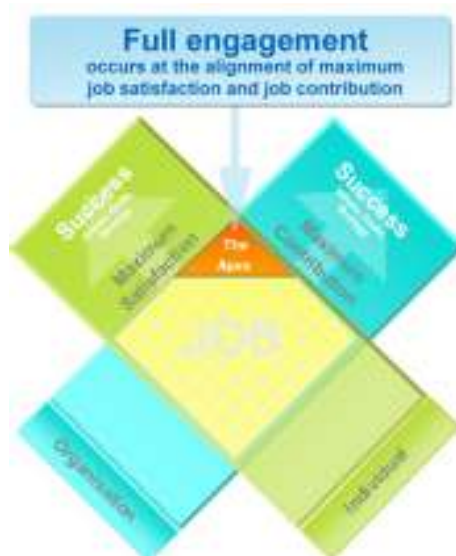


How to Lead Happy & Productive People In Challenging Times

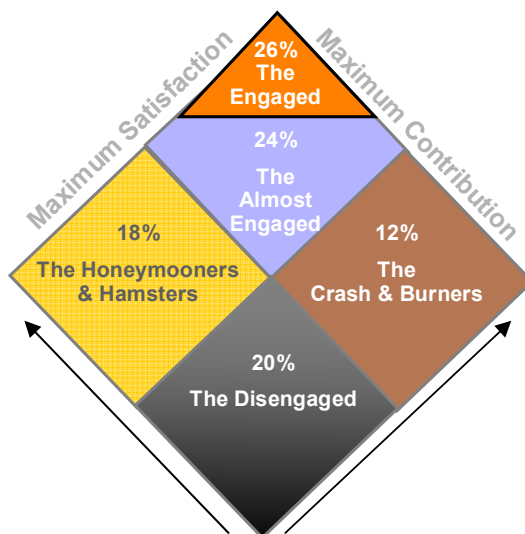
The basis of any good relationship is mutual needs satisfaction. In business it is important that your employees know what they have to do to achieve business outcomes. And it is important that they understand how they can satisfy their needs whilst working for you. This is termed “Employee Engagement” which BlessingWhite defines as occurring when your employees are “enthused and in gear”.

The best way to achieve a win-win outcome for all is to have employees doing what they are good at, what they enjoy – and of course doing and what is needed by the business. The diagram below summarises how the employer’s and employee’s paths cross for mutual satisfaction.



Key BlessingWhite Employee Engagement Research Findings

Last year BlessingWhite completed a Global Survey which found that only 26% of the Australian workforce is fully engaged (Lagging significantly behind India at 34%, but considerably better from China at 10%). So, chances are that only about a quarter of the people who work for you know what they are supposed to be doing and are doing what they are good at and enjoy. You are also likely to have about 20% of people working for you who are wasting their and your time doing low priority stuff that they are not very good at - in misery and cynicism.



In these tough times, you simply cannot afford to be carrying people who are disengaged.

Here are ten steps you can take to get people to be more productive and enthused at work:

1. Lead

You are a, if not *the*, critical ingredient in achieving employee engagement. You need to be active, not passive. You need to demonstrate energy and believe in what your business is doing.

2. Hire (and keep!) high performing team members

Hang on to people who know what they want and who are good at what they want to do (and who of course who are contributing highly at work.) You cannot afford, particularly in times of economic stress, to hang on to low contributors and unhappy people. You could even use this time to poach great employees from other firms to build your capacity for the boom that always follows difficult times.

3. Earn trust every day

Do what you say you will do. Be consistent and dependable. Don't talk behind other employee's backs.

4. Be clear on, and communicate your business direction

Not only do you need to be clear on what you are aiming at, you need to ensure your employees know why the business exists and what it will achieve. In difficult times, they also need to know how stable it is. If you are stable, tell them so they do not look outside for a more stable business. If you are at financial risk, tell them so they know everyone needs to man the pumps and save the ship.

5. Create meaning for employees

People value their job more if it has meaning. How their contribution fits into the big picture. A story is told of President Kennedy visiting NASA and asking a sweeper what his job was. "I am helping put a man on the moon by keeping the centre clean." We all like knowing that what we are doing contributes to a bigger goal.

6. Feedback is a gift

Employees want to know how they are going. They deserve information that can help them achieve their goals and the organization's. Let them know what they do well so they can keep doing those things with confidence. Suggest course corrections to help them use their time and effort most efficiently.

7. Talk and listen more

Communication (especially in today's email-driven workplace) is often one-way. Conversation, on the other hand, is about dialogue between two or more people. Conversation drives clarity. It is by far the most effective vehicle for providing performance feedback. It is the only way to efficiently generate new ideas for increasing business results and personal job satisfaction. It helps prevent misunderstandings. It builds trust.

8. Match projects, passion, and proficiency

Every person comes to work with a different combination of personal values, talents and goals, which they are looking to satisfy on the job. They don't necessarily want a lofty title, a higher salary, or your job. If you can help them connect what's important to them with what's important to the organisation, you can make a positive impact on their job satisfaction, commitment, and contribution. It is important not to exploit those who contribute highly, but who get little job satisfaction, the "Crash and Burners". Don't wait for people to burn out. Try and help them find ways to make working with you more personally satisfying. This is not only decent; it helps you keep people who you depend on the most.

9. Develop your people

You don't need to be their friend, but you do need to get them to perform highly and find their work satisfying.

- Size up your Disengaged. If they have good potential, spell out clearly how they need to contribute and what they need to learn. You may need to get them to leave for their own good... and yours. For those with potential, spell out business expectations and provide them with the developmental opportunities that will make it easier for them to contribute more.
- Don't take the Engaged for granted. Full engagement is hard to sustain on one's own. Nurture them, recognize them, stretch them, and develop them. They not only contribute highly, they have a positive influence on others.

10. Ensure YOU are engaged

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Ask yourself, “Why would anyone want to be led by me?” If you are a martyr hating your work, but “soldiering on”, you put negative energy into the business. Even worse, if you are disengaged and not being very good at it (possibly because you have not kept up with changes), then you will be millstone in the business. You need to work out what you like doing and are good at, and where this is useful. My dentist has recently sold his practice because he has never really liked running a business. He is now reemployed there and loving it because he finds using his dentistry skills satisfying, especially without the worry of running a business. And he now has a 4 day week, so he can play golf every Friday.

Need assistance with getting your people more productive and happy?

If you want the full BlessingWhite research report and recommendations upon which this article is based, or if you want help in getting you employees more engaged, contact **Reg Polson at +613 98894455** or email regp@blessingwhiteap.com

Adapted by Reg Polson from BlessingWhite articles and reports
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