

LeaderPerfect Newsletter

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How to Create a More Engaged Team

by Dr. Mike Armour

Even novice managers recognize that their organization performs at its best when the workers are engaged and morale is high. What is often missed, however, is that leaders and managers must make every effort to be engaged with their workers before the workers will reciprocate with engagement in the organization.

Or to put it another way, people are not particularly inspired or effectively motivated by managers and leaders who seem unengaged, aloof, or disinterested in them. So what does it mean for a leader to be engaged?

Dependent on the context, the English word "engagement" has a variety of connotations, including:

- Connection — When a locking mechanism is fully engaged it is appropriately connected.
- Commitment — When a man and woman are engaged to be married, they are fully committed to one another.
- Collaborative Communication — When we engage someone in conversation, we anticipate a two-way, collegial dialogue in which we both listen carefully.
- Captivation — When we find an idea engaging, we say that it captivates us, that it captures our imagination.

These four words provide a helpful roadmap for the process by which leaders engage their people.

- As a leader or manager you must first *connect* with your people at a personal level.
- Then, through this connection, you must demonstrate your *commitment* to them and your care for them.
- Next you must practice *collaborative communication* in your relationship with them.

- And finally you must convey your aspirations for them and for the organization in such a way that you *captivate* their imagination.

These are key elements in connecting with your people:

- Presence — People are unlikely to connect with you if you are an absentee manager. Make a point of "managing by walking about."
- Personal interest in them — Learn people's names; learn things about their family, their children; if it will help you remember these details, build a tickler file containing this information. Regularly ask for updates on activities that you know they enjoy away from work. Drop them emails on birthdays, wedding anniversaries, etc.
- Casual conversation — Provide opportunities for small gatherings of people to spend time with you in relaxed, informal settings where they can come to know you better and you can come to know them better, as well.

When a leader consistently demonstrates a commitment to his or her people, they are far more likely to be engaged workers. To demonstrate commitment to the workers on your team, take actions such as these:

- Do everything practical to provide them a safe, comfortable, practical working area.
- Show interest in each person's career and professional development.
- Ask, "What can I do to help you with your job and responsibilities?"
- Be responsive to their suggestions and complaints.
- Seek their input on changes that will impact them personally, their work team, or their work environment.
- Keep surprises to a minimum.
- Give them feedback when you take action on matters that they have brought to your attention.

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