

Employee Engagement: What the market leaders don't share

Having strong employee engagement survey scores are no guarantee of success, especially for SMBs. Why? Because **engagement is only one small step toward a company's success** and by itself, is little guarantee of achievement. To the point, there have been many once-great companies that have had leading engagement scores, yet have failed.

Does engagement translate into success?

Engagement became the successor of 'job satisfaction' theories approximately 25 years ago. Both theories suggested that high levels of satisfaction and engagement countered job burnout and supported employee retention. Survey companies went further to suggest links between high engagement scores and company financial performance. Unfortunately for many companies, the relationship between employee engagement and company performance did not hold. Too many companies scored very well on employee surveys but could not deliver sustained results. Examples include Blackberry/RIM, Hewlett Packard, Pitney Bowes, Eastman Kodak, Motorola, Yahoo, AT&T Labs, Circuit City, Xerox, and many more.

True engagement methods are kept 'company confidential'

The premise that *having employees who are positive and enthusiastic about their company* only holds true if those employees are committed to driving the projects that make the company stronger. E.g. positive energy directed toward the wrong things is just a waste of time and resources. How do the market leaders direct this energy toward success?

Great companies rarely share their secrets. They enjoy sharing their positive environmental practices as it generates goodwill. Unfortunately, if you ask them how they select their strategic objectives and how they get their employees to deliver these projects on schedule, they won't tell you. These practices are deemed as competitive advantages and are considered 'company confidential'.

How to improve engagement and company performance

In leading companies, organizational performance and employee engagement are welded together. These companies have business processes designed to identify the core strategies needed to improve the company's valuation and also harness the energies of a vast majority of their employees. Everyone has read about the Silicon Valley companies where employees willingly sleep on-site until the projects are delivered. This level of engagement provides a massive competitive advantage. How do they create such a culture? What are the processes they use but don't share? Here are a few of their core practices:



1) Business planning is connected with the talent management strategy

While most companies have a traditional annual planning process that includes a headcount budget, leading companies have much more. They couple their strategic planning with their talent management strategy. This produces objectives designed to improve the company's valuation while engaging core employee teams; resulting in higher valuations and increased employee capability.

2) Leading companies don't hire average

In a classroom, student motivation and the desire to learn varies significantly. Leading companies know that employee ability and dedication is also highly variable. When selecting new employees or

internal leaders, they don't give these roles to average contributors. Instead, they utilize advanced selection tools and methods to identify and hire employees who are self-motivated and able to add considerable value.

3) They don't rush

One of the benefits of having a strategic plan that works in harmony with your talent strategy is that you can break away from the reactive hiring mode that can be so fraught with mistakes. Market-leading companies don't react to fill open jobs quickly. Why? They don't need to. They're very proactive, always looking for great candidates who fit their talent strategy. Secondly, they use vacancies as opportunities to further engage their employees. They do this by providing 'acting promotions' where other employees can be given temporary promotions and the opportunity to showcase their abilities.

4) Excessive celebration is contained

One of the least understood characteristics of high-performing companies is their anxiety. While typical companies will celebrate a success for weeks, high-performing companies celebrate successes quickly and then get right back to work. They do this because they know success can be fleeting. How do they build such high-performing cultures? They make champions of their successful teams and this produces the mental models for future success. They also incorporate ongoing internal communication strategies that reinforce a sense of urgency. Finally, their leaders are trained in providing recognition combined with the need to continually improve.

In summary, we have provided these tips to help SMBs understand that employee engagement is similar to an iceberg; 90% is hidden below the surface. Similarly, world leading companies also hide their best methods. Sure, they'll generate goodwill by providing information about their snacks, foosball tables and celebrations, but their methods for producing leading products, at high margins are kept 'company confidential'. If you want to improve your company's valuation while increasing employee engagement, start by linking your strategic planning process with your talent management strategy.

Here are a few additional tips from the authors:

- **Fit:** Remember every company has similar values including teamwork, respect, service, and quality. To reduce hiring mistakes, make sure applicants align with your 'working culture' which includes your strategies, management style, customers' expectations, etc.
- **Organizational performance:** A company's worth is most often measured using seven 'value drivers'. These are generic factors that suit any company. What really differentiates your company from its competitors is the way your employees execute.
- **Understand:** Traditional interview methods are a half century old and easily gamed. Break away from patterned questions and memorized responses by adding new and unconventional questions to your catalogue.

These are some of the many reasons why we have invented a new and advanced method of selection. We needed to break the mold and develop a new methodology that could identify *authentic people* and one that is not easily fooled.

Guided Instinct Interviewing™ enhances an interviewer's skill by providing reliable filters that identify high performing traits along with the methods to distinguish the "actor" and discover the authenticity behind the applicant. Need help? We'll help you set up modern recruiting processes and teach your hiring teams how to improve the speed and quality of their hires.

Would you like a complimentary assessment? Contact us to learn more about our Advanced Interviewing Skills and Guided Instinct Interviewing™ at www.highreturnselection.com/Contact.html