

## Career Coach

# How to make sure your employees are engaged

**The issue:** Engaging employees



Doyle

**The scenario:** I have recently been promoted to vice president and with that I am responsible for managing nine employees in my division. My company has experienced turnover and has a handful of low performers. I want to make a positive difference. How do I go about it?

**Coach:** Kelley Doyle

Your question touches on a hot topic: employee engagement. The Gallup Organization names three types of employees within any business: engaged, not-engaged and actively disengaged. Engaged employees is the ideal. They are passionate about their work and help to move the company forward. When employees are engaged they are less likely to leave and have higher levels of performance. Employees that are not-engaged or actively disengaged lack energy or passion for their work and act out in their unhappiness, respectively.

Here is a startling statistic for you. In 2005 the Gallup Management Journal survey

found that 17% of the U.S. workforce over 18 years old is actively disengaged. That translates to 23 million unhappy workers undermining the efforts of more engaged workers. The lower productivity of these disengaged workers costs the U.S. economy \$370 billion annually.

That's the tough news, but there is good news – as a manager you can directly affect the level of engagement your employees' experience.

To make a positive impact in your employees engagement, start with the following:

- Assess your nine employee's current level of engagement. There are resources online at [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com).

- Boost employee engagement. "12: The Elements of Great Managing" by Rodd Wagner and James Harter offer real-life stories and examples.

- Learn and practice basic coaching skills for the development of your employees. In my experience, the managers that learn basic coaching skills are more effective leaders, and have satisfied and productive employees.

There's not enough room to cover the basic coaching skills in a column, but I can share a simple formula for asking good questions, the core of all coaching skills. When I coach clients to use this, their conversations shift from "push," which is directive and forceful, to "pull," which engages employees' existing potential.

The next time an employee comes to you with a challenge or opportunity they face, resist giving your advice and instead use the "what + how + when" formula.

"What" uncovers the heart of the issue and reveals assumptions or perceptions that aren't on the surface, even to the

employee. This is the discovery piece of the formula. Good questions include: What do you want to have happen? Or, What is important about this to you?

"How" brings action plans, strategies and solutions into focus. This is the decision piece of the formula. Good questions to ask include: How do you see yourself achieving the outcome you want? Or, What is the first step?

"When" creates accountability and puts the action plan into a timeline. This is the deadline piece of the formula. Ask, When will do you that?

If you use this coaching technique in a trusting and non-judgmental manner, your employees will grow in their problem-solving skills, self-confidence and work satisfaction. Try it and let me know what results you're getting!

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