



Moving the Needle on Employee Engagement & Commitment

When it comes to employee engagement and commitment to an organization, most companies would agree that they 'have some, want more.' Why? These companies have come to recognize that their organization's long-term success relies on employee performance, which is directly impacted by the level of employee engagement and commitment to an organization.

How is employee engagement and commitment defined? According to a 2003 report by Towers Perrin, it is defined as "employees' willingness and ability to contribute to company success." What does that mean in real terms? It is the extent to which your employees are willing to put discretionary effort into their work in the form of "extra time, brainpower and energy."

If you're like most corporate leaders, you are probably thinking to yourself, 'Wishful thinking.' Worse, some corporate leaders think that simply making people happy and paying them more money is the solution. Not so. These are certainly important considerations for any company that wants to attract and retain the most qualified individuals, however, they are less important when it comes to engaging employees in their work. Further, engagement requires both a rational and emotional commitment. And, as you might suspect, it is far more difficult to engage employees emotionally. You have to engage not only their minds but their hearts as well.

So, what's a company to do? Here are some suggestions to help get you started in moving the needle on employee engagement and commitment.

1. **Measure:** start by establishing a baseline. Develop an annual engagement survey. To maintain confidentiality and build trust with your employees, it may be beneficial to work with an outside consultant.
2. **Analyze:** when reviewing the survey data, ask yourself these key questions: How do we compare with other companies in our industry? How do our employees compare across job levels? What attributes of engagement is our company strong in? Weak in? It is also a good idea to conduct employee focus groups as part of the analysis process. This will provide additional meaning and richness to your analysis, while providing an opportunity to further engage employees in the process.
3. **Plan:** identify those areas that your company will focus on. Identify goals and involve your employees in developing an action plan. Remember to involve employees at all levels. Your plan should include sponsorship, change

- management, training, communications, key measures as well as the tactical plan for actually implementing your goals.
4. **Perform:** now it's time to execute your plan and measure results. This should not be relegated to Human Resources. Rather, all divisions need to have accountability for employee engagement and commitment and should have engagement goals that tie back to the corporate goals. And remember, you have to inspect what you expect. It is advisable to develop an engagement and commitment scorecard that is reviewed at least quarterly by senior management with monthly check-ins on key initiatives as appropriate.

It's a fact that highly engaged and committed employees outperform other employees. Use the MAPP process noted above and watch employee productivity and morale improve with a corresponding impact to your bottom line. Of course it will take time and commitment with a focus on long-term results. However, no matter how you slice it, focusing on employee and commitment just makes good business sense, but remember, it's an ongoing journey, not a just a destination.

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Regina Barr is a management consultant and speaker. Her consulting firm, Red Ladder, Inc., specializes in helping organizations and their leaders develop their full potential through strategic project management, executive coaching and training. Regina also helps companies develop strategies to attract, develop and retain high potential leaders. For more information visit www.RedLadder.com or <http://www.redladder.blogs.com/>.