

Are Your Employees Engaged? Are you?

If your team members are not engaged on a regular basis, there is a reason: the culture is not congruent with engagement. Ultimately, to get employees more engaged, the culture must be transformed.

One of the biggest challenges to getting employees engaged is over-planning. Too often, leaders say, "We have been working on a plan for three years, but have not seen any improvement." Just planning on going to the gym three days a week doesn't get you in shape. The fact that you plan to go to the gym is great but, if there is no action, all the planning in world will not get you into shape. I know this first hand.

Here are three simple steps to creating greater employee engagement that actually work:

1. **Have a "one-on-one" meeting with every employee about engagement and what it means to them.** Many employees' natural behavior styles are such that they do not like to share ideas in a public setting, even among their close colleagues. They may prefer to talk one-on-one and may, quite possibly, have some exceptional ideas. You may need to ask more probing questions, almost as if you were interviewing them. Be sure to listen closely and take notes or record your conversation. When you share these responses with the entire team, it is critical that all responses are anonymous.

Some great questions to ask here are:

- What was the best form of positive recognition you have personally experienced? Why do you consider it the best?
- What is your preferred way to be recognized by me (the leader) and your teammates? Here, you may learn that one employee might prefer having live recognition while another might prefer a simple hand written note.

Another great area to tackle is receiving negative feedback. It may seem strange, but employee engagement can easily hinge around how you develop your employees. Developing employees includes letting them know when they have not performed well. You will find that there are as many ways to share negative recognition as there are positive.

2. **Share leadership responsibilities with everyone on the team.** There is a reason that Canadian geese fly in a "V" formation and rotate leadership. They can fly upwards of 85 percent further by rotating leadership and all of the geese are engaged. Always start by asking for volunteers to lead various tasks, although you may have to start out by recruiting employees looking to be

challenged. This can include team meetings, special projects, and even social activities for the team.

Team members are closest to the situation so it makes sense to have them take point on projects. Projects of this nature should challenge an employee, and not be so far advanced that they are sure to fail. The more success you create, the more engaged the employee.

3. **Describe the goals for the team or project in real-life terms.** In order to develop a common understanding of what employee engagement means, a common language is necessary. With today's diverse workplace, the excessive use of industry lingo, and over-exaggerated circumstances, employees sometimes lose sight of what is really expected and thus become disengaged. Another challenge in this area is the lack of specificity. When you are talking with your employees one-on-one, be sure to use (and expect from them) specific examples.

Try having your team respond to some, or all, of these statements:

- My immediate supervisor is someone who genuinely cares about me as a person.
- I have everything I need to perform my job correctly.
- Someone has talked to me about my general progress – more than just a performance evaluation.
- My colleagues are 110% committed to doing quality work.
- I know what is expected of me every day at work.
- I have opportunities to grow and develop on the job.
- I believe my opinions count.
- I receive praise on average of four times per month.
- At least one person at work encourages my growth and development.

These are just a few examples of how great leaders can develop great teams with great employee engagement. How do you measure up?

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A diverse, twenty-year background in real estate, mortgage banking, event planning, and production, as well as radio and television broadcasting, created a perfect storm that put Gregg Gregory where he is today. Gregg works hard to ensure that different personalities can work together successfully to accomplish your organization's mission, goals, and objectives.

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