



Global Plastics Company Reinforces Culture, Improves Employee Engagement



“The biggest secret to success is that everything comes from your people. The Top Workplaces award is a wonderful thing, but that was gravy. What was most important to us was getting good feedback from our employees.”

Tim Chisholm, Director of Human Resources, INCOE

[INCOE Corporation](#), a 100% family-owned, global business, maintains a close-knit culture imperative to continued success. Concerned that growth might affect employee engagement, the company chose the [Engage Survey](#) to gather employee feedback, highlight emerging challenges, and create an action plan for improvement. Since 2015, employee engagement has jumped five percent and INCOE earned a coveted spot on the [Detroit Free Press 2016 Top Workplaces list](#).

+14%
EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT

INCOE scored 14 percent above the Manufacturing Metal Products benchmark, a 5 percent increase since 2015.

Source: 2016 [Energage Survey](#)

Background

For nearly 60 years, INCOE has pioneered the advancement of global plastics processing with hot runner technology. Even with a team of professionals that spans 45 countries, the office maintains a family feel.

Communication Challenges as Company Expands

Recently, INCOE experienced a period of growth and embarked on a Lean Manufacturing program. While necessary, it came with inherent communication risks.

Tim Chisholm, Global Director of Human Resources, explains, “We don’t want to lose ourselves just because we get bigger. It’s like the telephone game. With four kids, you might have a similar message by the end. Increase to 10, and that message has more opportunity to change.”

Employee Engagement Critical to Success

For INCOE, the family culture builds engaged employees and represents an essential component. “We are in a competitive business, and we understand that our culture can give us an advantage,” states Chisholm.

“One of the things that sets us apart is our customer service, and that stems from our employees. So if their morale starts to slip, the impact would be quite large.”

Survey Gives Snapshot of Workplace Culture

Looking for a more accurate picture of employee engagement, INCOE turned to the Energage survey. The first, administered in 2015, highlighted key areas for improvement.

Chisholm reports, "The survey results showed that we had a morale issue in our design department and that we needed to do a better job making sure that communication is getting out there."



Strategy

Communication Plan

After immediately addressing the morale issue, Chisholm and his team initiated a multi-faceted approach to communication, including:

- An open-door policy from the top down.
- Rewards for employee suggestions.
- Anonymous call-in line.
- Free, confidential counseling services.
- Education sessions to explain benefits programs.

+26%
COMMUNICATION
UP

In 2016, INCOE scored 26 percent above the Manufacturing-Metal Products benchmark for the OrgHealth™ "Communication Up" statement, an increase of 7 percent since 2015.

Source: 2016 Energage Survey

"We don't look at these programs as a cost," says Chisholm. "We see them as more of an opportunity. It's worth every dollar."

Encourage Employee Feedback

A key component of implementing the Lean methodology for process improvement involved gathering ideas from employees on the front lines. Chisholm explains, "We placed employees in positions where they had opportunities to shine in unaccustomed roles. It opened up engagement with employees who may not feel quite as open with a supervisor."

Results

Michigan Top Workplace

When Energage conducted the follow-up survey in 2016, INCOE earned a spot on the Detroit Free Press 2016 Top Workplaces list. "It was great. We made that list, but we still saw some things in the survey that we addressed immediately," remarked Chisholm.

Improved Engagement

For Chisholm, the Top Workplaces designation took second place to increased employee engagement. "As employees saw us integrating their co employees' ideas, it opened it up for even more employees to come forward and share their thoughts," he concluded. "People have a lot of ideas. You've just got to stop and listen."

↑ 6%
NEW IDEAS

"New ideas are encouraged at INCOE Corporation."

INCOE's survey scores for "New Ideas" improved by 6 percent between and 2015 and 2016.

Source: 2016 [Energage Survey](#)