



Workplace Learning Solutions

Performance Power! Newsletter

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Editor's Corner



These are still difficult times for workers, especially those who remain unemployed. Many are still pounding the pavement trying to land the next opportunity that will allow them to continue putting food on their tables and keep a roof over their heads. But this group is not the only one that's suffering. While the unemployed continue to envy those who survived the cuts and layoffs, those who remained have their own crosses to bear. There's now less people to get the work done. They're faced with the new catch phrase of **"doing more with less"**. They are tasked with finding ways to be more efficient while cutting cost. They're even expected to work more hours but not necessarily at a higher wage. Many are unhappy, but stay with the job because *"at least they have a job."*

This situation often translates to a lack of engagement among employees. In a recent survey the [Gallup organization](#) found that *"actively disengaged employees erode an organization's bottom line while breaking the spirits of colleagues in the process. Within the U.S. workforce... this cost... (could) be more than \$300 billion in lost productivity alone."* That's a lot of money! So, in this month's edition of **Performance Power! Newsletter**, we will examine employee engagement and some simple steps that you and your organization can take to improve in this area for your employees and your bottom-line.

Featured Author

[David E Clarke](#) is the former Head of Employee Engagement and Organisational Culture at Hewitt Associates in Australia. He worked as part of the global panel of experts conducting employee research, including the Hewitt Best Employers Research and an in-depth study of the global leading culture measurement and management tools.

He has deep subject matter expertise in employee engagement, organisational culture measurement and transformation, as well as communications effectiveness to stakeholder groups internal to an organisation.

[Read David's article...](#)

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Happening This Month

Special September Events:

- 1st Monday—Labor Day U.S. Labour Day Canada
- Sept 11, Patriot Day in the U.S. in remembrance of attacks on Sept 11, 2001
- Sept 15, Hispanic Heritage and German American Heritage Months begin
- Sept 21, International Day of Peace

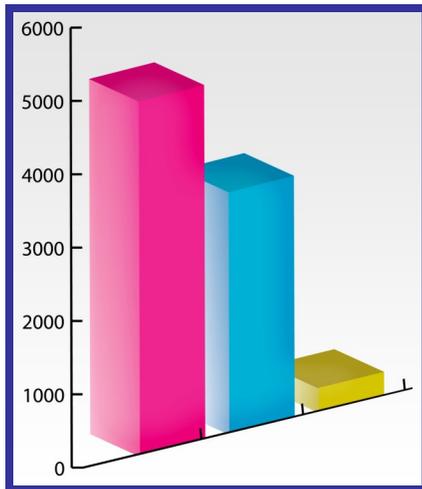
Global Celebrations:

- Independence Day Celebrations in Brazil-7, Mexico-16, Chile-18 and St. Kitts/Nevis-19



Improving Employee Engagement – The Three Simple Steps Required For Successful Change

There are lots of reasons why organisations fail to create the change they plan for in the business. This applies both broadly speaking and to employee engagement and motivation programs specifically. It's easy to pick fault - many businesses make the same mistakes and they're easy to see.



Amongst the many reasons for failure to fully execute planned change initiatives, you'll observe the following:

- ◆ *Poor communication*
- ◆ *Indecisive and ineffective leadership*
- ◆ *A lack of emotional commitment / connection to the cause by employees*
- ◆ *Unclear objectives or ambiguous plans*
- ◆ *Poor program management - where tasks aren't broken down into manageable chunks*

It's not surprising then that figures released by Hewitt Associates in 2008 showed that only around half of all businesses experienced increases in employee engagement year on year. These companies know what they need to do... they just aren't doing it very well. Similarly, wide ranging research can be found all over the internet (e.g. projectsmart.co.uk) claiming that anywhere between half and two thirds of all change management projects end less than well.

Fundamentally, the reason change fails runs as follows:

- ◆ *We have a great idea and everyone gets excited*
- ◆ *We enthusiastically build a plan... but don't tell many people about it*
- ◆ *We return to our desks, start reading emails, begin drowning in work as reality sinks in, and then completely fail to see through the execution of the idea*

Sound like anywhere you've worked or people you've worked with?

The reality is that businesses simply don't manage internal change with the same rigour, drive and ruthlessness as they do in getting the burger from the cow to the bun or the car from the plan to the shop floor. If the basic premises of Lean Manufacturing were applied to change management in organisations the world would be a very different place. But it's not. These companies deliver to their clients very efficiently, but it's too much of a stretch to apply these processes to themselves and their employees.

