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One Minute Ideas

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You enter a room to attend a meeting. Two seats are empty. One would put you on the same side of the table as your opponents and your boss. The other would put you across from them. Which do you head for?

Achieving Potential

November 2009

In this month's edition of our monthly newsletter "Achieving Potential," we highlight employee engagement tips which can help you and your team achieve results.

We coach individuals and organizations and help them achieve their true potential.

Building Employee Engagement

Most managers, and the companies they work for, quickly and decisively deal with employee absenteeism. After all, unscheduled absences cost organizations hundreds of dollars per employee, decrease productivity and visibly affect the bottom line.

Typically, the work culture is really to blame and creating a culture where employees want to work is ultimately the solution.



There is a far more common problem than absenteeism, however. The problem is that of employee engagement. Employees who are disengaged with their workplace and with the work they do can drag down team performance. Employees who are disengaged show up for work, but they leave their hearts and minds somewhere else. Once again, culture is often at the heart of both the problem and the solution. Leadership provided by management is key to creating an attractive work culture. It is also said that employees do not leave jobs; they leave supervisors.

The book "First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently" (Marcus Buckingham & Curt Coffman) used data collected over 25 years with a million employees to identify the basic roles of a great leader/manager.

The potential effect of great leadership was summarized in the 12 questions

Suggestions:

· Think opposite.
The power positions are opposite your competition or chief decision maker. Don't sit on the same side of the table or next to someone you want to influence.

Reasons: You can't make appropriate eye contact. You also nullify the benefit of facial and hand gestures. It doesn't matter if the table is square, rectangular, oval, or round. Sit opposite.

· Consider table "weight."
If there's too much contention on one side of the table - you and your opponent - table weight is unbalanced. The meeting leader may silence your side of the table just to get the other side involved. In addition, you may lose some opportunities to press your points.
Source: Gary Sorrell, Sorrell Associates

employees ask - and the measure of successful management lies in if and how leaders provide the answers:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had the opportunity at work to learn and grow?

As a leader, how would you answer the questions above if asked by your employees? What do they think? Your role as a leader is to ensure your employees get satisfactory answers to these questions. Do so, and you make your workplace an attractive place to be and a desirable place to work.

If you're not sure, you are missing an opportunity to use the most valuable link to peak performance - keeping your staff learning and engaged.

According to Fast Company Magazine, here is how the U.S. World work population segments out:

26% Engaged (we call them Enhancers - loyal and productive)
55% Not Engaged (we call them Neutralizers - just putting in time)
19% Actively Disengaged (we call them Diminishers - unhappy and spreading their discontent)

The cost of employee disengagement is alarming. Lack of Employee Loyalty always shows up in your Customer Loyalty Score. Most organizations need outside help to erase the gap between leadership vision and the daily habits of your employees. Internal consultants are too close to the problem, if not part of the problem, they have too much to lose to make proper recommendations for action, and they seldom have true independent authority to drive required action.

The cost of employee disengagement can destroy a company. The rewards are significant for closing the gap between company strategy and the desire of employees to engage in that strategy.

Do you want to secure your legacy as a leader? Start scheduling time with your

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employees to seriously discuss these 12 questions. Come up with the right answers and you will be a hero to everyone.

Sources: 12 questions developed by the Gallop Organization.
Marucs Buckingham & Curt Coffman, "First Break All the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently"
Fast Company Magazine

5 Tips for Workplace Retention Across Generations

The generational challenge is not one that rests solely on the shoulders of organizations or seasoned professionals. It's equally important to educate all generations on the magnificence and importance of these differences. Here are some tips and techniques for leading across generations, regardless of generation. Highly effective teams can achieve extraordinary results for the organizations that they serve. Achieving success for the organization leads to greater personal success and achievement. Yet in truth, team success is not guaranteed. So, here are five common barriers to team success and what you can do to avoid them.



1. Educate Yourself.

Generational differences are real and, if not well understood can cause clash, which slows productivity. That said, locate three professionals of different generations and ask them to share about themselves: what's important to them, why it's important to them, how they got to where they are. This will help you to gain an understanding and respect for your differences and locate your commonalities. Also, find three books on generational diversity and dive in. The three that I highly recommend are: From Boomers To Bloggers: Success Strategies Across Generations, Generations at Work, and Retiring the Generation Gap: How Young Employees Young and Old can Find Common Ground.

2. Generate a Clear Vision.

If you are in a leadership position, it is your responsibility to create a clear vision for your team. While your organization may have its own mission/vision statement, it is incredibly valuable to create one for your team. The leader creates the vision, which gives the long-term goal of where you, the team and the organization are headed. Doing so will create a clear pathway to success and everyone enjoys the great feeling success brings. In order to create a vision, ask yourself the following questions: What problem(s) do you solve? What needs do you fill? What specifically do you sell? How do you make money? What is your revenue model? How is your organization different from every other organization out there? What is your organization's

unique selling proposition?

3. Generate a Clear Mission.

A mission is a statement of purpose put together by a team of people, which creates clarity, focus, teamwork, personal accountability, and inspiration. It gives direction as to how the vision will be achieved. Bringing key people together to strategize on your mission naturally creates synergy, teamwork, and collaboration. Consider bringing your team together, articulating your vision, let them know that none of it is possible without them, and request their support in generating a short, pithy, inspiring mission. You can use some of the same questions to prompt their thought process. Ask your team: Are you clear about where we're headed and the importance of your contribution?

