

SEVEN SENSES OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

How to Be the Best Boss
Your Employees Ever Had



The 7 Senses of Employee Engagement
How to Be the Best Boss
Your Employees Ever Had

Del Gilbert
Accelerating Excellence

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Dedication

To Pam Duchene, the best boss I ever had. Thank you for allowing me to witness the characteristics and practices of a great boss on a daily basis. Thank you also for putting me in a position to teach these characteristics and practices to other managers.

You saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. My life is much better because our paths crossed.

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Introduction

“By far, the hardest part of my job is managing the people.”

Those were the words of the director of pharmacy as he stood in my office doorway. I thought it was a significant statement given he was responsible for a dozen pharmacists. One wrong move by one of them could cause great harm to a patient. Yet his primary concern centered around managing people.

Many managers look at managing their staff as a burden. The primary reason for this is people are often promoted from a staff position to a management position but receive little to no management training. Many other professions require extensive training, certifications, and licensure. But when it comes to management, we often just say “Go forth and be a leader.” It’s like teaching someone to swim by pushing them in the deep end of the pool and saying, “Figure it out for yourself.”

Being a manager requires a dramatically different skill set from that of being an individual contributor. Being a manager involves motivating employees, resolving conflict, setting vision, and holding difficult conversations. That’s just the beginning.

Managing others doesn't have to be a burden, you can actually enjoy it. I don't want you to manage defensively. I want you to lead offensively. Instead of walking into work every day thinking, How can I make my staff behave? I want you thinking, How can I make my team come alive? I want you to be the best boss your employees ever had!

I am passionate about this because a great boss changed my life!

In my first twenty years in the workplace, I had many bosses. Some were bad, most were average. I showed up every day, acted responsibly, and got promotions. But it was still just a job. It put food on the table.

Then in 1999, I got a new boss, Pam. Pam turned out to be an exceptional boss. Pam had my best interest in mind. Pam saw potential in me that I didn't see in myself. She would tell me that my work was making a positive impact. She challenged me to use my gifts. She pushed me out of my comfort zone to develop me.

I came alive in the workplace. I no longer had just a job; I had a vocation. For the first time, work became a rewarding and fulfilling part of life. I thought, Why can't this be the norm rather than the exception? For the past twenty years, I have been equipping managers to be great bosses. I want to make a dent in this part of the universe.

What I learned from Pam, I am going to share with you in this book. I want you to enjoy the privilege of leading others. And I want those you lead to experience the joy of having a great boss.

Chapter 1

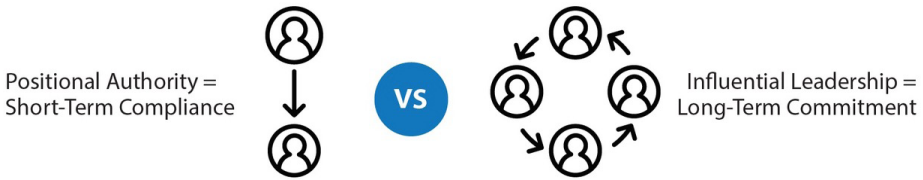
Introduction to Employee Engagement

Years ago, I interviewed someone for a director-level position. When I asked why he wanted the position, he said, “I have a goal to be chief executive officer someday. I started out in a staff position, became a supervisor then a manager. This director position is my next step.” Buzz, wrong answer!

Leadership isn’t about you. It isn’t about pay, perks, and power. Leadership is about those who report to you. When you are an individual contributor, your focus is on individual excellence. Once you are in any kind of leadership position, the game changes. Leadership is about helping your team members win. Great leaders have a “generosity gene”; they have a strong desire to see others succeed.

There are only two ways to change human behavior: you can manipulate it or inspire it. That is the difference between authority and influence.

Authority Vs. Influence



Managing by authority is using your position to get work done. It's command and control. You have a higher position in the company than your employees, so they are supposed to do what you tell them to do. If you manage by authority, your employees will go through the motions. When you are present, your staff will behave. But when you are away, they will likely give less than their best effort, perhaps goof-off, or even sabotage. Managing by authority leads to short-term compliance.

The other end of the spectrum of the command-and-control style of management is the “hands off” approach. This type of manager is too laid back. They fail to set expectations, recognize good performance, or address poor performance. They provide little guidance, feedback, or support.

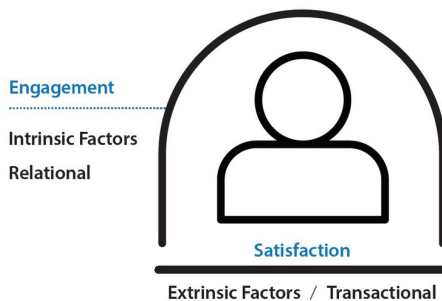
Leading by influence involves caring for and wanting the best for others. When you lead with influence, your team will do their work with passion. They will give their best even when you are not present. They will give what psychologists call “discretionary effort.” Leading by influence engages employees.

Engaged employees are much more productive and collaborative. Leading by influence leads to long-term commitment.

Engagement versus Satisfaction

There is a critical difference between employee satisfaction and employee engagement. It's important to know the difference.

Employee satisfaction is the baseline from which employee engagement is built. You can't have employee engagement without employee satisfaction. But employee satisfaction alone doesn't create a desire within an employee to give their best effort every day. Employee satisfaction is foundational to, but separate from, employee engagement.



Employee satisfaction involves the following:

- Pay
- Benefits
- Work environment
- Convenient and flexible schedule
- Length of commute

These factors are extrinsic. They are transactional. They serve to attract people to a new job and motivate them to do enough work to keep their job.

In 1986, I was working for a small hospital making \$18,000 per year. I secured a job at a larger hospital for \$32,000 per year. Once I got that job, I thought I was rich! Seriously. I almost doubled my income. I thought because they paid me so well, I would come in every day for the rest of my life determined to give my best. How long do you think that feeling lasted? About three months. Why? Because as human nature would have it, I adjusted my lifestyle up and that higher salary became my new normal.

I showed up consistently, was responsible, and even got promotions, but believe me, I wasn't driving into work three years later thinking, *I am going to do my best today because of the pay*. It wasn't until 13 years later when Pam became my boss that I developed a desire to give my best every day. That is the difference between employee satisfaction and employee engagement.

You won't be able to achieve employee engagement if an employee feels they aren't making enough to provide for their family. You, as a manager, have little control over employee satisfaction. You likely don't determine pay, benefits, work environment, etc. But once those essential needs are met, it is now up to you. As a manager you have, by far, the largest influence on employee engagement.

Employee Engagement: *The amount of enthusiasm and commitment one has for their job and organization.*

Gallup Management Group has concluded that 70 percent of an employee's engagement is determined by the relationship with their direct supervisor. Did you get that? 70 percent of an employee's engagement is determined, not just influenced, by the relationship with their direct supervisor. People don't leave companies, they leave bosses. Fortunately, the converse is also true, people don't commit to organizations, they commit to people.

I have heard managers say, "My employees are so unmotivated, I feel like I have to constantly baby sit them." Let me be candid, if your employees are not engaged, the first place you should look is in the mirror.

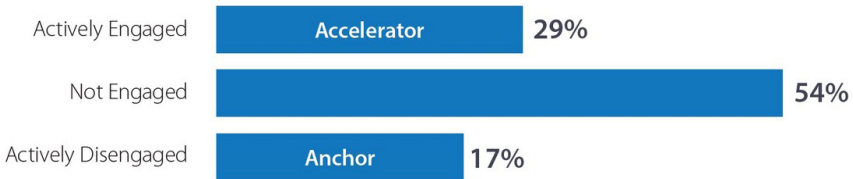
"I'd been conducting for 20 years when suddenly I had a realization. The conductor of an orchestra doesn't make a sound. Their power depends on their ability to make other people powerful. And that changed everything for me. I realized my job was to awaken possibility in other people. If their eyes are shining, you know you're doing it. If their eyes are not shining, you get to ask a question: Who am I being that my players' eyes are not shining?"

—Benjamin Zander, Conductor, Boston Philharmonic Orchestra

The 3 Levels of Engagement

According to Gallup Management Research, there are three levels of employee engagement: Actively Engaged, Not Engaged, and Actively Disengaged.

3 Levels Employee Engagement



Research shows that about 29 percent of the American workforce are Actively Engaged.

Actively Engaged employees:

- Bring passion to their work
- Speak well of the organization
- Provide solutions to problems
- Take initiative
- Collaborate well with co-workers
- Eagerly serve the customer

I call Actively Engaged employees “Accelerators.” Why? Every organization has a vision of where it wants to go. The Actively Engaged Employee helps the organization get to where it wants to go faster.

Engaged employees create satisfied customers, enhance the company's reputation, and foster a positive work culture. Actively Engaged employees make you, as the manager, look good. We all love Actively Engaged Employees.

You as a leader must continue to engage Accelerators. If they are neglected, unappreciated, or under-challenged they will begin just putting in time or they will find another place to work. To keep a fire roaring you need to keep throwing logs on it.

A second type of employee is Not Engaged. Notice there is a difference between Not Engaged and Actively Disengaged. Not Engaged staff look at their work as just a job. Their mindset is "Thank God It's Friday, Oh God It's Monday." They punch in, go through the motions, then punch out. They view work as a necessary grind to enjoy the rest of their life. They work to put food on the table and to enjoy weekends and vacations. Off the job is where the real life exists. There is a big divide between personal and professional life.

Research shows that about 54 percent of the American workforce are Not Engaged.

Not Engaged employees:

- Simply put in time
- Do only what they are told
- Take little initiative
- Go with the flow
- Work to provide for and enjoy their personal life

The third day on my first job after I graduated college, an older co-worker excitedly said to me, “Only 17 more years and I get to retire!” That is what you call Not Engaged! That wasn’t encouraging to someone who had more than 40 years of work life ahead of him.

Your job as a leader is to move the Not Engaged employee up to Actively Engaged.

“If you can’t energize others, you can’t be a leader.”

—Jack Welch

A third type of employee is Actively Disengaged.

I call Actively Disengaged Employees “Anchors.” Picture a car going down the road with cinder blocks tied to the back end. That’s what Actively Disengaged employees are like. They are a drag on an organization. They hinder progress. They hold good employees and the company back.

Research shows that about 17 percent of the American workforce are Actively Disengaged.

Actively Disengaged Employees:

- Are negative and complain often
- Speak poorly of the company and co-workers
- Call out sick unnecessarily
- Cause dissension within the team
- Use up a lot of unnecessary time and energy

You as a leader need to address Actively Disengaged employees. Your first goal is to move them up to at least Not Engaged. But if they don't respond properly, you must move them out. The one thing you can't afford to do is stay stuck. You can't have the same problem employee with the same problem behavior six months from now as you do today. Stop paying employees to damage the company.

John Maxwell breaks down the 3 categories like this:

Momentum Makers—people who move things forward and create momentum.

Momentum Takers—people who neither create nor diminish momentum; they simply go with the flow.

Momentum Breakers—people who sabotage the organization and actually sap momentum as a result.

These align well with the categories of Actively Engaged, Not Engaged, and Actively Disengaged.

