

THE DONALD COOPER CORPORATION

Speaking and coaching internationally on management, marketing and profitability



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20 tips to help your staff 'feel' important...and be more engaged:

'Employee engagement and retention is the biggest challenge in most businesses today. I'm frequently asked by clients what they can do to make their staff feel that they're an important part of the Team. The short answer is to actually make them an important part of the Team...and they'll feel important. 'Smoke and mirrors' and pretty speeches about 'teamwork' won't cut it.

Employees who are not fully engaged in their job, or to the commitments of the business, carry a huge cost in inefficiency, customer frustration, low company morale and profitability. Employees who are actively disengaged are toxic and destructive. Sadly, you may have more of these people than you think.

Here are some shocking statistics from the '**State of the Global Workplace**' report from international research and consulting firm, Gallup Inc.

First, let's start with 3 simple definitions:

- 1. 'Fully engaged' employees:** Employees who are highly involved in and enthusiastic about their work and workplace. They drive performance and innovation and are committed to the success of the company.
- 2. 'Not engaged' employees:** These employees are psychologically detached from their work and the company. They're just putting in time and don't care about their job, the customer, or the success of the company.
- 3. 'Actively disengaged' employees:** These employees aren't just unhappy at work; they're resentful that their needs aren't being met and they're acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these employees are actively undermining the business and the accomplishments of others.

Now for the shocking numbers...according to Gallup Inc:

- 1.** In **Western Europe** only 10% of employees are fully engaged, 71% are not engaged and 19% are actively disengaged.
- 2.** In **Australia** only 14% of employees are fully engaged, 71% are not engaged and 15% are actively disengaged.
- 3.** In the **USA and Canada** 31% of employees are fully engaged, 52% are not engaged and 17% are actively disengaged.

Imagine, the positive impact on your business, your customers and your bottom line if you could increase the number of fully engaged employees on your Team and get rid of the non-performers.

Donald's 20 tips to help your staff 'feel' important...and be more engaged:

Below are my 20 tips on how to help your employees feel more important and be more engaged. Use the **check boxes** on the left to rate your company or department's current performance in each specific tip on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being excellent. If you really want to know how engaging your culture is, ask a cross-section of your employees to also read and rate this checklist.

1. Explain why **what we do as a company** is important to our customers, our suppliers, the community, the environment and the economy. Also explain the negative impact on people's lives if we, as a company, 'mess up'.

2. Explain why **their particular job** is important to our customers, to the Team, to the environment and to the bottom line.

3. Start new employees off with a proper introduction, welcome and onboarding so that they feel valued and important from day one. Assign a mentor / guide to each new employee to help them navigate through the first few weeks. Choose your 'Guides' wisely.

Give them the ongoing **training, resources, tools and encouragement** to do their job well and then **empower** them to do it. When we don't train our staff properly, we're telling them that how they do the job is not important. And, if we don't think it's important, why should they?

Never promote an employee without a clear and specific training and coaching package to make sure that they're a success in their new position...or, even better, train and coach them before promoting them. Many businesses promote good people to positions for which they're not suited or properly trained. These employees are being set up for failure, lost confidence, embarrassment, personal stress and, perhaps being terminated through no fault of their own.

4. **Pay them well, reward performance...and deal with non-performance.** The best people won't work for the least amount of money. They have career options...and they know it.

Agree on performance commitments, measure or monitor performance and reward success with money or meaningful perks...or both. Deal firmly and promptly with chronic non-performers, toxic personalities or proven dishonest employees. Get the documentation right before you terminate to avoid an ugly and costly mess. Good people leave because poor performers or toxic employees are allowed to stay.

5. Make sure that our **Team members have time** 'to be people' and to carry out the other responsibilities and commitments in their lives. Create a culture that focuses on and balances both business and personal outcomes.

Idea: Sit with each Team member and have a conversation about 3 things they'd like to accomplish in their career and their personal lives in the next 3 years and commit to help them achieve those 3 things. Then tell them about 3 things that you want or need to accomplish in the business in the next 3 years and ask them for their help in making those happen. This may sound way too 'Zen' for some of you, but it works!

