

Episode #23: Tips to Improve Your Employees' Engagement during the Covid-19 Pandemic, Part 2

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

Hello. Today I want to share three more 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'm your host, coach Percy Cannon.

In our last episode I shared Gallup's employee engagement figures for 2018, where only 15% of global employees were engaged. In the United States, this number was higher, at 34%, more than twice the global average, but it's still very low.

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

I offered a model from bestselling author and consultant 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.

I covered the first driver: Employees don't want to feel anonymous. 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 offered three suggestions to eliminate the feeling of anonymity in your employees:

1. Write down what you know about the career and personal life of each of your employees.
2. Talk individually with your employees. Show a genuine interest in truly learning more about their life. Ask them how they are coping with remote work. Since you'll be using a teleconferencing platform, try to interact with their family members as well.
3. 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.

Today I want to cover the second driver to improve employee engagement: Employees want to feel that their job is relevant.

A sense of irrelevance is another job killer. This happens when employees believe that their job really doesn't matter, and nothing really changes when they do a good job. The reality is that everyone's job matters in some shape or form, big or small. It's your responsibility, as the manager, to constantly remind your employees of this. Otherwise, you run the risk that your employees will disengage.

As I mentioned in our last episode, I felt this way in my first full-time job. I not only felt anonymous, but I also failed to see the relevance of my job. These two aspects gradually diminished my interest and engagement and eventually led me to quit after only seven months.

Again, as in our last episode, I want to contrast my first job experience with the next one. I had completed an MBA in between jobs. Upon graduation I was hired by the same company but in a different department. Fortunately, this time there were two different factors working for me, one of which was that I had a manager who showed a tremendous interest in me as a professional and as a person.

The other factor was that he quickly made me realize how relevant my job was.

I remember starting on a Wednesday. He had scheduled several introductory meetings with key managers within the company and with the two advertising agencies I was going to work with. I had a full agenda for my first three days on the job. The last item on the schedule was to connect with him at the end of each day.

That first Wednesday I went to his office at 5 pm and shared my reactions to the different people I had met that day. As I was preparing to leave his office and go home, he asked me to help him crunch some numbers needed for next year's sales and marketing budget. We ended up staying until around 8 pm that day, and the next one as well. Although a bit tired, I finished both days with a sense of accomplishment. While I crunched numbers with him, my manager explained to me what these calculations were about and why they were relevant.

I was already getting a sense of why my work mattered....

A set of these numbers were sales figures per inhabitant by region, which internally were called "Brand Development Rates." One region stood out for its low numbers. He immediately put me in charge of conducting a promotion to increase the sales levels in that region. A few days later I flew into this region and worked out the final logistics of the promotion with the sales manager and the local TV and radio station. As a rookie, I was a bit overwhelmed by this assignment, but fortunately everything went well, and we ended up exceeding the promotion objectives. My manager made a point of congratulating me for both leading the execution of the promotion and for the results. This was almost four decades ago, and I still remember several of the details surrounding it.

I was barely a month into this new job, and I was already convinced that my work was relevant.

Those of you who have people reporting to you can take advantage of the current remote work situation triggered by Covid-19 to make them aware of the relevance of their jobs.

I have three suggestions on how to do it:

1. First, establish a clear connection between your priorities and at least one of the performance objectives of each of your employees.
2. Next, jump on Zoom, Teams or any other video-communication platform and talk to each one of your employees individually. Do your best to make the connection between your priorities and their objectives as clear as possible.

3. My third suggestion is to schedule a recurring reminder in your favorite device or physical agenda to not let one, two or a maximum of three months go by without sharing some form of appreciation with each of your employees about the relevance of their job.

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

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.

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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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