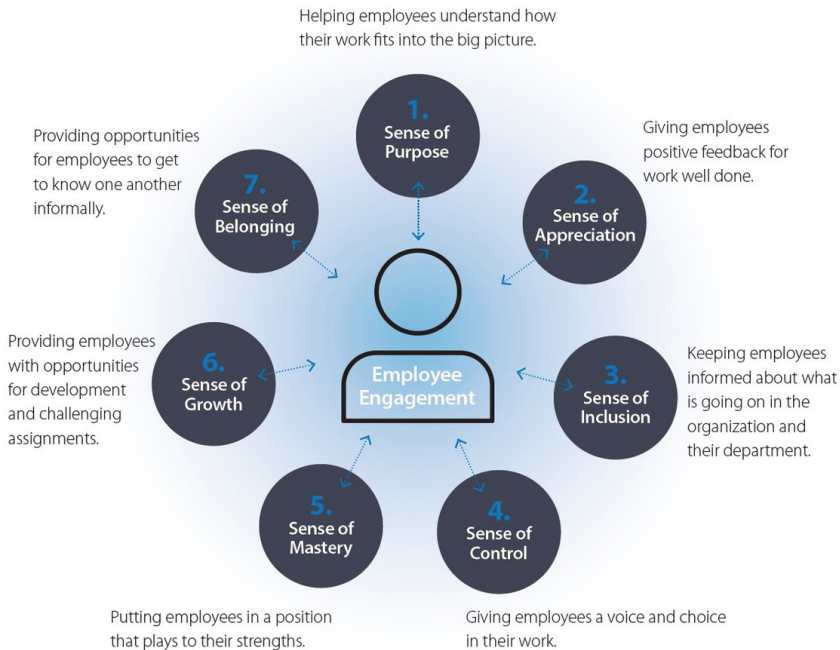
Great leaders have a combination of warmth and strength. In the first part of this book, I will give you 7 practical ways to bring out the best in your staff. That's the warmth part of management. In the second part of this book, I will focus on the strength part, Employee Accountability. I will give you a practical, step-by-step method of addressing poor behaviors and attitudes.

An Overview of the 7 Senses of Employee Engagement

So, with all this talk about employee engagement, how do you actually engage your employees? I will give you 7 very practical and effective ways to motivate your direct reports. I call them the “7 Senses of Employee Engagement.” They are simple, straightforward, and cost no money.

I’ll give you an overview, then in the following chapters, we will dive into each of the 7 Senses individually. The 7 Senses are interrelated and overlapping. They are not listed in order of importance. You can and should be practicing all of these simultaneously.

The 7 Senses of Employee Engagement



1. Sense of Purpose

Helping employees understand how their everyday work makes a positive difference in the lives of others.

2. Sense of Appreciation

Giving employees specific, positive feedback on work well done

3. Sense of Inclusion

Keeping employees informed about what is going on in the department, the unit, and the organization.

4. Sense of Control

Giving employees a voice and a choice in their work. Soliciting their ideas and letting them have input on decisions.

5. Sense of Mastery

Putting employees in a position to play to their strengths. Capitalizing on what they do well.

6. Sense of Growth

Providing employees with development opportunities and challenging assignments.

7. Sense of Belonging

Providing informal gatherings so that employees build strong relationships.

It's interesting—the things that are most motivating to employees are easy for a manager to do. Often employers are looking in all the wrong places to attract, engage, and retain staff. They increase pay, add benefits,

and provide flexible work schedules. I'm not saying these aren't important. I'm saying these aren't most important. Like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, if you are a leader, the power to engage employees lies within you. You are the prime driver of employee engagement.

You really can move employees from thinking they have to come to work to them wanting to come to work. It's possible! It happened to me. Let's explore how.

“People don't leave companies, they leave bosses.”

—Beverly Kaye, author, *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em*

Chapter 2

A Sense of Purpose

Key Question: Do I feel my work is important?

There is power in purpose.

People want more than a paycheck; they want to have a purpose. People want to know they are making a positive difference in the lives of others. They want to know what they do matters. We are hardwired to make a difference. We are all purpose-driven beings. It's a fundamental part of leading a fulfilling life. The world of work offers a great opportunity for people to connect with a purpose.

Here's a story to illustrate what I mean by a sense of purpose:

A person walking down the street sees three construction workers. She asks the first, "What are you doing?" He answers, "I'm making \$15 an hour pounding nails." So the pedestrian asks the second, "What are you doing?" "I'm laying bricks, waiting for lunch break." Finally, she asks the third and he responds, "I'm building a church where people can find comfort and refuge, attend weddings, and funerals, and share sorrow and joy with one another."

Now which one of the three construction workers would you want working for you? Purpose creates passion and enthusiasm. Lack of purpose turns work into a slog. Any time work is disconnected from purpose, *performance suffers*. It's your job to regularly remind employees of the purpose of their work. It's your job to be Chief Meaning Officer.

The Disconnect

How many organizations have a clear, concise, and compelling mission statement? How many companies regularly remind staff what that mission is? How many organizations do a good job communicating the difference they are making in the lives of their customers? Not many.

A team without a purpose is a team without passion. It is your job as a leader to connect the dots between the everyday tasks performed and purpose for your team. Help your direct reports see the positive impact they create. A compelling purpose is much deeper than an organizational goal. Your team will not be inspired by the company's goal to "*increase profit by 10%*" or "*enhance market share.*" You have to go deeper than that.

Identify your company's purpose. How does your product or service help others? How does it change the world for the better? Really think through why your organization does what it does. Or why your department does what it does.

Connecting the Dots

Years ago, I was director of environmental services at a hospital.

I tried to instill a sense of purpose with the housekeeping staff. I wanted them to know they were doing more than just cleaning toilets, making beds, and mopping floors. I shared with them that patients in the hospital are more vulnerable to infection. And, being in the hospital where there are more germs, there is more chance of them acquiring an infection. By providing a clean room, what they were really doing every day was *helping patients heal*.

Understanding purpose helps me in my business, Accelerating Excellence, on a very practical level. I conduct about three training sessions per week. I often deliver the same workshop to a different audience. I have delivered some of my standard workshops well over one hundred times. If I don't connect my training to my purpose, it would be easy to simply go through the motions.

The purpose of Accelerating Excellence is to *help people and organizations thrive in the marketplace and beyond*. When I think about having the opportunity to equip people to succeed, I get jazzed up! Thinking about my purpose adds enthusiasm and energy to my work. Understanding purpose makes a big difference.

I work with several long-term care communities. They all have an Activities Department. One activities director told me that on a new employee's first day she tells them, "We are not here to babysit residents for an hour at a time. We are here to keep the residents' minds and bodies as strong as possible." Now that's purpose.

Here are some other examples of connecting everyday work to purpose:

- An information technology department's purpose could be to help co-workers increase productivity.
- An accounting department's purpose could be to provide the company with essential information to make sound business decisions or to insure they capture revenue to maintain the company's financial well-being.
- A printing company's purpose could be to provide quality materials that help build a customer's brand.
- A homebuilder's purpose could be to help families realize the American Dream.

As a manager, what are you doing to build a sense of purpose within your team? How are you helping connect the dots between your team's work and the difference it makes?

Application: Leadership in Practice—Sense of Purpose

1. Develop a Clear, Concise, and Compelling Mission Statement.

You may not be in a position to change your organization's mission statement, but you can write a purpose statement for your team or department. When you do, involve your team. Don't wait for your organization to communicate a purpose that your team can latch onto. Take the initiative now to engage the hearts of your team so they will develop a passion for their work.

When I was a housekeeping manager, I got our team together and facilitated a discussion.

I asked a few questions:

- Why does our department exist?
- Why do we do what we do?
- What difference are we making?
- How do we improve the lives of others?

Here is what we came up with: *The mission of the housekeeping department is to provide a clean, safe, and attractive environment for our patients to heal and for staff and visitors to enjoy.*

You can ask your team the same questions.

2. Become Chief Meaning Officer

Start meetings, huddles, and briefings by reminding everyone of the mission. Let them know “We are here to do great work, to improve the lives of our customers.” In meetings recognize employees who carry out the mission. One client of mine labels this practice “Mission in Motion.”

When you have one-on-ones with your direct reports, remind them of the purpose of their job and how it contributes to the lives of others.

Like the aforementioned activities director, when you bring on new team members, connect everything to purpose, with the why behind their job. Let them know how their work matters before you show them how to use the software, plan the project, or operate the machinery.

3. Share Positive Customer Feedback.

The pacemaker manufacturer Medtronic has a year-end employee gathering. During the event, they bring in patients who are using their pacemakers. The patients give a testimony regarding how the pacemaker has improved or even saved their lives. Why? To help employees on the manufacturing floor, in accounting, and in shipping see the end result of their work. Medtronic is connecting the dots for their staff.

4. Build Purpose into Positive Feedback

We will get into this more in the next chapter, but when delivering positive feedback, start with “what” your employee did well then connect it to “why” it mattered.

Conclusion

Employees who understand their job’s wider purpose are happier, more engaged, and more creative. From an organizational perspective, when employees see how their roles fit with the company’s purpose, staff turnover goes down and productivity rises.

We are all purpose-driven beings. Every individual needs to feel they matter, that showing up every day makes a difference. You as the manager are uniquely positioned to be the person who unlocks purpose.

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.”

—Proverbs 29:18

Chapter 3

A Sense of Appreciation

Key Question: Do I receive recognition for work well done?

“Can I see you in my office for a few minutes?”

What is the first thought an employee has when they hear that question from their boss? They think they have done something wrong of course!

It is much more common for managers to let their employees know where they fall short than what they are doing well. Management expert Ken Blanchard calls this “seagull management.” You don’t hear from the boss until something goes wrong, then they fly overhead, make a lot of noise, dump on everybody then fly away, not to be heard from again until something else goes wrong.

This is such a poor, yet common, way to manage people. This is simply catching people doing something wrong. In his book, *The One Minute Manager*, Blanchard shares a simple, yet powerfully effective management practice: *catch people doing something right.*

Giving people positive feedback for work well done is commonly regarded as the number one employee engagement and retention factor. If you are the kind of boss who thinks an employee's thanks is in their paycheck, I'm sorry, but you just don't get it. Compensation is important. But employees view their paycheck as a right, something they have earned. Recognition is a gift that is truly valued—especially because it is not required by the manager.

*“The deepest craving in human nature is the desire
to be appreciated.”*

—William James, former Harvard psychology professor
and the father of American psychology

Gallup Management Research surveyed over 4 million employees and have concluded that employees who receive regular recognition are:

- More productive
- More likely to stay
- Better team players
- Better at delivering exceptional customer service

That is a huge return on investment for something that costs you and the organization nothing. With all the money, technology, and information that companies have, we often don't do the simple stuff. I cannot tell you how many times people told me they left their job because they didn't feel appreciated.

The Power of Positive Feedback

The key to delivering effective positive feedback is to make it specific. When delivering positive feedback, let your employee know exactly what they did well. It's important for people to know they are good. It is also important for them to know *why* they are good.

Here is a simple way to make sure your positive feedback is specific, start with:

- I noticed . . .
- I saw . . .
- I heard . . .
- Someone told me . . .

When your recognition is specific, it accomplishes two things. First, it comes across as genuine. The employee knows you are not just blowing smoke because you are describing a situation in detail. This makes the feedback more personal. Second, the employee knows exactly what behavior to continue. The word affirm literally means “to make firm.” When you affirm someone, you are actually making their positive behavior more firm. Behavior that gets recognized gets repeated.

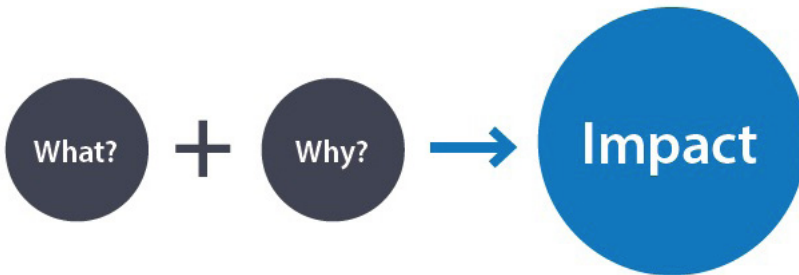
Let's look at an example.

Let's say the receptionist for your company reports to you and he or she does a great job of welcoming visitors. You could say, “You are really doing a good job. Thanks for being so friendly!” That's a start and I wouldn't discourage that.

But how much more powerful is this? “I am in the lobby quite often. And I have noticed every time someone walks in, you immediately look up from the computer, make eye contact, smile and say welcome to ABC Company. How may I help you?” Now your employee knows exactly what they do well.

Connect it to Why

The Power of Positive Feedback



So, the first part in delivering positive feedback is to make it specific. The second part is letting the person know why it matters. This goes back to building a sense of purpose.

In the receptionist scenario you could add, “As the first person a visitor sees when they arrive, you are often the first impression of our company. You do a great job in representing our company so well. I am grateful you are on our team.”

That’s the powerful one-two punch of positive feedback; what, make it specific, and why, tell them why it matters.

