

## Talent Management Perspectives

Published January 2010

### Seven Strategies to Engage Employees in 2010

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Effective leaders continually seek business improvements and ways to maximize the potential of those they lead. They see the untapped potential in their employees and deploy strategies to bring out the best in every person or team.

This is essential given the fact that the cost of unfocused, unmotivated and unhappy employees takes a heavy toll on business. Employee disengagement costs businesses in the United States more than \$300 billion each year.

One study compared highly engaged business units to disengaged units and found that the engaged groups rated 86 percent higher in customer satisfaction, had a 78 percent higher safety record, maintained a 70 percent lower turnover rate, delivered a 70 percent higher productivity rate and scored 44 percent more in profitability.

The good news for leaders is that untapped potential of disengaged employees can be turned around. Here are some key strategies leaders can employ to increase staff engagement and further organizational success.

**Hire right.** The most important decision that leaders make is to bring the right talent into the organization — this means finding a fit between what the job, team and organization needs and what the employee brings to the table. Too often, leaders hire people they like in the interview; this "like" factor creates a personality fit, but commonly misses several other important success factors. Instead, they must utilize a comprehensive performance assessment to help objectify the hiring process. An assessment that measures personality, motivation and competency provides the highest level of superior job performance predictability.

**Honor the whole person.** Employees don't want to be used simply as a vehicle for corporate success. Engaging leaders truly care about workers as unique people. Employees engage when leaders demonstrate that they care about and are interested in them, their families and their careers.

**Honor competency.** In the 21st-century, almost all jobs require some level of individual creativity, leadership and decision-making autonomy. An engaging leader understands that employees often have better answers to their own work issues than the boss does. Leaders should honor the competency of their employees by asking them to share their opinions and ideas and coaching them to think and create solutions themselves.

**Establish a partnership environment.** Employees typically want to experience the success of achieving a cause bigger than themselves. However, most organizations miss opportunities to include employees in achieving the vision, mission and values of the company. Employee meetings are good vehicles for sharing information, but information and dialogue must flow freely through all levels of leadership, even to the most entry-level employee. Engaging leaders treat employees as partners in the business, and transparency of an organization's financial status when possible is important.

**Encourage healthy dialogue.** The majority of people tend to shy away from disagreements and conflict, but engaging leaders master the art of facilitating respectful and open dialogue that honors and encourages differing views. This type of environment not only fosters engagement, but it also produces healthier business decisions and increased profitability.

**Provide resources.** Once employees are motivated to perform, it becomes critical that leaders provide all the resources employees need to be successful. These could include systems infrastructure, such as IT, financial funding, tools and equipment, information, and skills and abilities.

**Ensure accountability.** When performance or interpersonal issues are not addressed, a team's morale suffers. The impact of even one disengaged employee can be devastating to the overall engagement of a department or team. High-performance teams within organizations operate just like winning sports teams — those that win are working together as a cohesive and engaged team. Losing teams may have a few individual stars, but no one performs at his or her best. Effective leaders deal with performance issues to ensure the entire team is functioning at its full potential.