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EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION: A Powerful New Model PAGE 86

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by Linda Hill and Kent Lineback

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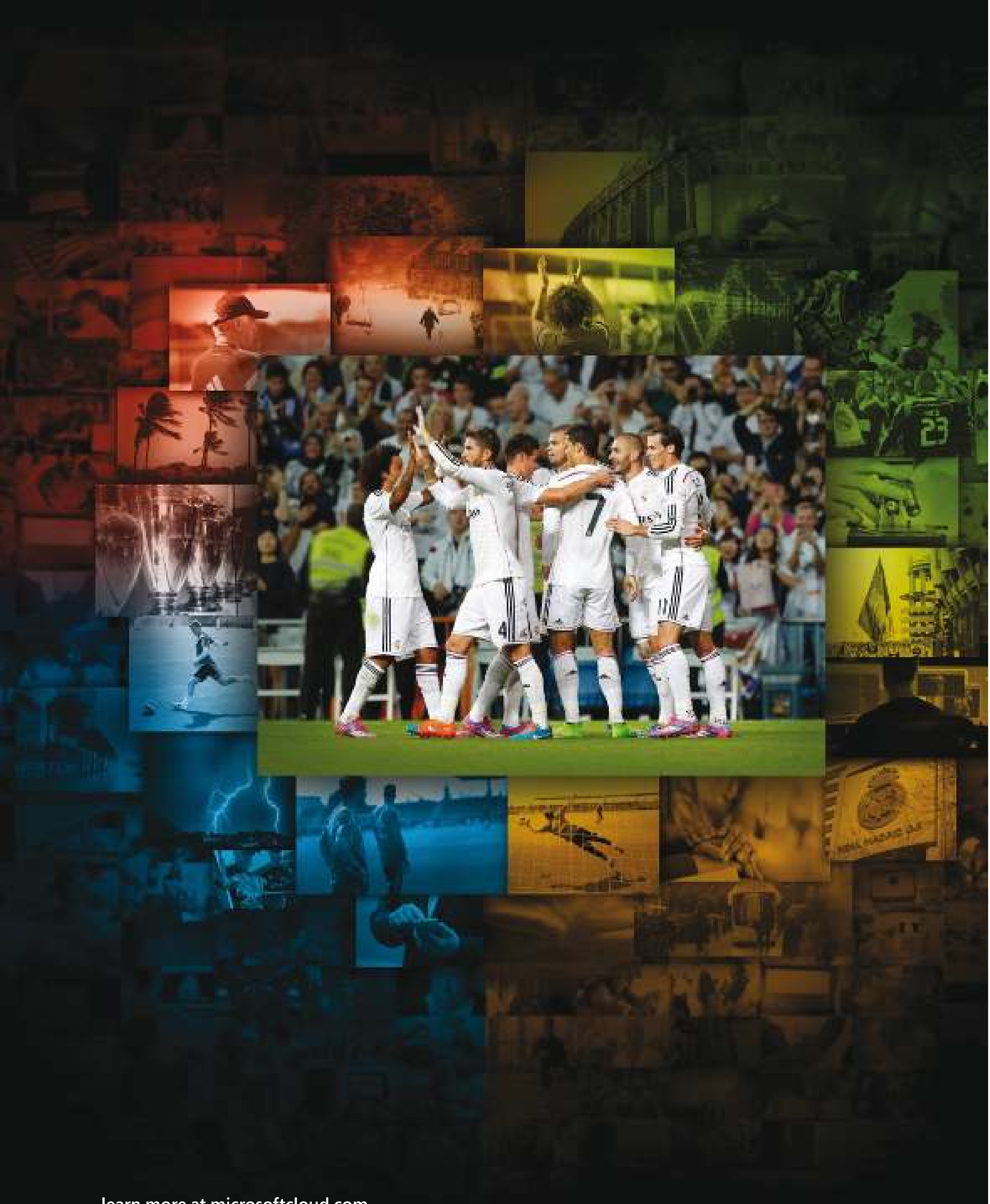
Power Is the Great Motivator
by David C. McClelland and David H. Burnham

What Great Managers Do
by Marcus Buckingham

Be a Better Boss

How to Bring Out the Best in Your People



FROM THE
EDITORS

High Expectations

KEEPING EMPLOYEES ENGAGED and motivated is critical to being a good manager. Yet it can be hard to do when you have so many other things on your plate and your staff is feeling pressure to do more with less. Sometimes you have to put your team ahead of yourself. You have to understand what makes people tick. You have to *care.* In short, you, too, must be engaged and motivated.

The rewards are worth the effort. A boss who sees the potential in people and finds ways to draw it out is a boss whom people want to follow and whose team is inspired to deliver strong results. In "What Great Managers Do," Marcus Buckingham argues that above all, exceptional managers discern people's strengths and develop positions based on those unique abilities. While this may seem like a lot of work, the payoff is more-efficient and more-effective employees. You're working with people's natural tendencies rather than against them. Doing that consistently and fairly galvanizes the whole team.

It's also important to let people own their ideas and their processes. In "Bringing Out the Best in Your People," Liz Wiseman and Greg McKeown note that managers who swoop in with all the answers and make all the decisions diminish the abilities, and the drive, of their employees. Good managers, they write, are "multipliers," who build the collective intelligence of their teams by, among other things, giving people permission to exercise judgment and by asking the questions and fostering the discussions that lead individuals and groups to make thoughtful decisions.

Perhaps more subtle, but no less significant, is the observation made by J. Sterling Livingston in the HBR Classic "Pygmalion in Management" that a manager's expectations directly affect a team's behavior. If a manager conveys high expectations, her employees are likely to excel. If she conveys low expectations (they're hard to conceal), her staff is likely to struggle. High-caliber managers don't give up easily on employees, because that would mean giving up on themselves.

