

Chestermere steps up employee engagement with TalentMap at its side

ONCE A SMALL LAKESIDE SUMMER VILLAGE, THE CITY OF CHESTERMERE HAS EVOLVED TO BECOME A DYNAMIC RECREATIONAL OASIS IN CANADA'S WEST.

As one of the fastest growing municipalities in Alberta, it saw 105 percent growth between 2006 and 2016. The City's current population of 20,331 is projected to more than double, reaching 50,000 over the next 20 years. Amidst all this growth and change comes continued pressure from the community; a workforce of 149.2 full-time equivalent municipal employees bears the brunt of the burden.

A pressure cooker of disengagement

When Cathleen Peter-Swart joined the City in 2014 as HR Manager (she is now the Assistant Director and Interim Director of Corporate Services), employee turnover was extremely high and morale was at an obvious low. "Everywhere you went you could see people weren't happy to be at work, you could see it in their demeanor," she recollects. The City had introduced a complete reorganization that wasn't managed well.

149.2

full-time equivalent
municipal employees.

207%

The City of Chestermere saw a 207% increase in employee engagement since its first survey in 2015.

Employees were affected across all levels.

Not one to shy away from a challenge, Cathleen decided it was time for an employee engagement survey and spearheaded the City's first. People wanted to talk. They wanted to be heard. Chestermere's first employee engagement survey drew an 85.6 percent participation rate. The overall engagement score was a tellingly low 27 percent. Communication and feedback ranked especially low.

To understand more clearly what was going on and why, the City held world cafés. Every employee participated. "We set up a room of tables and at each table set out a series of questions specific to different themes," explains Cathleen. "People rotated from one table to the next; a member of the group would take notes, preserving anonymity in the process."

From that exercise, the City formed staff committees to develop recommendations for the senior leadership team. All but one of the recommendations were accepted as part of the City's improvement strategy.



THE CITY ROLLED OUT ITS NEXT SURVEY IN EARLY 2016. THIS BRIEF PULSE SURVEY DREW AN 86.7 PERCENT PARTICIPATION RATE AND SHOWED ENGAGEMENT RISE TO 57 PERCENT.

Surveys for survey's sake or for engagement insights?

Chestermere had used a local survey vendor for its first and second surveys but shifted to TalentMap for its third. The ability to compare results against an extensive library of municipalities in TalentMap's database was compelling and Cathleen really liked the ability to do the reporting in-house.

With TalentMap on side, the timeframe from start to finish "was quick and impressive." The City signed mid-February 2017. TalentMap worked on mapping questions with the municipality's previous employee engagement surveys. By mid-March the survey launched with a three-week period for completion – garnering a 92 percent response rate. Detailed results came a month and a bit later with a final presentation in May. The City's overall engagement score was 73 percent, a remarkable 207 percent increase since its foray into employee engagement less than three years earlier.

This shift is huge. Morale is vastly improved. The City is brimming with people craving to be creative and innovative, to have the authority to go out and do something meaningful, and to be trusted and empowered.

In year one, Chestermere took steps to address weaker performing areas such as work/life balance, communication, and feedback. Year two, three, and beyond have concentrated on an organizational culture initiative called Create Amazing. This initiative includes focusing on areas such as recognition, interdepartmental collaboration, teams and teamwork, creativity and innovation, as well as a LEAN culture.

2015

Survey Response Rate: 85.6%
Employee Engagement Score: 27%

2016

Survey Response Rate: 86.7%
Employee Engagement Score: 57%

2017

Survey Response Rate: 92%
Employee Engagement Score: 73%



“What I really love about TalentMap is how they analyze drivers of engagement using data and analytics and that their engagement driver analysis focuses our improvement efforts on drivers that are critical to engagement in our organization. The natural inclination is to focus all your improvement efforts on the areas with the lowest results in order to improve engagement but if we do that, then we may not be focusing on the drivers that our employees have shown are important to them and their engagement. It does not mean that we should not focus on underperforming areas but we should be more deliberate in focusing on the drivers that are critical to engagement here at the City,” says Cathleen.

In the not-so-distant future, Chestermere is heading into municipal elections. It’s not improbable that a new Council could bring about changes in municipal policies and directions.

“
TALENTMAP KNOWS EXACTLY WHAT THEY’RE TALKING ABOUT. THEY HAVE DEEP KNOWLEDGE AROUND HR AND ENGAGEMENT. IT’S NOT JUST ANOTHER SURVEY EXERCISE, IT’S ABOUT ENGAGEMENT: WHAT OUR DRIVERS ARE BASED ON OUR RESULTS AND WHERE WE SHOULD FOCUS.”

What Cathleen intends to do is calm the waters and prepare by following next-step suggestions from TalentMap’s experts.

Those steps are to involve all employees in developing a set of guiding principles, so everyone remains confident and constant in the delivery of services and what they do for their community, irrespective of changes in municipal policies and directions. “With our guiding principles in place, our staff will always know how their work fits into the bigger picture,” says Cathleen.

Innovation was also identified as one of the City’s top drivers of engagement and the City has provided all staff with training such as Critical Creativity and Enabling Amazing with LEAN. The City has also created a tool that staff can use to implement improvement ideas. Cathleen is also working on a strategy around innovation blocks to allow staff the time to be creative.

Another top driver of engagement at the City is professional growth. Cathleen has provided training to managers on performance management and feedback.

The hope is that managers will work together with their staff to plan, monitor, and review work objectives and overall contribution to the organization as well as engage in continuous discussions which include setting objectives, assessing progress, and providing ongoing coaching and feedback to ensure that staff are meeting their objectives and career goals. An online portal with a Performance Evaluation and Employee Development Plan form has been created in-house. The intention is to make the annual review process simpler. In order to achieve this objective, managers will be required to hold regular performance discussions and document meeting highlights using an online form.



Outcome

The end result? Managers and their staff will have information at their fingertips when they complete the annual performance review. Continuous feedback discussions should also result in staff feeling that the importance of their professional growth is being recognized and plans are in motion.

“From beginning to end, the whole experience with TalentMap has been very professional and I’m very happy,” says Cathleen.

“

THE EXECUTIVE REPORT WAS WRITTEN IN A LANGUAGE THAT MAKES SENSE AND IS USEABLE. THE SIMPLICITY BEHIND EVERYTHING TALENTMAP PROVIDES IS GREAT. I’M REALLY, REALLY PROUD OF THE WORK THAT’S BEEN DONE.”

About TalentMap

With over 17 years of conducting thousands of different surveys in every type of organization across North America, TalentMap offers you the insights, context, and experiences of those organizations alongside sophisticated post-survey services and support.

Dedicated to helping organizations act on employee survey results to create meaningful change, TalentMap offers a large suite of full-service and Do-It-Yourself survey solutions that are flexible and configurable.



TO LEARN MORE, VISIT WWW.TALENTMAP.COM