

Employee Engagement is Low

We have a Google Alert set for “Employee Engagement” so everyday we get emails that fill us in on what folks are writing about the subject around the world. Here are three things these folks agree on:

1. The more employees are engaged, the more successful their organizations.
2. Employee engagement in organizations around the world is at an all time low – as low as 20% and no higher than 47% of employees are highly engaged at work.
3. Employees want to be engaged at work because it beats the alternatives.



Those findings aren't coming as a surprise to you are they? You know from experience that when you work with people who are engaged you have more fun, work goes by more quickly and you get more done. You know that the last couple of years have been difficult - layoffs, shrinking resources, frozen/cut salaries, uncertainty about pensions and a hundred other things have sent shockwaves through our organizations. We all want things to change for the better. We want to work in a place where employee engagement rebounds – where at least 80% of our colleagues are engaged in their work because there are good reasons to be.

Here is the challenge. We can't wait for our leaders to create the conditions under which our engagement levels will rise. If they could have done it, they would have already done it. It's up to us. If you are a Director, don't wait for your General Manager to engage you. If you are a Manager don't wait for your Director to start doing what it takes to fire you up. If you are a professional with no direct reports don't wait for your Manager to “get it” or your colleagues to get passionate about their work despite the uncertainty. It is up to you to create the conditions that will bring engagement to your work.

Here are three things you can do today to get your engagement ball rolling:

1. Gripe once and move on. There will always be things to complain about – things that aren't fair: undeserving people who get a break, wasted resources, silly policies, clients who yell at us, managers who lie to us, bad decisions made and more. If you gripe once you can let it go. If you gripe again and again you will imprison yourself in negative energy that will make engagement impossible.
2. Keep work at work. There will always be reasons to take your work home and neglect your family/personal life. Only you can say no - your boss and colleagues won't tell you to work less. When you are overworked and your personal life is suffering engagement will be impossible to sustain.
3. Track your progress. On your way home from work every day list three things you accomplished that you are proud of. This might be something you learned, a task you completed, a colleague you helped or a gripe you let go! If you aren't recognizing your progress, engagement will be impossible to achieve.

Great Leaders

Most of us know what it's like to work for a great leader. In our Passionate Leadership workshop we ask participants to identify the most passionate leader they have ever had and the impact they made. Sometimes these stories are from work, or from volunteer organizations or from schools. Regardless, these stories are powerful to hear and tell.

What's your story?

1. Who is the most passionate leader you have ever had?
2. What made them passionate?
3. What impact did they have on you, others and the organization?
4. When did this story happen?

For most people, these stories occurred years ago – rarely do we hear stories of current leaders. Why is that? Because great leaders are hard to find and the best ones always stand out. It's why great leaders have the most loyal followers – be they students, clients, employees or voters. It's why we remember them so fondly.



What about you? Will your students, employees, clients, colleagues or community members talk about you in our workshops in years to come?

More than ever we need great leaders in all aspects of our lives. The challenges we face economically and socially are big. The cynics are plentiful and they get a lot of air play. We have seen the damage that bad leaders can do. It's time for us to step up and be the leaders we can be.

Here are three things you can do today to become a great leader:

1. Decide that you want to be the kind of leader you talked about in your story. Commit to making changes in the way you lead to emulate the leaders you admire.
2. Tell the people you lead that you want to be a better leader. Ask them how you can lead them better than you already are. Listen to what they tell you and ask questions to better understand their perspective before you judge. Commit to making changes to respond to their feedback and ask them frequently how you are doing moving forward.
3. Stand up for what you know is right. It is never ok to lie, to cheat, to play favourites, to steal, to take credit for others work, to yell at people, to fail to recognize effort, to not hold people accountable, to not care. Bad leaders don't do the wrong things all at once – they stop doing what's right gradually over time. Commit to doing what's right – even when it's hard.