4. Get to know your team.

Consider what you will gain by knowing what motivates your team members. It is possible that either you are in a position that plays against your strengths or you have people on your team who are in positions that are not in alignment with their natural talents. Getting to know yourself and/or your team will aid you greatly in getting the most out of each person, yourself included. Each generation is motivated and inspired differently - understanding these differences and learning how to best harness your talent will only add to your credibility as a leader. Ask yourself: Am I playing to my strengths? And, am I leading others to play to their strengths?

5. Acknowledge your team consistently.

Identify ways to publicly and privately acknowledge your teammates for their hard work. Give them the credit they desire and deserve. I distinctly remember a Senior Vice President at a Fortune 5 company say these specific words: "I know I have an excellent Sales Manager when I compliment her/him on their work and they quickly ensure I know it's their team doing all the heavy lifting."

Remember ... if you don't know yourself and your team, you'll never get the most out of them. "Be the change" -take time to learn about YOURSELF and YOUR team. Capitalize on playing to your strengths.

Author: As the CEO of Inspirion Inc., Misti Burmeister is committed to helping organizations and individuals reach their potential across the generations through individual and corporate coaching, speaking and emerging leadership seminars.

Top 10 Business Networking Blunders

Business networking can be a very powerful tool for advertising and marketing your business and its services. In fact many small businesses rely on networking events for new sales leads yet a lack of savvy about business networking techniques and you'll get nowhere.

Networking is a powerful way of building professional relationships and generating new business opportunities. It is a reciprocal process based on the exchange of ideas, advice, contact and referrals. Although there is no one-size fits all way to network, it is important to remember proper business etiquette in approaching and developing new professional relationships.

Apply the right business networking techniques and you could be well on the way to growing your small business but get it wrong and you'll be left wondering why other rave about the power of networking. So here's a top ten list of gaffes some networkers make and advice on how to avoid these blunders.

1. Only talk about yourself.

What a bore. Remember the net worker credo "how can I help you?" Be a giver of qualified leads and referrals and help your fellow net worker's make connections. This will have a positive effect on your reputation.

2. Schedule a meeting immediately.

A networking event should not be viewed as an opportunity to fill up your calendar. It is more advantageous to get to know people first before taking out your Palm Pilot. By acting too eager you may be perceived as looking at other participants only as dollar signs. If a connection is made, ask for permission to call or e-mail them within a specific time frame. ("Would you mind if I called you early next week to set up an appointment to continue our conversation?")

3. Monopolize their time.

Everyone attending an event is looking to increase their networking base. When you monopolize someone's time, they are unavailable to meet new people. Be considerate and spend only two to five minutes with each person than move on. If someone corners you for too long, politely disengage by saying, "It has been such a pleasure talking to you, but I'm sure there are other people here you'd like to meet."

4. Name Drop.

You may know many people that networkers want to get acquainted with, but this will eventually come out in conversation once you determine who the networker would like to meet. Bragging about people you know turns others off.

5. Interrupt conversations.

Nobody likes a "butinsky." Wait your turn and in the meantime try to strike up

a conversation with someone else.

6. Ask personal questions.

If you just met a person it does not show the best judgment to ask how much money they make, marital status, religious bent, or age. If a future business exchange requires personal information, then it should be done in follow-up conversations. Keep the mood light and interesting.

7. Give everyone your business card.

"He who collects the most business cards wins." This is a misguided philosophy of many net workers. Business cards should serve as an extension of your business and be selectively distributed. Carry your cards in a case and give them only to people that you've made a connection with and who requests them.

8. Three is a crowd.

"One is OK and three or more is OK, but never two." If someone is standing alone at an event it is fine to go up and introduce yourself. If three or more people are talking, go ahead and join the group too. If two people are facing each other and engaged in conversation, don't disturb them, but make a mental note to approach one or both of them later.

9. Look around the room.

Of all the ways we communicate with people, eye contact is the most powerful and makes a positive impression. Don't blow it by looking around the room while engaged in conversation-unless of course, you tip them off beforehand that you are looking for someone you had promised to meet.

10. Tell inappropriate jokes or use offensive language.

No one thinks it is funny or cute to tell a blonde joke or swear like a sailor. In business, your image is everything. Set a good example and you'll attract like minded people and increase your chances of achieving success.

Author: Passionate networker Louise Yates shares business networking techniques and advice for word of mouth marketing, generating referrals and sales leads together with executive coaching centres and programs for business performance, life and career development.

Motivational Quotes

"When you get to the end of your rope, Tie a knot and hang on."

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

"Nothing so conclusively proves a man's ability to lead others as what he does from day to day to lead himself."

- Thomas J. Watson

"Wise are those who learn that the bottom line doesn't always have to be their top priority."

- William A. Ward

For results you can count on, contact Performance Development Strategies, LLC at 914-953-4458 or Email: grant@pdstrategies.com

Make it a GREAT day,

Grant Schneider

Performance Development Strategies, LLC