

We're Engaged!

Do you hear people say this at work?

Of course you don't. Engagement is one of the new industry buzzwords that article-writers and consultants use to describe whether or not employees are doing more at work than just breathing.

Employee engagement is the latest measure of productivity in employees. It is another term for figuring out how happy employees are in their jobs, based on the age-old concept that happy is good, and unhappy is bad.

"Happy" was a disagreeable concept for many managers, though, because conventional wisdom espoused that people showed up to work to get paid, not to have fun. But happy and fun, although linked, are different. Fun is laughter. Fun is doing something enjoyable. Happy is everything fun AND feeling important, appreciated, and inspired.

To engender happiness at work, free Krispy Kremes and gold stars are not enough — it means knowing what gets people to dip their oars and row with gusto. So it *is* important to know how enthused people at work are, only we must use the term "engaged" because it sounds more profitable than "happy".

It drives us nuts when the basics have to be re-named to get some attention, but hey, that is the art of communication. To really connect with someone, you need to find ways to express your message in terms that *really* reaches them. So if the latest and greatest measure of organizational success is "employee engagement", we are all for it. It has been proven repeatedly that when people really get their hearts *and* heads into



their jobs, that they do more, do it better, and service levels soar. Deficiencies in engagement mean problems with production, initiative, creativity, turnover and customers. Thankfully, the emotional drive of employees is now an important priority.

People Don't Quit Their Companies: They Quit Their Boss

Although no surprise to workers everywhere, the news that the happiness/profit equation boiled down to a few management practices *did* startle some leaders: yet more evidence that IQ simply isn't enough.

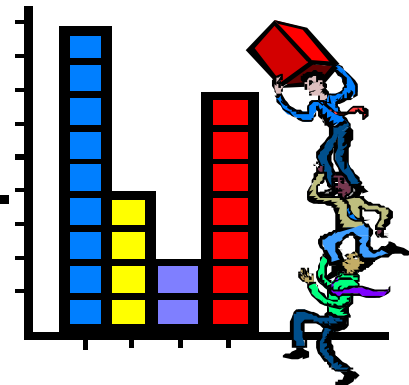
Have you ever met a person with super smarts who could not relate to people? Some are in leadership positions, and research shows that the extent of worker loyalty and the inspiration for greatness are muted by the fear or apathy they feel from the leadership. Indeed, people don't just quit their companies—they quit their boss.

So how do you know what your company needs? We guarantee that every business already has the *ingredients* for tremendous results—they have people. But no recipe turns out well without the requisite tools. Grinding away at organizational excellence without knowing cause and effect is like making a soufflé with a mortar and pestle. It's a lot of extra effort and a likely flop. If you want your people to marry the job, you have to make them love the idea of being there.

Measuring and Implementing

If you have not yet read *The Extraordinary Leader—Turning Good Managers into Great Leaders* (Zenger & Folkman, McGraw-Hill, 2002), that's okay, because Drs. Zenger and Folkman have put their money where their mouths are, and have developed The Extraordinary Leader Program for managers and The Extraordinary Performer Program for staff members. Based on 20 years of research of over 25,000 managers, they have nailed the goods on greatness.

Using a 360° feedback tool, participants learn how their words and actions translate into the



work of their peers and subordinates. It is very powerful, and very constructive. Instead of focusing on weaknesses, the program proves that building on strengths moves overall performance UP across numerous areas.

Meet the Authors and Get the Keys

We are hosting the first 2005 Southern California public forum of The Extraordinary Leader on May 19-20th at the Sheraton Universal (near Los Angeles). Please see the enclosed flyer for details regarding how their programs can lead to:

- **Increased Profit—10%**
- **Higher Customer Satisfaction—30%**
- **Lower Turnover-10%**
- **Enhanced Employee Engagement—40%**

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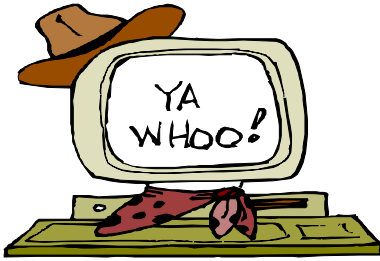
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Email was invented so that people could cover their professional butts by responding without having to actually talk to the other person, or to pass along news without having to be shot as the proverbial messenger.