—The Editors

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OnPoint Fall 2015

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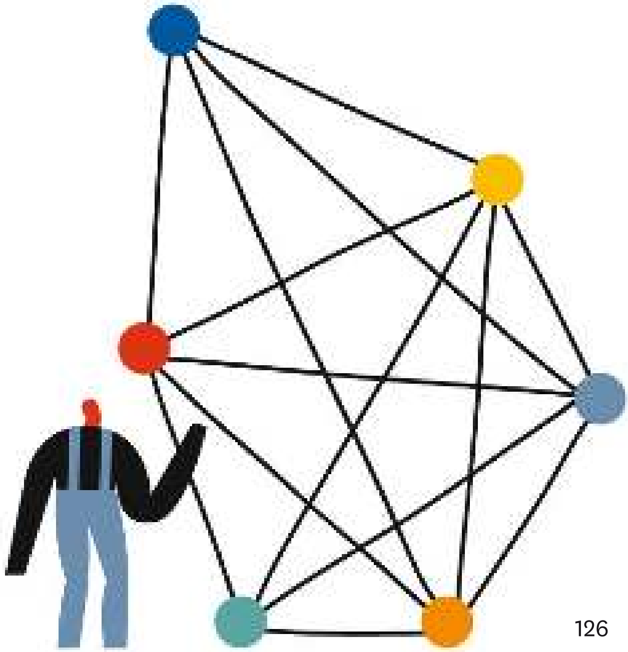

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INSPIRING PEOPLE

How to Get Employees Excited to Do Their Work

by Kelly Decker and Ben Decker

WHAT KEEPS you up at night as a manager? Are you worried about hitting your numbers? Boosting the results of lower performers? What about keeping top performers motivated?

We often believe that the most effective way to respond to these concerns is to explicitly tell employees what to do. Directing a team is certainly one way to achieve your goals. But while it's tried, it's also tired. Several trends suggest that it's no longer enough to lead by authority. There's an ever-increasing trust gap between leaders and employees (we are twice as likely to trust someone "just like us" than to trust a CEO), endless distractions make it harder to separate the signal from the noise, and more than 67% of employees aren't engaged at work. This has left people thirsting for inspiration, which means managers have to rethink how they communicate with their teams.

People don't want another checklist task that they *have* to complete. They seek something greater. So instead of informing and directing your direct reports, aspire to inspire. When you focus on persuading your people, you'll be able to turn even a corporate initiative or new-product launch into a cause that becomes their own. They'll *want* to step up and own their results.

The challenge is how to shift someone's response from "I have to" to "I want to." After pulling together the tips we've shared with thousands of leaders from *Fortune* 500 companies, nonprofits, and start-ups, we developed what we call the Communicator's Roadmap.

The vertical axis represents emotional connection. This barometer of trust includes the rapport you build with others and your likability, reliability, and empathy. You can strengthen this connection by being warm and caring. Personal stories, especially those that reveal vulnerability, can also help other people relate to you. As social psychologist Amy Cuddy explains, "Warmth is the conduit of influence: It facilitates trust and the communication and absorption of ideas."

The horizontal axis represents the content of your communication. A self-centered message, on the left side of the spectrum, is not necessarily selfish, but it's all about you—your expertise, your wisdom, your opinions, and your agenda. The right side is about how the message relates to the other person. These are not mere facts, figures, or frameworks; they are human-focused, concrete communications that people can act on. If your message is not relevant to someone, it won't be persuasive.

Within the four quadrants, most of us default to Inform and Direct as a way to get things done. Sometimes that works, but it's not a long-term solution for retaining top talent, growing your team, or raising the bar.

We worked with a client at a financial services company who had a direct report—let's call him Bill—who was not well liked. Bill was a good performer, he was effective on a stage, and he got paid well, but his colleagues didn't like him. No matter how hard his manager tried to direct him—"Bill, you need to do a better job and connect with others"—he made no progress. Bill didn't care whether his colleagues liked him.

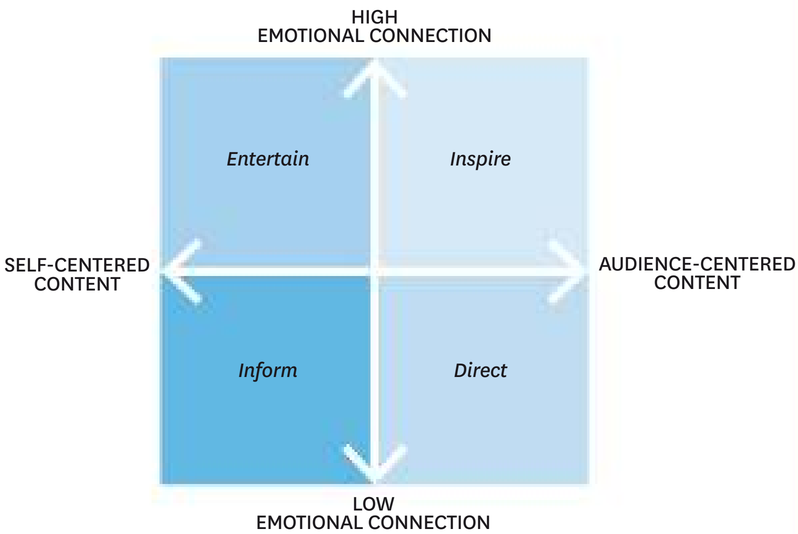
After many dead ends, Bill's manager shifted her approach. She said to him, "I see a future for you here at our company, and I want what's best for you." Emphasizing that Bill had great potential, she made an emotional appeal to his long-term goal to join the management team. She continued, "Peer relationships at that level are critical to working with others—and it's just not possible if you are not trusted and can't connect well with your colleagues."

This shift in message (toward Audience-Centered Content), inspired by her confidence in him (through Emotional Connection), changed Bill's perspective. Building relationships with his colleagues was no longer something he *had* to do; it was something he *wanted* to do as part of his own goals and objectives. There was a new personal level of accountability.

