Good leadership, management and team working
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Introduction

The “Have Your Say Campaign” was launched in April 2015 to raise awareness and challenge negative behaviour at work within the Faculty of Engineering. In addition to dealing with bad experiences, the Faculty was also interested to hear about examples of good management which staff would like to see emulated and encouraged by colleagues, managers and leaders.

By sharing these examples we hope that leaders, managers and colleagues across Engineering will take note and put actions into place that will help these examples to be emulated within their departments in order to create a happier working environment for all.

These examples have been grouped according to Imperial Expectations. The top themes have been summarised and are followed by the responses received, edited so that individuals and departments cannot be identified.
Key examples of positive behaviour at work which staff would like to see encouraged

- **Better methods of communication to create a happier work environment at all levels through:**
  - greeting and thanking staff (good morning/ hello) is the norm and being mindful of the positive impact something as simple as this may have to the mood of the working environment;
  - holding regular one to one meetings/ holding regular team meetings
  - creating a supportive team culture of sharing ideas and helping each other;
  - creating an environment where staff are listened to, including the introduction of suggestion boxes where these are acted upon where possible;
  - encouragement of team socials/away days/coffee mornings and being mindful of the huge positive impact this has on staff morale;
  - encouraging different methods of communication to bring our different staff groups together
  - encouraging open door policies so the environment becomes more welcoming.
  - creating an environment where there is no fear in challenging negative behaviour whatever level the member of staff and knowing that those who challenge will be supported at a senior level

- **Innovation and new ways of working by:**
  - having the freedom to take risks without there being a blame culture;
  - encouraging everyone to speak up and respect the opinions of others;
  - encouraging challenge and debate;
  - creating an environment that values and fosters trust, positivity and freedom.

- **Improved management/leadership style by:**
  - realising the negative impact of micromanagement;
  - allowing for a work-life balance and accepting the positive impact this has on staff in relation to better productivity and commitment;
  - giving feedback and providing guidance/coaching;
  - being proactive in encouraging training and development.
Responses from staff

1. Champion a positive approach to change and opportunity

- The team I work in is very supportive of trying new ways of working and encourages training.
- The atmosphere is very much about finding ways to improve systems and procedures, viewing problems as challenges rather than roadblocks.
- Be positive when someone wants to share ideas about a project and discuss/encourage innovation.
- My supervisor cares about my satisfaction about the subject of my PhD. He is really open to my suggestions. He sees the first year of PhD as a year in which we should care more about understanding what we really like and if there is a feasible way to do it. I really feel free to spend time on my different ideas.
- I am a post doc. The environment in the lab encourages innovation and risk taking. I am free to try novel ideas which might fail.
- I was invited to give a presentation on my research and this helped me meet researchers from different fields and gained useful feedback on my work.
- We are able to try new ways of presenting reports/financial data. My manager is open to new ways of working.
- I have always felt encouraged to improve processes where possible.
- I have been very lucky. My manager gives me freedom to explore new ideas and to them put into action. This allows innovation and better productivity and a higher level of performance.
- My manager allows risk taking and for mistakes to be made. There is no fear to try different things.
- There is no blame culture in my immediate work environment.
- My manager and team are generally up for a challenge and want to do things in the best way possible.
- Being positive about embracing change is stimulating and helps motivate me and I do not hold back on making suggestions.
- I have always said and will continue to say that working for XXX has been a pleasure. I have worked for XXX since 2004. He treats everyone equally, with respect and I have never heard a cross word uttered from his mouth.
- Successive HODs have been willing to invest in staff by providing funds to help support additional pump-priming funds.
• My manager has never said no to me in relation to new ideas/blue skies thinking and initiatives. She has always just let me get on with it and chipping in with thoughts when needed. If mistakes are made there is no blame culture - it's always about just learning from those mistakes and moving on. This sort of working environment has helped me to be much more creative and enabled me to challenge myself and certainly to be much more productive.

• The professional support staff here have a morning coffee break for 20 minutes each morning where colleagues can get together and talk about work issues, or sometimes just a quick catch up. This has allowed staff to see each other as human beings and as a result it is much easier for us all to approach each other for work tasks as we have gotten to understand each other’s personalities and form healthy bonds with one another. I highly recommend this approach for good communication within a team. When I started, these breaks accelerated my ability to learn about my colleagues and left me feeling a lot more comfortable picking up the telephone for support or guidance without feeling I was infringing or bothering anyone.