It is important to remember that the positive feedback needs to be earned. This is not about playing games with people by telling them they did a great job when they really didn't, just to make them feel good or in hopes they will improve.

Many organizations have employee-of-the-month programs or some type of recognition system, whether it's Deserving a Diamond, Caught in the Act, or something else. These aren't bad, but they are the frosting on the cake, not the cake. Recognition programs are no substitution for sincere appreciation from an employee's boss. Nothing can replace personalized, specific recognition from a person's direct supervisor.

Expressed Versus Felt Gratitude

There is a big difference between *expressed* gratitude and *felt* gratitude. We can feel gratitude toward someone but not express it to them. As a manager it's easy to assume your employees know you appreciate their work so there is no need to tell them. But this is a mistake. You not only need to *feel* gratitude toward your employees, you need to *tell* them.

*“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like
wrapping a present and not giving it.”*

—William Arthur Ward

Years ago, an employee came into my office discouraged and frustrated. She decided to apply for a job in a different department and had a transfer request form in hand. When I asked her why she was seeking a job change, she said, “I work hard and give great customer service. But I feel totally taken for granted. No one appreciates my work.”

I saw the same person in the hall a few days later and asked how the transfer process was going. She said she ripped up the form and was no longer requesting a transfer. When I asked why she said, “One of my co-workers told my boss I was seeking to transfer to another department. When he heard that, he immediately pulled me into his office and told me I was the best employee he had in the last ten years. He said he wouldn’t know what to do without me.”

That manager almost lost a great employee. Why? He *felt* gratitude toward his employee but didn’t express it! Popular preacher Andy Stanley has said, “Unexpressed gratitude is interpreted by others as ingratitude.”

Pass the Positive

In addition to giving positive feedback to those who report to you, be the kind of person who “passes on the positive” to others beyond your area of responsibility. When you hear something positive about someone, simply let them know. This contributes to a positive work environment in general and enables you to be more influential.

I remember sitting in a meeting where the CEO and Vice-President of Nursing were talking about a nurse manager they hired several

months ago. They were going on and on about what a good hire she was and how well she was working out. The new nurse manager wasn't at the meeting. When I saw her in the hallway later that day, I simply told her what was said in the meeting. She lit up like a light bulb and said, "You just made my day!"

Delivering positive feedback takes so little time and effort but makes a huge impact. It is one of your most powerful engagement tools. How often do you give positive feedback? When you do, is it specific? Do you let your team members know why their good work matters?

Application: Leadership in Practice—Sense of Appreciation

There are several ways to deliver positive feedback.

1. Face-To-Face

From time to time, give employees real-time, face-to-face positive feedback. Instead of asking an employee to see you in your office because they did something wrong, ask them to see you in your office so you can tell them what they did right.

You can also do this publicly, in department meetings for example. When you recognize performers publicly, the rest of the staff gets the message that good work doesn't go unnoticed. It also raises the bar for the mediocre performers.

2. Handwritten Note

In this day and age of text messaging, email, and other electronic communication, a handwritten thank you note is powerful and extra

meaningful. A thank you note let's your employee know you took the time to write it out. It is also something tangible they can keep and pull out at a later date. Even if it is a short note, make sure it is specific.

Buy a package of blank thank you cards and keep them on your desk. When someone does something extraordinary, write a note in real time. You will be surprised at the positive effect it will have.

I know a nursing home administrator who had a very difficult time retaining staff. He decided to regularly write thank you letters to staff and send them to their homes. Spouses and other family members were amazed and proud to have a family member recognized in such a way. He was pleasantly surprised at the powerful affect it had on employee retention.

3. Email and Copy Others

I once spoke at a conference. The next day Pam wrote a very nice email to me about some positive comments she had heard about my presentation. She also copied the president of the company on the email. I once again realized I had a unique boss. That had a powerful impact on me.

4. Tell Your Boss and Ask Them to Give the Employee Recognition

Here's something you can do from time to time: tell your boss about an employee's exceptional performance. Then ask your boss to make it a point to recognize the employee when they see him or her. This is a win-win-win. A win for you, a win for the employee, and a win for your boss. Every day, your boss is likely dealing with challenges, obstacles,

and problems. You can brighten their day by letting them know about someone on your team doing something well.

Conclusion

With all the resources employers have, they often neglect the simple but important stuff. Giving positive feedback for work well done isn't an add-on to your job, it is a necessary part of it. It costs nothing and provides immediate and significant benefits. It is actually a competitive advantage. The number one reason people leave their job is lack of recognition.

Be the kind of boss who is generous at giving positive feedback for good performance. Master the art of appreciation. Shine a light on what is right. When you see good work, say something. Never underestimate the power of a well-timed compliment. It could be a game-changer for someone.

Chapter 4

A Sense of Inclusion

Key Question: Do I feel *in* on things?

People are down with what they are not up on.

Years ago, I stopped at a Target store on a Saturday morning right when they opened. I noticed that each department manager was holding a stand-up huddle meeting with their team. I overheard a one department supervisor tell her team what the store sales figures were for the previous Saturday and what the store sales goal was for that day. The manager also informed her team that some items in the store had been relocated overnight. She wanted her team to be informed so they could direct customers accurately. Finally, there had recently been a change in the tax law. She informed them that they would see a difference in their paycheck and that it was due to the new law.

There is a communication vacuum within organizations. People want to know what is happening with the organization they work in. They want to be kept informed. If leadership is not filling the communication void with facts, staff will make stuff up and it likely isn't going to be positive.

“When the eagles are silent, the parrots will jabber.”

—Winston Churchill

According to employee engagement expert Quint Studer, team members who feel well informed look at themselves as “owners,” they feel they are an important part of the company. When employees feel in on things, it breaks down the “we vs. them” mentality. When you regularly share information with your team, they feel more valued and respected.

Employees who feel out of the loop regard themselves more as “renters.” There is a big difference between the owner and the renter mindset. You don’t wash and wax a car that you have rented for vacation. You don’t buy new curtains for your hotel room. We don’t take care of the things we rent in the same way we take of the items we own. When employees don’t feel well informed, they feel like hired hands.

In addition, when people are not given information, they get frustrated. I remember waiting at the Manchester, New Hampshire, airport for my flight. About 45 minutes before take-off, the airline informed us that our plane was still at the Baltimore airport. They said it would be at least two more hours before we begin boarding the plane. I didn’t like the message, but I liked that I knew. I could do something with that information.

When you fail to keep your team well informed, here is what you are implying to them:

- You are not important enough to know
- We don’t trust you with the information

Both of those messages will lead to employee disengagement. Keep your team well informed, even on matters that don't necessarily concern them personally or affect your department. Employees want to know what their company is up to.

It's important to regularly share information on two levels, the organizational level and the department level.

ORGANIZATIONAL	DEPARTMENTAL
Finances	Staffing issues
Customer satisfaction	Volume
Growth	Priorities
Quality	Review of yesterday
Marketing	Daily events
Competitive landscape	Suggestions
Current events	Miscellaneous

Organizational Level

When I was the chief learning officer at a hospital, we held a monthly leadership meeting called Leadership Council. The meeting was held every third Wednesday of the month at 8:00 a.m. Leaders from the CEO to department managers attended the meeting.

The agenda included what we called the Organizational ScoreCard.

- Volume (average daily census and outpatient visits)
- Finance (actual vs. budget figures)
- Patient Satisfaction Scores
- Employee Engagement Scores
- Quality
- Safety

We had specific, easy-to-understand metrics for each of these areas. In addition, we also shared mission moments, current hospital events, and marketing campaigns.

The challenge wasn't getting this information to the organizational leaders, they were at the meeting. The challenge was getting the leaders to share the information with the frontline staff.

Some managers scheduled their department meeting to be held in the afternoon on the same day as Leadership Council. That way, the information would get to frontline staff on the same day. This is a best practice. Unfortunately, some managers never held department meetings at all.

I know of one organization that holds an all-staff meeting every Monday morning. The organization has over 500 employees, but the CEO understands the importance of keeping everyone well informed and on the same page. Keeping people well informed not only keeps employees more engaged, it helps the organization run more effectively. There are operational benefits to knowing what is going on throughout the company.

Department Level

In addition to what is going on at an organizational level, it's important to keep team members well informed on a department level. This is often done through stand-up huddles at the beginning of shift. This should just take a few minutes, but it makes a big impact.

I once witnessed a nursing home administrator and director of nursing make rounds to each nursing station in the morning. This was a standard, daily practice. Staff gathered around the nursing station as the director of nursing asked questions like:

- Did anything happen in the last 24 hours that we need to know about?
- Are all residents ready for their appointments today?
- What feedback are you getting from the residents? Their families?
- How can we do things better?

One outpatient laboratory holds stand-up meetings to discuss the following:

- How many patients were seen the previous day?
- What was the average wait time? (measured against a wait time goal.)
- What did we do well yesterday? (or what went right?)
- What didn't go so well? How can we learn from it?

How well do you keep your team informed? Do you consistently pass on organizational information to your direct reports? Do you hold morning or start of shift huddles to get everybody on the same page?

Application: Leadership in Practice—Sense of Inclusion

Here are some practical ways to make sure information flows and your team feels well informed.

1. Regular Department Meetings.

Make sure you have an agenda and it includes key organizational metrics and news. You could also ask your team ahead of time if they would like to add anything to the agenda. Make sure someone keeps meeting minutes and provides them for staff who were unable to attend.

2. Newsletters or Weekly Emails

I know of an outstanding manager who develops a weekly newsletter for her department. She regularly includes the department mission statement, recognizes employees for outstanding work, shares current events and happenings, provides updates on new equipment, procedures, etc. She sends this newsletter out by email. This is a best practice. This shouldn't be regarded as extra work, but as a necessary step to keep the team operating effectively and enthusiastically.

One CEO I know recently began sending out a weekly email to update to her staff that was based in several locations. She was overwhelmed with positive feedback. She told me that if she happens to skip a week, she hears about it!

3. Open Forums/Town Halls

At Open Forums/Town Halls leaders share information in-person with staff. The face-to-face meeting provides opportunity for two-way communication. This was a standard practice of my great boss, Pam.

Don't be surprised if, at first, people don't attend or say much if they do. They want to make sure the meeting is worth their time and their input is taken respectfully and seriously. It takes time to build an

emotionally safe environment where people are willing to speak up. Don't give up on this practice. Trust the process and, in time, it will prove to be a key employee engagement factor.

4. Communication Logs

Many departments maintain communication logs manually or electronically. Staff are required to review it before starting work. This gives staff real time information and equips them with knowledge needed as they work their shift.

Conclusion

When I worked for a hospital, we were building a new physician practice right near a main highway. I told our leaders to make sure everyone knew about it before we put the sign on the building. You want employees who drive by the new building to be thinking I knew that! rather than, no one ever told me!

To employees, no information means no power. Go out of your way to make your team feel like insiders. Communication and consistent flow of information is always going to be a challenge. If you think about it, most conflict in an organization comes from lack of communication or miscommunication. You will never get to the point of saying, "We nailed communication, what's next?" Make it a point to overcommunicate. Make it your goal to never hear, "No one told me about it."

Chapter 5

A Sense Of Control

Key Question: Do I have a say in my work?

Get every brain in the game.

In his book *Winning*, former General Electric CEO Jack Welch tells the story of holding what he called Workout Groups for the purpose of getting employee input. He felt frontline workers had insights on how to operate more efficiently, improve quality, and enhance customer service. During one of his first Workout Groups, a long-time employee who worked on the manufacturing floor said, “Mr. Welch, for 40 years General Electric has paid me for the work of my hands when they could have had my brains for free. This is the first time anyone has asked for my opinion.”

Employees want voice and choice in their work. They want to be asked for their opinion and want a say in their work. They want their opinions to count.

Voice

The higher you go in an organization, the less you know. Why? For two primary reasons. First, you become further removed from the frontline, where the action is. Secondly, staff are often reluctant to give the boss the unvarnished truth. Therefore, it is imperative for leaders to pro-actively ask employees for their ideas on solutions to everyday problems.

