

Finding the Sweet Spot between Company Performance and Employee Joy

'Twas the end of the year and all through the office, employees seemed, well happy. Visions of time off, upcoming vacations, and a lighter workload danced in their heads while leadership scratched their heads wondering how they can make this feeling stick all year round.

This scenario begs the question: Is it really on the shoulders of leadership to create this type of holiday joy in the workplace all year?

In effort to recruit, retain, and reward employees, leaders may fall into the trap of trying to create utopias, which in the end prove to be distractions from business goals and results that leaders need to achieve to keep finances in the black.

But what if there was a way to infuse joy into the workplace that focused on harnessing an individual's value and contributions that truly connected them to the organization's purpose while at the same time, allowing senior leadership to focus on productivity and overall performance? There is: *Optimizing employee talent and making your individual team members feel valued uncovers the sweet spot between company performance and employee happiness.*

Employee Engagement: Bah Humbug!

Many senior leaders are far-removed from the front lines and focus on making decisions that impact the collective organization as opposed to those of individual players. As a result, they are often fearful of looking like a Scrooge because the perception is that they are so focused on company success that they no longer care about the well-being of those carrying out the day-to-day work.

In an attempt to get a read on the engagement level of their employees, top leaders will often implement employee engagement surveys in hopes that they will reveal the "magic bullet" on how to make everyone happy. More often than not, these tools are full of empty promises because they don't gather the right metrics. Or, leadership gets bogged down with other responsibilities and the time and cost to implement the results of the surveys outweigh the benefits.

A Lesson from the Grinch

Remember the line from the Grinch Who Stole Christmas after the Grinch learns the true meaning of the holiday?

"It came without ribbons; it came without tags. It came without packages, boxes, or bags. Maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas means a little more."

The same goes for employee engagement. Often times, leaders make the mistake of equating employee perks with employee engagement when the truth is it takes much more than employee perks to have a truly engaged workforce.

Sure, everyone loves a holiday party at an upscale venue or access to an onsite gym, but these things aren't what connect your people emotionally to their work. They are rewards and have their place, but at the end of the day, don't help you move the needle forward when it comes to optimizing talent.

The Best Gifts Under the Tree

Have you unwrapped the magic of your middle management team? Those who interact with your front-line team each and every day and have a pulse on what's happening in your business? They are your greatest gift. Mobilize your middle management group by giving them the tools to help understand what drives their people's behaviors.

Despite the notion (and sometimes expectation) that you can separate the personal from the professional, the reality is we can't compartmentalize and the "whole" person shows up to work. It's inevitable that your folks will come to work with baggage that spills into the workplace. By arming your middle leaders appropriately, you give them the tools and communications strategies to make the workplace a sanctuary of personal satisfaction. Fostering a deeper sense of purpose for their direct reports and their work, can clearly connect them to the broader goals of the organization, which results in a more engaged and joyful workforce.

Furthermore, as a senior leader, you must train and empower these middle managers to effectively communicate, regardless of the situation. There is no cookie-cutter or one-size fits all. It's all individualized and while a person's tasks can be managed, he or she must be led in a way that inspires them. This is where tools like The Predictive Index comes into play because they uncover insights that allow managers to build a team that are inclusive, diverse, and complimentary.

Aside from empowering your middle management, it's important to remember that employee engagement is also tied to job fit and the recruitment of the right people. You need to have a methodology to put the right people in the right positions. The people need to fit your culture and vice versa. Ask yourself these key questions:

- Do you understand what success looks like for your jobs?
- How does your new hire fit on the current team?
- Does your manager's style fit with your new hire?
- Is there clear alignment of the four: Manager, job requirement, new hire, and team?

Making Spirits Bright

Now that we've discussed how employee perks don't equal an engaged workforce and how you can arm your middle managers with tools to be successful, let's talk about rewards and recognition. And no, we're not talking about a subscription to the "Jelly of the Month" club that Clark Griswold was gifted in "Christmas Vacation."

Individual contributors often feel their leaders can't or will not help them advance their careers and sometimes feel that good work will be credited to the manager. This leads to employee dissatisfaction and a revolving door.

Managers and senior leadership alike need to find time and ways to celebrate the wins within the organization and make employees feel valued regarding outcomes. This is where formal and informal recognition programs come into play where the contributions of top contributors are highlighted. While it doesn't seem significant, something like this has the potential of going a long way in creating pride and ultimately joy for a front-line employee.

Joy to the World

Today's leaders face a myriad of pressures when it comes to employee engagement: growing economies, low unemployment rates, and a constantly changing workforce. As you rise up the leadership ladder, your view and how you steer the ship changes. Give your middle management the tools they need to work with their direct reports while you find your own joy in guiding the organization collectively.

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