

GREGORY P. SMITH

BOOSTING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

50 WAYS TO MOTIVATE AND UNLEASH
EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE



Boosting Employee Engagement

50 Ways to Motivate and Unleash Employee Performance

Employers face the complex tasks on finding ways to improve job engagement and job satisfaction. A global economy of discriminating employees has placed demands on employers never before seen.

Employers face the challenges of maintaining productivity, job performance as well as keeping their workforce engaged and satisfied with their jobs.

Environmental pressures, rising health care costs, and the needs of the workforce have placed management in a complicated and tenuous situation. The answer lies with creating a work environment that maintains employee job satisfaction as well as motivates people toward exceptional performance.

A survey conducted by the Conference Board showed only **45 percent of Americans** are engaged with their jobs. This is the lowest job engagement level ever recorded by the Conference Board in more than 22 years of research.

Those that fail to improve job satisfaction are at risk of losing their top talented people to the competition. Supervisors and managers who maximize the potential, creative abilities, and talents of the entire workforce have a greater competitive advantage than those who don't. Employees that are engaged in their work have a higher level of job satisfaction. Motivated workers provide the health insurance businesses desperately needed in these chaotic times.

THE PRIDE SYSTEM

The leaders of the organization have the responsibility for creating a high level of job satisfaction. Dr. Edwards Deming said, "The aim of leadership should be to improve the performance of man and machine, to improve quality, to increase output, and simultaneously to bring pride of workmanship to people." A motivating environment is one that gives workers a sense of pride in what they do. To show supervisors and managers how to build a more productive work

environment, I've created a five-step process called the PRIDE system. Leaders can improve employee motivation and employee engagement within their organizations by following this process:

- Provide a positive working environment
- Reward and recognition
- Involve and increase employee engagement
- Develop the skills and potential of your workforce
- Evaluate and measure job satisfaction

STEP 1--PROVIDE A POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Job satisfaction begins by first providing a positive work environment. Fran Tarkenton says, to find what motivates people, "you have to find what turns people on." This is the most important factor in the process. A motivating working environment requires going over and beyond the call of duty and providing for the needs of the worker.

Walt Disney World Company provides an excellent work environment for their employees or "cast members." Employee assistance centers are spread strategically across the theme park. Some of the services included employee discount programs, childcare information, money orders, postage stamps, check cashing, and bus passes. The Walt Disney Company realizes that taking care of their employee's needs keep them motivated, on the job and loyal to the company.

STEP 2--REWARD, REINFORCEMENT AND RECOGNITION

Mark Twain once said, "I can live for two months on a good compliment." Personal recognition is a powerful tool in building morale and motivation. A pat on the back, a personal note from a peer or a supervisor does wonders. Small, informal celebrations are many times more effective than a once a quarter or once a year formal event.

Graham Weston, co-founder and CEO of Rackspace Managed Hosting, gives the keys to his BMW M3 convertible for a week to his top performing employees. This creative way to reward employees has a bigger impact than cash. He says, "If you gave somebody a \$200 bonus, it wouldn't mean very much. When someone gets to drive my car for a week, they never forget it."

I have spent several years researching what organizations do to motivate and energize their workforces to achieve high levels of employee satisfaction. There are hundreds of easy-to-implement techniques that are guaranteed to improve performance, energize, help motivate, and [improve teamwork](#). Just about all these ideas cost nothing or very little to implement.

STEP 3--INVOLVE AND ENGAGE THE WORKFORCE

People may show up for work, but are they engaged and productive? People are more committed and have higher levels of employee engagement when there is a process for them to contribute their ideas and employee suggestions. This gives them a sense of ownership and pride in their work.

The Sony Corporation fosters the exchange of ideas within departments by sponsoring an annual Idea Exposition. During the exposition, scientists and engineers display projects and ideas they are working on. Open only to Sony's employees, this process creates a healthy climate of innovation and engages all those who participate.

Capturing employee suggestions and ideas engages and improves employee motivation, creating a more productive and satisfying work environment. Yet many ignore the untapped resource of their employees who know their jobs better than any expert.

STEP 4--DEVELOP WORKER'S SKILLS AND POTENTIAL

Training and education motivates people and makes them more productive and innovative. At Federal Express, all customer contact people are given six weeks of training before they ever answer the first phone call. Learning never stops and testing continues throughout their employment tenure. Every six months customer service people are tested using an on-line computer system. Pass/fail results are sent to each employee within 24 hours. They receive a personalized "prescription" on areas that need reviewing with a list of resources and lessons that will help. Federal Express' intensive training and development program has resulted in higher motivation and lower turnover.

