

## Getting Employees Engaged

By Ann N. Gatty, Ph.D.

The challenge before companies in today's business climate is determining ways to develop an organizational culture that is positively energized. In other words, getting employees engaged to successfully move the organization forward. To accomplish this goal takes steadfast leadership with the ability to motivate and support the employees with whom the leaders work. We've stated this before in several of our articles, but it can't hurt to state it again: aligning the employees' core values with the company core values is the starting point. Values and mission statements help define a set of employee behaviors that drive a company toward success. Leadership, on every level, will set the tone and guide the progress.

According to the Aberdeen Group, a business research firm, quality leadership is an essential ingredient in improving employee engagement. The research findings indicate that 84 percent of the employees surveyed don't believe their company's culture is widely upheld within its values and mission. In other words, many employees surveyed do not believe that the leaders are modeling what they are preaching.

What we have found when working with our clients, is that employees' behavior does not necessarily reflect what leaders expect but what leaders inspect. For example, a company may publicize that excellent customer service is a central priority and that sales employees will address customer needs within two minutes of them entering the store. If we find that the leader rewards a sale employee who spent a majority of her time posting on social media sites, rather than attending to customers in a timely manner, other employees will notice and follow suit. The leader must keep the standards of accountability consistent with the core values the company espouses.

We know that it takes more than showing up at work to be productive and engaged. A company's culture is comprised of the values, practices and personalities shared by the employer and employees. The global consulting firm, Deloitte, finds that 94 percent of executives and 80 percent of employees believe a well-defined workplace culture is important to business success.

### Three Ways to Get Employees Engaged

#### **Create a Healthy Workplace culture**

Smart leaders know that they need to model trust if they expect it in return. A trusting culture is more likely to try new and creative solutions as problems crop up. In addition, a strong dose of honesty, integrity and authenticity goes a long way. With these traits being an integral woven part of the cultural fabric, stand back and witness the power of mutual respect!

#### **Develop a Feedback Loop of Communication.**

It is imperative for leaders on all levels of the organization to share the current business goals and information about the organization's current performance. Even if the outlook for the company is less than stellar, being honest about the situation will command greater respect from the workforce. Along with sharing a company overview, leaders who regularly provide employee recognition among the organization corridors, will find employees reciprocating with a more positive approach to handling their work.

#### **Instill Learning Expectations**

The business world moves and changes at a rapid pace. What keeps a business competitive one day often becomes irrelevant the next. Employee skill sets that are effective for one organizational purpose may be



outmoded for another. There is no reason that leaders cannot establish career growth opportunities for their staff members. When reviewing job performances, identify skill and knowledge areas that can be nurtured for improvement. A learning organization is an organization that remains poised to remain competitive. A healthy culture where employees are respected for the work they perform and understand what their purpose is within the organization will provide them with the assurance that what they contribute to the organization is valuable. When they feel a sense of alignment with the company's values and know that there is an open line of communication up and down the corporate ladder, they will be more likely to take their work to heart. The results of building a more positively engaged culture is a group of individuals who are more likely to stay with the organization and be less likely to walk out the door. A win-win for everyone.

#### About the Author:

Dr. Ann Gatty is a business learning expert. She helps her clients build businesses to work brilliantly. Through a collaborative mentoring process, she and her clients create workable strategic business plans and success initiatives, while improving their workplace processes. She is frequently featured in the media and contributes blog posts for [www.AllBusiness.com](http://www.AllBusiness.com) and [www.WomenOnBusiness.com](http://www.WomenOnBusiness.com). Her interactive speaking engagements assist participants in discovering new-found talents and skills that they can immediately apply in the workplace. Watch her video series, [Building Businesses to Work Brilliantly](#) for more business strategy tips.