

Title: How to Transform Disengaged Employees Into Engaged Employees

Here in the US, we have a real problem with disengaged employees. On January 28, Amy Adkins of Gallup confirmed this when she released this: "Majority of US Employees Not Engaged Despite Gains in 2014." As you can probably guess from her title, there's good news and bad news.

On the bright side, employee engagement is at its highest level since 2000, and overall employee engagement was up 2% from 2013 to 2014. That takes us all the way up to 31.5% of US employees engaged at work. It's good, but only in the "sort of" sense. There's still a lot of work to be done.

Now for the bad news. The level of employees categorized as "not engaged" remained basically flat. It now sits at 51%. Yes, that's over half of the US workforce. For "actively disengaged employees"... it's 17.5%. Combined, that's a mind-numbing 68.5% of employees who are apathetic, unenthusiastic, and not committed to the company. Essentially, they punch the clock, count down the hours, and collect their paycheck. That's it! Nothing else.

Maritz Research recently polled a sampling of US employees and found a prevalent theme: Lack of trust in company management. The research uncovered, "poor communication, lack of perceived caring, inconsistent behavior, and perceptions of favoritism were cited by respondents as the largest contributors to their lack of trust in senior leaders."

The same Maritz study revealed that nearly two-thirds of participants, who said they had "strong trust in management," would be happy to spend the rest of their career with their present company. Only 7% of respondents, who have weak trust in their employers, would want to finish their career with their current employer. That tells us a lot, doesn't it?

What does all this mean for HR? When you're tasked with finding, screening, recruiting, and training job applicants... where does employee engagement have its greatest impact? Consider the immense monetary value in having happy, engaged, motivated, long-term employees. Employee retention not only saves a great deal of money, but also saves a great deal of time and resources that would be better spent finding and training new employees. Those recovered resources can now be devoted to developing and enhancing existing employees, leading to more loyalty to the company and an even higher level of employee engagement.

For employees, the credibility of the company and senior management is driven largely by the quality of relationships that employees have with their direct supervisors. It is imperative for HR to insist that all managers have a caring relationship with all their employees.

Managers need their employees to be engaged and productive for the ultimate success of the business. You can have all the pizza parties, stock option plans, employee awards, fancy software packages, and casual Friday's you want, but true employee engagement isn't an activity. It's a deeply-felt "emotion" in the heart of each employee.

Employee trust is a critical factor. Employee engagement is what makes the difference between an average organization and a world class organization. In a world class organization, employees truly care about the success of the company. They're the ones who will work hard to make sure your clients, guests, and customers are happy.

It's been proven, time after time, that companies with world class engagement experience increased productivity, increased profitability, fewer safety incidents, lower absenteeism, and a significantly higher growth rate compared to companies with disengaged employees. That means more money to the company's bottom line. Less waste, more profits!

HR can influence and inspire managers to make this vision a reality by helping them understand the WIIFM principle (What's in It For Me). Let's look at the payoff in terms of what it can do for their career. Managers of world class companies are significantly more successful than the average US manager. This means a much higher annual income and more frequent promotions.

So, how do you transform disengaged employees? Answer: You have to put employees first. Zig Ziglar said, "To get what you want in life, you must first help others get what they want."

When talking about employee engagement, managers must help every one of their employees to be engaged, motivated, and productive. This means truly caring about the work they're doing and their happiness with the company. The results will mean success for the employee, success for management, success for HR, and ultimately, success for the company.

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