There are many reasons training and development makes sense. Well-trained employees are more capable and willing to assume more control over their jobs. They need less supervision, which frees management for other tasks. Employees are more capable to answer the questions of customers which builds better customer loyalty. Employees who understand the business, complain less, are more satisfied, and are more motivated. All this leads to better management-employee relationships.

STEP 5--EVALUATE AND MEASURE JOB SATISFACTION

Continuous evaluation and never ending improvement is the final step of the PRIDE system. Evaluation is a nonstop activity that includes a specific cycle of steps focusing on job satisfaction and employee engagement. The primary purpose of evaluation is to measure progress and determine what needs improving. Continuous evaluation includes, but is not limited to, the measurement of attitudes, morale, and motivation of the workforce. It includes the identification of problem areas needing improvement and the design and implementation of an improvement plan. Good organizations conduct a job satisfaction survey at least once a year.

Businesses have searched far and wide for the competitive advantage, the best equipment, technology, or the latest business fad. These provide only temporary

solutions. The true competitive advantage is trained and motivated people proudly working together for a common purpose, contributing their vitality and energy toward the goals of the enterprise.

Ways to Motivate and Unleash Employee Performance

Executive Lunch: Tenet HealthSystem selects an employee from each department via e-mail to join Executives (VPs) for lunch. Approximately 10 executives and 15 employees have lunch in a conference room on the Executive floor on a monthly basis. There is no set agenda. Coworkers get a chance to interact with one another, and interact with executives on an informal basis. This program has done a lot for job engagement.

Employee Involvement: UT Federal Credit Union has gone the second mile to involve all of their employees. In order to provide a benefit employees had requested, and involve all employees in the decision-making process, they surveyed all employees to see if they wanted a TV in the break room. A few voted NO, but the overwhelming majority wanted one. They put it in for a two-month trial basis, and did a follow-up survey. It was confirmed they wanted to keep it. The way they involved everybody, no one could get upset if the vote did not go his or her way. Also, the employees got to make the decision--it was not mandated by management.

All Stars Recognition: Circuit City Stores, Inc. has the “All Stars Recognition” program to reward excellent customer service. Peers in department can fill out card to “nominate” peers stating action to be awarded. All cards are posted on bulletin board during the quarter. At the end of each quarter, three winners are drawn, and get to select one of three prizes: \$50 gift certificate to salon, \$50 gift certificate to restaurant of their choice, or \$50 gift certificate to Circuit City (our company). They also get an 8 x 10-framed certificate to display in their workspace. All certificates, nomination cards, and “publicity” materials are color printed with a baseball theme.

Trip to Headquarters Company: Denon Electronics offers an all-expense paid trip to their headquarters in Japan, for the employee and their family. They have lunch with CEOs, tour the factories, and have a guided tour of the city by employees. Employees nominate the winner of this coveted award.

Referral Bonus Program: The Lutheran Social Services of Mid-America offers a Referral Bonus Program to their employees. Quarterly, they recognize all employees in their monthly newsletter that made a referral during the quarter, whether the persons they referred were hired or not. Employees have commented how much they appreciate the recognition.

Staff Speaks Newsletter: The Lutheran Social Services of Mid-America have a large organization, which spans three states. They have begun a “Staff Speaks” article in their monthly newsletter. They choose an employee from each of their four affiliates, and provide name, length of time employed at their organization, title, and a brief description of job duties. Then they ask them a “fun” question each month, such as, “If you could be anyone/do anything else professionally, who/what would it be?” They take their picture, and include it with their info. This allows their staff to get to know others throughout the organization who they may not meet, or have opportunity for interaction.

Chair Massages: American Healthways have nurses who work in a call center environment. They have just started offering chair massages.

Spot Program: Abbott Laboratories have implemented the “spot” program. Anyone can give a “spot” award. The award comes with a designated gift certificate (usually \$25) to a variety of stores. At the end of each quarter, the spot awards are collected and placed in a drawing. The winner is pulled out, and they get an extra vacation day.

Team Assist Boards: Best Buy Company, Inc. has boards, which are located in

multiple areas within a department. Peers or managers recognize the excellence of others by writing a quick message of thanks, and then post it on the board.

Tool for New Employees: Northeastern University has many divisions, each containing several departments. The division decided to develop a tool to assist the new employees. It is an orientation/training manual, and the entire company helps direct them where to go, who to speak to, and what they need to begin working on.