The process for successful change really isn't that difficult however. With external clients who are 'paying' for continuous improvement a business can't really expect them to get involved in the process. These clients have no emotional connection to better products and improved processes - if they don't get them they'll

simply go elsewhere. With internal clients, i.e. employees, the relationship is different. These people **WANT** to work for better businesses and they're willing to

invest their time and efforts in achieving this. Organisations simply have to tap into this willingness.

The first step in creating successful change is therefore to create a '**Burning Platform**' that provides the inspiration and motivation for all employees to ensure the change is successful. Give people a purpose and a reason to do something and they'll often work out how to do it, and then make it happen, without any further direction or assistance.

People do better with purpose motives than they do with profit motives. Provide a bonus or reward to an employee to do something that they're not emotionally connected to and they might do it - but they won't do it with all their heart and soul. Give someone a burning desire to make something happen and then all you need to do is get out of their way - money won't be required.

Creating a Burning Platform requires strong communication about the current state of the business and why this is not good for them as employees (you can throw in that it's not good for the business and shareholders too, but this is

3 steps to successful employee engagement

Step 1: Create a burning platform that provides inspiration and motivation for employees.

Step 2: Align activities towards a common goal

Step 3: Make everyone accountable for their contributions to the success of the team

(Continued on page 4)

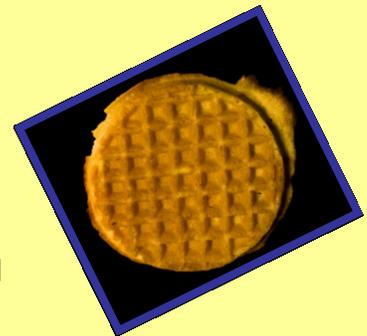
Did You Know?

Which of these fun September Holidays do you already celebrate?

National No Rhyme (Nor Reason Day) - Sept 1



National Lazy Mom's Day - Sept 3



National Waffle Week—Sept 5-11

International Chocolate Day - Sept 13



National Women Road Warrior Day - Sept 20



National Good Neighbor Day - Sept 26

Improving Employee Engagement cont...

(Continued from page 2)

less likely to get them jumping out of bed). Once they understand and feel the need to change the current situation, you then simply need to provide a clear vision about what needs to change, as well as why this will make their business a better place to work.

This Burning Platform needs to be something that emotionally energises all employees equally. It has to inspire and ignite passion in everyone - not just the leaders that create it. Change plans that work for some and mean nothing to others are simply destined to fail.

So identify the thing that needs to change and why it needs to change. Provide an inspiring and energising vision of what the new reality will look like and the benefits it will convey to all employees. Then communicate, communicate, and communicate. It's amazing what people can achieve when they set their hearts and minds to it - even when the conditions for change and tools available to create the change are less than perfect.

Once you've 'revved up' your employees you then only need to ensure their activity is aligned. This is step two in creating successful change and is called '**rallying the troops.**' Critical to this step is the governing role of the leadership of the business (or a specially designed and empowered project team) in ensuring that all employees collaborate and cooperate effectively towards a common goal. If the Burning Platform was intelligently designed and effectively communicated in the first place this should be easy. It doesn't involve micromanagement or directive leadership. It simply involves resolving differences in interpretation of how to achieve the desired state or what the desired state looks like.

For this step to be successful communication is yet again enormously important. This doesn't mean a constant monologue from the leaders to the employees. It means constant multi-directional streams of information between everyone involved in the change. Remember: everyone's opinion counts. As soon as you take an opinion away from someone

regarding something that is going to have an impact on them, they will emotionally disconnect from the process and only tacitly involve themselves.

Ways to ensure this constant multi-directional flow of information can be planned for well in advance of the change management project itself. With employee engagement and motivation surveying this usually means working out who will be involved, when and in what way, prior to the surveying itself. Once you know that, tell them and get them involved. It benefits no-one springing it on them at the eleventh hour, whereas anticipation in involvement in exciting change can work wonders for employee engagement just through active participation.

The final of the three steps in creating successful change is ensuring accountability and responsibility. Highly driven employees that are working cohesively as a single unit towards a common goal can be enormously effective. However, it never hurts to make sure everyone is clear on each person's role, responsibilities and what they will be held accountable for.