In another example, a client had grown substantially through a series of acquisitions over a three-year span. Suddenly every manager had a lot more

The Communicator's Roadmap

A guide to creating the most effective message.



SOURCE *COMMUNICATE TO INFLUENCE*, BY BEN DECKER AND KELLY DECKER

Tailor Your Message to the Situation and Goal

When to inform, direct, entertain, or inspire your employees.

	SITUATION	OBJECTIVE	MESSAGE
INFORM	A policy update or procedure change	Simple understanding	Straightforward. *"This is the process for expense reporting. It's due the second Friday of the month. Here are the steps..."*
ENTERTAIN	A team member is nervous or uncomfortable	A personal connection	Emotional. *"I remember the first time I botched a sales pitch...it was awful because...here's what I learned..."*
DIRECT	Something is time-sensitive	Prioritization and specific actions	Clarity about who's doing what and when. *"Maria, you're responsible for pulling the financial report together. Get it to John by Thursday at noon so he can package all the materials together."*
INSPIRE	Motivating someone or improving performance	Persuasion	Speak to their future using a story or analogy. *"Someone in engineering once proposed an idea, we took a risk, and it paid off. This is something I see you being able to do."*

SOURCE BEN DECKER AND KELLY DECKER

on his or her plate, including keeping teams engaged, motivated, and performing rather than feeling bitter about the changes.

The corporate communications team had already been churning out e-mails highlighting new expense procedures, sales process changes, escalation flows, and so on, but this wouldn't engage employees. When a message comes from above, it has to be adapted at every level; otherwise it's just a directive. The great managers stood out in their ability to tailor the new vision to each level of direct reports. When they shifted the message to be audience centered—by explaining why each team should personally care about the changes—they elicited a positive, self-propelling response from team members.

Inspiration is not something to be left for the annual company kickoff. Opportunities arise every day: when you want to empower a team member to take ownership of a project, when you want your feedback about someone's performance to stick, when you're communicating change. Being a leader who persuades others through inspiration starts with personal connection. Greater empathy and relevance leads to growth, greater motivation, faster action, and real results. Use the Communicator's Roadmap before your next meeting with your direct report to create an experience that will shift his or her response from "Sure, I can do that" to "Count me in!"

Originally published on HBR.org
May 18, 2015

Kelly Decker and **Ben Decker** are leading experts in business communication. Together, they run Decker Communications, a global firm that trains and coaches tens of thousands of executives a year. Their new book, *Communicate to Influence: How to Inspire Your Audience to Action* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2015), shares real-world stories and tips from the C-suite.

Inspiration is not something to be left for the annual company kickoff. Opportunities arise every day.

READER COMMENTS

Getting people inspired about their work means investing in their development both personally and professionally. That takes a lot of time, energy, and resources, but the long-term benefits are worth it. Companies like Apple, Google, and Starbucks succeed in recruiting, selecting, and

retaining top talent because they invest in developing people.

—André Harrell, president/CEO, AH2 & Beyond Consulting

In the end, people work for people, not perks. And being an effective communicator is fundamental to being a strong leader.

—Linda Capello, founder, Capello Communication Coaching

What Inspiring Leaders Do

by Jack Zenger and Joseph Folkman

WHAT DO top executives want from their leaders? IBM recently asked this question of 1,700 CEOs in 64 countries. The three leadership traits that mattered most to them were the ability to focus intensely on customers' needs, the ability to collaborate with colleagues—and the ability to inspire.

Our own extensive 360-degree feedback data, which we've gathered from just under 50,000 leaders who have been assessed by approximately a half-million colleagues, strongly confirms the importance of inspiring leadership. Of the 16 leadership competencies we most frequently measure, it is clearly the one that stands out. In our data, the ability to inspire creates the highest levels of employee engagement and commitment. It is what most powerfully separates the most effective leaders from the average and least-effective leaders. And it is the factor most subordinates identify when asked what they would most like to have in their leader.

Yet, when you talk with leaders who want to be more inspiring, you often get a deer-in-the-headlights reaction. They simply do not know what to do.

What inspiring leaders do. To address this topic, we engaged in what some people might call a reverse-engineering exercise. We went into our database and looked for those leaders who received the highest scores on the competency of "inspires and motivates to high performance." We found 1,000 such leaders and then analyzed what they did that separated them from their less inspiring counterparts.

Some of what they did was specific and tangible. For example, they set stretch goals with their team. They spent time developing their subordinates. They engaged in highly collaborative behavior. They encouraged people to be more innovative.

Other things we identified were somewhat less specific and less tangible. These inspirational leaders were more adept at making emotional connections with their subordinates, for instance. They were better at establishing a clear vision. They were more effective in their communication and willing to spend more time communicating. They were ardent champions of change. They were perceived as effective role models within the organization.

Inspirational leaders are adept at making emotional connections with their subordinates.

Our data sends a clear message: In this case, more is more. That is, the more of these behaviors a leader exhibited, the more inspirational that leader was perceived to be.

How they go about it. We next turned our attention from what these inspiring leaders did to the manner in which they did it. We've found that many leaders equate being inspirational with being enthusiastic and outgoing, and that can be so, but we also found that leaders could take any number of other approaches that didn't necessarily require them to be extroverted.

That is, a leader could be inspirational in, say, setting a stretch goal in a number of different ways. He or she could do it by creating a compelling vision (which we dubbed, unsurprisingly, as the *visionary* approach). Alternatively, a leader could meet with team members and have them collectively set the goal (the *enhancing* approach). Another leader might determine stretch goals by tossing out a challenge to the group and setting a specific deadline by which to make it (the *driver* approach). Or maybe he or she encourages the team to find an ethical goal that focuses on the organization's mission (the *principled* route). Yet another inspiring leader might convene a meeting and deliver a classic halftime locker room speech to set the goal (the classic *enthusiast* style). Or, finally, he or she might interview team members to determine what skills each might best contribute to the effort (the *expert* route).

