



In tough economic times, more than ever, employers need to get the most from their employees.

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Book Corner

I Quit, But I Forgot To Tell You by Terri Kabachnick

Kabachnick tells us in this short and practical book that “retention is not a cure for turnover. Retaining a disengaged employee is worse than letting him go.” Engagement seems to be a common management topic these days. In tough economic times, more than ever, employers need to get the most from their employees. That means engaging them!

Engagement and motivation come from loving what you do. What are the reasons for disengagement? She shares these eight:

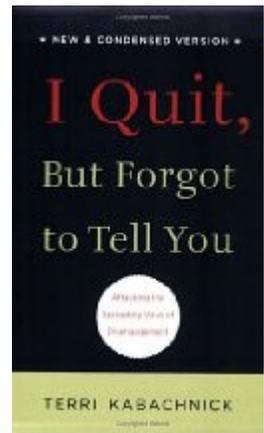
1. Job/employee mismatch
2. Overworked and under appreciated
3. Culture shock
4. Politics and perception
5. Politics and control
6. The “Peter Principle”
7. Business “by the book”
8. The “Bad” boss

Kabachnick also describes the phases of disengagement and shares specific ways to keep employees engaged.

It’s hard to argue with her Employee Engagement Principles:

- Treat employees as individuals
- Treat employees as adults
- Spur employee involvement
- Make employees partners
- Respect

Is employee engagement an issue in your organization? You may find it helpful to read this well-done book!



Communications, Collaborations, Community

Question: Our organization has identified three major objectives. We call them the 3 Big Cs: “Collaboration, Communication and Community.” We know that excellence in these three areas is critical to our success, both internally and externally with our clients. Our desire as an organization is to continually improve and excel: in collaborative efforts; in clear, concise and effective communication; and in building an effective and healthy community. Do you have any suggestions that might help us?

Collaborations response:

Our first suggestion was to reorder the way the 3 Big Cs were listed, thought about, and discussed. We suggested that communications is fundamental to being able to effectively

collaborate, and in turn both are fundamental to continually building a healthy, well functioning community.

Here is one more comment on communications. Then we'll discuss the idea of effective collaborative efforts.

Communications

In addition to last issue's comments on communications, there is another aspect of effective communications that we want to emphasize. Very simply it is this - for the most part effective communications is a matter of *choice!* We can, and must, individually and collectively make a conscious choice to become effective communicators.

There is no magic formula. There are a lot of helpful hints and techniques, as cited in our last issue. All things considered however, it boils down to *choosing* to understand and to be understood - and continually putting forth the effort and energy necessary to do so.

We have worked with numerous organizations over the last 25 years. We've had the opportunity to closely observe people discussing everything from easy to very, very difficult topics; topics upon which they agreed; and topics on which they had deep and protracted disagreements; discussions that varied from time constrained arguments to free flowing discussions.

Our observations are that people are generally able to communicate quite well - when they want to, or when they are placed in situations where time is dedicated to the discussions with the expectation that the discussions will be fruitful. That leads us to conclude that in large part, perhaps in the largest part, effective communications are often more matter of the choice to effectively communicate by the participants!

In discussing his POW experience in Hanoi, Dave always emphasizes how obsessed he and his fellow POWs were with always being able to communicate well with each other. Their captors wanted them to be isolated, cut off, and out of touch with each other. The POWs *chose* to do otherwise. Often the consequences of being "caught" communicating were harsh. That never stopped them from trying. Sometimes it was all consuming, however they knew that if they could not communicate well, then everything else they needed or wanted to do together would suffer.

Quite frankly we believe that the consequences for all aspects of our efforts together in our organizations and in our lives are the same. If we are not able to

communicate effectively it will adversely impact everything else we do together.

And the really fundamental first step of effective communications is a matter of *choice* - *choose* to understand and to be understood.



Collaborations

Our dictionary defines collaboration as "the act of working with someone to create or produce something." The starting point in talking about effective collaborative efforts is exactly where we left off in discussing effective communications - it is a matter of *choice!*

We find over and over again that people can choose to work together effectively - or not.

Often those choices are not the product of a clear, conscious decision. Rather they are the by-product of poor time management; holding grudges; not clarifying what was intended; not clarifying what was heard; not clarifying what is required; considering the issue unimportant - and not saying so; faulty assumptions that are never checked out; etc.

It is true that there are "fatal flaws" that will yield poor collaborative efforts and results. Such things as grossly underestimating time lines and time requirements; lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities; lack of accountability; failure to give appropriate time and resources to the effort; wrong personnel involved; wrong skill sets; and under-funding are just some examples. There are quite possibly any number of circumstances that will hamper collaborative efforts.

Indeed attention must be paid to all of the above and more. Who will be involved. Where will they meet, work together? What support will they receive? When will they start, finish? What resources will be committed?

