

Employee engagement equals business results



By [John French](#)

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78% of business leaders say employee engagement is both an urgent and important priority - Deloitte research.

'Employee engagement' is the buzz phrase we are hearing more and more about in today's corporate world. This is not surprising. After the economic meltdown of the Credit Crunch years, the global economy is slowly recuperating from years of stagnancy and lacklustre performance. Businesses are desperate for growth. Employee engagement is the key.

Research firms like Gallup provide us with the statistics: central core business processes like productivity, profitability customer satisfaction, quality, retention, and sales are all substantially higher at companies with engaged employees.



"Employee engagement has become the new currency in today's economy" - Michael Papay & Alexandre Santille.

Many business leaders are already leveraging the engagement phenomenon. As a result, employees in these organisations deliver strong results and encourage client loyalty.

There's one fundamental challenge though: in most organisations the majority of employees remain disengaged - as much as 70%.

That's a half-a-trillion-dollar challenge in the US alone! The same percentage of the workforce was just as disengaged back in 2000. This disengagement trend has remained unchanged throughout the last decade. Leading human capital analyst from Deloitte Consulting, Josh Bersin, advises it's time to reconsider our critical engagement strategies.

"When people are financially invested, they want a return. When people are emotionally invested, they want to contribute" - Simon Sinek.

How can you grow engagement in your organisation?

- **Facilitate a culture of healthy engagement:** Your employees have a basic desire to reach out and engage. Even the

latest Millennial employee has a recognised need to connect in real time. Employees really want to build meaningful work relationships and have their ideas heard and considered. They desire to be involved as an active contributing voice in your strategies and vision.

Give your employees the opportunities and platforms to share their opinions and debate over the important challenges that face you. Encourage an active engagement culture through collaborative planning, decision-making, innovation and strategy.

- **Build confidence and communication skills:** The greatest barrier to a thriving culture of employee engagement is employees not having enough self-confidence to contribute and speak up to offer valuable insights and opinions. Many employees just do not have the necessary self-confidence to open up and engage in discussions that create opportunities and ideas for organisational growth.

Corporate environments usually attract the more introverted analytical personality types. These serious professionals are usually low on verbal self-expression and they often, resultantly, suffer with a low self-confidence when it comes to self-expression. Reserved employees withdraw and disengage when they face more public platforms. Communication skills training builds the necessary self-confidence and helps create the vital self-expression which facilitates active engagement.

- **Build employee EQ and stakeholder relationship management skills:** Confidence and active engagement can only be delivered when employees apply the skills and techniques of successful active engagement. When there is a lack of confidence or skill, employees simply withdraw or start exhibiting dysfunctional behaviour. A myriad incorrect and unnatural ways of communicating and engaging are taught at school level and by other early childhood influencers. Negative social conditioning destroys open and successful adult engagement.

Communication training can help employees to regain their personal power and build new solid and healthy engagement practices based on logic, EQ and new insights. Learning about the various different stakeholder types and how to engage with each type of stakeholder also guarantees far greater success when engaging, negotiating and influencing your key stakeholders.

- **Teach employees how to present and influence:** Engagement is far more than merely connecting and building rapport. It is also about influencing and achieving buy-in with your internal and external stakeholders. Employees require the presentation skills to engage, lead and sell your business value proposition with confidence and skill. They need to understand the psychology of how to influence; be able to manage irate stakeholders and know how to achieve buy-in. There is nothing as valuable as an empowered employee who knows how to communicate and influence.

- **Teach employees how to manage conflict:** Most employees fear and resist conflict. This can lead to disengagement where employees dangerously avoid dealing with the very issues that need to be addressed in order to achieve client breakthroughs and business growth. Dealing with conflict, handling sensitive conversations and overcoming resistance are vital communication skills needed by employees. These skills can be learned. In my 20 years of communication skills training, I have witnessed how emotional intelligence and strategic and empathetic communication skills are sadly generally absent from the corporate world.

Conclusion

Successful engagement provides the essential platform necessary to build healthy and profitable businesses. Engagement skills facilitate successful internal and external communication and collaboration. It diminishes stress, builds healthy and loyal relationships and it creates a corporate culture conducive to influence and buy-in.

Engagement makes absolute sense. Make 2015 the year you got 'engaged'...

ABOUT JOHN FRENCH

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