Inspirational leaders might apply these different approaches to any of their leadership responsibilities. For instance, they might take a visionary approach to championing change by imagining the company implementing a new strategy, or an enhancing approach by encouraging team members to develop an innovative strategy together. Similarly, a leader could produce peak results by painting an exciting vision of the future or by marshaling the team's enthusiasm to aspire to a higher goal. Although merely 3% took the expert approach, perhaps more surprising is that only 12% went the enthusiast route. Each approach was equally effective, our data indicates, but leaders who mastered multiple approaches significantly increased their effectiveness.

Learning to be inspirational. Finally, we turned our attention to the question of whether leaders could learn to become more inspiring. To find out, we did another study of 882 executives, from data collected during the past three years, who were measured on the 16 different competencies and encouraged to focus efforts on improving one of them. Focusing on the 310 who chose to improve their ability to inspire others, we found that as a group they made impressive strides—moving from the 42nd percentile (that is, below average) to the 70th percentile. This is a statistically significant positive gain and compelling evidence that when leaders use the right approach, they can learn to become more inspiring.

In other words, with awareness, good feedback, and a plan of development, leaders are able to improve this most important leadership competency.

Originally published on HBR.org
June 20, 2013

Jack Zenger is the CEO and **Joseph Folkman** is the president of Zenger Folkman, a leadership development consultancy. They are the coauthors of the article "Making Yourself Indispensable" (HBR, October 2011) and the book *How to Be Exceptional: Drive Leadership Success by Magnifying Your Strengths* (McGraw-Hill, 2012).

READER COMMENTS

When leaders help their team understand the vision of *what* is possible to achieve and the *why* in what they do, they inspire the team with a passion to creatively find the *how* to achieve huge results.

—Verltidwell

Unfortunately, too many leaders stretch people in areas that don't energize them, which lowers morale and increases turnover. Inspiring others involves understanding employees' strengths, values, and aspirations and helping them understand how those are aligned with broader organizational goals and a brighter future.

—James Brook, joint founder and managing director, Strengths Partnership

Managers Can Motivate Employees with One Word

by Heidi Grant Halvorson

HUMAN BEINGS are profoundly social—we are hardwired to connect to one another and to want to work together. Frankly, we would never have survived as a species without our instinctive desire to live and work in groups, because physically we are just not strong or scary enough.

Lots of research has documented how important being social is to us. For instance, as the neuroscientist Matthew Lieberman describes in his book, *Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect* (Crown Publishers, 2013), our brains are so attuned to our relationships with other people that they quite literally treat social successes and failures like physical pleasures and pains. Being rejected, for instance, registers as a "hurt" in much the same way that a blow to the head might—so much so that if you take an aspirin, you'll actually feel better about your breakup.

David Rock, the director and CEO of the NeuroLeadership Institute, has identified *relatedness*—feelings of trust, connection, and belonging—as one of the five primary categories of social pleasures and pains (along with *status, certainty, autonomy,* and *fairness*). Rock's research shows that the performance and engagement of employees who experience threats or failures in relatedness will almost certainly suffer. And in other research, the feeling

The word "together" is a powerful social cue to the brain.

of working together has indeed been shown to predict greater motivation, particularly *intrinsic motivation,* that magical elixir of interest, enjoyment, and engagement that brings with it the very best performance.

Theoretically, the modern workplace should be bursting with relatedness. Not unlike our hunter-gatherer ancestors, most of us are on teams. And teams ought to be a bountiful source of "relatedness" rewards.

But here's the irony: Although we may have team goals and team meetings and be judged according to our team's performance, very few of us actually *do our work* in teams. Take me, for example: I conduct all the research I do with a team of other researchers. I regularly coauthor articles and books. My collaborators and I often meet to discuss ideas and to make plans. But I have *never* analyzed data with a collaborator sitting next to me or run a participant through an experiment with another researcher at my side—and my coauthors and I have never, ever typed sentences in the same room. Yes, many of the goals we pursue and projects we complete are done in teams, but unlike prehistoric humans banding together to take down a woolly mammoth, most of the work we do today still gets done *alone.*

So that, in a nutshell, is the weird thing about teams: They are the greatest (potential) source of connection and belonging in the workplace, yet teamwork is some of the loneliest work you'll ever do.

We need a way to give employees the *feeling* of working as a team, even when they technically aren't. And thanks to new research published in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* by Stanford University's Priyanka Carr and Greg Walton, we now know one powerful way to do this: Simply say the word "together."

In Carr and Walton's studies, participants first met in small groups and then separated to work on difficult puzzles on their own. People in the *psychologically together* category were told that they would be working on their task "together" even though they would be in separate rooms and would either write or receive a tip from a team member to help them solve the puzzle later on. In the *psychologically alone* category, there was no mention of being "together," and the tip they would write or receive would come from the researchers. All of the participants were in fact working alone on the puzzles. The only real difference was the feeling that being told they were working "together" might create.

The effects of this small manipulation were profound: Participants in the *psychologically together* category worked 48% longer, solved more problems correctly, and had better recall of what they had seen. They also said that they felt less tired and depleted by the task. And they reported finding the puzzle more interesting when working *together* and persisted longer because of this intrinsic motivation (rather than out of a sense of obligation to the team, which would be an extrinsic motivation).

The word "together" is a powerful social cue to the brain. In and of itself, it seems to serve as a kind of relatedness reward, signaling that you belong, that you are connected, and that people you can trust are working with you toward the same goal.

Executives and managers would be wise to make use of this word with far greater frequency. In fact, don't let a communication opportunity go by without using it. I'm serious. Let "together" be a constant reminder to your employees that they are not alone, helping to motivate them to perform their very best.

