



Inspired Success
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Principles For Inspired Success Ezine

"Tips, Tools, & Resources for People-Whispering"

Do You Know The Keys To Employee Engagement?

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People-Whispering Tip:

Spring has come to Atlanta and there seems to be no more beautiful place on earth with cherry blossom and Bradford pear trees exploding into color and scent after an unusually cold winter for us here in the South. It is not such a far reach for us to draw a parallel between the promise that spring blossoms bring and the warming trends and hopeful signs in the economy after an unusually long and bitter recession in the US and the global economy. Nature is mirroring the hope in the world at large and none too soon for many.

The good news is, life has its cycles and the upswing does inevitably come after the downswing if one can keep one's eye on the long view. The challenging part now is that the corporate survivors of this most recent economic storm are burnt-out and shell-shocked having seen their colleagues be down-sized or outsourced while they seemingly hung on by a thread. I recall the late 80's had a similar zeitgeist or mood although at that time I was "new" in my career and didn't have much of an historical perspective. We talked about survival guilt then. Now some are talking about envy.

I say envy because almost all of my corporate clients from the Fortune 100 to small to mid-sized companies tell me that they have more to do than they can possibly handle. They secretly yearn to have been "let go" except for the financial ramifications. And of course, while the "survivors" have more to do, they are being charged with doing more with less. One could focus on time management strategies and read more about tools and techniques to get organized. That might have some short-term traction, but more than likely, the real problem would not be addressed.

The real challenge in employee engagement is reenergizing employee commitment and passion. Organizations need to go back to addressing the fundamental issues of vision, mission, and values NOT just as empty platitudes to put up on posters around the office but as real beacons as to why people are working there in the first place.

In short, organizations need to look at what they can do to fully engage the whole person not just the mental person. Most organizations treat employees as if they are merely a number, a headcount to the extent that I recently had an acquaintance say just that to me. As a National Accounts Manager for a major car rental company, she said, “as of late, I feel like all I am to my company is just a number.”

I don’t know about you, but that would hardly inspire my best performance. I didn’t have time to probe and more importantly, time to really investigate all of the factors in this individual’s work situation and corporate culture. And, having worked with thousands of individuals and a wide range of highly respected companies from many different industries over the years, I have no doubt that there are indeed bad bosses, toxic work environments, challenging relationships, and personal and professional crisis situations that can color our perceptions and our behavior.

To back up my hypothesis, a recent Talent Management magazine article (January 2010) contained some depressing news. “Engagement measures as the percentage of employees willing to go the extra mile for their company has fallen 12 to 24%, depending upon sector, over the past 198 months.” My belief is that the reason for this is an overemphasis on the intellectual part of business denying the emotional and spiritual aspects of the enterprise.

Just like human beings, organizations (made up of human beings by the way), organizations have their psyches too. Every business entity has its intellectual, emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects. The intellectual includes creative ideas that drive innovation and the implementation of those ideas into products and services. The emotional aspect saturates the workplace in how employees interact with one another. The spiritual aspect of a company’s psyche is the true mission for the organization. This aspect of what the company or organization is about understands that what the company does and how it does it affects its employees, community, country and the entire planet.

On an organizational level, many people feel disconnected from full engagement because they don’t have a sense of purpose and meaning in their work lives. Some are just staying in jobs or with companies they don’t really have a passion for to get a paycheck until the economy turns. Sometimes, people are their own worst enemy and need to leave to pursue their real passion elsewhere and just needed the cosmic boot to take action. And yet, I often find that people are well-suited for their role and for the company but have lost their passion because of a leadership failure to articulate a compelling and engaging vision, mission and values. Most organizations need to harness the energy of their employees by tapping into their hearts as well as their minds.

If you are not in an organization with an inspiring leadership climate, you do have choices. You can leave and go somewhere that does. You can start your own business. Or, consider becoming the light yourself to help transform your work environment and bloom where you are planted. You may need the support of a coach and/or a mentor to do this however. A well-trained, experienced guide can help you to reenergize your attitude, skills, and beliefs.

On an individual level, we could all probably agree that performance, health and happiness are grounded in the skillful management of energy. The good news is, we have far more control over our energy and attitude than we usually realize. While we may not have much latitude regarding our external circumstances nor the number of hours in a day, we can influence the quantity and the quality of the energy available to us. The more we take personal responsibility for the energy we bring to the world, the more empowered and productive we become. Likewise, the more we blame others or our external circumstances, the more negative and drained our energy is likely to be. For more tips on how to do this, read the Transformational Coaching Tips below and in other Ezines I've written.

DiSC Assessment Application:

When employees are disengaged and are showing only minimal effort, the [Work Expectations Profile](#) can be an excellent tool to help you to understand why. One possible cause for employee engagement is the fact that often employees do not have a clear sense of purpose or direction. I've also touched on the possibility that the organizational culture may leave employees feeling isolated and unappreciated.

Another potential cause for a lack of employee engagement can be a disconnection between employee needs and management expectations. If you have ever wondered what makes a good company great, you can answer very simply: "it's the people silly!" Committed, productive employees are the key to organizational success.

Research has shown that people who have clearly defined, well-communicated expectations have better attitudes and enjoy greater job satisfaction than people whose expectations go unspoken or unrealized. [Work Expectations Profile](#) helps people explore 10 work expectation areas that impact relationships in today's world of work. These areas include: Autonomy, Balance, Career Growth, Diversity, Environment, Expression, Recognition, Stability, Structure, and Teamwork.

Call us at 404-327-6330 to find out how the [Work Expectations Profile](#) can help you and your employees to better understand and manage their work expectations. Feel free to email me as well at Laura@lauraadavis.com.

Transformational Coaching Tip:

When I was in training to be a coach, I was fortunate enough to have been trained by the visionary late Thomas Leonard and his first graduates from Coach U. Thomas brought many gifts to the coaching profession not the least of which were some amazing distinctions and top ten lists for how to fulfill certain principles.

In keeping with this month's theme, I'd like to borrow from Thomas' book [The Portable Coach](#) where he explains the distinction between a Vision and a Purpose. According to Thomas, "a

vision is what is clearly visible to you and probably to others. It's not you, nor is it a reason for living. It's simply something you see that is clear to you. You can choose to move toward it or just enjoy it from a distance. It has a tug, but not a charge. A purpose, however, is personal. It orients, defines, and identifies you. It is likely to be connected with the past, and thus can sometimes be a burden or a drag."

The following are some ways to have a clearer vision:

- 1. Be aware of the trends affecting society, business, and you.** For example, if you are not participating in social media, get on the bus.
- 2. Know several visionary types personally.** Associating with people who naturally have vision can help to hone your abstract thinking and visionary skills as well.
- 3. Identify a current trend and extrapolate that into a vision.** Practice looking at trends and seeing what they mean for the future of your industry, situation, product, market, population so you can be where the need is and not be outdated in your skill sets.
- 4. Don't confuse your vision with your self-identity.** If your vision becomes a CAUSE, and you start basing your life, self-esteem, success, or identity on the progression of your vision, then you need to step back and get some perspective.
- 5. Let your vision evolve naturally.** Avoid getting fixated on a single vision as things are always in flux and changing such that your current vision may no longer be relevant through no fault of your own. Allow yourself and your passions to evolve and grow throughout your life as well.

For assistance in applying any of these ideas to yourself, your team, or your organization, please call me at 404-327-6330 or email me at Laura@lauraadavis.com.