

## **Episode #22: Tips to Improve the Engagement of Your Employees during the Covid-19 Pandemic, Part 1**

Welcome to THE CAREER ACCELERATOR, the podcast where corporate managers will find tips and tools to deliver results through others.

Hello. In the last several episodes I've been talking about remote teams and how they can become more effective while they are working from home. Now, in this and the next two episodes, I'll continue that trend by talking about improving employee engagement while working remotely. I'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode you heard the following ten tips on how to give and receive feedback during this pandemic:

1. Do not throw in the towel in these difficult times. Acknowledge that giving and receiving feedback is not easy, but you can learn and improve.
2. Make a choice: When you give and receive feedback, you have an opportunity to grow. Do you want to benefit from that?
3. Restrict the conversation to one piece of feedback at a time.
4. Pinpoint. Make your feedback as specific as possible.
5. Set ground rules, such as being 100 percent constructive and providing both positive and negative feedback.
6. Volunteer to receive the feedback first.
7. Listen with your ears and your heart.
8. Practice, practice, practice.
9. Recognize that no two persons address and react to feedback the same way. Remember "The Platinum Rule" from previous podcasts? "Treat others the way THEY, not YOU, want to be treated."
10. Exercise the option to pause and assess the process midway, and if needed, reschedule it to a later time.

Today I want to share three tips that will help you, as a manager, significantly increase your employees' engagement, especially now that most or all of them are working remotely from home and may likely be experiencing a level of isolation.

I'll start by defining engagement. The research company Gallup describes an engaged employee as somebody who is "involved, enthusiastic and committed to their team and organization."

Even before the current pandemic, the employee engagement levels reported from different studies consistently showed a concerning picture. Gallup, as of 2018, reported that globally, only 15% of employees were engaged. In the United States, this number is higher, 34%, more than twice the global average, but it is still low.

What are the different assets that you have at your disposal to engage your remote employees?

- Probably not a lot of financial resources to offer salary increases and bonuses.

- Probably not a lot of vacation days, as the level of work due to layoffs and furloughs is probably higher than before Covid-19... and given the current travel restrictions, your employees may now want to use their limited vacation days to stay at home.

However, you may have a different set of assets that perhaps you have not yet tapped into and which do not require additional budgets.

Of the different books and articles written on this subject, today I want to share one developed by Patrick Lencioni called “The Truth about Employee Engagement.” He outlines three drivers that are easy to understand and straight-forward to execute. They, however, require that you, as a manager, assign a top priority to spending time and energy on the human component of your role.

The good thing is that, by addressing these bad things your employees don’t want to experience at work, you should see almost immediate benefits in their level of engagement and job satisfaction.

In this podcast we will cover the first one: They don’t want to feel anonymous. Anonymity is big job killer in companies. When employees perceive that their manager doesn’t know much about who they are, when they don’t know what is going on in their professional and personal life during this pandemic, and when they are not interested in finding out about them, the result is an unhappy employee. They are not going to give their best, and they will not go the extra mile to deliver results. In short, they will disengage.

I felt this way in my first full-time job. The company that eventually hired me had been impressive during the recruitment process. Being an international student in the United States, they reached out to me in my sophomore year to validate the information about my major, which was chemical engineering, my graduation date and my desire to return to my home country of Peru.

They kept in contact with me throughout the rest of my studies and leveraged a trip I took before my senior year to interview me at their plant facilities in Peru. I was impressed by the engineers who interviewed me.

A few months later a job offer arrived in the mail, which I promptly accepted.

Upon graduation in the United States, I returned home and started what until then had been my dream job. Unfortunately, the job did not pan out the way I had expected. One of the issues was my manager. On the technical front, he seemed to be proficient and well respected by others. He was also a quiet and reserved person... so much so, that I didn’t know much about him, and I don’t think he knew much about me. At least I don’t recall him expressing an interest in getting to know me. I felt anonymous...

My boss’s boss, the plant manager, knew a bit more about me, especially since he had interviewed me and signed my offer letter. I had a closer relationship with him, but he was not my direct manager, so I seldom saw him.

Anonymity was just one of the aspects of my work that gradually diminished my interest and engagement in this job and eventually led me to quit after only seven months.

After this, I went through a mini life crisis. I had left without another job offer. In fact, I started to question whether engineering was the right career for me. After a brief soul-searching process, I decided to go back to school to get an MBA.

I want to contrast my first job experience with the next one. Upon finishing my MBA, I was hired by the same company but in a different department. In hindsight, I probably took a big risk by giving the same company a second chance. Fortunately, this time there were two different factors working for me: I had a manager who showed a tremendous interest in me as a professional and as a person. This, together with the specific nature of my job, resulted in high levels of engagement and job satisfaction on my end. I never again felt anonymous.

Those of you who have people reporting to you now, or expect to in the near future, can take advantage of the current remote work situation triggered by Covid-19, to jump-start your engagement efforts with your employees.

I have three suggestions on how to do it:

1. First, spend a few minutes writing down what you know about the career and personal life of each of your employees. Don't be surprised if you know little about them.
2. Next, jump on Zoom, Teams or any other video-communication platform and talk to them individually. Don't forget, video cameras on for both of you. Apologize if you know little about them and show a genuine interest in truly learning more about their life. Ask them how they are coping with remote work: Do they have kids studying through distance learning? Is their spouse also working from home? Ask to meet the rest of their family and do your best to interact with them.
3. My third suggestion is to rinse and repeat... Do this with all your employees and keep doing it on and on. Aim to always be up to date on what's happening in their life.

I invite you to tap into the huge upside potential of getting to know your employees, to improve their engagement and overall job satisfaction. Remember, now more than ever, you have to take care of the human component of your employees.

I hope you enjoyed today's episode. In the next one, I will provide another set of tips to help you improve your employees' engagement during this pandemic. If you like what you heard today, and depending on the platform you're using, let me ask you to please rate, subscribe or follow this podcast and share it with your coworkers and friends. Also, you can request a free coaching call with me by visiting my website at [www.cannon.consulting](http://www.cannon.consulting), or if available in this platform, using the link provided in the Details section.

This is coach Percy Cannon, working to help you ***make the rest of your life...the best of your life®***.

## Percy's BIO

Percy provides corporate managers and leadership teams with customized coaching programs that help them develop the skills and capabilities needed to significantly increase their business results through others and accelerate their career growth.

Percy is an "alumnus" from three multinational corporations, Procter & Gamble, IBM & Microsoft, with whom he spent close to three decades.

Since 2011 he has been helping corporate executives, managers and employees ***make the rest of their life...the best of their life®***.

Percy has worked in the United States and across several countries in Latin America as an Executive Coach, Leadership Team Consultant and Keynote Speaker, serving companies such as Microsoft, Procter & Gamble, Citibank, Tiffany & Avianca.

Percy is a Certified Professional Coach from Wainwright Global, Authorized Partner for "The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team" and "Everything DiSC" and certified as a "Go-Giver" speaker & coach.

He published his first book in 2012-13 in English (*The Business Apostolate: Insights to Define and Achieve Your Mission in Life*) and in Spanish (*El Negocio Más Grande de su Vida*).

Percy is a Consulting Partner with Grupo Azimuth and the Chapter Director for the COO Forum in Southeast Florida.

He has lived in 9 different cities and 5 countries, and speaks English, Spanish and Portuguese fluently.

Percy is married, has 3 children and 6 grandchildren, and is a passionate runner & reader.

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