

Energize Your Workforce

Seven ways to create a high-performing organizational culture

BY BRADY G. WILSON



Today's employees—even those who may be engaged—are exhausted. Depleted of passion, resilience, verve and excitement, they are devoid of the personal energy that compels them to consistently go above and beyond the call of duty. To create a sustainable, innovative and high-performing organizational culture, businesses need to focus on both engagement and energy—essentially, moving “beyond engagement” as we know it today. Here are seven ways for leaders to change the way they approach engagement—and put energy first.

1. Manage Energy, Not Engagement

When we are low on energy, we lose our ability to focus, regulate emotions, make decisions and take action. By managing energy instead of engagement, leaders protect employees' executive function. This can unlock energy that fuels enthusiasm and innovation—generating sustainable engagement.

2. Deliver Experiences, Not Promises

When elaborate recognition/reward programs and intricate performance management systems don't deliver on leaders' promises, this creates workplace cynicism—leading employees to see employee engagement as a con game. But by delivering on experiences, leaders can create a happy, productive, frequently energized employee base.

3. Target Emotion, Not Logic

We live and work in an environment where feelings—not intellect—drive employee behavior. In fact, research shows that emotional engagement trumps rational engagement by a multiple of four! Understanding what matters most to employees—and then acting upon that information—is an effective way to show compassion and support.



Brady is a speaker trainer, author and the co-founder of Juice Inc., a corporate training company. His latest book is Beyond Engagement: A Brain-Based Approach That Blends the Engagement Managers Want with the Energy Employees Need. Visit www.bradywilson.com.

4. Trust Conversations, Not Data

Annual engagement survey results only provide a small glimpse of a very large picture. To really understand and energize employees, leaders must shift to frequent, face-to-face, meaningful conversations. Leaders who engage in meaningful dialogue with their employees create conditions that generate genuine, sustainable energy, and a greater sense of support in their people.

5. Seek Tension, Not Harmony

The brain's natural response to tension is to interpret it as a threat. However, we are actually energized by tension. Many opportunities for innovative breakthroughs exist between the current and desired way of doing things. The trick is for leaders to learn to stand amid that tension—not to avoid it—and effectively manage competing priorities.

6. Practice Partnering, Not Parenting

The brain perceives shared responsibility as a risk. Therefore, leaders may resort to parental-like behaviors—which, consequently, introduces negativity into the workplace. By shifting to a partnering managerial style,

leaders and employees can work together to create powerful solutions that both parties are willing to adopt and implement.

7. Think Sticks, Not Carrots

Leaders often gravitate to offering carrots like recognition programs, cheerleading and inspiration. However, they should be “thinking sticks”—that is, identifying and addressing psychological forms of workplace interference like bullying and conflict. In doing so, managers can produce environments where employees can be their best selves—able to access their knowledge, experience, skills and strengths at a moment's notice.

Conclusion

When the needs of an individual go unmet, they may act out in unskillful ways such as forming cliques and gossiping. This can quickly permeate the organization with interference, which affects people's ability to leverage their executive function. By focusing on individual needs and personal connections, leaders can inspire employees and sustain workplace energy. 🌟

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