Staff Excellence Award: Northeastern University has developed a staff excellence awards. These are done monthly and the winners are nominated by those in their department. They receive a gift certificate and plaque.

Perfect Attendance Recognition: Graybar has weekly or monthly drawings for perfect attendance. This is for those who have had no tardiness, etc. for the previous weeks. They give one gift certificate per week.

On the Spot Award: NexCom uses the “On the Spot Award.” Any supervisor who finds an employee doing the right thing gives it. They give that employee a gift certificate, minimum \$25, maximum \$100.

Breakfast Burrito Reward: Sandia National Labs has the Breakfast Burrito reward. When a team or individual meets a certain performance goal, they get a Breakfast Burrito party. Status towards achievement is tracked on a poster... red chilies indicate falling behind schedule, and green chilies show if they are on time, or ahead of schedule. This is very inexpensive, but well received. Employees love to eat!

Feed the Teams: Smith and Nephew encourage their various departments to select a weekend to feed the mfg. teams that have to work. They arrive at 8:00 p.m. Friday night for the second shift, 2:00 a.m. for the third shift, and at noon on

Saturday for the first shift. The teams have been very appreciative.

Incentive Compensation Program: Wells Branch Mud has used an incentive compensation program to retain temporary employees. They provide an extra dollar for every hour an employee works if he/she works till the end of summer. This is only for temporary workers.

Magic Maker of the Quarter: US Food Service recognizes the excellent employee that goes over and beyond in work performance, excellence, attendance, team leadership, an overall good employee with no disciplinary action. Supervisors nominate their employees. The Magic Maker of the Quarter receives \$50, lunch with the boss, and puts them in the drawing for Magic Maker of the Year where they receive \$1,000.

Spontaneous Fun: Scholastic Book Fairs randomly stops employees from work for a few minutes to play nerf basketball. Shooting a basket wins candy bar, pop, etc. They also select employees to go “fishing.” They use a fishing pole with Velcro fish (Wal-Mart). The fish have small prizes labeled on them. The group of managers come together and selects an employee to play once a week, once a month, etc.

Above and Beyond Awards: Co-op Network has peer-to-peer recognition anytime, for anything. Employee receives certificate and coupon to save and exchange for merchandise. Coupons are placed in a box for random drawing twice a year the prize is \$500 each time. The employee with the most awards gets to attend one of our many annual programs or conferences anywhere in the country.

You Done Good Program: Farner-Bocken Company give their managers and supervisors a certain amount of “You Done Good” tickets each quarter. They are responsible for giving the tickets to employees who show “pride” in their work.

This includes productivity, respect for co-workers, involvement in community and work, dedication and loyalty to company, and enthusiasm and a positive attitude in the workplace. The employees also receive Guaranteed tickets for an absent-free month, anniversary (years of service), and no loss-time for the quarter for the department. They called it “You Done Good” because their president uses that term when an employee does do good!

Quarterly Drawings: Each quarter Farner-Bocken Company draws for a trip (three employee winners), one paid day off (two winners), and any item from the company clothing shop (two winners). They also throw in surprises at the end of the drawing. On the trip, a manager is the host, and the employees who win are from different departments. The trip allows employees to bring one guest and they get to know each other, and what they do on their jobs.

Hats Off Peer Recognition: RDV Sports, Inc. has a “Hats Off” peer recognition program. On Hats Off post cards, a message is written about a positive experience. At the end of the month, a random drawing is done, and the winner receives a \$25 gift certificate.

All-Star Customer Service Award: RDV Sports, Inc. Employee nominations are made to the COO about a significant, specific customer service event, internal or external, that exceeded expectations. The COO selects a winner from the peer nominations. The winner receives a \$100 gift certificate and special parking. The winner and other nominations are posted to the employee breakroom bulletin board.

Making Change: NRTC uses “Making Change.” They purchased coins that say “You’re Special. “ YOU made a difference in my day.” All employees have a few, and are asked to pass them on to other coworkers when they help out each other. They encourage people not to keep the coins, but pass them on.

Employee Profile: CLMS has a BI-monthly employee newsletter, which features an “Employee Profile.” They treat them to a “meal with management,” where the managing partners and headquarters staff take them to restaurant of their choice. In addition to the pre-profile interview (done via e-mail questionnaire), this lunch provides the opportunity to get to know the employee, and hear their impressions of the organization, as well as informally discuss things they like, do not like, and concerns they might have. By getting this feedback in a comfortable, informal setting, they not only get to discuss topics important to them, but feel a connection with the company’s leadership, and that their ideas truly matter to the organization.

