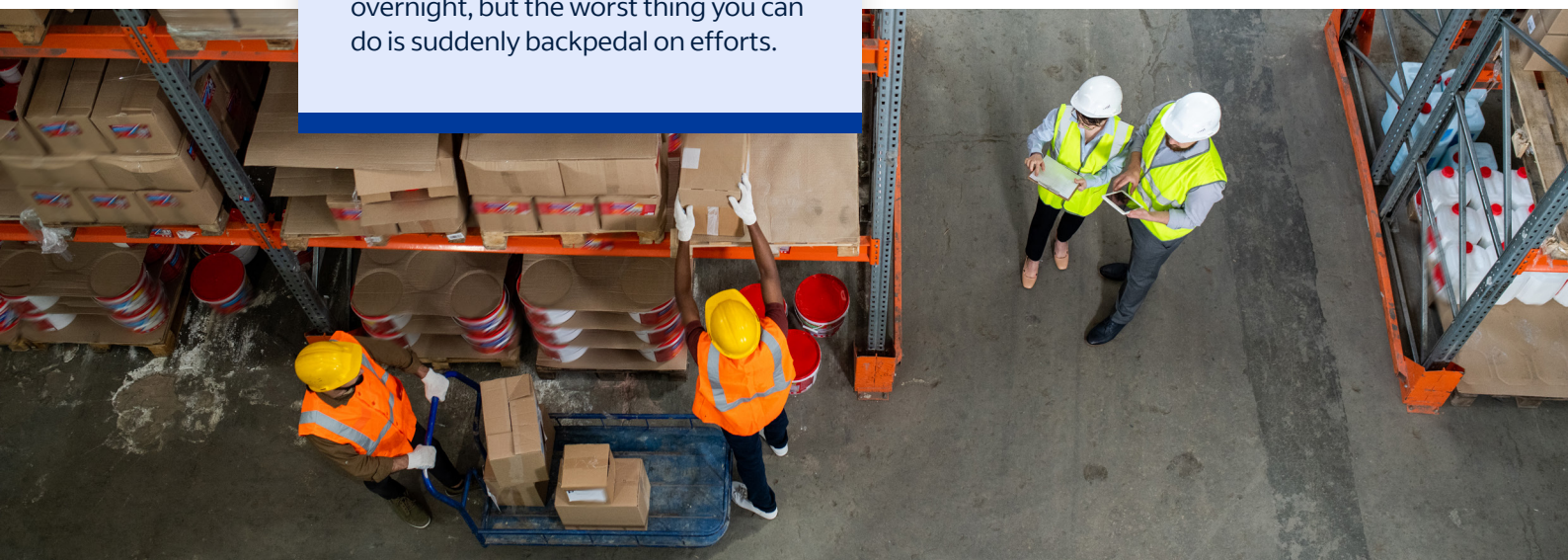
Most warehouse workers are not used to autonomy, and that means they need to be explicitly told that they are being given more room to make decisions.

Ask employees what they need

Building trust is difficult, but inclusion goes a long way. Involve your employees in the process of giving them more power; responding to their specific frustrations may help you locate important factors you had previously overlooked.

Commit

Employee empowerment may not produce extraordinary results overnight, but the worst thing you can do is suddenly backpedal on efforts.



⁶<https://www.cornerstoneondemand.com/rework/art-science-and-impact-implementing-data-driven-hr-2017>



5

Introduce Technology



Just 14% of businesses are fully 'digital mature' - Accenture⁷

Technology has played an enormous role in most employees' lives over the last 18 months. It is time for businesses to properly acknowledge this and introduce more technology into their operational model. While warehouse businesses typically use a number of technologies - from inventory apps to supplier management tools - it has usually been introduced in a haphazard way across an extended period of time. And the use of HR technology is still its infancy in such businesses.

Embracing technology full-tilt now is a great way to increase flexibility and ensure your staff are happy. There are also huge gains to be made on a purely business level: The average cost saving achieved by implementing a Staff Supplier Management solution is 12%.⁸

How hospitality businesses should approach technology:

Remove boundaries

Where possible, every employee should have access to business technology. This is key to both employee empowerment and operational flexibility.

Focus on clear goals

Warehouse businesses are currently facing staffing challenges, so HR technology which will help them manage this should be prioritised.

Consider customer experience

With so much technology in the workplace, it can become difficult to navigate. Leaders should ask their technology providers and in-house experts to focus on simplifications and streamlining - to get the best possible results without expecting staff to navigate 600 different apps and devices.

⁷<https://www.accenture.com/us-en/blogs/business-functions-blog/empower-people-improve-the-bottom-line-digitally>

⁸<https://www.hicx.com/blog/fact-42-7-of-all-statistics-are-made-on-the-spot/>



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