

Drive profitability, forge trusted ties with employees

The most profitable companies today have something in common—many of them also are recognized as one of the best places to work in their respective industries. The leaders of these companies have made a conscious decision to put their employees first.

Why? Quite simply: They know they must first “delight the workplace” in order to “delight their customers.”

Think about it. Employees are on stage every day performing behaviors and experiences for customers. If they're not happy, their attitudes and behaviors reflect it, resulting in poor or inconsistent performances. This drains your company of its ability to deliver exceptional products and services, sustain loyalty and increase profits, not to mention attract and retain more talented performers.

I can't think of one leader I've met who wasn't motivated to achieve more profitable growth. But I can think of thousands who believe that throwing dollars at morale and retention problems will delight their workers enough to boost results. Unfortunately, this approach doesn't foster sustainable impacts.

Turning your organization into a profitable, best place to work isn't about lavishing employees with incentives, perks and creative work schedules. It's about providing the knowledge, tools and direction to help employees see how their daily performance makes an impact on the company's success.

Let's face it. People don't get out of bed each day, brew the coffee and run off to work simply to make their bosses and company owners more money. They do it to earn a living and to feel like they're making a difference.

Yet, in a recent study conducted with more than 12,000 U.S. employees, nearly 50 percent were not happy with their work at the end of the week, and a whopping 60 percent felt their company's mission statement couldn't be translated into ways that are meaningful to their work. So what can companies do to ignite each employee's intrinsic desire and passion for making a difference at work?



ON PERFORMANCE

Gregg Lederman

They can begin by making their “stuff” more meaningful.

Most companies today invest in creating two types of stuff.

First there is the “Who Stuff,” which is a clear description of who your company is or wants to be known as—brand image/reputation. This typically consists of mission statements, values, principles, cultural drivers and brand promises.

The second type of stuff is the “What Stuff,” which are the desired business results to be achieved. This includes clearly stated goals and objectives, such as customer satisfaction, financial targets and measurements.

While this information is critical to plotting a course, companies often fail to make it actionable by giving employees direction on how to do the “stuff” as part of their day-to-day work. Without these guidelines, they can't possibly embrace the “stuff,” commit to doing it and, most importantly, take action to deliver great performances for each other and for customers.

Best companies to work for solve this dilemma by putting into practice what I call the “How Factors.” The How Factors are a simple, logical framework for ensuring that employees aren't frustrated by an overload of “strategy” that they don't know how to do or how to impact.

There are three How Factors that every company should do:

1. Set clear behavior expectations. Develop and integrate proprietary brand-driven behaviors that clearly define what successful performance is at the company level and individual level by job function.

2. Deliver strategic and consistent communication. Integrate expectations for doing these behaviors into critical leadership

and human resource practices, including recruitment, hiring, onboarding, and performance assessments and evaluations. Then, continually educate and motivate employees through a strategic, performance-focused recognition program. If executed well, this program also can be used to capture and share the best practices that have the highest impact on achieving business results.

3. Drive accountability for success. Measure employee understanding and action on the behaviors and experiences that bring the brand to life through performance assessments and evaluations. To fully evaluate success, managers also should measure performance against the company's documented “stuff.”

For more information on implementing How Factors, visit www.brandintegrity.com/Truth8. There you will find free downloads for setting up a performance infrastructure capable of creating a “best place to work” culture, where employees thrive by knowing how they can make a difference.

Companies that do these How Factors are rewarded for their efforts beyond financial benefits. Just ask Southwest Airlines. A couple of years ago, they reported having 225,895 applications for only 1,706 open positions.

Do you think they were able to be quite selective to ensure they hired the best potential performers? Of course! And, because their employees are happy, Southwest customers are the happiest in the industry, ranking the company No.1 in the industry for the last 15 years. This is why Southwest has been profitable for 35 straight years when the competition continues to struggle with service, culture and finances.

Employee satisfaction and loyalty at such companies also is more than admirable.

Recently I was shopping at a “best place to work” retail store, and “Ray,” an assistant manager who looked to be about 35 years old, was truly going above and beyond his duties to make sure I had the right product. Imagine my shock when I inquired how long he'd been working for his employer and he responded, “21 years!”

Dying to know why he stayed so long,

and why he seemed so downright happy to be helping me, I asked: “Don’t you think it’s time to spread your wings a bit and try out a different company?”

“No way!” said Ray adamantly. “I’m never leaving this company—I love working here!”

Wow! How many employees in your company would say that?

Most of us spend the majority of our waking hours at work, so naturally we would prefer to work in an organization that is a

best place to work. Like Ray demonstrated, knowing how we contribute to the success of the company fuels satisfaction and a genuine passion to “go the extra mile.”

If your company isn’t building respected and trusted relationships between management and employees, or employees aren’t taking pride in their work, get laser-focused on the How Factors. Set and communicate behavioral expectations and watch how accountability for success flourishes, putting your company on the pathway to being a

more profitable, best place to work.

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