

ARTICLES

Why Worker Engagement is Not Enough

By Keith Ayers

February 2007 | *Manufacturers Monthly*

What would you do if you found out that there was a cancer in your organization? What if you learned that managers and leaders around the country were sitting idly by as this cancer was slowly eating away at profits, the bottom line, and even effecting customers?

This “cancer” is called *employee disengagement* and, if left untreated, will erode any organization the same way cancer eats at a patient’s body.

If you have been reading any of the articles or books from The Gallup Organization on the subject of employee engagement, you will know that the average level of engagement of the American workforce is abysmally low. According to their research:

- 29% of employees are *actively engaged* in their jobs.
- 54% are not engaged.
- 17% are actively disengaged.

Clearly, this problem is very real. And one of the most devastating effects of this cancer is the percentage of payroll that is wasted on *disengaged* employees.

In organizations with only average levels of employee engagement, between 30 and 50 percent of their payroll is going down the drain. You pay employees 100 percent of their wages and benefits, but those who are *not engaged* give you 50 percent or less of what you pay them for. The *actively disengaged* employees cost even more! Not only do they take their pay and benefits and then working against the best interests of your organization, like a cancer, they spread their discontent and try to turn the engaged employees off as well. Even if they don’t succeed, they will undermine the good work your engaged employees are doing by failing to complete their part of projects on time or lowering the overall quality of the job.

What’s more frightening, many leaders do not even realize that the cancer of disengagement is eating away at their organization, so they do nothing to treat it. The few managers who do see the problem look for quick fixes: they throw money at the problem, thinking that better compensation, benefits, incentives, or working conditions will fix it. If these things have any impact on engagement at all, it is very short term.

The truth is, there is no quick fix for the problem of disengagement, any more than there is a quick fix for cancer. But if diagnosed early on, both can be cured.

If you are serious about getting your employees to be as passionate about your dream for your organization as you are, focus on igniting the passion in your employees, not on getting them engaged. Passionate employees are engaged, and then some.

For more information, visit
www.EngagementIsNotEnough.com

ARTICLES

continued

Many leaders fail because they take the easy approach to employee productivity: they control their employees. They micro-manage, monitor every phone call, and even go to excessive lengths to spy on them to make sure they are earning every penny of their salary.

The most effective leaders, however, trust their employees. It is hard for a leader to create a work environment where every employee wants to perform at his or her best. However, it is necessary. Leaders must take the time to truly value their employees. They must take a step back from looking at the bottom line and instead examine how their workers contribute to the goals and missions of the company. By addressing the problem of engagement head-on with positive solutions and clear goals for the future, managers can stop the spread of the disengagement.

If you are serious about creating a great organization, get serious about raising the standard of leadership in your organization. You can't afford to have leaders who create disengage employees and drive the most talented people away. Now is the time. A new year is upon us. We can cure this workplace cancer.

For tips on how you can be a more effective leader and light the passion of engagement with every employee to increase profits, improve customer service, and create a productive office culture check out Keith Ayers's new book *Engagement Is Not Enough: You Need Passionate Employees to Achieve Your Dreams* available at www.engagementIsNotEnough.com.

For more information, visit
www.EngagementIsNotEnough.com