• I am trusted to work independently, using my own initiative, and my manager supports the objectives I set for myself. This allows me to focus on the aspects of my job that are important to me, helping me to develop our offering to the faculty community.

• My manager XXX is always very supportive when I ask her permission to sign up for any training, especially the Mental Health First Aider course.

• After being shown evidence that what I was proposing was in line with the requirements, my manager allowed me to make some changes to our team’s recruitment process which significantly sped up the process.

2. Communicate regularly and effectively within and across teams

• The team is very communicative.

• This is something that needs to be improved at a departmental level, particularly between staff groups (academics and administrative).

• Communication is key no matter what the hierarchy. Encourage people to speak up and share thoughts and ideas.

• Open door policy and always being willing to answer questions or discuss situations. Makes people feel very approachable.

• I have an open door policy as do the academics I work with. This allows us to have face to face communication which is often helpful and quicker than communicating via email. The students also feel this is helpful.
I have regular meetings with my supervisor. We also have regular group meetings. Lunchtime and coffee time provide the best opportunities for communications within the group.

As part of our research group we meet once a month with colleagues to discuss work and latest publications. This allows a session for questions and collaborations.

Weekly meetings allows communication between individual and manager.

My manager's door is always open.

I have regular one to one catch ups and learning meetings.

Having a meeting once a week would be very helpful.

Encouraging social interactions with work related matters.

My managers' door is always open and this is something I value. There is nothing more depressing, negative and unwelcoming as seeing a corridor of closed doors even though there are people inside.

I had a PhD student who was forthright and always spoke their mind, including being critical of the scientific judgement of others. To some this seemed like arrogant behaviour, and sometimes even with me it did strike a nerve, however, this is what science should be, an open discussion, where differences in opinion are valuable.

Our DUG is very clear in her written communication and sends regular updates to all staff. She is also willing to meet face-to-face to discuss issues and is very clear and logical with her rationale for decisions.

I think it's very important for senior managers/leaders to engage with staff at all levels. The importance and impact on staff of saying good morning and engaging with staff they might not regularly have contact with cannot be underestimated and can lift the mood of the working environment. We had one manager who always did this and always remembered the names of staff- and engaged in small talk and banter. This really helped with staff morale.

My manager is keen for our whole to team to share our experiences and ideas through regular team meetings and general good communications. He identifies overlap in our work which, in turn, helps to coordinate our activity and strengthen the collective appearance of our team across the Faculty.

3. Consider the thoughts and expectations of others

The administrative teams and line managers are very approachable and I do not feel awkward at all discussing with them.
Open and frequent communication promotes a welcoming and diverse environment. Opinions are welcomed but an expectation is set that not all opinions will be implemented.

Our Post graduate student representative has demonstrated a lot of initiative and hearing people's voices. He has organised socials and collected feedback on people behaviours in open plan offices and took to the PG Committee meeting.

Each individual is able to give their views and opinions at work.

I see the situation from others view point.

A colleague wanted to change supervisor and their voice was heard.

Generally this is encouraged though there is always an air of needing to toe the line. Challenging issues may result in detriment to your career.

I think it is clear that we are all a team together and no one person is more important than the other. I know that if I raise a concern I will be listened to. This gives me peace of mind.

We have introduced a comments or feedback box in the department. I have submitted suggestions and they have been taken on board where possible. I am sure it is not always possible to take every suggestion on board but it has given everyone the opportunity to at least have their say.

My manager always has his door open and is approachable. His staff have no fear of opposing his opinions as he encourages that debate- and many times he changes his mind based on those differing opinions.

4. Deliver positive outcomes

Support is readily available

Manager helps to work through politically difficult situations and provides guidance and feedback. Doesn't micromanage but guides and coaches.

My direct line manager does not get involved in or is even aware of what exactly I do on a day to day basis but I do get support from my peers, the PG manager and research manager to deliver positive outcomes.

When I work on my research problems I can get support from all my colleagues and collaborators. This leads to positive outcomes, papers and new results.

My supervisor supports me and my research.

Team is supportive and always on hand when assistance is needed.

Team work here is key

In our group meetings everyone is supposed to talk about their progress. This is very inspiring.
• I have a mentor who provides the support I need to deliver positive outcomes. My direct manager does not have the specialist knowledge base I need though is supportive.

• My manager trusts me to do my job. If I need advice I will go to him and he will give it. If I was micro managed I would not be in this job.