Don't be the kind of boss who sits in your office making decisions that affect many people without gathering input from those closest to the action. Often frontline staff have the firmest grip on reality. There is a Chinese proverb that says, "None of us is as smart as all of us." In order to make wise decisions, gather input from others.

When you seek input from others, you send several important messages to your employees:

- I respect and value you.
- We are a team here.
- I don't have all the answers.

Those are powerful, engaging messages. It shouts, "This is a team effort." It demonstrates that you understand that you can't do it alone. That you rise and fall together as a team.

Gather input from your employees. Maximize the brainpower of others.

Regularly ask questions like:

- How are we doing as team?
- What problems are you encountering?
- How can we do things better?
- What support do you need from me?

If you implement an improvement based on employee input, be sure to publicize it. This gives credit where credit is due and encourages more employee input.

If you are wrestling with an important issue or trying to make significant decision, don't hesitate to ask your employees for advice. The role of leader is not to come up with all the great ideas. The role of the leader is to create an environment in which great ideas can happen. Be good at talking less and asking more. Ask great questions. A simple but powerful question is, "What do you think?"

I remember years ago our organization held an important meeting. Our CEO was out of town and unable to attend. He called me later in the day and said "Del, I value your opinion. Tell me about the meeting and give me your take on it." That meant a lot to me. I appreciated his respect for my opinion.

And when you ask staff for their input, listen! If the boss doesn't want to hear it, the people won't say it. You don't have to agree with all their input, but you have to respectfully acknowledge it. If you ask for ideas and then dismiss them out of hand, your team will stop giving input. Close-minded leaders will close employees' minds and mouths.

*“Leaders who don’t listen soon find they have
employees with nothing to say.”*

—Andy Stanley, best-selling author and leadership communicator

One very practical way to give your employees a voice is getting them involved in the hiring process. Provide your team members with good, solid training on the fundamentals of employee interviewing. Then make them a part of the interview process. Many frontline staff have a sixth sense when it comes to hiring potential co-workers. Because they do the job every day, they have an uncanny sense of who would work out and who wouldn’t.

Choice

In addition to giving your team members voice, give them choice. A significant employee engagement killer is micromanaging. Be clear on the end result you expect but give them some space on how to achieve the result. Give your direct reports some freedom on how they do their work.

Autonomy is one of the most fundamental motivating forces in life. When you can, push decision making down. Give your staff the freedom to choose some aspects of their work. They will feel more competent and respected. When you take away choice, employee engagement nosedives.

One of my client hospitals went to a self-scheduling model for their nursing staff. The hospital lays out the parameters regarding the number of weekends and holidays needed to work. Then within those

parameters, nurses make their own schedule. The response has been extremely positive.

If a position lends itself to work remotely, give your employees the opportunity to work from home, at least some of the time. If you are redesigning a physical space of a department, do so with employee input. How good are you at empowering your direct reports? How often do you ask for their opinions? In what areas can you give them more say in their work?

Application: Leadership in Practice—Sense of Control

1. One-to-One and Department Meetings

In addition to providing downward communication by keeping employees informed, practice upward communication. Ask for information from your staff. As part of your regular one-to-one or department meetings ask questions like:

- How are we doing as team?
- What problems are you encountering?
- How can we do things better?
- What support do you need from me?

I have developed a Direct Report Check-In Form with these questions. You can download it for free at

<http://www.accelerating-excellence.net/resourcegallery>

2. Idea Boards

This is a practice taken from Lean Management. Because not everyone is comfortable speaking in a group, some companies use Idea Boards. Team members can post their ideas for improvement for management to see. If you are going to adopt Idea Boards, every idea submitted should include the employee's name. It's important this doesn't become a board with just a bunch of anonymous complaints without solutions. No drive-by shootings.

3. Push Decision Making Down

Whenever it seems appropriate, let your team members make their own decisions. Find some specific choices that you can let them control, however small.

4. Create an Environment of Emotional Safety

Don't allow comments like "that will never work!" or "we tried that before" come from you. And don't let these comments go unchallenged when said by others. This will stifle creativity and reduce input.

Conclusion

Every person in the world seeks respect and dignity, and every person deserves them. Use the power of collective wisdom. When you give your team voice and choice, you will make better decisions and increase employee engagement. As a great manager, use this powerful phrase often, "*You decide.*"

Chapter 6

A Sense of Mastery

Key Question: Do I have an opportunity to do what I do best?

You can teach a turkey to climb a tree, but it's easier to hire a squirrel.

Have you ever encountered a grumpy receptionist? I do all the time. Not only is it important to have the right people in your organization, it's important to put the right people in the right position. When you do, the company wins, the employee wins, the customer wins, and you, as a manager, win.

Jim Collins opens his insightful book *Good to Great* this way:

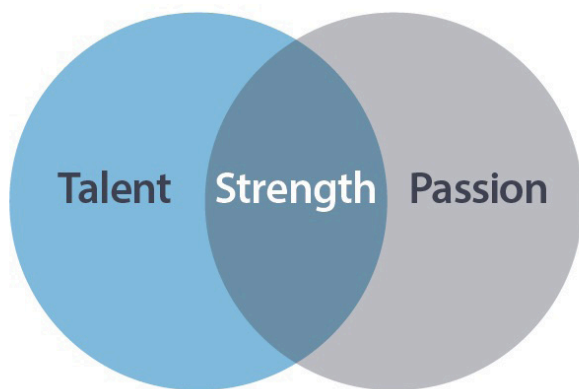
“The first thing great companies do is get the right people on the bus and get the wrong people off the bus. Then they put the right people in the right seats.”

Put People in a Position to Play to their Strengths

I once saw a tagline on a company website which said, “We are really good at what we do, because we only do what we are really good at.” I love it!

That's your goal as a manager, putting people in a position where they can thrive.

Very simply, here is my view of a strength; the place where talent and passion overlap.



You can have a natural talent in an area and not be passionate about it. That is not a strength because if you regularly worked at something you didn't love; you would lose enthusiasm. Talent without passion equals boredom.

Conversely, you can be passionate about something but not have a natural talent in that area. Passion without talent leads to frustration because of lack of competence or progress.

I am thankful I had a boss who saw my strengths. Pam saw something in me that I didn't see in myself. Upon walking in her office for the first time, I noticed her bookcase was full of management and leadership books. I love reading those books too. So, we would regularly discuss what we were reading and learning.

During the fall of 1999, our CEO asked if I would lead our company's United Way campaign. When Pam found out about this, she invited me to her monthly Open Forums with nursing. She had a leadership practice of holding standup Open Forums on every nursing unit, on every shift, once a month. She invited me to join her so I could give my brief United Way pitch.

A few weeks later she initiated a conversation that would be a career-changer for me. She had been thinking about my strengths and the need for management training within the organization. She knew of my years of management experience and my interest in the field of leadership. In addition, while giving the United Way presentations, she said she thought I was a clear communicator and had the gift of teaching.

She asked if I would consider transitioning from my current position to the position of Director of Education and Training. She thought I had the talent and passion (the combination of a strength) to deliver management workshops and provide leadership development. She was matching the needs of the organization with my strengths.

Actually, it turned out to be more than a career changer—it was a life changer for me. About 95 percent of the reason I have my own management training business now is because I had a boss who put me in a position to play to my strengths. I saw her do this time and time again with others as well.

Marcus Buckingham, a strengths expert, encourages leaders to look at the direct reports as chess pieces rather than checkers pieces.

In checkers, every piece looks and moves exactly the same way. The pieces are interchangeable. People are not like that. Everyone has their own set of strengths and weaknesses. Look at your team members like chess pieces. Each chess piece looks different and moves differently from others.

My personal story is a good example, but you may not have the authority like Pam did to simply create a new position for someone. As a manager, you can still practice this. Let me give you another example.

When I was a housekeeping manager, I hired a guy, Rick, for the primary purpose of stripping and refinishing floors in empty patient rooms. Rick had a great attitude. I soon found out that he was a social person. I also discovered that he wasn't detail oriented. This was a mismatch because his main responsibility was doing detail work by himself. But because he had a great attitude, I wanted to find something that worked for both of us.

Fortunately, I had another opening in the department. This job involved going around the hospital several times a day emptying the trash and soiled linen from the patient floors. It worked out very well. Rick would pass by and greet many people throughout the day. And although an important job, putting the trash and soiled linen in a cart and bringing to the basement didn't involve a lot of detail.

*“Try to bring out what God put in, not stuff
in what God left out.”*

—Marcus Buckingham, author, *Discovering Your Strengths*

Here are the benefits of putting people in a position to play to their strengths:

- They are easier to manage.
- They are more enthusiastic about their work.
- They are more productive.
- They add more value to the organization.[/BL]

As a leader, think about job fit. Do you make sure you have people with high-relational skills in customer facing positions? Do you make sure you have someone detail oriented in positions that need high accuracy? Do you have people who like routine in positions where there are few surprises or variation?

Application: Leadership in Practice—Sense of Mastery

Here are some practical ways to put team members in a position to play to their strengths.

1. Assess Each Team Member

As a leader, think of each of your direct reports. What is unique about each person? What do they do exceptionally well? How can you have them do more of it? How can you match the needs of the organization with an employee's strength?

2. Hold Career Conversations

Occasionally ask probing questions like:

- What are the parts of your work that you enjoy the most?
- What would you like to do more of?

- What things do you find difficult to do?
- What skills would you like to develop?[/BL]

3. Hire for Fit

When interviewing potential candidates, think about the unique strengths needed for the position you are hiring for. Once you are clear on the skills needed, develop strong behavioral-based interview questions that focus on those essential skills. Select the right person, with the right strengths, for the right job. Hire the squirrel to climb the tree, not the turkey.

4. Provide Opportunities for Team Members to Showcase Their Strengths

Does a team member have exceptional relational skills? Perhaps they could be a partner for a new employee. Do you have someone with exceptional communication skills? Perhaps they could give a presentation or educate the team on a new product or procedure.

Conclusion

Discover what is unique about each direct report and capitalize on their strengths. It's a good feeling to be competent and confident in your work. When you leverage employee strengths with a job that fits well, they are more likely to be engaged and more likely to stay. And your job gets easier

Chapter 7

A Sense of Growth

Key Question: Do I have opportunities to learn and grow?

You have to go through awkward to get to awesome!

Think of yourself as a cultivator of human potential. Leadership is about taking people places they wouldn't have gotten to by themselves. One of your responsibilities as a great boss is to help others move closer to their potential.

I remember helping a company revise their performance review system. The time came to roll out the system to all employees. We held five informational sessions over two days to explain the new process. The VP of human resources presented during the first half of the session and I presented the second half.

Right before the first session, the VP asked his assistant, Cindy, “Would you be willing to wrap-up each session with a few details about the timeline for the new performance review system?” He knew she wanted to get into the field of training and thought this would be a good

growth opportunity. When asked, she immediately became nervous. But she said she would do it. (Good for her!)

When she stood at the podium at the end of the first session, she was visibly nervous and had a red rash on her neck. I really felt bad for her. When she presented at the end of the second session, she was still visibly nervous, but less so. And the rash was more pink than red. With each subsequent session, she was less nervous. By the fifth session she was beginning to gain some mojo! You have to go through awkward to get to awesome.

The VP understood the power of growth by getting someone out of their comfort zone.

*“A good leader inspires others with confidence in him or her;
a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves.”*

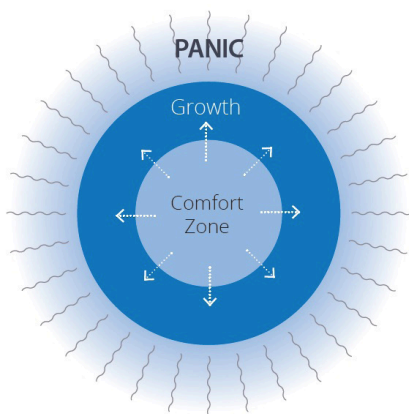
—Unknown

Employees want to be better today than they were yesterday. They want to stretch. It's your responsibility to provide opportunities for development. As a great boss, provide challenging assignments that help employees grow

Earlier we looked at the three categories of engagement: Actively Engaged, Not Engaged, and Actively Disengaged. Do not neglect the Actively Engaged group. They are not on autopilot. Actively engaged employees who are not challenged will either begin to coast (and the only direction you can coast is downhill) or they will find another job where they are challenged.