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August 13, 2014

Heidi Grant Halvorson is the associate director for the Motivation Science Center at the Columbia University Business School and the author of *Nine Things Successful People Do Differently* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2011) and *No One Understands You and What to Do About It* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2015). Follow her on Twitter: @hghalvorson.

READER COMMENTS

"Together" is a tremendously important word, but a more important one is "trust." If I believe your motivation is based purely on your needs, desires, and self-promotion, mere words will not motivate me. I have to know that you have my best interest at heart, as well as your own. Leaders need to display honesty, integrity, and loyalty to their people. Then they may deserve the right to say, "We are in this together."

—David Hinton, technician, Xerox Canada

Reducing motivation to one word is presumptuous at best. Cohesive work teams are a product of culture. We should not mandate togetherness, and many of us prefer and prosper as individual contributors. Check dogma at the door, and encourage culturally relevant behavior consistent with organizational and individual values and expectations.

—Bobby Hoffman, author, **Motivation for Learning and Performance**

You Can't Be a Great Manager If You're Not a Good Coach

by Monique Valcour

IF YOU have room in your head for only one nugget of leadership wisdom, make it this one: The most powerfully motivating condition people experience at work is making progress at something that is personally meaningful. If your job involves leading others, the implications are clear: The most important thing you can do each day is to help your team members experience progress at meaningful work.

To do so, you must understand what drives each person, help build connections between each person's work and the organization's mission and strategic objectives, provide timely feedback, and help each person learn and grow on an ongoing basis. Regular communication about development—having *coaching conversations*—is essential. In fact, according to a multiyear research initiative launched by Google called Project Oxygen, the single most important managerial competency that separates highly effective managers from average ones is coaching.

Strangely, at most companies, coaching isn't part of what managers are formally expected to do. Even though research makes it clear that employees and job candidates alike value learning and career development above most other aspects of a job, many managers don't see it as an important part of their role. Managers think they don't have the time to have these conversations, and many lack the skill. Yet 70% of employee learning and development happens on the job, not through formal training programs. So if line managers aren't supportive and actively involved, employee growth is stunted. So is engagement and retention.

Can you teach old-school, results-focused line managers to coach their employees? Absolutely. And the training boosts performance in both directions. It's a powerful experience to create resonant connections with other people and help them achieve something they care about and become more of who they want to be. An effective, resonant coaching conversation produces positive energy. Hundreds of executive students have reported to me that helping others learn and grow is among the most rewarding experiences they've had as managers.

Starting today, you can be significantly more effective as a manager—and enjoy your job more—by engaging in regular coaching conversations with your team members. As you resolve to support their ongoing learning and development, here are five key tips to get you started.

Listen deeply. Consider what it feels like when you're trying to convey something important to a person who has many things on his or her mind. Contrast that familiar experience with the more luxurious and deeply validating one of communicating with someone who is completely focused on you and actively listening to what you have to say with an open mind and an open heart. You can begin a coaching conversation with a question such as "How would you like to grow this month?" Your choice of words is less important than your intention to clear your mind, listen with your full attention, and create a high-quality connection that invites your team members to open up and to think creatively.

Ask, don't tell. As a manager, you have a high level of expertise that you're used to sharing, often in a directive manner. That is fine when you're clarifying action steps for a project you're leading or when people ask you for advice. But in a coaching conversation, it's essential to restrain your impulse to provide the answers. Your path is not your employee's path. Open-ended questions, not answers, are the tools of coaching. You succeed as a coach by helping your team members articulate their goals and challenges and find their own answers. This is how people clarify their priorities and devise strategies that resonate with what they care about most and that they will be committed to putting into action.

It's essential to restrain your impulse to provide the answers. Your path is not your employee's path.

Create and sustain a developmental alliance. While your role as a coach is not to provide answers, supporting your team members' developmental goals and strategies is essential. Let's say that an employee mentions she'd like to deepen her understanding of how your end users experience the services your firm provides. She suggests accompanying an implementation team on a site visit the next week, interviewing end users, and using the interviews to write an article on end-user experience for publication on your firm's intranet-based blog. You agree that this would be valuable for both the employee and the firm. Now make sure you give your employee the authorization, space, and resources necessary to carry out her developmental plan. In addition to supporting her, you can also highlight her article as an example of employee-directed learning and development. Follow-up is critical to build trust and to make your coaching more effective. The more you follow through on supporting your employees' developmental plans, the more productive your coaching becomes, the greater your employees' trust in you, and the more engaged you all become. It's a virtuous cycle.

Focus on moving forward positively. Often in a coaching conversation, the coached person gets caught up in detailing his or her frustrations. "I'd love to spend more time building my network, but I have no bandwidth. I'm at full capacity just trying to stay on task with my deliverables. I'd really love to get out to some industry seminars, but I can't let myself think about it until I can get ahead of these deadlines." Although it can provide temporary relief to vent, it doesn't generate solutions. Take a moment to acknowledge your employee's frustrations, but then encourage him or her to think about how to move past them. You might ask, "Which of the activities you mention offer the greatest potential for building your knowledge and adding value to the company?" "Could you schedule two hours of time for developmental activities each week as a recurring appointment?" "Are there skills or relationships that would increase your ability to meet your primary deliverables?" "How could we work more efficiently within the team to free up and protect time for development?"

Build accountability. In addition to following through on any commitments you make to employees in coaching conversations, it's also useful to hold the employees accountable for formulating and implementing developmental plans. Accountability increases the positive impact of coaching conversations and solidifies their rightful place as keys to organizational effectiveness. If an employee plans to research training programs that will fit his developmental goals, give those plans more weight by asking him to identify appropriate programs, their costs, and the amount of time he'll need away from work—and to deliver this information to you by a certain deadline. (And then, of course, you will need to act on the information in a timely manner.)

