Employee Engagement
Three strategies for building deep commitment

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Much is written on strategies for building employee engagement. It is thought that engagement positively impacts the organization by retaining valuable employees, increasing productivity and creating loyalty. Engaged employees typically feel that their work has significance in the larger organization and that the organization is a worthwhile employer.

The root of employee engagement is commitment. This article explores three strategies for building deep commitment that will invariably lead to a highly engaged workforce. Whether your company is a small dealership or a very large one, the strategies presented will help you refine your approach to managing your valuable human resources.

Commitment is a stabilizing force in the dealership. It not only ties people to you, as the employer, but to the work of the industry. Committed employees have a mindset that makes them genuinely want to obligate themselves to an employer. This desire supersedes their economic need to be employed. It is a desire to be part of something that has meaning and value.

Three Strategies for Building Commitment

There are three strategies that leaders can use to build high levels of commitment. The first is to **create meaning in the work**. Many jobs in the office technology industry become routine after a few years of tenure. It is up to you to find ways to create meaning in the work done by your employees. This will require you to have conversations with people about why their work matters, how their individual contributions add to the success of the dealership and the value they, as individuals, bring. These conversations need to be sincere.

It also helps if you have a system for celebrating successes. Successes can be more than financial — they can be whatever is most important to your team. Celebrations do not need to be large, formal affairs. Small, sincere gestures will go further in touching the hearts and minds of your employees.

The second strategy for cultivating an environment where high levels of commitment are the norm is to **create a culture**. Some cultures evolve, others are intentionally created. Taking the lead on creating a culture reflective of the mission, vision and core values of the organization requires thoughtful, comprehensive effort. Not only will you have to analyze current services and systems, but you will also have to deconstruct policies and procedures to be sure they are in alignment with the culture you seek to create.

For example, an organization that touts a coaching culture but uses only annual performance reviews for performance management does not really support coaching. Coaching is a critical piece of the performance management system. It should be integrated into human resource policies so managers know it is an expected requirement. This expectation should be supported by education that teaches managers and supervisors coaching best practices. Culture creation requires a fearless analysis of what you say, what you actually do and the incongruities between the two.

The third strategy requires **attention to the environment**. Leaders are responsible for creating a motivating environment. Not to be confused with cheerleader camp, a motivating environment pays attention to what noted psychologist and business management expert Fredrick Herzberg refers to as an employee's need for psychological growth. This type of environment pays attention to the factors that provide intrinsic motivation. Those factors include: achievement, recognition, responsibility, growth and advancement. A motivating environment has career ladders, opportunities for employees to develop new skills, and allows employees to own their work without micromanagement. A motivating environment encourages employees to try new activities, explore aspects of the business outside of their assigned duties and contribute to the larger industry. All of these efforts combined are a vote of confidence in employees and their abilities.

In Summary

Engaged employees are committed employees. They highly regard their work and their employers. This attachment is not accidental. It happens when employers make the conscious effort to add meaning to the work, build a strong culture and tend to the motivational needs of employees. ■

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