One of the best ways to keep actively engaged team members engaged is to challenge them in a positive way. Give them more responsibility. Get them a little out of their comfort zone.

Here's a simple diagram that I think is quite insightful.



Out of the Comfort Zone

We all have three zones: a comfort zone, a growth zone, and a panic zone. No one gets better by staying in their comfort zone. Conversely, people get discouraged if they are overwhelmed by getting too far out of their comfort zone.

Think of teaching your teenager how to drive. When it was their first time behind the wheel, where did you take them? Probably in an empty parking lot. With some practice, driving in the parking lot became a skill within their comfort zone. If you never move them out of their comfort zone, your teenager would be limited to driving around in empty parking lots all their life! So, what do you do next? Most likely you take them to a residential area. Once they are comfortable driving in the residential area, you have them drive on roads with some traffic lights.

Eventually you bring them on the highway. All the time you are expanding their comfort zone and increasing their capability.

That is how we all grow, by moving out of our comfort zone into our growth zone.

However, we want to avoid the panic zone. The panic zone would be taking your teenager out for the first time to learn how to drive and pulling over on to the shoulder of a busy highway at 4 p.m. in the afternoon. Then you say, “Have at it.” That’s the panic zone. (Probably for both of you!) The panic zone causes distress. The panic zone will likely overwhelm and discourage them because it often leads to failure.

After I had been delivering management training for a year or so, Pam called me into her office. She said that our parent company was looking at outside companies to deliver management training for our entire health system. I told her that I thought that was a great idea. She said, “Yes, it is. But you should be the one delivering the training. I want you to go to corporate and show them what you are doing here.” I was stunned. I felt totally out of my league. But I was also flattered and encouraged by her faith in me

To make a long story short, the parent company saw my training material and loved the idea of having someone within the system deliver management training. The first time I delivered the training, I was extremely nervous. But as the growth diagram indicates, the more I did it, the more comfortable I felt and the more confidence I gained.

*“Great people are those who make others feel that they, too,
can become great.”*

—Mark Twain

Did you notice what Pam did? She first got me in my strength zone then out of my comfort zone.

Encouragement

The word encourage literally means “to give courage.” Great leaders encourage their direct reports. Great leaders delight in seeing their team members grow, develop, and flourish.

Who has encouraged you? If you are a leader, someone encouraged you. They saw some leadership qualities in you, even if you didn’t see it in yourself. Do the same for others. That is your job as a leader. Help your team members believe in themselves. Jack Welch, former CEO of GE called this “giving the gift of confidence” to others. You should be giving the gift of confidence. It’s one of the greatest gifts you can give to another.

Poor leaders look at their employees as two-by-fours to get the job done. They are not interested in developing their employees, they just want the work to be done.

Years ago, I delivered a 45-minute “lunch and learn” at my company. It was January and the title of my talk was “10 Ways to Make 2008 Great!” It was a fun, motivational talk focusing on personal development. The morning of my presentation I received an email from a discouraged

employee. She wrote to tell me she was very excited to attend but she could only stay for 30 minutes because her boss said that was how long her lunch break was and the subject matter didn't apply directly to her job. That is downright awful leadership.

Three Powerful Tools

I'd like to share with you three powerful employee engagement tools: appreciation, affirmation, and encouragement.



Appreciation looks to the past and says, "You did it." *"Thanks for coming in on third shift last night. We were really in a bind and you helped out a lot."*

Affirmation sees a strength in the present and says, "You are doing it." *"You really have a gift of calming angry customers down. You are such a good listener and are able to resolve very difficult situations."*

Encouragement looks to the future and says, "You can do it." *"You have a good, clear way of communicating. I'd like you to give a presentation to the Board of Directors. I know you will do a great job."*

How good are you at developing your direct reports? What do you do to help your team members stretch and grow? Do you ever challenge them to get out of their comfort zone? Do you help them believe in themselves?

Application: Leadership in Practice—Sense of Growth

1. Ask Someone to Lead a Meeting or Make a Presentation

One of the easiest ways to get someone out of their comfort zone is to ask them to speak publicly. Most people are very reluctant to make a presentation, but once it's over, they usually feel pretty great (and relieved). When appropriate, encourage some direct reports to deliver a presentation. Start small, perhaps they could make a short presentation at a department meeting.

2. Delegate

Think about what you can delegate. When you delegate, not dump, you take something off your plate and help another person learn and grow. There are many benefits to delegation. You develop others, you make the organization stronger, and you have more time to focus on your highest priorities. You'll never be a great manager if you want total control or think no one can do a task as well as you.

3. Put Someone Temporarily in Charge

If you see leadership qualities in someone, test the waters. Put them in charge while you are on vacation or on the weekend temporarily.

4. Provide Learning Opportunities

Encourage some team members to get a degree or send them to workshops and seminars. Promote online learning.

Conclusion

Even though Pam and I have not worked together in several years, to this day I receive an occasional email from her. She sees what I am doing through my website, blog, and podcasts. In those emails she still continues to be affirming and encouraging. Most employees see how uncommon it is to have a manager who is growing and developing them.

Encourage your employees to grow. We want our team members to be content in their work but not complacent. Be in the business of shaping lives, not just getting work done. I believe that when you look back at your career as a leader, the most rewarding part will not be the pay, perks, and power but the people you developed.

Chapter 8

A Sense of Belonging

KEY QUESTION: Do I have good friends at work?

We are human beings not human doings.

Your employees are people first and employees second. They are social beings who desire good relationships. When you create strong bonds between team members, they will collaborate better, communicate better, and will be more likely to stay.

As a leader, it's important to intentionally build an environment where team members look at each other as more than just co-workers. You want your team members to have a fuller picture of each person. For example, not only is Sandy in accounts payable, she is crazy about her grandson, loves to garden, and is a big football fan. Generally, when you get to know someone better, you care more about them.

Also, when you get to know someone on an informal basis you feel more comfortable around them. Many years ago, as a 28-year-old department manager, I attended a conference with our company CEO. I was already

intimidated by his position and, at six feet nine inches tall, his physical stature only added to my fear.

We drove to the conference together in his big company-owned Cadillac. During the three-hour drive he was very down-to-earth. We talked family, sports, and musical interests. I went on to work for that CEO (although several levels down) for 25 years. Although I always respected him, I never felt intimidated after our trip. A barrier had been broken down. That is what you should try to achieve with your team.

And, as the manager, you also should take an interest in your employees. Great bosses are interested in others. They care about their employees. Obviously, you shouldn't be intrusive or inappropriate, but ask how their weekend was or what they did on vacation. Ask them about their trip to visit colleges with their high school son or daughter.

I remember a very effective vice-president sitting in my office telling me she just submitted her resignation. She was known for putting in long hours and leading her team well. She was a single mother with one child. When I asked her why she was leaving she told me, with tears in her eyes, that in the three years she reported to the CEO, he never asked one question about her or her son.

Gallup Management Research suggests that a key employee question that heavily influences engagement is "Does my supervisor care about me as a person?"

Do your best to create informal "hang time" with your staff so they can get to know one another in a more personal way.

Make extra sure new employees feel welcomed and immediately experience a sense of belonging.

New employees are asking themselves:

- Did I make the right move?
- Do I feel welcome here?
- Are they on my side?[/BL]

A client of mine does a great job of making new employees feel welcomed. On the employee's first day they take a picture of the person and ask them to fill out a "fun-fact" form.

The form asks them to list things like:

- Where were you born?
- What are your hobbies or interests?
- What are your favorite sports teams?
- What is your favorite color?
- Who are your favorite musical artists?
- What are your favorite foods?
- Do you have any pets? Tell us about them

This form, along with their picture, is posted in a high traffic hallway. All staff are encouraged to introduce themselves to the new team member and, if possible, make a connection based on what they know about them from the form.

When I facilitate teambuilding retreats, I often take teambuilding expert Patrick Lencioni's advice and break the ice by having each team member share:

- Where they grew up.
- How many siblings they had and where they are in the mix.
- A childhood memory.[/BL]

At one retreat, the CEO shared about being bullied in middle school. He showed a very vulnerable side and it set a tone of transparency for the day. Here's an added benefit of building a sense of belonging, communication improves. Team members are more likely to ask for help when needed. They are more likely to speak up when they don't understand something. They are more likely to give their opinion. A sense of belonging his breaks down walls and improves communication.

How good are you at facilitating strong relationships in your team? Do you intentionally create times of informal social interaction for your direct reports? Do you take an interest in the lives of your employees?

Application: Leadership in Practice—Sense of Belonging

1. Create Informal, “Hang Time” for Your Team and Promote Fun

Celebrate birthdays, weddings, and anniversaries. Encourage your team to hold baby showers for co-workers. Hold pot-luck luncheons. Have barbeques on Fridays in the summer. Food is always a good way to bring people together.

Encourage your staff to dress up for Halloween. Hold a company-wide talent show. When I worked at a hospital, occasionally nursing units would hold a baby picture contest. Baby pictures would be posted of each

member of the nursing team and staff would try and match the baby picture to the nurse.

2. Highlight a Team Member Each Month

One company I work with has each employee bring in a poster board with pictures that highlight their family, hobbies, and interests. They rotate employees monthly.

3. Create a Special Welcome for New Team Members

Decorate the new employee's work area with a welcome sign or balloons. Have each team member sign a welcome card. Hold a welcome lunch or meet and greet.

4. Use Language That Fosters a Sense of Belonging

Frequently use statements like, "we are a team here," "we are all in this together," "we win as a team and lose as a team."

Conclusion

The power of connectedness is strong. If your team members feel a sense of belonging, they will enjoy their work more. In addition, they are less likely to leave for another job for a small raise (or perhaps even a large one). They will not want to leave the people with whom they have built a strong relationship.

Chapter 9

Employee Accountability

Don't pay employees to hurt your company

Jack Welch once said, “Think of yourself as a gardener with a watering can in one hand and a can of fertilizer in the other. Occasionally you have to pull the weeds but most of the time you just nurture and tend. Then watch everything bloom.”

We have spent the previous chapters discussing how to nurture and tend employees in hopes they will bloom. But there will likely still be some weeds. Weeds choke out flowers. In the next few chapters we will focus on dealing effectively with the poor behaviors and attitudes.

Everyone in your company is paid to provide more value to the organization than their compensation, otherwise the company wouldn't hire them. It's your responsibility as a manager to see that this happens.

Frankly, if you practice all of the 7 Senses of Employee Engagement but fail to address poor performers, you will *still* fail to engage your team members. Strong performers look at poor performers as obstacles

and extra baggage. High performers want a boss who will clear low performers out of the way.

You owe it to the people who do the job right to take corrective action with the people who don't. I have seen several times where a manager finally terminates a poor performer and the staff responds with joy and relief. It's like the monkeys celebrating in the *Wizard of Oz* when the bad witch melts into the ground.

The Power of Expectations

An effective way of preventing poor performance in the first place is to establish clear behavioral expectations. People tend to live up or down to expectations. Most companies have a set of core values like Excellence, Integrity, Collaboration, and Service. But values are conceptual. What does excellence look like? How do you know if someone is collaborative?

Behavioral expectations are clear, concrete, and specific. When you have established behavioral expectations, then delivering corrective feedback is simply a matter of letting the employee know where they are getting off track. The behavioral expectations become the standard way of working together and conducting business. Give people something to live up to.

An effective way of establishing expectations is to include behavioral expectations that align with each value. One of my clients is a retirement community for nuns. They came up with the acrostic F.A.I.T.H. as their organization's values. F.A.I.T.H. stands for Friendliness, Adaptability, Initiative,

Teamwork, and Honesty. With each value they have established behavioral expectations. Here are the actual behavior expectations:

The behavioral expectations under **Friendliness** include:

- I am warm, welcoming, and easy to work with.
- I regularly express appreciation and provide encouragement to my co-workers.
- I am helpful with my expertise and willingly share my knowledge.