Telephone Calls of Appreciation: Boeing has their CEO call employees directly to say, “job well done.” They are able to actually describe what the employee did. This is most important, as Boeing is a very large company.

President’s Recognition Dinner: Schreiber Foods, Inc. holds an annual President’s Recognition Dinner. Throughout the year employees nominate each other for five categories: leadership, quality improvement, innovation, community involvement, etc. A team then evaluates the nominations, and the winners selected. They are then announced and recognized at the President’s Dinner. The recipients receive a crystal award and a bonus. It is really a special occasion--it feels like “The Oscars!”

Birthday/Anniversary Club: Entice Corporation has a birthday/anniversary club. Once a month they get together as a company, celebrate the birthdays, and recognize the anniversaries that have occurred during that month.

Only A Fool Would Work Here This Long: Alaska Sealife Center has an Employee Anniversary recognition lunch on April Fool’s Day. Everyone is invited, and they recognize employees in five-year increments such as five years,

ten years, etc. They receive a certificate signed by the Mayor. This program was developed for the City of Seward, Alaska.

Easter Egg Hunt: The Thursday before Easter, Open TV stuffs and hides approximately 100 eggs. They have all employees gather in the conference room. They place their names in a bag, and draw teams. Employees are given 15 minutes to find the eggs. The team with the most eggs wins. Past prizes have included a \$15 gift certificate to Borders or Blockbusters per winner. They announce the winners at their weekly lunch, which the company provides each Thursday. E-mail is sent to the entire staff announcing the winners, just in case some employees were unable to attend the lunch. Total cost is less than \$100. They use plastic eggs and stuff them with Easter candy. They provide plastic grocery bags for the “baskets.” By mixing up names and assigning people on different teams, people who previously did not know each other become acquainted.

Culture Change Team: USIS formed a culture change team. As an introduction project, they asked the employees to read a free copy of the books we gave them such as *Who Moved My Cheese?* and *Fish* and to agree to a follow-up discussion in the future. They displayed a chart with the employee’s name on it. When they read the books, they placed a “cheese” or “fish” sticker next to their name.

They had the follow-up discussion with them, asking three questions about their job, and the company.

1. What do you like?
2. What do you dislike?
3. How should we be doing things--what would you like to change?

Employee Award: The Del Norte Credit Union has implemented the Wellness

Award. If employees are not late or do not miss work due to illness, they receive a cash award on a quarterly basis.

- They have an Anniversary Award where they recognize one year, five, 10, 15, 20, 25, etc.
- They have a Member Service Award for employees who provide exemplary service.
- They have quarterly gatherings for employees.
- They also provide “welcome” flowers for new employees.

Monthly Newsletter: Swales Aerospace has created a monthly newsletter that is provided to employees and their families. This is mailed to the name of the employee, and allows the achievements of the company and individual employees to be shared with spouses and family members.

Tours for New Hires: Swales Aerospace has tours of facilities for new hires on a monthly basis, followed by luncheon and a Question/Answer session with the CEO and CFO.

Fish Philosophy Recognition: Valley Federal Credit Union encourages employees to give each other *Fish!* Cards for pats on the back. Each card is worth “worms” to fish in fishing pond for prizes. The more worms, the bigger the prize. Have *Fish! Days* when employees fish for prizes, special fun games and prizes.

On The Spot Award: RSM McGladrey has On The Spot Awards, given by upper level management to anyone in increments of \$50. It goes directly to payroll, and is applied on their next paycheck. Management writes why they gave the employee this award for positive reinforcement.

Thanks for the Inspiration: International Cont. uses “Thanks for the Inspiration”

cards. Each is worth \$50. It represents any new idea implemented that generates company cost savings.

Friday Ho Hos: Each Friday afternoon, Genentech provides their employees Ho Hos. They gather in the café with snacks and drinks. This gives the employees an opportunity to mingle and unwind at the end of the week.

Breakfast with the President: At Buffalo Wild Wings, each month they gather a person from each department, and collectively have a two-three hour roundtable with the president of the company. This includes sharing ideas, and changes they would like to see.

Play Day for New Hires: Captaris gives their new hires a T-shirt with a bullseye, a nerf gun, and goggles. They have a play day at 4:00 p.m. every Friday.

