

Want More Engaged Staff? Here's How.



Worldwide, 13% of Employees Are Engaged at Work

Low workplace engagement offers opportunities to improve business outcomes

The most recently available statistics about employee engagement from Gallup that I know of are not very encouraging. Of the 87% disengaged workers globally, 24% are not only just “disengaged”, but “actively disengaged” at the workplace. It means that those 24% are actively spreading negativity and degrading the effectiveness of their co-workers as a result. What that means is that if we were to fire 24% of the workforce, we would be facing a situation

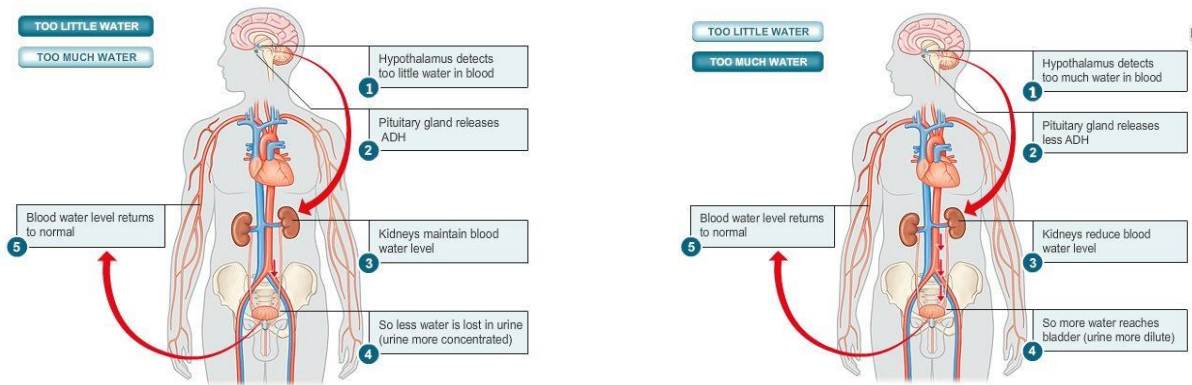
similar to that in Southern Europe at the moment, where about 26% of the working-age population is unemployed! That was the US unemployment rate during the Great Depression of the 1930s!

To counter this, organizations do what they have always done. They reorganize. Like a man drowning in an ocean of fear, confusion and uncertainty, they will grasp at any brightly-coloured, promising straw that comes along. These straws come along proclaiming the next big thing in the “development” of human society, including organizations. They have included the productivity movement, re-engineering, good to great, and, more recently, something called “[holacracy](#)”, which Zappos founder Tony Hsieh seems to have embraced in a very wholehearted manner. None of these fads will work for any significant length of time. This is because the underlying assumption is that the human race is progressively moving up the “evolutionary ladder” when in fact the scientific evidence points in the opposite direction. To cite just one example by way of illustration, scientists studying the human genome have concluded that genetic entropy spells extinction for all of us in the not-so-distant future. Entropy is of course the tendency for things to break down. In the case of the human genome, it is the inexorable replication of “copying mistakes” during the reproductive process. All of us have inherited copying mistakes in our genes, and these mistakes will be passed on to the next generation and so on. The end game comes when the number of copying mistakes is so large that further reproduction becomes impossible!



[Click on the image for the video](#)

I will leave it to older and wiser heads to work out how the human race will save itself from this spectre of oblivion. What I will focus on here is how to slow down the rot, one of which manifestations is the low degree of employee engagement. For a start, picture a normal human being. The human body maintains an optimum internal environment via a process called homeostasis. It responds to deviations from this optimum state by initiating physical and physiological processes that help return the body to “normal.” So, if you feel hot, you start to perspire and feel the urge to remove excess clothing or move to a cooler place. If you feel cold, you start to shiver, add more clothing or try to start a fire to raise the ambient temperature. The diagrams below show what happens when there is too little or too much water in the body.



What has been happening is that “new” ideas and philosophies have been trying to move this “normal” human body to greater heights and newer levels of consciousness without acknowledging that the same human body is currently out of balance with regard to its internal environment. This imbalance weakens the body significantly, so that it tries to go where it wants, but finds itself unable to do so. What is needed is not new frameworks and methodologies, but returning the body to balanced health. Only then will that body be able to go to where it desires.