• I bring a positive, upbeat attitude to my daily work.

The behavioral expectations under **Adaptability** include:

- I embrace change and am supportive of the changes that the organization adopts.
- I see opportunities with every issue and help create solutions.
- I am flexible and adapt to any situation.
- I am creative and find a way to work through challenges.

The behavioral expectations under **Initiative** include:

- I take pride in my work and seek to perform with excellence.
- I go beyond my normal job responsibilities to help others succeed
- I take ownership of issues and follow through to resolution.
- I look for and suggest improvements to the work environment.

The behavioral expectations under **Teamwork** include:

- I respect differences and understand that diversity makes us stronger.

- I celebrate the success of my co-workers.
- I seek to handle differences constructively.
- I seek input from others to test and improve my ideas.

The behavioral expectations under **Honesty** include:

- I earn respect through keeping commitments and fulfilling expectations.

- I share credit, admit mistakes, and ask for help when I need it.
- I am honest in all my interactions and seek to build trust with others.

- I use equipment, supplies, and my time in a responsible manner.

Did you notice that these expectations have little to do with job expertise or competence? When dealing with poor performance, it almost always boils down to a behavior issue. There is a common saying in Human Resources circles: “People are hired for technical competence and fired for interpersonal incompetence.” The way to address lack of job competency is through training. The way to address poor behavior is through corrective feedback.

“Treat a person as they are, and they will remain as they are.

*Treat a person as they can be, and they will become
as they can be.”*

—Goethe

Three Diagnostic Questions

Just as a doctor asks a patient questions to try and diagnose a physical issue, I have come up with three questions to help you assess whether or not you have a significant employee issue.

1. How would I feel if this employee resigned?

Imagine one of your employees walking in your office tomorrow and telling you they found a better job closer to home. Then they handed you their two weeks' notice. If you would be happy; if after they left your office you would do a Snoopy dance on your desk, that is a sign you have a poor performer.

2. If I owned the company, would I want to pay them their same salary?

This will change your perspective on a poor performer in a hurry! What if their \$50,000 or \$150,000 salary came out of your pocket? Look at yourself as the business owner of your unit or department. Is the poor performer delivering on their paid value?

3. Do things go better when they are absent?

Is there a sense of relief with the team on the poor performer's day off? Do things go more smoothly when they are on vacation? Is there less drama when they are not on the job?

Ask yourself these questions. If someone immediately comes to mind, you need to address this person. This person is giving you heartburn and is taking you away from investing in your good performers.

*“We are prepared, including legally, to fire you
for a bad attitude.”*

—Herb Kelleher, former CEO, Southwest Airlines

Common Excuses for Not Addressing Poor Performers

We can easily talk ourselves out of addressing the poor performer. We often find any reason to avoid the difficult conversation. Here are some common excuses:

That’s just the way they are, they will never change.

You are convinced that the poor attitude or lack of dependability is part of their personality. So you say to yourself, “Why try and change them? The whole effort will be in vain.” But that is faulty thinking. The reason you should bother is they are hurting the team, the company, and most likely the customers. Your responsibility as a manager is to make sure everyone on your team is making a positive contribution.

They might explode.

Don’t shy away from delivering corrective feedback because of something someone might do. Give them the benefit of the doubt. Perhaps they are unaware. Perhaps they have a blind spot that simply needs to be pointed out. And if they do happen to explode, you know you have a bigger problem.

Years ago, I was giving one of my employees their annual performance review. The person was loud, negative, and abrupt. While I was addressing these problem behaviors during her performance review, she

she got extremely angry and began to cuss me out. Because of that outburst Human Resources agreed that I had grounds to terminate her, which is exactly what I did.

I might hurt their feelings.

It's easy to focus solely on the feelings of the employee we need to address. We feel bad about telling them something unpleasant. What if they are hurt? What if they cry? It's important to be sensitive, but you also need to be thinking about all the other members of your team who are negatively affected by this person's behavior.

Remember, there is a difference between hurt and harm. When I was a little boy, occasionally I would fall off my bicycle and scrape my elbow. I would run home to my mom. She would immediately put yellow iodine on the wound. And it stung like crazy! She did this so it wouldn't get infected. She temporarily "hurt" me in in order to help me. You should never want to harm an employee, but you may need to "hurt" them in order to help them.

They won't like me.

I know you want to be liked; we all do. But as a leader, your primary responsibility is to help your direct reports be a productive, contributing member of the team. When you professionally and considerately address poor performance, you will be respected and trusted. You will also likely be admired. Candidly, it is selfish not to tell people the kind truth because you want to be liked more than you want to help the employee.

What if they leave?

You may think that a warm body is better than a vacant position. It's import

ant to understand that most of your team would rather operate with fewer staff than be burdened with a poor performer.

*“You are here to run a business not a rehab center
for poor performers.”*

—Quint Studer, author, *Hardwiring Excellence*

Negative Consequences of Not Addressing Poor Performers

If you do not deliver corrective feedback when someone needs it, it's negligence on your part. And there are consequences to that negligence.

It hurts the organization.

No one is perfect and we all have opportunities for improvement, but poor performers downright hurt the organization's work culture, reputation, and productivity. One person can't make a team, but one person can break a team.

It hurts your credibility.

If you see a five-year-old throwing a temper tantrum in a store because they can't have candy, you may immediately look at the child, but in a matter of seconds you are looking at the parent. In the same way, your team members may initially look at their less than stellar co-worker but soon they will eventually focus on you and wonder why you are not addressing the employee. Face up to hard conversations or you will be perceived as weak.

It prevents excellence.

You should look at your department as a “pocket of excellence” within your company. Unless you are the CEO, you don’t have control of every part of the company, but you are responsible for your department. There is no way you can operate your department at a high level if you tolerate poor performers. A high-performing team and tolerance of poor performers is incompatible.

It doesn’t help the poor performer.

This may be the most significant consequence. As I stated earlier, your main goal as a leader is to help your team members be as successful as possible. It is unkind to not help them. Even if it comes to the point that you have to terminate someone, hopefully they will learn from their unacceptable behavior and improve in their next job.

Years ago, a physical therapy manager walked in my office and told me that for the first time in his career, he needed to fire someone. He was pretty anxious about it. He said one of his therapists was consistently late. This resulted in a bottleneck of patients waiting and poor customer service. I asked if the termination would come as a surprise to the employee. He told me that it wouldn’t. He had worked with Human Resources and followed the appropriate warning process. The last warning he gave her clearly stated that ongoing tardiness would result in termination. At that point I told him, “You aren’t really firing her, she has made the decision to fire herself.”

The Kind Truth

I believe most managers want to address poor performance; they just haven't been trained in how to do it. Delivering correct feedback effectively is a skill that can be learned. These are emotional, high-stakes conversations. We can't afford to "wing it."

Here are some common, ineffective approaches to addressing poor performers:

- Drop hints to the employee in hopes they will change.
- Tolerate the bad behavior but complain to others.
- Try the "group slap" where you come down hard on the whole department when one individual should be addressed. (This usually results in the good employees being insulted and the poor employee not understanding it was meant for them.)
- Hold back addressing the employee, get increasingly frustrated, then "pop a gasket" and handle it poorly.

When addressing a poor performer, it's important to be aware of two extremes. One extreme is beating around the bush, being less than candid. This is the "hint and hope" approach. This approach is considerate but lacks courage. There is a difference between nice and kind. Always be kind, but being nice prevents you from being candid.

The other extreme is being too blunt to the point of being offensive. This often happens when you have held back giving feedback in the past but are now at the point of high frustration. You don't think the conversation

through, and you say what's on your mind unfiltered. This is being candid (maybe even brutally honest) without being considerate.

It is important to think things through. The best approach is to be both considerate and courageous. Seek to be direct, honest, and constructive. As the Apostle Paul wrote, “speak the truth in love.”

The Kind Truth



Remember, it's your job to deliver the corrective feedback in a professional, considerate, and candid way. But *you are not responsible for the reaction of the other person*. I hope that is liberating for you. Doing the right thing and how someone responds are two different things.

*“There is something that responds deeply to people
who level with us.”*

—Susan Scott, author, *Fierce Conversations*

Years ago, a nurse manager told me that a poor performer was transferring from her unit to another nursing unit. According to human resources

policy this nurse manager was to give the transferring nurse a performance review. The nurse manager felt the staff nurse had some attitude and behavior issues. The manager wanted to give the nurse corrective feedback before she started on the new unit. We discussed a good approach to handling this sensitive conversation well. When I saw the nurse manager a few days later, I asked how the performance review went. She said, "Terrible." I told her "Doing the right thing and how someone responds are two different things." About a year later the staff nurse was terminated for performance issues.

Conclusion

You may be saying to yourself that you are not comfortable with this part of your job. Let me be straightforward, *you are not paid to be comfortable*, you are paid to get the best out of your team members. As long as you make a choice not to act, you also make a choice to diminish the performance of the entire organization and foster discontent in a lot of other people. Face up to difficult conversations. Build a reputation for being a straight shooter.

Chapter 10

The D-I-R-E-C-T Model

Sometimes the hard thing to do and the right thing to do are the same thing.

The Center for Creative Leadership research shows the most challenging part of a manager's job is addressing poor performance. Most managers want to address poor performance, they just don't know how. In this chapter I am going to show exactly how

By the way, I like the term "corrective feedback" rather than "negative feedback." Negative feedback implies punishment. Instead, picture your team member getting off track and your goal is to get them back on track.

I have developed a model for delivering corrective feedback; The D-I-R-E-C-T Model. I think you will find it extremely practical. I have taught this model to thousands of managers. Many say they use it consistently because it is simple and effective.

Let's walk through it.

The Opening

When you deliver corrective feedback to a team member, start the conversation by *pointing to the behavior you want, not the behavior you don't want*. For example, if you are addressing someone's tardiness, don't say: *"I'd like to talk to you about your tardiness,"* or *"I want to talk to you about being late so often."*

That is focusing on the behavior you don't want. It will likely put the employee on the defensive right from the start.

Do say something like: *"I'd like to discuss the importance of being to work on time every day."*

You are still being direct but setting the conversation up for success.

D—Describe the Behavior

Once you open the conversation, describe the behavior. State exactly what you saw or heard. Provide a specific example of what you are referring to. The more specific you are, the more likely they are to be receptive. Avoid labeling people with statements like, "you're lazy" or making judgments like, "you don't seem to care about your job."

"Shape up," "your attitude needs to improve," or "you need to be a better team player" are all vague generalizations and ineffective. Stick to the facts. Facts are most persuasive and least insulting.

Don't say: *"You're constantly late."*

This is vague, not specific. The employee can argue with you about the meaning of the word "constantly."

Do say something like: “Over the last three weeks you have been late seven times.”

By stating the facts, you reduce the possibility of the employee arguing or denying the facts.

I—Solicit Input

Once you state the facts, give the employee a chance to respond. There are two sides to every story so don’t jump to conclusions. Allow the team member to give their perspective.

Here are some possible employee responses when you solicit input, along with strategies to work through them.

1. Personal Problem

If someone is having a personal problem; for example, they are having trouble finding a babysitter. Empathize with them, then return to the issue. Don’t turn into therapist, counselor, or personal problem solver. Express your concern, then return to the issue.

Let’s continue with the tardiness scenario. Imagine your employee tells you they lost their babysitter and are having trouble finding childcare before school.

Don’t say: *“Well, do you have a neighbor who can watch your kids until school starts? Do you have parents that live nearby? What time does your spouse leave for work?”*

Do say something like: *“I’m sorry you are going through that. That has got to be a tough situation. And it’s important that you are at work at 7 o’clock every morning.”*

2. Point to Other Bad Behaviors

Sometimes the person you are addressing will deflect by pointing to someone else. *“Steve comes in late all the time. Why aren’t you talking to him?”*

The strategy for this response is two simple words, “right now.” *“Right now, we are focusing on you.”*

3. Deny or Minimize the Importance of the Bad Behavior

The employee may not take the corrective feedback seriously or they may minimize their bad behavior.