Recognition of Anniversaries: National Research Group, Inc. recognizes and announces employee anniversaries. They give them a certificate and/or make the announcement on the bulletin board.

Ring that Bell: Vinson & Elkins has a bright idea. In Human Resources, when they hire someone or complete a project, they ring a bell real loud. Everyone gathers around to celebrate and share in what has happened.

Informal Programs: At Shelter Insurance Co., anyone in the company may recognize anyone else. A write-up is sent to Human Resources each month. One employee in the home office and a field employee win “Employee of the Month.” They are then considered for the “Employee of the Year” award. Employees get recognition at all levels. The worker bees get recognition often.

Shining Star Pin: At Rich SeaPak Corporation, managers, and department heads are asked to reward one associate in their department per quarter. They

receive a “Shining Star Pin” for something that an associate has done. That person will then be recognized in their quarterly newsletter.

Pancake and Sausage Breakfast: At Johnson County Community College, every Christmas supervisors of all departments come to work early to prepare a pancake and sausage breakfast for all employees in the company. Employees are asked to volunteer for a company choir, and they sing Christmas carols during the company breakfast.

Bar Chart: At Virtua Health, they put a bar chart on the wall to show hires per month as a team. Each employee is color-coded, but the results posted are listed as a team. They set a team goal for each month. If the goal is reached, they engage the staff. The most successful recruiter for that month is also rewarded.

How do Employees Want to be Recognized: At Eli Lilly & Company, they have created a tool managers can use and give to their employees to fill out. The goal is to find out how employees want to be recognized. (Their favorite office supplies, favorite candy, etc.) The manager can then individualize their recognition.

Stash of Candy: At the American Speech/Hearing Assoc., Human Resources has a stash of candy, which they distribute to people who have done something good, or to those who have had a bad day. This stash has expanded to an entire file drawer, and people stop by all the time because they “need” a piece of chocolate, and usually end up talking about problems or things that have happened. It has opened up great opportunities for informal communication.

Employee Appreciation Lunch: MeritCare Health System employees decide within each service to have a variety of activities throughout the week; draw Secret Service, and do something nice for each other on the special day of the

week.

Rumor Mill Meetings: KANA's CEO conducts meetings, several sessions throughout the day, to address organizational rumors, allow employees to ask questions, and inform employees of future plans of the organization. All questions are answered to the best extent possible.

Take a Walk: KANA's executive walks around the company, and hands out pension statements. It gives them an opportunity to speak with busy employees about their retirement, benefits, and planning. Employees are invited to workshops or individual counseling. This helps gauge interest, motivate participation, ease nerves about investing, and generally get to know your staff. This is a good idea for a smaller company, with 100-250 employees.

Weekend Trips: At Business Layers, they offer weekend trips to those in professional services that travel 100% for the company. These trips are for the employee and his/her family.

Monthly Get-Togethers: At Business Layers, they have monthly get-togethers, planned around a theme, such as Mexican or Italian.

President's Club: Business Layers provides employees with the President's Club. They give an all expense paid trip to Hawaii to the highest revenue producers.

Retail Industry: Finlay Fine Jewelry hired a company to shop their stores and rate their employees against their selling standards. At the end of the month, results were e-mailed to all the stores. If employees scored 2/4, they paid \$50. If the employee scored 4/4, they received \$200. Details were sent to the District Managers, and they reviewed detailed results with employee.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Greg Smith is the founder and President of *Chart Your Course International*, a management development firm located in Atlanta, Georgia. Many of his clients include both Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award winners and Fortune Magazine's "Top 100 Best Places To Work." Greg served on the Board of Examiners for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. He is listed in Harvard University's *Profiles in Business and Management: An International Directory of Scholars and Their Research*.

The Human Resource Executive Magazine selected him as one of the nation's Top Ten "Rising Stars" in Human Resource Management.

He has received other awards including the Legion of Merit from the U.S. Army and the Order of Military Medical Merit. He is listed in *Who's Who of Professional Speaking* from the National Speakers Association and holds both a B.S. and M.S. degree in Personnel Management.

He has written and published over 350 articles and nine books including, *The New Leader: Bringing Creativity and Innovation to the Workplace* and *Here Today, Here Tomorrow: Transforming Your Workforce from High Turnover to High-Retention*. He is the publisher of the Navigator Newsletter and has created numerous products, tools and services for his clients. Mr. Smith and his associates conduct training programs and speak at conferences worldwide. Please visit his website for additional information.

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