This transparency around 'who's doing what' serves two purposes. Firstly, it makes sure each person 'stays on point' and has clear objectives to work towards. This will motivate and engage them - if aligned to the Burning Platform. It will also provide them with a clear reference point for self regulation. Secondly, it allows peer management. If everyone in the team is clear on the responsibilities of every other team member (however small these responsibilities are when all the activity is divided up), they will be able to cajole, nudge and openly push people to ensure they do their part in delivering the desired state.

Building a process for assigning accountability and responsibility can and should be quite straightforward. In much the same way as a business strategy is 'rolled down' through the organisation one level at a time, so the requirements for creating successful change can be broken down by one group and level at a time. Once again, key parts of this process are effective communication and

proper planning. Tell people what will be happening, when it will happen, and what you need them to do as early as possible. Then, right throughout the process, keep communicating with them.

Following these three simple steps will work wonders for your business. Applying the same rigour and practices to your employees as you do to your clients will produce astounding business performance - just try it and see.

Ultimately, if you give your employees a purpose motive in place of a profit motive they'll do what you need them to do. Not because it's what you want to happen - but because it's what they want to happen. Furthermore, they won't do it and then forget about it: they'll create the change, embed the change, and then continue to enforce the change long after the next change initiative begins.

The choice is there for every business to make. Be a part of the half of the business community that stumbles through change implementation and employee engagement initiatives wasting money on poorly executed plans. Or, make a difference to your business, take control, and make your company a better place to work. A place where all employees communicate richly, where change is part of a vision of an improved workforce for all employees, and where people know exactly what is expected of them in order to make this vision a reality.



Workplace News

Workplace Performance Consultant for Hire

Is your workplace showing signs such as low motivation, absenteeism, resistance to change or high turnover? This could be an indication that your employees are unengaged. Are you ready to do what it takes to get your employees engaged? **Workplace Learning Solutions** can help you turn unengaged employees into a fully engaged workforce. [Contact us for more details](#)

More on Employee Engagement

Everyone is discussing employee engagement these days. What is your company doing to keep employees engaged? Do you even believe in all the hype? Well, research continues to prove that an engaged employee is a productive employee, so don't ignore this. [Click here for another article on EE by Workforce Management...](#)

Webinars and Conferences

Start spreading the news! Baby Boomers are retiring! The Millennials are coming! Are your HR and training departments ready for this shift? Here's a FREE webinar that will help you prepare. Block an hour on Sept. 15th to attend [How the Millennial Generation Is Shaking Up the Workplace.](#)

Here's a great conference for trainers! The **Telling Ain't Training and more... Conference** offers an experiential approach to transforming "telling" into activities that result in long-term retention and behavior change. Don't be fooled by the title! This conference provides answers to the questions every trainer wants to know: How do learners learn? Why do learners learn? How do you make sure learning sticks? [Click here to register for an upcoming session near you.](#)

About Workplace Learning Solutions

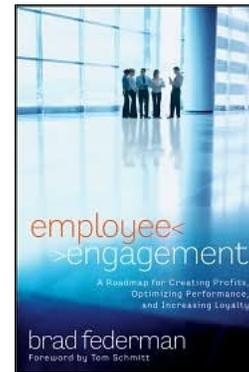
Workplace Learning Solutions is a professional consulting group specializing in solving workplace learning and performance issues. We focus on building organizational human capability by developing great managers and supervisors, helping them to maximize the performance of their teams through effective management and leadership.

Our services include:

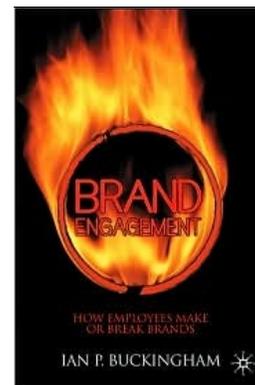
- Strategic planning
- Workplace performance consulting
- Leadership and management development programs
- Self-paced learning solutions
- Facilitator led training programs
- Blended learning solutions

If you would like to make a comment or suggestion, or if you need to ask a question please contact us at info@workplace-learning-solutions.com

September Reading List



[Employee Engagement: A Roadmap for Creating Profits, Optimizing Performance, and Increasing Loyalty](#)



[Brand Engagement: How Employees Make or Break Brands](#)

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