For example:

“It’s not that big of a deal. Besides when I am late, I don’t get paid for the whole day. You are actually saving money.” Or they may say, “I stay later at the end of the day to make up for it. I put my eight hours in.”

If the employee minimizes the corrective feedback, don’t argue with them, simply set your expectations.

“My expectation is for you to be here at 7am every morning.”

4. Become Defensive or Discouraged

The employee may become angry, argumentative, or start to cry. This is tough. Here is my recommendation, the strategy is to have a conversation about the conversation. Step out of the first conversation and enter into a second conversation. It looks like this:

“My job as your manager is to help you be as successful as possible. The reason I am addressing this with you is this behavior is getting in the way of your success. Is there another way that you can suggest on how to share this with you?”

The purpose of a statement like this is to help them see your good intentions and to show how unreasonable their reaction is.

5. There is a Legitimate Reason

If the employee truly has a legitimate reason, work it out. Take into consideration their past performance. There is a big difference between treating everyone equally and treating everyone fairly. We shouldn't treat everyone equally, but we should treat everyone fairly.

There can be a temporary occasion when you extend grace to an employee who is going through a personal problem. If someone has been a contributing, dependable employee for a long time and they are now struggling with a personal problem or a family issue, see what you can do to accommodate them on a temporary basis. Balance the needs of your company with the needs of your employee.

If a new employee is consistently late for work, you still need to know the reason, but that employee should have less leeway than someone with a consistent, positive track record. You want to treat everyone fairly, not necessarily treat everyone equally.

R—Remind Them of the Goal

People tend to live up or down to expectations. An important part of managing performance is setting expectations. Here is where you do it. It should be simple and straightforward.

“It’s my expectation that you are here at 7 am every morning.”

E—State the Effect

Not everyone sees the effect of their behavior on others. Inform the employee of the negative consequences of their behavior on the company, customers, co-workers, or even on them personally.

“When you are not here on time . . .

—you miss our morning huddle and planning for the day;

—a co-worker has to stay over past their shift until you come in; or

—you keep our customers waiting.”

C—Request Change

Make a clear request for change. This is their problem, not your problem or everyone else’s problem. Ask them what they are going to do differently to resolve the issue. It’s up to them to come up with a solution.

“What can you do to make sure you are here, on time, every day?”

T—Follow Through

This is an important step. The employee needs to know you are not going to give up on the issue. They are much more likely to respond positively if they know there will be a follow-up conversation.

“Let’s plan to meet next Monday at 10 a.m. and make sure this issue is resolved and you are back on track.”

If their performance has improved, thank them for responding positively. Thank them.

If there is no improvement or the behavior gets worse, repeat the D-I-R-E-C-T Model but turn up the intensity.

“I am increasingly concerned about your tardiness. We spoke last week and it hasn’t improved.”

At this point you may want to start your company’s disciplinary process. I am giving you the “spirit” of the law with the D-I-R-E-C-T Model, but work with your human resources department for the “letter” of the law. This will likely include your company’s disciplinary warning process.

The Close

Close the discussion by expressing confidence in the person. You want them to be encouraged and motivated to improve, not discouraged.

“The reason I am sharing this with you is I want you to be as successful as possible. I have high expectations of you, and I am confident you can meet them.”

Conclusion

Once you have done your part, it’s now up to the employee. There are several possible employee responses to corrective feedback; some will improve, some will feel the heat and leave, and others will hold on until they are terminated, or you give up addressing them.

If the employee’s performance doesn’t improve, keep the pressure on and turn up the intensity. This isn’t one and done. You may have to have multiple, increasingly hard conversations. Whatever the employee response, your goal is to eliminate the poor behavior and help the employee succeed. Your success as a leader will be in direct proportion to your willingness to step into difficult conversations.

Additional scenario

The above scenario focuses on the issue of tardiness. Tardiness is a very concrete example of poor performance. I am convinced the D-I-R-E-C-T Model can be used effectively in every corrective feedback discussion. Even if you want to address someone's bad attitude, there are behaviors that lead you to believe the employee has a bad attitude. Always address the specific behavior. Let's look at a less concrete example.

Let's say you become increasingly concerned about an employee's dominant personality or ego. Here is how the D-I-R-E-C-T Model conversation might look.

The Opening

Don't say: *"Pat, I want to talk to about your dominating and overpowering personality."*

Do say something like: *"Pat, I'd like to have a discussion regarding the importance of working well with everyone on our team."*

Here you are pointing to the behavior you want, not the behavior you don't want.

D—Describe the Behavior

Don't say: *"You have reputation for being insensitive and arrogant. And you were rude again at the meeting this morning."*

Do say something like: *"In the meeting this morning, you spoke the majority of the time. When Cindy finally had something to say, you immediately*

cut her off and took over the conversation again. I have witnessed this type of situation before.”

You want to address the issue by citing a specific example. Don’t overwhelm them with sixteen examples. They will wonder why you haven’t addressed it before.

I—Solicit Input

This question should be simple and concise.

“Are you aware of how you are coming across? How do you feel about this?”

It is important they have a chance to share their perspective, even if you don’t agree with it.

R—Remind Them of the Goal

Here is where you set clear expectations.

“My expectation for you to be more respectful of others and to allow others to share their ideas. It is important that we work as a team here. We want an environment of collaboration, openness to new ideas, and mutual support.”

E—State the Effect

Let them know how their behavior is affecting others. Help them see themselves as others see them.

“When you interrupt and dominate conversations . . .

—you can intimidate others;

—stifle ideas from others; or

—shut down necessary communication that enables us to work well as a team.”

C—Request Change

Make a clear request for change. Ask them what they are going to do differently to resolve the issue.

This is their problem, not your problem or everyone else's problem. It's not up to you to come up with a solution.

"What are you going to do differently to be a better listener and show that you value the input of others?"

T—Follow Through

Don't forget this step.

"Let's plan to meet in two weeks. We will have had a couple more meetings by then. Let's make sure we keep a collaborative, supportive environment."

The Close

Close the discussion by expressing confidence in the person.

"You are a dependable, committed member of this team. I want you and our team to be as successful as possible. I have confidence you can make the positive changes necessary to help the team."

You can get a free copy of my D-I-R-E-C-T Model Discussion Planner at <http://www.accelerating-excellence.net/resourcegallery>

Chapter 11

Principles of Corrective Feedback

Positive feedback affirms our worth. Corrective feedback increases our value.

Years ago, I met with the CEO of a company to discuss the possibility of providing management training to his leadership team. At the end of our meeting he said, “Del, I like you and I like your material. I have already decided to have you deliver your training here. I also want you to know that in this meeting you said the phrase ‘to be honest with you’ about 15 times. That’s not a good phrase to use. I used to say that a lot and someone pointed it out to me. I thought I would share that with you.” Ouch! That was awkward.

Let’s look at this feedback. First of all, the CEO did provide positive feedback; he liked me, my material, and was going to bring me on board to provide training. That positive feedback was very encouraging to me. It affirmed my worth; but it didn’t actually increase my value. When he informed me about overusing the ill-advised phrase, “to be honest with you,” that increased my value. That was something I could learn from and improve moving forward.

Try looking at delivering corrective feedback to your employees this way. You are trying to increase their value. If it is the first time you need to speak to your employee about an issue, take a presumed innocent approach. In order to solve the problem, the person must be aware of the problem. Most performance issues are due to lack of feedback. There are times when an employee becomes aware of an issue, they apologize, and adjust accordingly.

In the last chapter I shared my D-I-R-E-C-T Model of Corrective Feedback. That is what I call the “skeleton.” In this chapter I want to share with you the “flesh and muscles” of corrective feedback.

Here are 7 Principles of Corrective Feedback.

1. Get comfortable with the uncomfortable.

Understand that you will be uncomfortable delivering corrective feedback. This is normal and even healthy. Take your hesitancy as a sign to move forward. If, on the other hand, you can't wait to confront the person, that is the time to pull back until you get your thoughts together and your emotions under control.

Once during a speaking engagement, someone sitting in the front row passed a note to me. It said, “your zipper is down.” Let me ask you, do you think she felt comfortable informing me? No. Was I comfortable receiving the information? No. Was it the right thing to do? Yes!

When delivering corrective feedback, you will likely feel uncomfortable. The person you are addressing will likely feel uncomfortable. It is still the right thing to do. By the way, you are not paid to be comfortable. You are paid to bring out high performance in your team members.

2. Start with the right motive.

When delivering corrective feedback, your goal is to help the other person. You are not doing this to embarrass, humiliate, or demoralize someone. View your team member as “pre-great” and you want to get them to be great. Any time you are giving corrective feedback, your goal should be to help the employee become more successful, not show them how wrong they are. The idea is to course correct.

Can you remember a time when you were given corrective feedback and you didn’t become defensive? You absorbed it, reflected on it, and learned from it. Why? You likely believed the person giving it had your best interest in mind. If your employee believes you have their best interest in mind, the conversation is likely to go more smoothly. And they are more likely to respond positively.

3. Stay in your lane.

Early in my career I became very frustrated with a manager who reported to me. I was looking for results on a particular project and all I got was excuses. During one discussion I said a thought that popped in my mind and, without thinking it through, I said, “You know, you really have a victim mentality.”

That was a stupid thing to say. I made the conversation much bigger than it needed to be. For the next ninety minutes we had an emotionally draining conversation that was going nowhere. We got way off the issue. When someone feels disrespected, all they can focus on is getting their respect back.

Often, when you say things out of stress, you bring more stress on yourself. In this case, because I didn't think things through, I brought more stress on myself.

Here is how I could have handled the conversation better: *"Given the obstacles and challenges you just shared with me, what can you do to make this project successful?"* Do you see how much more effective and constructive that conversation could have been?

Think through what you are going to say. Make sure your feedback is disciplined and focused. Avoid generalizations like *"you're irresponsible"* or *"you're mean."* That's not staying in your lane, that's hitting the guardrail. These imply personality faults not performance problems.

For example, imagine you are a nurse manager and you want to address an issue with one of your nurses. Notice the difference in these two approaches.

First approach: *"You don't seem to care about your patient's needs."* Wow, talk about making the conversation much bigger than it needs to be!

Second approach: *"I noticed you were having a social conversation in the nursing station while the call light was on."* Much better. Facts, just the facts.

Corrective feedback should be a boundary conversation that focuses on behavior. Discuss what you saw or heard without making judgments.

4. Be objective and accurate

Again, choose your words carefully. Do not exaggerate. Phrases like *"you always," "you never,"* and *"every time,"* reduce the likelihood that they will take you seriously. The employee can dispute that. It can also lead to the

conversation going off on rabbit trails. Soon you are majoring on minors.

5. Talk from beside not from above

Avoid the approach of coming down hard on someone. Make the other person feel you both are on the same team. Be on his or her side. Balance assertiveness with supportiveness. Be hard on the issue but soft on the person.

There is an old saying about an “iron hand in a velvet glove.” Be firm but supportive. By the way, if you have an office, don’t deliver corrective feedback from behind your desk (unless you are terminating the employee). Instead, sit next to the employee.

6. Ask more, tell less

You likely will be inclined to talk too much. Never miss a great opportunity to shut up! Make this a dialogue not a lecture. Ask focused, powerful questions that challenge your employee:

- What can you do to insure you are here at 7 a.m. every morning?
- What will you do differently to work better with Cheryl?
- What are you going to do differently to make your co-workers feel more respected?
- What extra can you offer our customers to provide exceptional service?

7. If necessary, use the phrase: “I need someone in this position who will . . .

- be here consistently at 7 a.m.;
- work well with his/her co-workers; or

—regularly provide customers with outstanding service.”

This is a powerful phrase. I call this phrase the “verbal cold shower.” It should be used only if you feel the employee is not absorbing the significance of their poor behavior. This phrase depersonalizes the situation and lets the person know that you are thinking in terms of the position not the person. It’s a professional way of saying. *“if you won’t do it, I’ll find someone who will.”*

Conclusion

Earlier we focused on the importance of providing positive feedback. If you regularly provide positive feedback, when the time comes to deliver corrective feedback, it likely will be taken with more openness and cooperation.

