

# White Paper

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# The Disconnect

Solution Focus Areas:

**Engagement / Morale**  
**Productivity**  
**Leadership / Supervision**

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## The Disconnect

*Executives, supervisors and managers across the country are making decisions everyday that provide direction to their employees and lead their businesses to success. Employees are coming to work each day to follow the leader’s direction and carry out the day-to-day operations of their organization. Everyone is doing their part and working together to help their businesses succeed.*

This sounds like a great scenario where everyone should be happy and looking forward to work each day. Yet, it seems that no matter what business you go to, you hear the same story: The leadership appears to be on a path to success, assuming that the employees are following along. They think that the employees are moving their business forward with great excitement and enthusiasm. On the other hand, employees are showing up to work every day wondering where their leaders are taking them and wondering if leadership has any idea what is really happening.

Sound familiar?

In his book, “The 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave”, Leigh Brahnem states that 89% of managers believe employees leave their jobs for more money, while 88% of employees state that they actually leave for reasons having to do with job satisfaction, the culture, the manager or the work environment. Forty-three percent of employees report that they do not feel valued by their employers (CreerBuilder.com) while 71% of workers in the United States rate themselves as Not Engaged or Actively Disengaged (The Gallup Organization).

So what is the disconnect?

It would appear that many of our nation’s corporate leaders have lost touch with the reality of their organizations. There is a clear consensus amongst employees that they are not feeling valued by the leaders in their organizations. Employees across the country are showing up to work but are not engaging with their organization. Are leaders recognizing this and seeing this as a leadership issue or are they blaming the employees for having bad attitudes?

The problem seems evident, “The #1 reason employees leave jobs is a poor relationship with their immediate supervisor.” (The Gallup Organization)

Research is clear that employee engagement is a significant issue and that leadership is the most critical part of the problem. However, research also supports the fact the leadership is the best solution. Leaders need to start by acknowledging that the problem is not simply an employee's bad attitude or the fact that their employees are lazy or any other excuses leaders come up with. The bottom line is, leaders need to see themselves as the solution to the disengaged workforce. They need to get in touch with their employees and take the time and effort to understand how employees are feeling. Employees want to be engaged in their organizations and it is the leader's responsibility to help create an environment where their employees feel cared for and valued.

Here are a few practical strategies for leaders to consider in helping to engage their employees in their organizations:

- **Support Growth** - Provide for the personal and professional development of your employees, including, but not limited to:
  - Professional Development Plans
  - Build into Performance Appraisal Systems
  - Tuition Reimbursement
  - Utilize Staff Expertise to Train other Staff
  - Participate in Trade Organizations and Associations
  
- **Unite With Your Team** - Be available/accessible to the people you work with, including, but not limited to:
  - Accessible – Open Door Policy
  - Regular One-on-One Meetings
  - Regular Team Meetings
  
- **Praise Others** - Provide praise for a job well done and encouragement for taking a risk, including, but not limited to:
  - Catch Them Doing Things Right
  - Celebrations - Formal Recognition Systems
  - Informal Compliments
  - STARS – Allow Staff to Recognize other Staff
  - Financial Incentives
  
- **Expect Excellence** - Set high expectations for both yourself and others, including, but not limited to:
  - New Employee Orientation
  - Regular Training
  - Clear and Concise Policy Manuals (not too cumbersome)
  - Regular Feedback Sessions with Staff
  - Clear Position Descriptions

- **Require Accountability** - Uphold individual responsibility, as well as accountability, including, but not limited to:
  - Regular Constructive Feedback
  - Immediate Response to Inappropriate Behaviors
  - Performance Appraisal Systems
  - Culture Where Staff Hold Each other Accountable
  - Expect Staff to Hold Themselves Accountable
  
- **Verify Potential** - Develop an atmosphere of hope and confidence, including, but not limited to:
  - Communicate Hopefulness
  - Provide Staff Opportunities to Succeed
  - Do Not Criticize the Person, Address the Behavior
  - Expectations Great Performance
  - Do Not Tolerate Gossip – Culture of “Thinking the Best of Others”
  
- **Instill Independence** - Allow room and encouragement for autonomy, including, but not limited to:
  - Delegate
  - Do Not Micromanage
  - Encourage Risk Taking
  - Allow Mistakes to Occur
  - Encourage Team Work
  
- **Share Continuously** – Establish open and honest two-way communication, including, but not limited to:
  - Regular Feedback
  - Listen
  - Honesty
  - No Hidden Agendas
  - Be Transparent
  
- **Optimize Ownership** - Create opportunities for involvement in decision making, including, but not limited to:
  - Provide Opportunities for Staff to Participate and Contribute
  - Clear Strategic Plans
  - Performance Appraisal Systems Directly Linked to Strategic Plans
  - Encourage Risk Taking
  - Culture of Ownership and Buy-in

- **Reinforce Relationships** - Sharing with and care about your employees as people, including, but not limited to:
  - Communicate Regularly
  - Sharing & Caring
  - Opportunities for Staff to have Fun – Encourage Laughter
  - Flexibility in Work Schedules
  - Get to Know What Motivates each Team Member

Remember, every member of the organization is responsible for creating and maintaining a culture that values both people, as well as productivity. However, leaders play an important role in setting the example for others to follow. It takes time and effort on the leader's part to engage their workforce, but the benefits are numerous. Ultimately an engaged workforce translates into both higher quality and higher productivity.

So, take the time to recognize the disconnect ... and remember to see yourself as the solution!