

## Feature

# Searching for Superstars in Your Organization

— *Move beyond engagement*



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## *Who do you consider your best employees?*

You probably think of them as the “superstars” of your organization. They have limitless energy, love their jobs, frequently go above and beyond the call of duty and get great results. Too bad there are so few of them! Or are there?

Let’s be honest: there are actually more employees with superstar potential in any organization than we often realize—possibly *many* more.

These folks are technically engaged employees. They are committed and loyal, come to work regularly, don’t complain, stay many years and consistently strive to do a good job. However, they are also overwhelmed by having to do less with less. They lack passion and therefore cannot be innovative nor do their very best work.

Believe it or not, you can transform these engaged employees into more consistently productive powerhouse contributors. It requires a paradigm mind-shift at the managerial level, but is absolutely possible.

Here are three critical things that leaders can do now to move these employees *beyond engagement* and reap the business benefits of a higher-performing work environment.

### **1. Manage energy, not engagement**

It’s hard to think beyond engagement when it’s where we’ve always focused. Look at where we are today. According to a 2012 Ipsos-Reid/Canadian Management Centre survey, only 27% of working Canadians are highly engaged and one in five is not engaged at all.

Simply put, today’s engagement initiatives aren’t working. So if not engagement, what then is the number one indicator of employee success?

It’s their *personal energy level*. This is one’s ability to focus on the value-adding aspects of their day (things like planning, strategizing, having difficult yet effective conversations and seeing projects through to completion).

What leaders must therefore do is move away from managing engagement and move toward managing *energy*.

By changing the managerial mindset to energy and creating workplaces where employees feel energized, organizations can enable employees to -flourish, thrive and be innovative thereby fuelling great business results.

### **2. Minimize surveys, maximize “energy checks”**

The hard truth is that employees don’t care about engagement survey scores. Rather, they want to know things are fair, that they can find meaning at work, take pride in their role and have enough energy left at the end of the day for their own personal lives.

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It takes at least 18 to 24 months to implement -organization-wide strategies in response to employee engagement surveys. If employees don't see visible, concrete actions that impact their day-to-day energy levels, they become only more cynical by their employer's so-called engagement initiatives and ongoing surveying efforts.

A more effective method is to only do organization-wide surveys at a rate that matches your ability to take meaningful action. Do in-between surveys and simple energy-checks with your workforce.

An energy-check is essentially a simple two-minute questionnaire (and resulting conversation tool) designed to quickly and simply measure individual and team energy levels. It will pinpoint the issues that need to be addressed. The employee and manager each fill out two energy checks: one for themselves and one for their partner. This gives both individuals an opportunity to step into the other's world and look at various workplace factors that may impact each other's energy levels.

#### 3. *Partner, don't parent*

While it may not be their intention, managers often resort to inefficient parenting-type strategies to get the job done. Consider, for example, companies that offer incentives to people for simply doing the right thing, using subtle forms of psychological control and/or using motivational messages that come across as "selling" the benefits of engagement.

Parenting is exhausting for the managers as it is in general. Moreover, this behaviour communicates an underlying, somewhat condescending message to employees "there is something missing here that we need from you".

Engaged employees already have what "parenting" leaders think is missing: the desire to make a difference, the pride of doing a great job and their own forms of self-determinism including work ethic, values and character. Employees need to see that above anything else, they are in a partnership with their leaders. Managers who partner with their employees offer a rich stream of feedback affirming what works and gently nudging what doesn't.

Introducing an ethos of partnering in your organization can be done with an elegantly simple coaching tool enabling anybody to coach anybody anywhere in the organization.

#### *More energy = more superstars*

Creating a culture that harnesses and fosters sustainable organizational energy is not easy but it is absolutely possible as well as profitable.

By adopting the three basic principles above, you are well on your way toward increasing the number of superstar performers in your company. Give it a try—you just may see a surge in business results and a whole new generation of "best" employees!

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