

Employee Engagement: Are your Workers "Checked in" or "Checked Out"

By Dr. Jan Ferri-Reed

Employers large and small are concerned about the question of employee engagement. Increasingly experts are finding that most American workers are not very "engaged" on the job. By definition engaged employees are more productive, in tune with the organization's goals, and enthusiastic about performing their jobs. However, surveys conducted by the Gallup Organization paint a very dark picture when it comes to the question "How engaged are American workers?" The answer is... Not very engaged.

According to Gallup, as many as 70% of American workers are actively disengaged. That translates to an estimated \$300 billion lost annually by disengaged workers who are unmotivated, under-performing and mistake prone! A recent report on the subject of employee engagement by Profiles International explained it this way, "Imagine a ten-person bicycle: three people are pedaling, five are pretending to pedal, and two are jamming on the brakes. How far are they going to get?" (Source: Employee Engagement in the Modern Workforce, Profiles International, 2014)

We all know that among most groups of employees there will be a few bad apples. Most supervisors know that it's always best to remove the bad apples before they "spoil" the rest of your employees. But the question of employee engagement is a different matter. Engagement is more pervasive, and potentially more destructive. Disengaged workers:

- Create a negative atmosphere that affects all other employees, no matter how productive or positive they may be.
- Commit errors and make mistakes. They can cost an employer "big bucks" in damages, lost materials or unnecessary rework.
- Could potentially damage a company's reputation with suppliers, vendors and customers.
- Make mistakes and cause accidents that may lead to increased costs through worker's compensation claims, lawsuits and damaged goods.

So how **can** you "re-engage" your employees? Fortunately there are ways that employers can motivate their workers to improve job satisfaction, limit costly mistakes and increase Productivity. Following are employee engagement strategies you can implement today:

1. Ask employees for suggestions. When employee-suggested changes are implemented, let everyone know the source of the good idea.
2. Find ways to reward employees through recognition.

3. Listen to employees. Have regular feedback meetings if possible, in addition to the suggestion box.
5. Make sure your employees have the resources they need to do their jobs. "Handcuffing" employees demotivates them.
6. Provide all employees with regular feedback about their job performance.

No one likes to work in a vacuum. People know when they perform well, so acknowledge it. When they need to be critiqued, be sure to give it quickly but constructively. Let them know what needs to change and be willing to help them. A quarterly or annual review serves little purpose other than to keep your employees in the dark. Show them you care with regular feedback.

Gauging Employee Engagement

The most effective and efficient way to determine your workers' level of engagement is through assessment tools developed by Profiles International. These cost effective instruments provide validated and highly reliable information that can help your organization make better hiring decisions upfront and improve employee performance down the line. They help you select the right people, develop their skills, and establish measurable performance indicators. Call me today to discuss how we can help you make sure your people are "checked in!"

ABOUT JAN:

Jan is a seasoned consultant and President of KEYGroup®, a 35-year international speaking, training, coaching and assessment firm and co-author of ***Keeping the Millennials: Why Companies are Losing Billions in Turnover to This Generation and What To Do About It***, and the author of ***Millennials 2.0: Empowering Generation Y***. Jan's work focuses on creating productive workplaces and retaining talent while increasing the bottom line.

Publications and media that have called on Jan and KEYGroup® for advice and guidance include Industry Week, TIME, Diversity Executive, NPR and Forbes, to name a few.

