



Focus

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Three Keys to Employee Enthusiasm

Enthusiastic employees are more productive, have less turnover, and are more likely to discover innovative new ways to carry out their work. Moreover, these engaged employees attract similar top talent to the company.

Employees crave the following, in this order of importance.

Respect. Show employees that you respect them as people -- who live real lives with all of life's joys and sorrows. Of course, decent leaders **do** respect their people, but perhaps don't demonstrate that enough. I say this a lot to leaders, "*They cannot read your mind.*" Here are some tips to help handicapped employees (i.e., those who are not telepaths.)

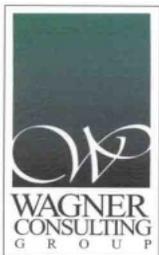
- a. Use different communication channels, from a casual sticky note, to group email, to sharing at weekly staff meetings, to a letter sent to the employee's home.
- b. You have the power of example on your side: People notice how you treat low-status group members and expect you will treat them the same way. So, praising/celebrating/helping out in a rough time a single group member leverages your time because other employees *actually feel the gratitude* of the one [This is called "mirroring" and occurs because of actual mirror neutrons in your brain].
- c. Sharing information shows respect. People love to be "in the know." One simple method is a monthly email from the boss. Keep it short and conversational in tone; don't be stiff! I recommend you set up a recurring task so you don't forget.

.. **Important work.** Explain, on a regular basis, why the work you do matters. Periodically use anecdotes or stories to reinforce the message. This satisfies a person's need to be part of something "bigger than just me" doing important, meaningful work. All people feel this way, but this need to make the world a better place is especially important to Millennials (ages 18 to 34).

- . **Why your job matters.** Take advantage of opportunities to lift up the importance of someone's job. You can approach this in two ways: In an ad hoc manner or as a group exercise.
 - A group exercise might look like this: Under the guise of better internal operations, ask participants to write down what this/these position(s) contribute to our overall success.
 - An ad hoc example could be like a restaurant dishwasher.
 - Imagine a world with no restaurants. Everyone would have to go home for lunch or carry a meal. No more lunch meetings! No more dinners on the town! No more stopping for a meal while traveling! This makes the case for why our restaurant matters.
 - Imagine a restaurant with no dishwasher. Dirty, unpleasant plates, service pieces, and utensils lead to sick patrons. Ick!
 - The fact that you have this conversation at all shows respect.

Finally, a note on incentives. For most employees, large cash bonuses are ineffective long-term behavior modifiers. Non-cash (low monetary value) rewards are more effective, like praise, coaching, training, promotion, small cash gifts for on the spot recognition, more freedom, extra perks, etc.

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