In the case of achieving a healthier rate of actively engaged employees in organizations, we do need to revisit, recall, re-assess and re-commit to implement measures which we already know to be true, right and just. Some of these are:

Clear *raison d'etre*.

Leadership by Example.

Value-enhancing Mindset.

Attitude of Gratitude.

Clear *raison d'etre*.

If the purpose of your business is not to raise value all round, then you have no business being in business. If you own the business or are leading the organization, what is your purpose in life? Providing people with Convenience? Status? Beauty? Life’s necessities? Counsel? Wisdom? If your line is logistics, you’re providing people with convenience in getting both the necessities and luxuries of life. If you are in the housing business, you provide functional and beautiful homes. If in the financial arena, you provide advice on how to preserve, deepen and grow wealth.

Whatever your sphere of business is, be very clear about why you even exist. That makes all else fall into place.

Leadership by Example.

We are all able to mouth this very easily. We make comments about TV shows like “Undercover Boss” and say to ourselves that we would do the same. Really? How many of you reading this have actually done it?

Leading by example doesn't necessarily mean doing the same things you expect your employees to do. It does mean, however, that you jump in and show them how things are done if they face difficulties doing it. It means encouraging them to discover ways of doing better what you just showed them. It means living the values your organization espouses in a very visible and public way. It means making the workplace as ergonomic as possible so your employees are virtually guaranteed of doing great work all the time, if they would but show up with their whole selves. It means being very sure that they will because of the leader you are.

Start reflecting. If you left suddenly today, would anyone miss you? If you can name a good bunch, chances are you are leading by example!

Value-enhancing Mindset.

What is value? Would you recognize it if it came up to you and barked in your face? Value from whose perspective, yours or the customers?

We live in an age where self is glorified. Just observe all the selfies and wefies on Facebook, Instagram and other social media. The obsession with self. The preoccupation with form over substance. Locking the stable door only after the horse has bolted. It's time to return to enhancing value. Self-esteem is necessary, but it is a quality that has been over-emphasized. We have forgotten that self-esteem rises exponentially when we deliver value to others just by being there. Few are those who possess a sense of confidence stemming from knowing that people at the workplace, their customers, their suppliers, feel better simply by knowing that they are present. Have you ever had anyone say to you personally "It is great having you around in the office"? I have. Many times, from different people. Perhaps more so in this day and age, has anyone ever told you that they feel better having you as a Facebook friend or a LinkedIn contact?

Bring the same mindset with you to your workplace. You'll find yourself appreciated, both verbally and financially!

Attitude of Gratitude.

Do you drive your BMW to work? BMW as in Bitching, Moaning & Whining. Do you like it when others drive their BMWs to work? Well, the buck stops here, doesn't it? Although Harvey MacKay has said that gratitude is the least deeply felt of all human emotions, that doesn't mean that we should scale back on our gratefulness quotient! We can decide to have an attitude of gratitude regardless of the attitudes of those around us.

It's hard, I know. While still in active service, one of my colleagues and I used to grumble a lot about what we saw as inefficiencies and policy disasters. There was precious little we could do about those, which is probably why we were so vocal about them. One day, our Boss called us in and told us to knock it off. He said that we were spreading too much negativity around the office. I think we both bristled for a while, but we both knew that he was right. We knocked off the grumbling and focused on things we enjoyed doing, like running every day just to keep fit. The everyday

operations work wasn't work, we had it at our fingertips and were actually getting bored by it. It's a good idea to keep giving challenging and great projects to those of your staff you know can and will enjoy taking them.

Most important, cultivating an attitude of gratitude helps us see possibilities. Attitudes of BMW cause us to only see limitations and inadequacies. Yes, there ARE such things as limits and boundaries, but there are possibilities even within those confines. Often, it is only when we see the possibilities within that we become able to discover the possibilities without.



So. Like to have more engaged staff on your team? Start by doing these things well first. No need to go off on a tangent chasing “new” stuff. Ready?