

What Managers Give Lip Service To

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How often are people told they are an organization's most important asset? If an organization is smart, they say it often. But saying it doesn't equal doing it. Nor is there agreement on what putting people first means. So many managers talk about people being important, but do little to truly care for and nurture them.

Surveys on employee engagement consistently find that two-thirds of employees are not engaged. The majority of employees are not happy and don't give their best. Surveys on employee satisfaction with management are about the

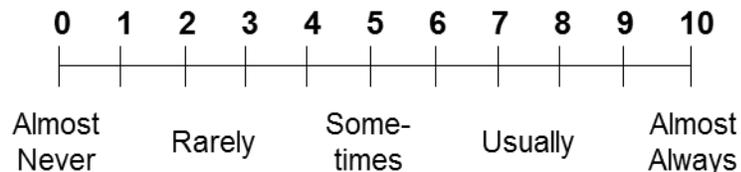
same. Approximately two-thirds of employees rate their managers below average. Is there a correlation? Of course there is. Managers are the most influential attribute affecting employee engagement.

The unfortunate reality is that great leadership and high employee engagement are the exception rather than the rule. An organization's most important assets aren't doing very well.

When employees are asked what they most value in their job and what most impacts their level of engagement, they consistently refer to how well they are treated. Compensation and benefits are sometimes mentioned, but more importantly employees want to be respected. They want to be involved and empowered. They want to be developed and invested in. They want to have the resources that enable them to perform at the highest level. They want to work for an organization that values them. They don't merely want to be surveyed annually and be recipients of check-in-the-box employee-engagement initiatives.

What do great leaders do to consistently produce engaged employees who are loyal and high performing? What do great leaders do to retain their best employees? They intentionally put people first. They genuinely care for people. They don't treat employees like pawns on a chessboard who can be easily replaced or robots who can be controlled on command.

If you are a manager or aspire to be one, consider how you think about others. Take the simple test below using the following scale to assess how much you truly value people:





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- _____ 1. When given a chance to do or lead, how likely are you to lead and empower others rather than control the work yourself?
- _____ 2. When given the choice to save money or invest in people's development, how likely are you to invest?
- _____ 3. When given a chance to tell people what to do or support their ideas, how likely are you to ask for their ideas and act on their ideas?
- _____ 4. When people display desirable behaviors but are not yet achieving measurable results, how likely are you to point out their positive behaviors as soon as you see them?
- _____ 5. How likely are you to focus on and articulate a compelling vision that gives meaning to people's work rather than focus on operational minutia?
- _____ 6. How likely are you to have a one-on-one meeting with someone despite being very busy and needing to work on an urgent request?
- _____ 7. When putting together the agenda for a team meeting, how likely are you to fill the agenda with topics that promote people's development and wellbeing?
- _____ 8. When you observe people struggling, how likely are you to support them and proactively offer assistance rather than put them down?
- _____ 9. When someone needs resources to successfully perform their duties, how likely are you to see their need and proactively provide the needed resources?
- _____ 10. When given the opportunity to receive a bonus for reducing headcount, how likely are you to forego the bonus?
- _____ Total

If you scored below 75, you get a C- at best. Not very people centric. You are more focused on projects, activities, and metrics than motivating, coaching, and developing a high-performing team. Consider a different philosophy. Study after study finds that highly engaged employees produce commensurately higher results. Realize that if you take care of the people in your organization and develop them that they will take care of the work that needs to be done. They will put in more discretionary effort. They will see to it that the desired outcomes are achieved. They will develop better products. They will delight customers. They will produce higher profits. They will ensure quality and safety. They will make you and the entire organization successful. They will enjoy their job and stay with you.

Article written by Mike Hawkins, award-winning author of *Activating Your Ambition: A Guide to Coaching the Best Out of Yourself and Others* (www.ActivatingYourAmbition.com), author of the *SCOPE of Leadership* six-book series on coaching leaders to lead as coaches (www.ScopeOfLeadership.com), and president of Alpine Link Corp (www.AlpineLink.com), a boutique consulting firm specializing in leadership development and sales performance improvement.

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