**Employee Engagement Problem Solving Guide for *Innovation* – Observe Tool** (Revised 1/23/15)p 1 of 4

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| Prepare: |  | While observing: |
| Discuss with the manager what you are observing and why so s/he understands how you’ll use the information. Focus on this as an opportunity to learn what currently happens around encouraging employees to come up with better ways of doing things.  Talk with the team about what you are observing and why so they understand how you’ll use the information. Ensure the team knows you are not “auditing” them.  Plan to spend at least 30 – 60 minutes at the workplace observing.  You may try several shorter periods of observation (15 – 20 min).  Choose times and locations that will allow you to observe the work being done.  You may try to observe a team huddle or meeting to capture that particular dynamic.  Bring paper and pencil to document what you see and hear. |  | Focus on what actually occurs, not what should occur.  Be an unbiased observer, not an inspector.  Pay attention to interactions, both verbal and nonverbal.  Record what you see and hear, along with any observable standards/expectations. |

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| What to look & listen for – define your own indicators of ‘how you will know’ (phrases, behaviors, visuals, etc.) the answers to the questions: |
| Do employees offer ideas for improvement? How? How often? Are they solicited? By whom?  Look/listen for: (ex.: supervisor asks for problems & ideas, clear place/method for employees to submit ideas, dates of last 3 ideas submitted)  What is the response to ideas? How long does it take? Who responds? How?  Look/listen for: (ex: supervisor response – verbal or otherwise – to idea, length of time between submission and response, instant “thank you” and pledge to follow up)  Is there visible evidence of employee ideas being captured? Discussed? Implemented?  Look/listen for: (ex.: idea boards showing ideas and status, idea cards or slips for employees to submit ideas, degree to which ideas have been added to or modified)  Is there visible evidence of improvement from employee ideas?  Look/listen for: (ex.: chart of performance over time showing when ideas were implemented, newsletter or poster recognizing employees’ ideas and their impact)  Do teams discuss problems? How? How often? What happens before, during, and after?  Look/listen for: (ex.: number of times team has discussed problems and possible solutions in the last month, whether teams use the word “problem,” standards – posted or spoken – related to problems or problem-solving, amount of time devoted to discussing problems/ideas, level of willingness to communicate problems)  Do employees have a basis for improvement? What is it? (Performance target or baseline, definition of customer value, etc.) How is it communicated?  Look/listen for: (ex.: process performance data and goals posted, visual showing customer needs or impacts, time devoted in team discussions to improvement desired) |

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| Optional activity: |
| Ask some employees (one-on-one) about their last experience suggesting an improvement to find out what happened. |

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Observations:

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Draw a picture of current state (what you see and hear actually happening):

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Reflect on what you observed. Questions to consider include:

* How does actual practice compare to standards/expectations?
* What appears to be “the process” for encouraging, soliciting, capturing, and implementing employee ideas?
* What seems to encourage employees to come up with better ways of doing things? What seems to discourage them? Provide specific examples from your observation.

Use your reflections to inform your current state drawing and identify a specific problem to be addressed first. This will inform the “Observe” step on the Problem-solving worksheet.

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