• My managers XXX and XXX are very supportive in helping me set up a very flexible working schedule that works around my health and childcare requirements.

5. Encourage inclusive participation and eliminate discrimination

• It’s a minor effort to show respect at all times. “What you don’t want people to do to you, don’t do to others”- this is the key to life.

• I never felt discriminated against because of my sexuality. This makes me feel part of a group quickly. Never had this feeling in my home country.

• The environment we work in is free from discrimination and we do try to champion a culture of respect and dignity.

• Our research group is made up of 5 different nationalities and hence is multi-cultural. This reflects the diversity of London as a global city.

• My department has many posters hung up on similar matters

• This is being championed in my environment but clearly is not in all areas. It would be nice to see senior managers have the strength to tackle these issues. I feel many managers let their staff down by failing to address these issues.

• I feel like my current work environment is diverse and I feel comfortable to be myself here. Negative behaviour is generally not tolerated.

• A deeply religious student in XXX was reticent to go on a fieldtrip owing to concerns that they would not be able to adhere to strict prayer times. To enable the student to participate we ensured breaks coincided with prayer times.

• Luckily our work environment is free from this and everyone does treat each other with courtesy and respect. We tend to have regular socials which helps us to get to know each other better and so work together well.

• In my role a lot of colleagues come to speak to tell my about negative experiences. I listen and encourage them to use the right/practical channels for example Have Your Say/talking to HR during drop in sessions. I also try to encourage others to speak up when someone is being inappropriate, however this is easier said than done as many colleagues do not want bad feeling with other members of staff/conflict.

• Two of my managers challenge discriminatory behaviour where they see it. I have been supported when I myself challenged it.
My view is that discrimination still exists, but it currently happens in a more refined way following the "Have your say" campaign. The same "old" people cannot behave in a different way.

6. Support and develop staff to optimise talent

- The professional support in the department is good and I have the opportunity for career guidance and training
- Learning new things is fun and needed for your personal and professional development
- Frequent professional development opportunities which allows for personal growth but also team building and information sharing
- We are encouraged to attend training courses but not sure if this qualifies for optimising talent.
- As a post-doc I find training courses and mock interviews provided by the post doc development centre very useful for my career development.
- My research group, the grant and the admin staff offer support and training when needed.
- Individuals are able to go on training sessions to further their knowledge.
- Able to complete professional qualifications.
- Training is available but not used by me yet
- I have been greatly supported and developed for which I am very grateful
- All in my team are supported to develop in line with aspirations and have good access to training opportunities and on the job projects that stretch.
- I have received training outside of the department as needed.
- In XXX we encourage research staff to obtain experience in teaching. I encouraged my postdoctoral research on my grant to undertake teaching duties, even if these reduced the time they spent on project, since the enhanced understanding of a subject acquired by teaching it made them a more valuable staff member on the research project.
- My manager, our DOM, actively participates in developing her staff. Individual support is offered for personal and professional development and she regularly highlights opportunities which may be of interest.
- My manager gives me the freedom to attend any courses that are free. If there is a cost implication then this is assessed- but so far my requests have never been turned down. I feel incredibly lucky at the level of support I have had at my time at Imperial.
- College female academic professional development course and opportunity to avail of individual coaching afterwards. In last two department away days we have had group 'coaching' or training on 'unconscious bias and then assertiveness. Both suggested by our Athena Swan committee who obviously thinks hard about these sorts of issues. Also
this term a number of new staff and research fellows were asked to shadow more senior staff at UG interviewing. This was good coaching/mentoring opportunity for junior staff

- Any ideas I have for training and development opportunities have been actively encouraged by my manager, and the Faculty has trusted me to grow the team and take on management responsibilities over new staff, despite never having done this before.
- I have been encouraged to become the team’s training rep and encourage others to seek training and development.