What will coaching your employees do for you? It will build stronger bonds between you and your team members, support them in taking ownership over their own learning, and help them develop the skills they need to perform at their peak. And it also feels good. At a coaching workshop I led last month in Shanghai, an executive said the coaching exercise he'd just participated in "felt like a bungee jump." As the workshop leader, I was delighted to observe that this man, who had arrived looking reserved and a bit tired, couldn't stop smiling for the rest of the evening. He was far from the only participant who was visibly energized by the coaching experience.

So go ahead and take the interpersonal jump. You will love the thrill of coaching conversations that catalyze your employees' growth.

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Monique Valcour is an executive coach, a keynote speaker, and a professor of management at EDHEC Business School. Her coaching, research, and consulting help companies and individuals craft high-performance, meaningful jobs, careers, workplaces, and lives. Follow her on Twitter: @moniquevalcour.

READER COMMENTS

I have seen managers who make one important shift and grow exponentially

in their ability to engage their employees and build trust: the shift from *telling* 100% of the time to *asking* the learner/performer thought-provoking questions that demonstrate respect and trust and facilitate learning and growth.

—Rebecca Bradley, president, Partnership Coaching

To be a good manager, it helps to be a good coach. But there is a catch. Good coaching primarily requires one to be "employee-centric," while being a good manager primarily requires one to be "company-centric." Maintaining that balance is so difficult that it perhaps makes most of the managers give up the role of coach.

—Sanjiv Bhamre

Managing and Motivating Employees in Their Twenties

by Michael Fertik

I'VE BEEN lucky to work with some awesome employees in their twenties. Although that formative decade is long and dynamic, certain techniques are consistently effective for managing and motivating excellent twenty-somethings.

Younger people are especially hungry to learn and to receive affirmation that they are doing a good job. The best ones are motivated much more by incremental education and acknowledgement than by a modest bump in salary. Of course, the same qualities that make younger colleagues so responsive to the education and praise you offer may also make them susceptible to negative-feedback loops, so be mindful of the context into which you toss them.

The best managers of younger employees are people who would otherwise love teaching for a living. They prize helping others grow and tend to overexplain their reasoning for decisions. Rather than assuming that twenty-somethings possess enough experience or perspective to read between the lines of their choices, these managers take an extra few minutes to lay out pros and cons and diagram their rationale. Three short minutes of explanation usually make excellent junior employees excited, because they feel the immediate benefits of gaining insight into decision-making processes. It also makes them better at working for you and your company, because it teaches them how you think.

Really excellent managers of really excellent young people also set up regular teaching sessions for them on different parts of the business. Top companies do rotation programs for promising younger talent. It's hard to support systematized rotation in small companies, but they can set up mini workshops to expose highly promising younger employees to various parts of the company. That type of early investment quickly pays off.

Here are some other ways to motivate and teach young employees:

Throw them into the deep end on their first day. Excellent managers of younger people give them decision-making authority on at least one mission immediately. One successful Silicon Valley founder is reported to make everyone in his company a "CEO" of something. That's the right idea. If they don't know how to do it, tell them to figure it out. The corollary here is that you can't tolerate learned helplessness. Even talented younger employees—especially those who have the peculiar disadvantages of hailing from privilege—may be tempted to ask you questions they can answer themselves. Make them sort it out for themselves. If you don't, they won't improve. And if letting them solve it on their own feels like too big a risk for you, reconsider assigning the project in the first place. There's always another mission that can be a better fit. As the necessary last step, once they have completed the objective, give clear feedback immediately. Postmortems are critical accelerators of their learning process.

Publicly reward junior team members who are doing a great job. No-brainer, right? The traditional way is to stand up in front of your group, explain what the superstar of the moment has been doing well, and thank him or her. Another good but rarely used method is to ask the employee in front of others what he or she thinks of an idea, especially when the debate has chiefly been among senior people. The question itself will be confirmation of the employee's growth within the company, and it will raise that person's status in the eyes of his or her peers. The employee will probably rise to the occasion and say something useful.

Ask frequent questions. When you're walking around the office, ask your junior colleagues, "What's the dumbest thing we're working on?" The fact that you're asking that kind of question will carry its own impact. It will show that you invite and insist on truth telling and on hearing bad news. It will stimulate younger employees to think for themselves and will affirm their contribution of ideas. Sometimes the answer will make you realize that a project the company is working on is actually quite dumb and a waste of money. And sometimes the answer will surprise you in a different way: An employee may think that something he or she is doing is dumb when, once understood in context, it is actually quite useful to the business. Consider it a learning lesson for yourself: Something has remained unexplained for the team. Use this chance to situate the "dumb" project in the broader picture of the organization's mission. You'll help clear up confusion and motivate the employee who thought part of his or her job wasn't worthwhile.

Invite interaction not just with yourself but with others throughout the company. Young employees are often shyer than their older counterparts, so these interactions can serve as motivators and be a catalyst for developing cross-functional intelligence. Stand when you're at your desk. It allows you and your work ethic to be more visible, making you much more approachable. Traffic to my cube, particularly among younger employees, has increased by roughly 50% since I started standing at my desk last year. Similarly, use company events to grease the wheels of intermingling—get a few of your more sociable employees (salespeople are often the right vanguard) to introduce different team members and get conversations going. It will be a big relief for younger employees, and it will start the juices of future collaboration flowing.

Give them personal attention. A simple and little-used approach that goes a long way is to call them on their birthdays. That's it. Just call and say, "Happy birthday, glad to be working with you, hope you have a great celebration." They'll be glad you remembered, and you'll feel good about it.

Do not make the rookie mistake of creating false reasons for praise. Younger people have contempt for what they perceive as political baloney. Fake it, and they'll know, and they won't trust praise when you really mean it.

Don't create false reasons for praise. Younger people have contempt for what they perceive as political baloney.