If you see a troubling pattern in someone’s behavior or attitude, it’s important that you address it. Put thought and effort into making it a constructive conversation. Make it clear in your words and body language that your intention is to help. You want the person coming out better because of it.

Great managers are great at giving feedback, positive and negative. In fact, giving no feedback is seen by employees as worse than just receiving negative feedback. Even when receiving negative feedback, at least the employee can see you are devoting time and energy to them and their performance. Most people want to hear the truth, even if it is unpleasant.

Chapter 12

Managing Your Boss

Make your boss wish they had ten more just like you. Overdeliver. There are three types of bosses: bad bosses, mediocre bosses, and great bosses. No matter which of the three you have at this particular moment, it is your responsibility and to your advantage to forge a good relationship with him or her.

It takes no talent to work with a great boss. Anyone can do that. But if you have a mediocre or bad boss, decide that you are going to do your part well. That is part of maturity and being a professional. If you live in America, you are in a free country and you are a free agent. You can work wherever you want. If it gets intolerable, look elsewhere. Life is too short to be constantly twisted up by a bad boss.

*“If you can’t change your boss, change your attitude or
change your work address.”*

—John Maxwell, author, *Developing the Leader Within You*

Here are 7 ways you can build a strong relationship with your boss.

1. Keep Them Informed.

Bosses don't like surprises. They don't want to be blindsided by something they should have known about. If there was a major customer complaint or an employee safety incident, they want to know. If the project isn't going as planned or you are running over in expenses, let them know. Be a good communicator.

Also, keep them informed of the good things that happen. Your boss is likely dealing with problems and issues all day. If you are able to communicate wins and successes, it brightens their day and you will be seen as someone who is upbeat and positive. If one of your employees receives a customer letter appreciating them for outstanding service, let your boss know. If a project is running ahead of schedule or you filled a key position with an outstanding candidate, let them know. Communicate good news as well as problems.

2. With Every Problem, Bring a Solution.

I had a manager who reported to me and she would frequently say, "*you have a problem with such and such.*" And the problem was in her department! She would drop her department problems in my lap.

When you bring issues to your boss, always have at least a proposed solution. You may not have the best answer, but you want to convey that you have thought through the issue. You want to be seen as solution oriented, not problem oriented. You want to come across as a winner not a whiner. It is perfectly fine, once you have proposed a solution to ask your boss for guidance and direction. But offer a solution first. If you are unsure about a

particular solution, you could also offer several alternatives and ask your boss what direction they would like you to go in.

3. Seek out Their Expectations and Priorities.

Most bosses are not good at communicating their expectations and priorities. When I worked in a corporate job and reported to the CEO, in our monthly meeting, I would often say something like, “So these are my top priorities right now. This is what I am devoting my time and energy on. Do these priorities match up with the priorities you have for me? Is there something else you think I should be working on?” Almost every time he would say that I was on target, but I wanted to make sure. I encourage you to do the same. Not only will it clarify what you should be working on, simply asking the question will reflect well on you.

4. Adjust to their Style

Think about how your boss likes to communicate. Do they like to meet face to face or do they prefer email? Do they like structured meetings that get right to the point or do they like to chit chat for a bit before getting down to business?

I once had a boss who was consistently late for our scheduled one-to-one meetings. A colleague of mine who also reported to the same boss eventually got fed up and said to her, “You are consistently late to our meetings, that is irresponsible and unprofessional. I expect you to be on time in the future.” Now this is the someone saying this to her boss. That was the beginning of the end of that relationship.

Was she technically right? Yes. But you have to choose your battles. And there was no way I was going to die on that hill. (Besides, my boss had so many positive qualities.) Here was my strategy; when it came time for my bi-weekly one-to-ones, I would arrive at my boss's office, assuming she would not be there. I simply said to her assistant, "When she gets in, give me a call. I'll be in my office."

Think how your boss likes to operate. What's their style? Do your best to adjust. Use relational intelligence and situational awareness.

5. Put Them in a Positive Light

Be loyal to your boss. Say and do things that reflect well on them. If you need to implement a change that you don't necessarily agree with, don't bad mouth the change or say the boss is making you do it. That makes you look weak; you are giving up your power and influence. Communicate the reasons for the change and do your best to carry it out and make the change successful.

Don't bad mouth or criticize your boss. Nothing good can come of it. And it very well may come back and bite you in the butt. Nobody's perfect. We all have weaknesses. If you have a significant issue with your boss, tactfully discuss it with them. But talking about how bad your boss is to people who can't do anything about it will not work out well for you.

6. Give Them Positive Feedback

We have already covered the importance of giving your employees positive feedback. But what about giving positive feedback to your boss? Positive feedback doesn't have to be just downward, it can and should go upward. I am

talking about kissing up or being a brown-noser. But I am saying that if your boss does something well, sincerely compliment them. Be specific. Let them know what they do well and why it matters to you. I am not encouraging you to lie and tell them they're a great boss if they are not. But from time to time sincerely compliment them on what they do well. They probably don't have many people giving them positive feedback.

7. Ask to Lighten Their Load

Imagine if one of your employees or a co-worker came to you and said something like this: *"I noticed you have a lot going on and your plate is full, is there something I can help you with?"* After you picked yourself up off the floor, you would really appreciate the offer.

Asking your boss question like this conveys three things:

- You are invested in your boss's success
- You are willing to go beyond your job description
- You take initiative and are proactive

You can be a great parent even if you don't have great parents. And you can be a great boss even if you don't have a great boss yourself.

You can influence the relationship you have with your boss. Here is what I have found: too often employees only focus on what they need from their bosses. I believe that if you give your boss what she needs from you, eventually, your boss will give you what you want.

In the same way that you want your direct reports to succeed, your aim should be to help your boss succeed. You are there to remove obstacles for your boss, not be an obstacle. Be an asset to your boss, not a pain in their . . . (you know what I mean).

Chapter 13

The Privilege of Leadership

Leadership requires a different set of behaviors.

Years ago, a supervisor who reported to me said that he was frustrated by the lack of respect employees were showing him. Here is what I noticed, every day he would eat lunch with the people he supervised. Because it was lunch time and everyone was “off the clock,” he felt he could let his guard down and go unfiltered. He would gossip, make fun of others, and tell inappropriate jokes. Once they were back on the clock he expected his team to respect him. But life doesn’t work that way.

Your most powerful ally in being influential is your example. When you are a leader, everything you say and do takes on extra importance. Presume you are always on stage. It would be wise to imagine the spotlight and microphone are always on you. Everything you do is amplified, good or bad. No one is perfect, but you need to think of yourself as a role model. Show up every day bringing your best self to work.

“Your job gives you authority. Your behavior earns you respect.”

—Irwin Federman, General Partner, U. S. Venture Partners

10 Qualities of an Influential Leader

As I conclude this book, I want to share ten qualities of an influential leader.

Jim Collins in his book, *Good to Great*, talks about the best leaders possessing a combination of personal humility and professional will. What a great combination. Great leaders are personally humble, but they have a fire in their belly regarding their work. As I have said, warmth and strength are the dynamic duo of leadership.

1. Influential Leaders are Humble

They don't think less of themselves; they think of themselves less. An influential leader is all about others, not themselves. They give others credit. They know they don't have all the answers. They ask others for advice.

“Being powerful is like being a lady: if you have to tell people you are, you aren't.”

—Margaret Thatcher

2. Influential Leaders Display Integrity

Influential leaders are solid on the inside. They possess high character. They follow through and follow up. They keep commitments, meet deadlines, and

get back to others. They admit shortcomings, apologize when necessary, and keep confidences.

3. Influential Leaders are Caring

Influential leaders see employees as human beings not two by fours to get the job done. They make an effort to remember and use names. They take a personal interest in others. They give others their focused attention. They make every person feel like a very important person. They are delighted for the success of others. A good leader empathizes when an employee is experiencing a personal difficulty.

4. Influential Leaders are Strong Communicators

Influential leaders are simplifiers. When communicating, they are easy to understand and easy to follow. They are clear and compelling in their speech. They communicate the purpose and vision of the team often. They are good teachers. They are generous at giving positive feedback and effective when delivering corrective feedback. They choose their words carefully.

5. Influential Leaders See Greatness in Others

Influential leaders desire for others to grow closer and closer to their potential. They understand everyone is gifted. They seek to bring out that giftedness so the person can flourish as well as contribute to the organization.

6. Influential Leaders Challenge Others to Greatness

Influential leaders are great encouragers. They give others confidence. They push others out of their comfort zone for the purpose of growth and development. They provide corrective feedback so others can

be better. They set high expectations and challenge others to live up to those expectations.

“The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own.”

—Benjamin Disraeli

7. Influential Leaders Empower Others

Influential leaders don't have to do or control everything. They seek the opinions and advice of others.

Rather than micromanage, they give others appropriate freedom to make choices regarding their work. They delegate responsibility and empower others in their work.

8. Influential Leaders Promote Harmony

Influential leaders have little tolerance for internal competition, department silos, and interpersonal conflict. They address poor behaviors and attitudes that slow down or hurt the team. They step into conflict by bringing parties together to work things through constructively.

9. Influential Leaders are Confident

Influential leaders are respectful of others but never intimidated. They are poised and have a strong self-belief. They know they are unable to please everyone and are willing to make tough decisions. They are proactive. They play offense, not defense.

10. Influential Leaders are Optimistic

Influential leaders are realistic and optimistic at the same time. They define reality and give hope. They paint a picture of a bright future. They energize others.

“You can’t be great and negative at the same time.”

—Dan Rockwell, author of popular Leadership Freak blog

The Benefits of Employee Engagement

In the end, as a manager you will be evaluated on your ability to motivate and retain critical talent along with your ability to effectively address poor performers. Practicing the 7 Senses of Employee Engagement takes time and effort. It is hard work. Delivering corrective feedback requires thoughtfulness and emotional energy. But when you engage employees, your work and life become much easier. The payoff is worth it.

When you practice the 7 Senses of Employee Engagement, you can expect:

Higher Performance. Your team will be more productive and perform at a higher level. They won’t be satisfied with mediocrity Your team will become a pocket of excellence in your organization.

Better Customer Service. Your staff will go out of their way to deliver extraordinary service to the customer. There is always a direct correlation to employee engagement and customer satisfaction. If your team members are enthusiastic about their work, they are more likely to delight their customers.

Increased Collaboration. When people feel recognized, well informed, and a sense of community, they work well together. Everyone is on the same page and willing to help one another out.

More Positive Work Environment. When everyone is pulling for one another and relationships are strong, people enjoy their work. It becomes a rewarding part of their life. The environment becomes very supportive.

Less Turnover. Employees know a great leader when they experience one. And they know that it's rare to have a great boss, so they tend to stay.

As you can see, when you do all the hard work of doing it right as a manager, everybody's life gets easier. Many people will spend two-thirds of their life working. Work can be a slog, or it can be fun. It can be a grind, or it can be rewarding. A lot of it is up to you. You can move people from having to come to work to wanting to come to work. You can lead offensively rather than manage defensively.

Finally, here is what I consider the best benefit of being a great boss—you give others a better life! When I reported to Pam, not only was my work life better, my whole life was better. I enjoyed weekends and vacations more. I had less stress and worry. I knew she had my back. I knew she was on my side. As I said before, work became an enjoyable, rewarding, and fulfilling part of my life.

When your career is over, I am confident the most rewarding memories will be the ones where you helped others succeed. Where the people you influenced achieved more than they thought they were capable of.

The classic definition of management is “getting work done through people.” I think the classic definition of leadership is “getting people done through work.”

You were not put you on this earth to be ordinary. Be bigger than your job; leave a legacy. An inheritance is something you leave for someone; a legacy is something you leave in someone.

“The joy of leadership is helping others succeed.”

—Roger Stilson, Restaurateur

Thank You

Thank you for reading the *7 Senses of Employee Engagement*. It is my hope you found the information practical and insightful.

My next book, *Peak Productivity: How to Focus on the Important, Manage the Necessary*, and *Enjoy Life Along the Way*, is scheduled to be released in September 2020.

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