ON THE WEB ~ Visit www.susangerke.com and www.davecarey.com

Both websites carry all past issues of *Collaborations*. With Adobe Acrobat Reader 4.0 you can view or download and print the issues.

However, often there is total focus on “what” we are doing and almost no attention to “how” we are doing it together. We would argue that the really hard part of effective collaborative efforts is getting everyone on the same page, with the same candor, working together toward the same objectives. These things also need to have time and attention.

The basic first step is the *choice* to be an effective member of a collaborative effort. A choice by everyone involved to put the effort into the undertaking. The choice is to strive to always communicate clearly, and to always engage effectively in collaborative efforts.

Do I Want To Be A Manager?

Think of all the managers you have known in your career (yourself included). How many do you think were selected because they were very good as an individual contributor?

Our experience working with clients is that this has long been and continues to be a common practice in organizations. And, it makes sense. We want “the best and the brightest” to lead our people and lead our organizations.

Our concern isn’t with organizations choosing people to become managers from their pool of individual contributors. Rather, our concern is when one of the following happens.

1. These new managers don’t have a clear understanding of what the new role entails prior to accepting the position and beginning the job, or
2. New managers don’t receive management training and are left to figure out what do on their own.

Susan is currently working with a client who has found that many of their new managers over the past several years are failing or are unhappy in management – primarily because of concern number one above – they don’t know what they are getting in to. The idea of promotion sounds good, someone (often their manager) suggests they take on the role, or they think “up” is the way to get ahead in their career.

The reality is that some got into the job before they really understood that they would be getting work done through others rather than doing it themselves. They worry that they are losing their technical skills and/or they try to do all the technical work in addition to the management responsibilities and are burning out.

The client asked Susan to develop a one-day workshop for people who would like to explore whether a management role is for them or not. The focus of the workshop is as follows:

Who Are You?

This entails understanding strengths, values, style and attitude.

What Does It Take?

This focuses on learning what the organization expects of managers, hearing from managers who have successfully made the transition, and doing some role playing.

What Is My Plan?

Individuals are encouraged to think through their learning of the day and determine one of two things:

- ✓ **Yes, I’d like to pursue the opportunity to be a manager**
- ✓ **No, thank you. I don’t want to pursue management.**

Either plan is perfectly acceptable. The goal is to help people determine what fits them.

We’re excited about launching this program and helping individual contributors make an informed decision about becoming a manager or further pursuing their technical career.

Susan Gerke

is the president of Gerke Consulting & Development and “helps people work better, together.” Susan's focus since 1989 has been in designing, customizing and implementing leadership and teamwork programs meeting the needs of executives, managers, and employees in a wide number of companies and industries.

Application of her skill and knowledge has been in facilitation, consulting, curriculum development, and coaching. Susan has developed and delivered experiential programs in the areas of *group dynamics, team basics, mentoring, and facilitation skills*. She has worked with global teams and has certified facilitators around the world to deliver management, leadership, and team offerings.



A recognized expert on remote leadership and teaming, Susan is the co-author of *The I in Team ... Accelerating Performance of Remote and Co-located Teams*, and *Quick Guide to Interaction Styles and Working Remotely*.

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As a consultant and coach he focuses on *helping people work together more effectively*. He is an expert in team building, organizational & leadership development.

A graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Dave is a retired Navy Captain. As a Navy pilot he was shot down and spent 5 & 1/2 years as a POW in North Vietnam. His book *The Ways We Choose: Lessons For Life From A POW's Experience* is in it's third printing.



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Now I'm a Manager – What Skills Do I Need?

One day you are an individual contributor, the next you are a manager and your direct reports expect you to be fully “up-to-speed.” The reality is that you won't have all the skills you need on that first day. You will certainly gain them through all the experiences you will have as a manager. If you are lucky, your boss will be a good coach, and will help you through your challenges.

If your company has a Human Resources organization, you can also get coaching from your HR specialists. Make friends with these people. Their advice can keep you out of trouble!

Experience and coaching will be vital for you. However, some tips and techniques for specific areas will help too. You can get these through training – whether classroom, online or podcasts. You can also get them from some very good books (many of which we have reviewed over the years. You may wish to check them out in previous versions of Collaborations – available on both of our websites.)

So, what are the key skills? Here are some that we think are particularly important: Setting Expectations, Coaching/Giving Feedback, Delegating

If you can do these well, you will be off to a great start in your management career. So, create your action plan. Determine how you will get these skills. Will you find a good training opportunity? Will you find a good coach? Or, will you do some reading? Get started now!

Many of you receive an electronic (pdf) version of Collaborations, or notification that we have posted it on our web sites along with the link to the new issue. If you receive a paper copy and would like to convert to “electronic” drop us an email to sgerke@sbcglobal.net and we will make it happen. If you prefer paper, do nothing and we'll keep sending it to you via snail mail.