7. Work in a planned and managed way

- My workload is ad hoc but have been able to predict and plan better
- My line manager is not in any way involved in planning or really managing how I manage my time. It is really about how I manage and prioritise my times and workload.
- We have milestones and regular meetings to ensure deadlines are met with all goals achieved.
- Where possible, my work is planned and I am able to deliver on time. Some area’s (like space) take a while to get used to the workload so the first few years were a lot harder for me to cope with but as time as gone on and I have more experience dealing with it, the task has improved.
- For our xxx consortium grant we all agreed to begin preparation 6 months in advance with a rolling program of grant proposal reviews and assignment of tasks fairly around the team. The result was a highly successful and polished product.
- Our xxx and xxx Administrator is exceptionally organised and capable. She runs disparate course in a controlled and planned way reducing, and almost eliminating, administrative pressures from the Course Director. Her excellent organisation also enables her to assist other members of the administrative team when necessary thereby reducing stress for colleagues and ensure all objectives are delivered on time.
- I don’t work directly with my line-manager. Prior to person being my line-manager we were joint PIs on an industry funded project; and previously jointly supervised a PhD student and worked very well together. I experienced no pressure then and would not anticipate any in the future.
- My manager has the schedule planned to the 5 minute segment and months in advance. Not much wiggle room so this means we know what to expect.

8. What one thing does your colleague/manager/leader do that inspires and motivates you?

- Bubbly attitudes
- Morning coffee promotes communication
• Generally respectful and friendly staff all contribute to helping to make the workplace better and as a result more productive. (The XXX is generally good at this)
• Colleagues supporting each other and being friendly is so important at work
• I have some commitments outside my full time work at Imperial. My manager has been flexible with my working hours and allows me to complete those commitments. I am very grateful to them for this.
• He engages in open and honest conversation but really listens. He is willing to alter a decision if I present new information. He is focused on doing what is best instead of needing to be right.
• I am inspired by a “we can do it” attitude of my supervisor
• Some of my lab mates are very brilliant. They work on novel ideas and then demonstrate that these ideas work. This inspires me the most.
• My manager balances study, work, research and extracurricular activities. In academia he champions productivity and results over long hours.
• Able to carve my own process in delivering results rather than follow the steps process.
• Always having an open door and being able to tackle problems straight away.
• He gets involved in every single part of our research. This is very impressive.
• My manager encourages socials and brings everyone together on a regular basis. This has really helped ensure there is a positive working environment.
• Our manager is supportive of flexible working which is vital for a productive work environment. He knows that it is about output rather than presenteeism. Everyone works really hard but do leave on time to get a work life balance.
• My manager is an excellent networker who gets things done
• My colleagues
• When I am treated with respect it greatly improves my work life. Most of the academics I work for are very good about thanking me for any work I do so I do feel appreciated.
• Having a supportive and understanding line manager is really important. Having had managers in the past who always move the goal posts at assessment time, it is great to have one that not only will fight your corner, but also measures your success on the basis of the expectations you both agreed the year before.
• Our DOM is an excellent leader who takes an interest in all of her staff and encourages us to continually improve. She sets a good example, is fair and supportive in all matters.
• The team I work with are wonderful. Very supportive- each with their own strengths and different things they bring to the table. If one team member is under pressure the whole team will assist to support. We ensure we have team away days to help bond the team.
• Leadership style and ability of a senior professor in our department. This professor was my line-manager for several years and under whom I worked while he directed one of our
MScs where I make significant contribution: He has always been balanced and wise in his responses to difficult situations, he listens, is inclusive, is always polite, remembers to thank people and acknowledge help; gives very wise career advice and is sympathetic and supportive. He seeks advice of the people in his team. He is the only person that in the 20+ years that I have been in our Department that displays true people management skills.......He has motivated me hugely. Through working on his team on our PG teaching we have achieved great things over the years; he has inspired me to take on more leadership responsibilities on this course- as I am happy to 'give back' some of my time although I know it will reduce time I have for my own research and as I work part-time there are great pressures on my time. Even when I was a very young and experienced member of academic staff he delegated and assigned me roles with responsibility, and sought my advice, which gave me opportunities to grow beyond my direct research expertise. He and a few of my close academic colleagues with whom I do research or engage with academically are the only reasons that I have continued to work at Imperial through some very difficult times.

• A leader is someone whose word you can trust, and I feel confident that when my manager says they’ll do something, they’ll get it done.

• There is a general air of expertise and solidarity within my team which makes it desirable to work for.

9. Any other comments?

• Getting feedback is so critical and often gets forgotten. I would encourage more managers to do this regularly for their staff - especially when positive. Also saying “thank you” makes such a difference in relation to motivation.

• Having the autonomy is great

• Openness and approachability is motivating and creates a positive working environment

• I like Imperial

• I would encourage more managers and colleagues to great each other in the morning. This is so important and common courtesy.

• I think it's great that you are doing this survey. I hope it inspires many.