Now that it is a way of life, actual, real-time voice-to-voice interaction only happens in emergencies or if your caller ID reflects that it's someone you like.

But the convenience-of-avoidance brings new frustrations. Among them:

- Long-winded instructional text emails that become the PC equivalent of a boring lecture.

Oh, Those Irritating Emails: What to do...or not

- Messages that have been forwarded more times than Grandma's fruitcake from '56.
- The same, repeated subject line that remains intact with each new iteration/response to an email—a sure invitation to the Delete key.
- No subject line. This is probably the most important part of an email.
- Font and format absurdities. You know who you are...

There could be an entire course on the protocols of email in terms of how to write them, design their look and elicit responses. We thought we'd address a few of the common complaints.

Some Ideas For Your Consideration:

1—If you have a lot to say, at least make it easy on the eyeballs. Get to know your

bullets and numbering functions, and use **BOLD** type in the title of each section. Add spaces to distinguish one subject from another.

2—"RE:" and "FWD:" are sure signs that the message has been around for a while. Insert your own subject line and put the date in it if you anticipate the issue will bounce back and forth more than a tennis ball at Wimbledon.

3—"A Funny One!" - A person soon loses his/her sense of humor when their inbox is flooded with jokes. Try to curtail sending jokes unless you really believe the recipient will have a great appreciation for the story. Limit yourself to no more than 1 or 2 per week (that is, if your company allows).

4—How about a quick visit to the Spell Check button before the Send button?

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BIG DESK / LITTLE CUBE:

(a look at the varied perspectives of managers and employees)

THE OFFICE THERMOSTAT

Unless you are here in California, where we suddenly go from freezing rain to scorching temps—i.e., "Menopause by Mother Nature"—it's probably cold where you are. Whatever. The battles over the low setting of the thermostat will soon turn into wars about how high it is.

The funny thing about indoor temperatures is that energy experts say that we should keep ourselves a little too chilled in the winter and a little too tepid during the summer. But what they don't account for is the fact that there are undisputable variants that determine a person's comfort level:

- 1— Older usually means colder
- 2— The more meat, the less heat
- 3— The less dermis, the more thermos

Undeniably, there will never be a perfect setting for everyone at work. And the addition of clothes, or the shedding thereof, does not always solve the problem.

Conventional practices dictate that companies cannot send all of their bony people to bask in the warmth of the west side windows and send their hot blooded folks to the meat locker, much as it may appeal. Rather, we all have to figure out a happy medium.

BIG DESK PEOPLE

Some of you out there have a thermostat in your office, so you may not notice the set-in of rigor mortis until it dawns that the sound of chattering teeth has stopped. Or, conversely, that you are suddenly seeing a lot more skin and it's still winter. You need to assess the workplace climate (pun intended) and help everyone find solutions.

Can the company buy some fans or portable heaters for folks? Or can it use its buying power to obtain them at a discounted price to employees? Can window coverings be adjusted to regulate the heat/cold? We know you don't want to run up your energy or other costs, nor be a glutton with fossil fuels. But you have an obligation to provide some comfort to the people at work, too. And if you don't think it affects the bottom line, wrongo, Bucko. Ever notice that people move more slowly when too hot? Did it occur that frozen appendages make mistakes? Yes, productivity is affected by the office thermostat.

