

Spring is the season to engage

By: Veronica Cool ⌚ May 19, 2017



COOL TIPS

VERONICA
COOL

A scene from Dilbert:

- Clock in at 9a.m. for your shift that starts at 9a.
- Walk to the coffee maker, complain to your coworker about the traffic, news or game last night.
- Walk back to your office/cubicle/spot, stopping to chat with Jen, Jose, Maria and Kiera on the way.
- At your desk, you open Facebook to stalk your frenemies... and get interrupted by your boss asking for the updated TPS report. It's 9:22a.

My friends, this scenario is actually real. Did you know that 70 percent of U.S. employees are either not engaged or are actively disengaged?

Let me break this down for you: Only three out of every 10 people are actually ON.

Of course, the impact of this is dramatic, with various studies reporting the loss of upwards of \$500 billion dollars, from recruiting expenses, training and retraining — along with the simple fact that the work is simply not getting done.

Factors affecting disengagement include bad management, stress, poor working environment, lack of recognition and limited growth.

In other words, the work culture.

When you initially bring in new recruits, what is the orientation and onboarding process? Do they understand the very basics? Their roles, expectations, policies and even more importantly how their function influences the big picture?

Do they understand the big picture?

An engaged employee is emotionally invested in her work and committed to helping her organization improve. It's a mentality of not just "what's in it for ME?" but "what's in it for US?"

You can drive this change, beginning with you and then ensuring that you institute a culture of engagement.

Assess your current culture

This can be done through internal organizational assessments and employee surveys. There are consultants who can help you. One I recommend, for instance, is Shift (formerly EntreQuest), which has a solid record of driving cultural change with over 500-plus organizations by digging deeply into your organization to uncover your story and getting all of your employees on board.

Define your culture

Culture is the character and personality of your organization, what makes you unique, the sum of your behaviors, values and attitudes. It's the "It" factor that attracts employees and customers. I bet \$20 bucks that you just envisioned Apple, Southwest, Nordstrom, Harley Davidson or Google as entities with powerfully engaging culture. Almost cult-like. (If you didn't think of these companies, then the bet is null. If you did, then send me \$20 ... in small, unmarked bills.)

Build employee engagement

The secret sauce to building your culture is ensuring you and your team are all on board. Ensuring employee engagement is NOT a one-half day training session, or a kumbaya team retreat. It is a way of life lived every day. Does the employee know "how she helps the organization succeed?" You, as a leader — remember that you are a leader, regardless of your title and paycheck — need to focus on these key factors to drive engagement and culture.

- Communication — the frequency, transparency and type of communication.
- Work environment — what does your physical space feel like? What message does it promote? Is it dark and dreary? Crowded and dated? And, equally as important, is it safe?
- People — This factor encompasses the training, interaction, supervision, management, strategic leadership and processes in place to fostering the right culture. Do you have the right people in the right places? Are your leaders effective and engaged? Unengaged leaders are three times as likely to have unengaged employees, a vicious cycle that impacts productivity.
- Diversity & inclusion — remember that diversity encompasses differences greater than the physical characteristics, religion, sexual orientation and race. Diversity includes upbringing, educational levels, rural vs urban, large family vs small ... and so on and so on. Be inclusive, fostering an environment where people, all types of people, can perform to their potential.

Amigos, this is spring time, life is in full bloom, a perfect time to visit your culture and restructure your internal world to grow. It is the season for rebirth. Why not get engaged?

Veronica Cool is founder of Cool & Associates LLC, a business management firm specializing in financial wellness and diverse segment marketing. Her column appears twice a month in

The Daily Record and online. Contact her at Hola@CoolAssociatesLLC.com. Follow her on Twitter at [@verocool](https://twitter.com/verocool).

**This article was originally posted on The Daily Record.*

<http://thedailyrecord.com/2017/05/19/veronica-cool-column-increase-employee-engagement/>