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# Focus

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### Employee Engagement

As often happens, a confluence of events led to this month's article. First, I was analyzing the results of an employee job satisfaction survey for a client, and was gratified to see that scores had improved since the survey I carried out a year earlier. Second, I finished reading a book, *The Truth About Employee Engagement*, by Patrick Lencioni, one of my favorite authors. I own most of Lencioni's books, but this 2007 publication had previously escaped my notice.

Lencioni identifies three root causes of job misery: anonymity, irrelevance, and immeasurability – this last being a word he made up. This simple framework provides a great how-to guide to get the best out of employees and reduce management overhead time and effort.

#### Anonymity

People need to be understood and appreciated – as a person, not just a cog in the machine. Leaders who take the time to learn a little bit about employee personal lives are rewarded with lower turnover and better results. Moreover, Millennials blur the boundaries between their work and personal lives, and are more likely than their predecessors to abandon a

miserable job.

### Irrelevance

Everyone needs to know that their work matters to someone, even if it's just the boss. That boss part is good news. Of course everyone wants to be part of a winning team in a noble cause, but what if that's a hard sell? Lencioni illustrates that the employee's supervisor can give even the most prosaic job meaning by saying things like, "Thanks, Jill. Your hard work made me look good and relieved some pressure on me. My life is better because of what you did."

### Inmeasurement

Lencioni coined this term to describe the lack of feedback generally, but specifically self-measurement by the employee. Says he, "Employees need to be able to gauge their progress and level of contribution for themselves." Long-time readers will recall feedback is a favorite topic of mine, and it's easy to see why the lack of a scoreboard can lead to job misery.

Finally, here's an extra credit tip to help avoid losing a valued employee. During a routine interaction or performance feedback session ask, "Jack, if you ever decided to leave our organization, what would you imagine the most likely reason would be?" Ask that of enough people and you might spot an opportunity!



Tom

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