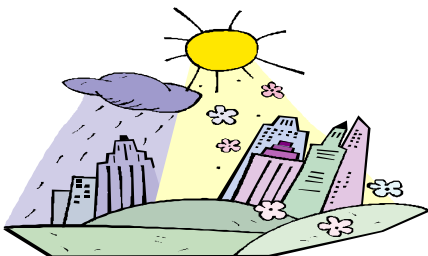
Little Cube Inhabitants

You have an obligation to dress appropriately for work, right? This includes being prepared for the indoor weather that is typical for your workplace.

If you tend to be cold, bring a sweater or light jacket to work. Or if you tend to glow when it is more than 70°F, make sure your final layer of clothing is something that still fits within the decorum for your position.

But moving faster is something everyone should do: for the chilled, it generates warmth. For the balmy, it creates a breeze.

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Light Touches

Service Extras That Linger Long After the Experience

Best Practices of 2004

1. Companies that organized collections and shipments of non-perishable and un-meltable foods and sundry items to our troops in Iraq. Among those we know about were **Rusty's Chips** and **Curves**. Rusty's Chips, by the way, are divine—Maui style, only made here in California. They're a good reason to keep going to Curves.
2. Being remembered. The littlest things can make a person feel special. Take **Ignacio at Dunn-Edwards Paint** store—when we were recently there, he called a client by name after only having once helped with a paint purchase. He even remembered her particular shade of white! We saw it first hand, and were wowed along with the customer.
3. Actually responding to an inquiry or

complaint. **EBay** does a good job of this, and furthermore, makes policy changes as a result of feedback received from users.

4. Being called and apprised of a service person's estimated time of arrival. While it is standard practice to give customers a "window" of time—usually 4 hours—during which they can expect the cable guy or refrigerator repairman to show up, **Ira Goltz of Pacific Plumbing** calls to let you know when he is on the way. It sure is nice to NOT be taken for granted.
5. Employees who take small risks to make great inroads with customers by making exceptions or looking for alternatives to meet customer needs. See our story about **Danila McDaniel**, right, of Verizon—extraordinary!

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Warm Tips

Reheating some old principles to succeed in new times

Patience, the Virtue

We are constantly reminded of the many benefits of patience—it results in extra attention and cooperation.

Case in point: working with a call center on a DSL connectivity problem over a 3-day period, we would have been justifiably homicidal had we indulged in modem rage—there were too many snafus to recount from our first couple of encounters. However, in an experiment-turned-test of patience, we kept our cool, and were rewarded with extraordinary treatment from a technician named Danila, to whom the issue had been escalated. She stayed late to help, calling the head office and calling us back. She tested and pinged and determinedly tried various options. In the end, she pulled strings and cajoled to get us a next day on-site appointment at 8:00 AM instead of the usual "between 8:00 and 5:00".

In the course of the hours-long ordeal, she told us that she really likes her job, which was evident to us. At the end of our conversation, we expressed our appreciation for her professional yet personable treatment—she was genuinely interested! We then asked how we could communicate her excellence to her boss, which we later did.

It *is* a battle to be patient all of the time. We're not, but each time we are, we have another little victory to celebrate in the living of life.

Patience is good for health, too. It keeps the blood flowing evenly, helping to prevent heart attacks. Better to be a patient person than a person who is a patient, no?

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pArticle Piques

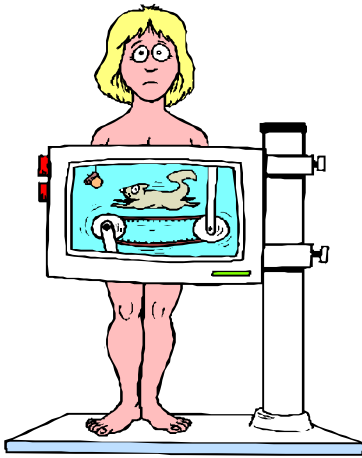
Irrksome iotas of service that cost : **Worst Practices of 2004**