Emphasize long-term rewards, and set an example. I've found that rather than living up to their oft-reported reputation of being entitled ingrates, the best employees in their twenties—perhaps particularly in the wash of the Great Recession—admire people who focus on longer-term rewards, especially those who aspire to run their own businesses one day. You don't need to buy them copies of Marcus Aurelius's *Meditations* or live like a monk. But let them see that you are resisting some forms of short-term pay or comfort, and you'll get them fired up to do the same.

Set very short-term projects. Young employees have short attention spans. Blame digital nativity, social media, the Cartoon Network, or whatever else. But it's true, and you need to adapt as a manager. Set weekly cycles so that all employees know on Sunday night what they must tackle by Friday EOD. In some cases, set daily goals. You'll find it remarkable how productive twenty-somethings can be; they'll fill the time they have to get the job done. Setting quick and predictable turnarounds will create high-velocity rhythms and a happy, productive-feeling younger workforce.

Fire those who are not performing. Younger people are disproportionately affected by seeing others slide by in their jobs. Seasoned colleagues may read between the lines as to why a slacker is being kept around, but younger people often haven't developed those nuanced lenses yet. Excellent junior colleagues start to resent—too often, too quickly, and too strongly—their less competent peers and the boss who keeps them. Middling-quality junior colleagues emulate the bad ones who aren't fired.

For the same reason, fire toxic employees immediately, especially if they interact with younger people. One toxic colleague can destroy an organization. Younger employees often haven't developed the ability to wall off the toxin.

Beware of setting up A+ 22-year-olds with 28-year-old managers. Too many managers in their late twenties are threatened by supersmart colleagues in their early twenties.

And finally, wear authority lightly. They take it more seriously than you think. Rookie managers of younger people can easily mistake informal body language and sometimes an insouciant communications style for disrespect. Don't. It's just leftover adolescent crap mixed with professional immaturity and generational sloppiness. They are following your leadership much more closely than it might appear at first.

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READER COMMENTS

Communicating to employees in their twenties should involve social media, video, Twitter, Facebook, and so on. The more you actively engage Millennials with interactive communication, the more you increase the chances of engagement.

—Loraine Antrim
cofounding partner,
Core Ideas

As a twenty-something, I don't believe I am entitled to anything other than fairness and respect. I don't want to be compared with someone of my age; I want to be compared with the CEO, the CFO, the top employee in my company—how I am doing relative to our "superstars"—because that is where and what I am striving to be.

—Jeffrey Adzigian,
financial consultant,
DTE Energy

Getty Images

BOOSTING PRODUCTIVITY

Want Productive Employees? Treat Them Like Adults

by Tony Schwartz

FOR MORE than a decade now, I've struggled to define what fuels the most sustainably productive work environment—not just on behalf of the large corporate clients we serve, but also for my own employees at The Energy Project. Perhaps nothing I've uncovered is as important as trust.

Much as employers understandably hunger for one-size-fits-all policies and practices, what motivates human beings remains stubbornly complex, opaque, and difficult to unravel. Perhaps that's why I felt so viscerally the shortsightedness and futility of Marissa Mayer's decision to order Yahoo employees who had been working from home to move back to the office, and Hubert Joly's to do the same at Best Buy.

Here's the problem: Employees who want to game the system are going to do so inside or outside the office. Supervising them more closely is costly, enervating, and ultimately a losing game. Highly motivated employees who've been working from home and are called back to the office will be resentful—and more inclined to look for new jobs.

At its heart, the problem for Mayer and Joly is lack of trust. For whatever reasons, they've lost trust that their employees can make responsible adult decisions for themselves about how to best get their work done and add value to the company. Distrust begets distrust in return. It kills motivation rather than sparking it. Treat employees like children and you increase the odds they'll act like children. You reap what you sow—for better and for worse.

As an employer, I stay focused on one primary question about all employees: What is going to free, fuel, and inspire them to bring the best of themselves to work every day most sustainably? My goal is to meet those needs in the best ways I can, without undue expense to others.

In the end, I'm much less concerned with *where* people do their work than with the *value* they're able to create wherever they happen to do it. The value exchange here is autonomy (grounded in trust) for accountability.

As the CEO, I myself work from home for an hour or two in the mornings most days because it's quiet and free of distractions. It's the best way for me to get writing and other high-focus activities accomplished, and that's true for many other business leaders.

One of the senior members of our team is a 35-year-old woman with three children under the age of nine. She lives 90 minutes from work. I'd love to have her at our offices every day, because I enjoy being able to interact with her around issues as they arise. I also just like having her around as a colleague.

But to make that possible, she'd have to invest three withering hours commuting each day—a huge cost, not just in time but also in energy, for work and for her family. Demanding that she make that trip every day would only prompt progressive fatigue, resentment, and impaired performance.

Supervising employees more closely is costly, enervating, and ultimately a losing game.

Instead, we settled from the start on having her come to the office two days a week, which is when we schedule our key meetings. Those days also provide time for spontaneous brainstorming of ideas across the team.

Another one of our team members, a woman with two teenage kids, travels frequently in her role. When she gets back from trips, she typically works from home the next day—both to recover and to have more time for her family.

Two of our other staffers—one male and one female—work mostly at the office out of personal preference, but they also have young kids and work from home sometimes when their kids are on vacation or get sick.

Two younger, married team members recently requested permission to move to Amsterdam for eight months—for no other reason than they wanted to experience another culture. For a moment, I bridled. But since technology makes it possible for them to do their jobs from anywhere, we were able to make it happen. They agreed to work during our regular office hours and to visit our office for a week every two months. So far it seems to be working seamlessly.

Every one of these people is highly productive. I do have moments when I find myself wishing all of our team members were in the office more, and even wondering what they're doing when I haven't heard from them. When those feelings arise, I take a deep breath and remind myself that my colleagues are adults, capable of making their own decisions about how best to get their work done, and that all good relationships involve some compromise.

It gets back to trust. Give it, and you get it back. In over a decade, no employee has ever chosen to leave our company. The better you meet people's needs, the better they'll meet yours.

