

LESSON 13: Business Performance

Employee Engagement

The Challenge

According to the Bureau of National Affairs \$11 billion a year is lost due to employee turnover. Many believe that this is directly linked to the lack of employee engagement.

Dale Carnegie Training conducted research that uncovered almost 3 in every 4 employees (71%) are not fully engaged in their work. But for those companies who have mastered employee engagement they outperform their peers by up to 202%, according to Gallup research.

It stands to reason that if we can improve employee engagement in our businesses that we will also see enhanced performance.

Why Are Employees Disengaged?

After high school, Rick needed the highest paying job he could find in order to afford college. A construction job became available that paid better than any other jobs he had explored.

Although the company was very good to its employees, Rick didn't like construction. As a laborer in the building of townhomes, the best day of every week for him was payday. Other than picking up a paycheck, he was rarely engaged in work. He was going through the motions and often did the minimum to get by rather than putting his heart and soul into this trade. He had no sense of purpose or meaning that connected him to that job.

Although the company was providing nice homes for people who needed shelter for their families, he never connected his role to the importance of that mission. Many employees in the workplace are like Rick at that stage in his life. They are there for the paycheck, but not much more than that.

There have been hundreds of research projects done on the reasons for employee engagement and the results can be boiled down into three categories:

1. Purpose
2. Empowerment
3. Trust

Purpose

Early in their married life, Bill's wife Jill was the nurse in charge of her hospital unit on occasion. On those days, she would sometimes come home in what he considered dictator mode.

Entering the house after work, she would sometimes order Bill to do things that didn't make sense to him. When asked why, she would bark "Because I said so!" On those occasions, he didn't respond very well. If he didn't understand the reason for something being done, either he wouldn't do it or would do it poorly because it had no meaning.

Many employees are going to work without understanding why they are there. They don't understand how their job relates to the mission of the organization or how the mission of the organization relates to the greater good of society or the greater good of advancing God's overall agenda. Instead many of these employees have a flawed view of their work.

Some common flawed views include the following:

- ***Work is a curse, not a gift*** | Genesis 3 describes the fall of man when God cursed the ground, making work harder. Many believe God cursed work, but that was not the case. Before the fall, man was encouraged by God to work and it had meaning, purpose and fulfillment. God desires for us to recognize and accept His gift of working with purpose.
- ***Work has no intrinsic value, other than a paycheck*** | Many believe that God doesn't care about our work and that the only value work has is to collect a paycheck. But Ephesians 2:10 teaches, "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do."
- ***Pastors and missionaries have a calling and purpose, but not those in the workplace*** | Many other people believe that there is a spiritual hierarchy. That God cares about the work of pastors and missionaries, but a business person is wasting their time. If you study the story of Bezalel in Exodus 31 you will discover that the first person ever filled with the Spirit of God was a craftsman who used his God given talents and skills to build the ark of the covenant and the artifacts in the temple.
- ***God's only concerned about saving souls, so my job is only a platform for evangelism or for giving money for evangelism*** | Some people believe that between our souls and our bodies that God only cares about our souls and that our material being is unimportant. Yet, God's first command to man was to fill the earth and rule over and tend to God's creation.

Empowerment

One of the ways employees can gain a sense of purpose and meaning is when they are more deeply engaged in the work. When employees are allowed the freedom to use their God given skills and abilities without being micromanaged, they are more likely to be engaged. God has placed them in that workplace with a set of unique skills and abilities for a reason. When they are not empowered to use those gifts then they feel their skills have been diminished or disrespected.

If you ponder the first two chapters of Genesis for long you quickly realize that God established Adam as His first employee and empowered him with naming all the animals and ruling over them and creation. He empowered Adam with very little instruction. Giving your employees the authority to do what they do well, brings fulfillment and satisfaction and engages them to want to do more to help your business succeed.

Trust

If staff doesn't trust the leadership team of the organization, they are less likely to want to be engaged. There needs to be a mutual trust developed in the workplace. People need to feel that you care about them and value them as a person. They also need to know they can trust your motivations and leadership skills.

This all relates to the leaders calling and purpose. If they are leading as God designed, they will be caring shepherds, rather than self-serving tyrants. Trust will increase and employees will desire to serve well.

DIVING DEEPER QUESTIONS

1. Discuss your thoughts on the root causes for employee disengagement.

2. Which of the flawed views have you experienced in the past or have witnessed in others? How did it impact the work being done?

3. Have you ever been disengaged in a former place of work? How did you feel at that time? Was there anything that your employer could have done to engage you in the work? How would you have felt if they had done those things?

THE SOLUTION

Years ago, in the now defunct *Business Reform* magazine, there was an article about a former CEO of Lenscrafters. He shared about his incredible journey of building employee engagement that came out of his own enlightenment.

While on a church retreat, this CEO found himself studying about the healings of Jesus. It struck him that many of the healings were giving sight to those who were blind. Up to that point this CEO claimed that he had his team at Lenscrafters focused simply on producing and selling more eyeglasses.

Suddenly, the Lord revealed to him that God didn't call him to Lenscrafters just to make more eyeglasses, but instead he was called to give sight to those having trouble seeing. This change of perspective was revolutionary for this CEO, as well as for his team.

This freshly inspired leader went back and called in his managers from around the country. He inspired them with a new purpose for the organization; and to emphasize their new mission, he instructed each city to select a homeless shelter and take their staff there one day a year. They were charged with fitting each homeless person who was having trouble seeing with glasses.

He wanted each employee to know that they had an important purpose in their work. The unintended benefit that surprised this business leader was that his employee turnover plummeted. As his team began realizing the importance of their work, they became more engaged in the work and had no desire to leave.

God has a plan and a purpose for the business you lead, and His purpose may be more meaningful than you and/or your team realizes.

As an employer, one of the most important things you can do to enhance employee engagement is to help your employees understand their important role in advancing the cause of your organization and the importance of their work.

Dale Carnegie's research identified five tips that will help you better engage your employees.

- Senior leadership must articulate a clear vision for their employees.
- Employees should be encouraged to communicate openly and influence the company's vision through their input.
- Direct managers should foster healthy relationships with their employees.
- Senior leadership should continuously demonstrate that employees have an impact on their work environment.
- Managers should show employees that they are valued as true contributors, giving them a sense of empowerment.

The core of many of these conclusions is that employees want to have a significant influence on fulfilling the vision of your organization. They are looking for meaning! Fortunately, God had a purpose for them and for you before you ever began leading your organization. Your job as their leader is to:

1. *Help your employees discover their God given skills, abilities, and knowledge.*
2. *Connect their gifts to the purpose or mission of your organization.*
3. *Connect and communicate your company mission to God's work.*
4. *Empower your employees with enough authority to use their gifts to advance your mission.*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some ways you can help your team discover their unique skills, abilities and knowledge?

- a. How do those gifts connect best to the mission of your organization?

2. Do you have a clearly stated mission for your organization?

- a. If so, how could it be stated differently to make it clearer on how you will enhance God's kingdom or advance the greater good for your community

- 3. If your employees were asked to rate on a scale 1 to 10 how empowered they have been to do their job, what score would they give you? Why?

YOUR PERSONALIZED SOLUTION

After carefully considering this information, write two or three action steps you can take to better engage your employees. Put a date to each action item as to when you will complete it.

Actions Steps to Engage Employees

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.