1. **Companies that have local offices that you can visit but cannot reach directly by telephone**, relegating customers to a call center somewhere far, far away.
2. **Promises broken, or never intended to be kept**. This includes unreturned or late phone calls or emails in response to an inquiry or request. This has reached epidemic proportions in the US, and is a signal that the leader either doesn't care, doesn't watch, or sets the lousy example him/herself.
3. **Advertising statements and assertions that mislead**. In one example, a national brand added the bold words to its package, "No added carbs!" Upon inspection, this simply meant that the content had not changed from its previously high carbohydrate count.
4. **Sorry seems to be the hardest word**: lame excuses and fabrications for poor service incidents could easily be diffused by an apology, yet many people think that doing so is an admis-

sion of personal weakness. They could not be more wrong. The integrity of taking responsibility for one's mistake or of a company problem instantly ratchets up the client's respect for the person, and therefore the company.

5. **Hotel California—You can check in, but you can never leave**: like the Eagles' song, websites or businesses that make extrication difficult, if not impossible, from unsolicited faxes and emails. Opting out must be made as easy as opting in!
6. **Instruction manuals** that assume a working knowledge of part names, functions and technologies. Illogical or unclear processes, and lack of troubleshooting information.
7. **Car dealer service people** who spend more time eliciting positive responses on their feedback score-card than on fixing the issue that drove you there in the first place. Some even promise free services or gift certificates for an outstanding rating!

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Thanks For Your Feedback!

We were absolutely tickled over the tremendous response we received from our 4th quarter'04 Light pArticles edition in which we supplied some handy interviewing tips. We received more comments about that issue than any other we have produced.

We realized that the topic struck a nerve: interviewing is tough on all parties, and anything to improve the process and results is appreciated. We want to continue in the vein of providing useful information to our readers. If you or your colleagues have a topic of general business interest that meets the following guidelines, let us know, and we will address it:

- A common business frustration that is necessary but not frequently done
- Something most don't enjoy but have to do anyway

Insider Insights
Thoughts and News Items We Felt Like Sharing

Websites We Like

For research—FindArticles.com, MagPortal.com

For real consumer feedback about products—Epinions.com (especially helpful before a major purchase—check the reviews)

When you don't want to get out of your chair to look up a word—TheFreeDictionary.com

For recipes—Epicurious.com, Foodtv.com

For financial information and comparative rates—Bankrate.com

To find origins of words or sayings—AskJeeves.com, Idiomsite.com

For medical information: Health.Discovery.com, WebMD.com

For information about us (new/improved!): **BusinessInsightsInc.com**

An FYI to Costco Shoppers:

If you see a red dot on the sign that shows the name and price of an item, it means that when the stock runs out, you won't be finding that item there anymore.



Beacon Bits

Quotations to cast rays of humor and humanity across everyday business life

"Personality can open doors, but only character can keep them open."
- Elmer G. Letterman

"Don't let yesterday use up too much of today."
- Will Rogers

"The greatest thing you can do is surprise yourself."
- Steve Martin

"Growth demands a temporary surrender of security."
- Gail Sheehy

"Work is a slice of your life. It's not the entire pizza."
- Jacquelyn Mitchard

Last Laughs:
1975 and 2005
Then and Now

Since the majority of our readership can relate, we furnish the following, received in a recent email:

1975: Long hair
2005: Longing for hair

1975: Acid rock
2005: Acid reflux

1975: Seeds and stems
2005: Roughage

1975: The Grateful Dead
2005: Dr. Kevorkian

1975: Going to a new, hip joint
2005: Receiving a new hip joint

1975: Rolling Stones
2005: Kidney stones

1975: Screw the system
2005: Upgrade the system

1975: Disco
2005: Costco

1975: Whatever
2005: Depends

Happy New Year to you all! We are thrilled to be in our 6th year of business, growing our knowledge and our company. Call or visit our website to find out how we can be of service to your bottom line!

Here's another one for you:
1975: EST
2005: EL*

(*The Extraordinary Leader—see the enclosed flyer)