6. Treat every employee with **trust, fairness, respect, dignity and joy.** If they're not deserving of that treatment, they don't belong on your Team.

- 7. **'Thank' them every day.** Good people want to know that they make a difference and a 'thank you' every day confirms that they did. If they did something specific that was wonderful, 'thank' them specifically. But if they were just generally wonderful again today, just say 'thank you'. They know what they did and they'll fill in the blanks.
- 8. Create a **culture of celebration.** Look for behavior to praise and accomplishments to celebrate.
- 9. Commit to a **set of values** that good people can be proud of.
- 10. **Communicate** with them, ask their opinion, listen to them and take action on their suggestions and concerns when it's the smart or right thing to do. Our staff know stuff and they hate it when we don't ask. When we don't ask them for their input, they assume that we don't care. And, if we don't care, why should they? When we tell our staff what to do, they're informed. When we ask for and listen to their input they're engaged and committed.
- 11. **Don't lie, 'BS' or talk down** to them. Don't bully them or allow bullying by others.
- 12. **Do not allow a culture of 'us and them'** between divisions, departments or functions. 'us and them' is a killer in any business. It goes far beyond 'friendly competition'. It creates resentment, destroys initiative and, in the extreme, hurts deeply.
- 13. **Teach our history and share our vision for the future.** Our team wants to know where the business has been and where it's going. It gives them 'context', creates pride and gets them energized about the future of the business and their career possibilities.
- 14. Give them **a title** that honors the importance of what they do and creates clarity for those who interact with them both inside and outside of the business.
- 15. Provide **business cards** for all employees who have a management or supervisory role, who interact with customers, or who's work impacts customers in any way. In a small company, get business cards for every employee. This honors employees and encourages them to brag about the company and become honorary members of the marketing team.
- 16. For those with the interest and ability, **put them on a career track** and promote them when opportunities arise. Start new employees at 'the beginning'...not at 'the bottom'. This simple change in wording makes a big difference. Nobody wants to start at the 'bottom'.
- 17. Let them know **how the business is doing.** Good people want to know that they're on a winning team. Imagine a sports team, expected to give their all...but they're not allowed to know the score. Makes no sense! The depth and detail of info re how we're doing will depend on their position in the business. The depth and detail of info re how we're doing will depend on their position in the business.
- 18. **Know your staff as people.** Know something about their interests, their hobbies, their pet, their spouse and kids. Use that info to have human conversations that make human connections.

- 19.** Create a first rate **'Meet Our Team' page on our website**. Honor them, their experience their contribution and add a little bit about them as people, especially if it relates to what they do in their job.

There are some excellent examples on the internet. For example, here's a link to the 'Meet Our Team' page for Marlon Products, a distributor of outdoor adventure products, <https://www.marlonproducts.com/about/our-team/>. And here's a link to another excellent 'Meet Our Team' page <https://parrautobody.com/our-team/> for Parr Auto Collision in Saskatoon, Canada.

- 20.** When appropriate, invite them to **attend industry Conferences, Trade Shows, Events** or other learning opportunities. Give them specific items, information or insights to be looking for, or recommendations to come back with. Ask them to put their findings in a brief report and then follow up with them within 3 days of receiving their report.

Note from Donald: So, there you have it...'20 tips to help everyone on your team feel more important and be more engaged'. Add up your check box scores. How does your business or department score out of a possible 200 points?

If you had the guts to have a cross-section of your Team also complete this Biz Tool, what total scores did they come up with and what insights can come from that? Was there broad agreement or widely different perceptions and scores? What does that tell you?

What do your 20 individual scores and your total score tell you about the need for fresh thinking and decisive action in your business or department culture? How will you involve your Team in those conversations and decisions? Then, what specific action will you commit to take, on which points, by when? Who will take this action, who will follow up, how will you measure results and how will you reward and celebrate success?

Remember, the best people have to work for someone...it's just that you have to deserve them.

Donald Cooper, MBA, CSP, HoF, has been both a world-class manufacturer and an award-winning retailer. Now, as a Toronto-based international management speaker and business coach, he helps business owners and managers rethink, refocus and re-energize their business to sell more, manage smarter, grow their bottom line...and have a life.

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