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Tony Schwartz is the CEO of The Energy Project, a columnist for the *New York Times*, and the author of *The Way We Are Working Isn't Working: The Four Keys to Transforming the Way We Work and Live* (Free Press, 2011). Become a fan of The Energy Project on Facebook, and connect with Tony on Twitter: @TonySchwartz and @Energy_Project.

READER COMMENTS

Trust is critical—it takes time to build, yet is so easy to blow in a second. If you want the best from someone, don't expect what you're not prepared to inspire!

—Craftmonster

If you hire an adult who you don't trust will work if he or she isn't "under your nose" all day every day, you should ask yourself why you hired that person in the first place.

—kcdiversity

Employers focus too much on time. I have always told my employees, "If you can get a week's worth of work done in 25 hours, then do it—don't worry about making a show of 'working' for 40+ hours." I want smart people who optimize instead of maximize their efforts. That leads to a more well-balanced employee base, a more successful workforce, and a much more dynamic, results-oriented business.

—Ken Montgomery

Share Your Financials to Engage Employees

by Bill Fotsch and John Case

IF YOU'RE searching for ways to improve employee engagement, you'll find lots of laundry lists: Fourteen tips. Seven steps. The "Ten C's." Most of those sources contain good but basic advice, such as providing mentoring, encouraging two-way communication, and recognizing people when they do great work.

But the statistics suggest that following such advice, like staying on a diet, is harder than it looks—some 70% of U.S. workers say they don't feel engaged on the job, a number that hasn't changed much in recent years. If time-starved owners or managers don't naturally abide by all those nostrums, are they actually likely to start now? We have a different way of thinking about engagement, because we have a different idea of what it is.

Our approach begins with a question: Who do you think is more engaged in the business, the farmer or the hired hand? The building contractor or the guy pounding nails? The store owner or the clerk behind the counter? The answer is obvious, but it raises an equally obvious objection—not everyone can be an owner. And as a National Bureau of Economic Research study shows, even employees who hold an ownership stake in their employer aren't necessarily more engaged or motivated than their non-shareholding peers.

But the objection misses the essence of ownership. It isn't just that owners are in charge. It's that they're *players*. They're in the game. They know the rules. They act, and they watch the numbers to find out whether their actions were on track or misguided. If they win the game, they know there'll be a payoff. Most people think of engagement in individual terms—feeling fulfilled by the task at hand, wanting to do a good job. We see engagement as being part of a team that's competing to win.

It's surprisingly easy to generate this kind of engagement among employees when you make the economics of the business come alive by sharing some key financial numbers. It's an open-book approach: People begin to watch these indicators. Then they figure out how to move them in the right direction.

A while ago, for instance, a global travel-management company picked three representative U.S. branches to pilot open-book methods of building engagement and improving performance. The company's team identified a critical financial number—site revenue minus direct site costs, known as "direct profitability." Branch employees then began meeting every week to review these financial results, brainstorm ideas for improvement, and forecast future results.

In the past, the company's frontline travel counselors had behaved pretty much like employees everywhere. They did a competent job, but they didn't worry about the financial implications of a changed itinerary or a new hotel pricing policy. Now, engaged in the business of improving their branch's numbers, they began spotting opportunities an owner might think of. A customer-relations rep in St. Louis, for instance, contacted vendors to recover money lost because of hotel no-shows and canceled flights. During the first few months she collected $189,093—a significant savings for the company.

Each pilot branch generated several such ideas, which they then shared with the other two. At the end of the pilot period, the experimental branches had exceeded their profit budgets by 10%, 17%, and 20%, resulting in more than $1.7 million in incremental earnings. None of the other U.S. branches hit budget that year.

We've witnessed similar results at many other companies that follow the open-book path to engagement. A designer at a Washington, DC–area design-build firm (which provides both design and construction) says she notices "everyone caring more and being more accountable and taking responsibility." The CEO of a midsize manufacturing company told us, "I don't have employees in my plant anymore. I have entrepreneurs who are looking to find ways to make more money." At one company, employees even organized small betting pools around the accuracy of each month's profit forecast. (Now *that's* engagement.)

Most open-book companies tie incentive compensation to improvement in the key financial numbers, so employees see a payoff as well. But the real engagement comes from thinking and acting like owners.

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Bill Fotsch, founder of Open-Book Coaching, has helped more than 300 companies around the world apply open-book management principles. **John Case,** author of several books on business and management, is the editor of the online publication *Retooling Capitalism*.

READER COMMENT

If employees could see the financial impact of their actions on the whole company, everyone would have a greater sense of responsibility and be more likely to hold one another accountable for results. However, for some leaders, hoarding this financial knowledge is one source of their power. By keeping this information to themselves, they can better set the company's direction to serve their self-interests.

—Greg Anthony Hawod, book reviewer, NetGalley

Quintuple Your Team's Commitment

by Scott Keller

IN A famous experiment by Harvard University psychology professor Ellen Langer, researchers ran a lottery with a twist. Half the participants were randomly assigned a lottery number; the remaining half received a blank piece of paper and a pen and were asked to write down any number they would like as their lottery number. Just before drawing the winning number, the researchers offered to buy back the tickets. The question researchers wanted to answer is "How much more do you have to pay someone who 'wrote their own number' versus someone who was handed a number randomly?"

The rational answer is that there is no difference (given that a lottery is pure chance and therefore every ticket number, chosen or assigned, should have the same value). A savvier answer is that you would have to pay less for the tickets the participants chose the number for, given the possibility of duplicate numbers in the population who wrote their own number. The real answer? No matter what location or demographic the experiment has taken place in, researchers have always found that they have to pay at least five times more to those who wrote their own numbers.

This result reveals an inconvenient truth about human nature: When we choose for ourselves, we are far more committed to the outcome—by a factor of five to one.