

## Do This, Not That: 10 Ways You Accidentally Contribute To Employee Disengagement

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According to [Gallup](#), more than 7 out of 10 workers in the United States aren't engaged at their jobs. Disengaged workers cover a wide spectrum: some merely show up late and get by on the bare minimum; others look for ways to spread their negativity around like a bad case of the flu.

Jim Clifton, the CEO of Gallup, [blames this troubling statistic](#) on poor management. As Clifton sees it, an employee's manager is the number one factor that influences their engagement.

In my experience as a leadership development and talent management consultant, I've found that organizations need to take Gallup's finding seriously. As a business coach, I've taken a long, hard look at my client's organizational culture and looked at leadership behaviors that contribute to employees' disengagement.

Through my observations, I've determined 10 common ways managers cause their employees to disengage, as well as 10 positive ways to contribute to better engagement.

### Micromanaging Your Employees

Nothing disrespects your employees' unique skills and professional autonomy more than having a boss breathe down their necks and dictate every little decision.

*Do this instead:* Honor your team members' distinct professional skills by loosening up the leash a little bit. Give them room to exercise initiative and, yes, fail from time to time.

### Playing Favorites

In a complex business environment, you'll undoubtedly click better with some people better than others. That may be natural, but don't be surprised when the employees you *don't* naturally gravitate to begin to tune out.

*Do this instead:* Go out of your way to cultivate work-appropriate relationships with the employees whom you would be least likely to befriend outside of work.

## Leading By Fear

Fear is [a powerful motivator](#), which explains why so many managers use it to keep employees in line. Do you threaten to cut hours when your staff fails to perform? Do you frequently call your employees' job security into question? If so, you're leading by fear.

*Do this instead:* Create an environment in which your employees perform for the sake of the team and its success, rather than for the sake of keeping their jobs.

## Failing To Hold People Accountable

If there's one thing productive employees hate, it's watching their low-producing co-workers skate by. If you let enough of your people get away with shoddy work and negative behavior, don't be surprised when your usual top performers start leaving their A-game at home.

*Do this instead:* Establish clear ethics and performance standards in your workplace. Then, enforce them consistently. By setting appropriate expectations and holding everyone accountable, you'll give employees the consistency they need to stay engaged.

## Giving Too Little Feedback

Are you regularly checking in with your employees about their work? Do your team members *know* how they've been doing lately, or do you take a "no news is good news" approach and leave them to their own devices?

*Do this instead:* I've helped many organizations transition from an annual performance review model to having frequent performance conversations with their employees. More frequent conversations ensure that expectations are being met and business goals are more likely to be achieved.

## **Lacking Self-Awareness**

Do you treat employees the way you would like to be treated? If so, keep in mind that every employee is different; everyone responds differently to various management and communication styles. With all due deference to the golden rule, you may want to pay more attention to how *they* would like to be treated, rather than how you would.

*Do this instead:* Get to know your people and how best to communicate with them. Pay attention to your own tendencies and make adjustments as necessary to fit each situation. For each leader that I coach, emotional intelligence training is a must-have.

## **Not Doing Enough To Recognize Employees**

Are you doing anything to recognize employees who go above and beyond for you? It takes more than just a paycheck to motivate your people. [According to DCR Strategies Inc.](#), 39% of American workers feel underrecognized, and 77% would work harder with just a little bit more recognition.

*Do this instead:* I've advised organizations to ask their employees how they would like to be recognized for a job well done as part of their onboarding process. Many organizations are surprised that most employees respond that they would just like a simple "thank you" from time to time. Sending a quick thank you note to an employee can go a long way for increasing engagement, and the cost can be absolutely free.

## **Talking The Talk Without Walking The Walk**

Nobody wants to follow a hypocrite. You can't inspire people to pour themselves out for your organization if they suspect you're simply phoning it in.

*Do this instead:* To echo Gandhi, be the change you want to see in your office. If you want your employees to put in longer hours, then put in more extended hours yourself. If you want a higher level of attention to detail, aim that magnifying glass at your own work first.

## Breaking The Rules And Behaving Unethically

Effective leadership must come from a place of integrity. If your employees sense that you're crossing boundaries and engaging in unethical behavior, they'll neither follow nor respect you.

*Do this instead:* Strive to be a model of integrity in your workplace. Whether anyone is watching or not, always do the right thing — even if hurts the bottom line.

## Engaging Your Employees Without A Plan

According to [a study](#) by Dale Carnegie & Associates, 90% of leaders believe employee engagement plans impact business success, though only 25% of them have one. If you're trying to keep your employees engaged and motivated without a plan, then you're likely to let a few of them slip through the cracks.

*Do this instead:* It all boils down to intentionality — putting together a plan to interact with and encourage each one of your employees in a meaningful, systematic way.

## Conclusion

Employee disengagement may be a serious issue, but there's no reason why your team couldn't join that minority of cheerfully engaged employees in America. Using what I've shared as a guide, how will you adjust your management style to make the most of your staff?

***The posts 'Do This, Not That: 10 Ways You Accidentally Contribute To Employee***

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## About Natasha Bowman

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