

Should Managers Focus on Performance or Engagement?

Gallup examined this question and found that the answer isn't as "either/or" as many companies might think

by Annamarie Mann and Ryan Darby



Regular meetings and involvement pay dividends in performance and engagement.

Many CEOs don't know that there is a philosophical battle occurring in the ranks of their company's managers. On one side are the performance-oriented managers who try to help their team perform at high levels by focusing their management activities -- such as conversations and development meetings -- on the team's objectives, goals, and desired outcomes. On the other side are the engagement-focused managers who try to help their team perform at high levels by focusing their management activities on creating an engaging environment that energizes and motivates employees and teams.

So in this philosophical war, which side is right? Should a manager focus on performance or on engagement?

To answer this question, Gallup asked more than 8,000 employees about their relationship with their manager. Can they approach their manager with non-work-related issues, talk to them about anything, and get prompt responses to requests? We also asked them questions about how their manager inspires performance and accountability.

Does their manager know what projects or tasks they are working on? Does he or she help set work priorities or set performance goals and hold them accountable to those goals?

What we discovered is that managers don't have to choose between creating strong, positive teams or focusing on high performance and accountability. High-performance managers do both. They are strengths-based, engagement-focused, and performance-oriented. They develop deep interpersonal relationships with their employees *and* focus on performance. Managers who emphasize one approach while ignoring the other risk alienating their team members, lowering engagement, and damaging performance.

Driving engagement by focusing on performance

Performance-oriented managers help their employees identify and focus on their most important objectives, goals, and desired outcomes. They wholeheartedly agree with the Walt Disney quote: "Of all the things I've done, the most vital is coordinating the talents of those who work for us and pointing them toward a certain goal."

High-performance managers create an engaging work environment that promotes peak performance in three primary ways:

High-performance managers are involved in their employees' work lives. They don't subscribe to a laissez faire approach to management, and they don't ignore their employees. When employees strongly agree that their manager knows what projects or tasks they are working on, they are almost seven times more likely to be engaged than actively disengaged. However, when employees strongly disagree with that statement, indicating they are largely ignored by their bosses, they are 15 times more likely to be actively disengaged than engaged. Ignoring your employees, it seems, is one of the worst things you can do to their engagement.

High-performance managers help employees set goals and prioritize their projects. Employees who work for a manager who helps them set performance goals are 17 times more likely to be engaged than disengaged. In contrast, employees who strongly disagree that their manager helps them set performance goals are almost seven times more likely to be disengaged than engaged.

These data demonstrate an important point that's overlooked too often: Most people want to succeed in their jobs. They want to strive for big goals and accomplish great

things. But they need great managers to support and guide them.

One of the main reasons managers keep their distance from their employees is because they fear being intrusive or being a micromanager. But there is a distinct difference between micromanaging and being involved in your employees' work lives.

Micromanagers take control of the process and the outcome. Great managers support employees by helping them define the right outcomes, then letting them use their unique talents to choose the process that works best for them.

High-performance managers hold their employees accountable for performance. It is not enough to be involved and provide direction. Great managers also ask their employees to take ownership of their success or failure. High-performance managers don't allow a culture of excuses or poor performance; no one thrives in such a culture. When managers don't hold employees accountable for performance, about seven in 10 employees (69%) are actively disengaged; only 3% are engaged.

One of the easiest ways for managers to start promoting engagement through performance is to establish regular meetings with their employees. On hearing this advice, many managers push back -- and perhaps rightly, because meetings aren't what many companies do best. However, our analysis shows something surprising: Regularly scheduled meetings with a manager are critical to an employee's engagement. On average, only 15% of employees who work for a manager who does not meet with them regularly are engaged; managers who regularly meet with their employees almost tripled that level of engagement.

And regular meetings and involvement pay dividends in performance and engagement. Employees who meet regularly with their manager generate higher performance for their immediate team and company and are more likely to report that they regularly receive recognition and praise, that someone cares about them, and that they know someone cares about their development. So for managers, the first step to creating a culture of performance and engagement is the easiest -- set up a regular meeting with your team members.

Driving performance by focusing on engagement

Engagement-focused managers increase productivity and success by creating an environment that energizes and motivates employees and teams, helping them reach the highest levels of performance. Workgroups with high levels of employee engagement

experience 22% higher profitability and 21% higher productivity compared with workgroups with low levels of engagement. They also experience 65% lower turnover and 10% higher customer ratings than workgroups with low engagement. To achieve world-class levels of engagement, great managers focus on the 12 elements of great managing at both the individual and team levels.

THE 12 ELEMENTS OF GREAT MANAGING

To identify the elements of worker engagement, Gallup conducted many thousands of interviews in all kinds of organizations, at all levels, in most industries, and in many countries. These 12 statements – the Gallup Q¹² – emerged from Gallup's pioneering research as those that predict employee and workgroup performance.

1. I know what is expected of me at work.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Copyright © 1993-1998 Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved. Gallup® and Q¹²® are trademarks of Gallup, Inc.

The Gallup Q¹² items are Gallup proprietary information and are protected by law. You may not administer a survey with the Q¹² items or reproduce them without written consent from Gallup.

GALLUP®

At an **individual level**, many great managers use the 12 elements as a project checklist. When they give employees an assignment, they ask themselves questions like: Have I clearly laid out the expected deliverables? Have I made sure that there are no barriers or obstacles in his way? Is this a project that uses this person's talents and strengths? Have I told this person what I liked about her past work so she can apply that feedback on this project?

At a **team level**, great managers meet with their team to discuss their engagement at least once a year and revisit engagement commitments throughout the year. Teams that have taken Gallup's 12-item employee engagement survey, the Q¹², can use their results

to discuss whether they are experiencing any barriers to their engagement and how to overcome them. They can also discuss how the team can meet its performance outcomes by making sure that each of the 12 elements is addressed. Together, team members can identify activities that they can stop doing, start doing, or continue doing to increase engagement and performance.

The crucial point is that the team must have an open and honest discussion about its engagement. What is standing in the way of the team achieving its goals? Are expectations unclear for the team? Are team members unsure about how their tasks should be prioritized? Does the team need more support from other departments or coworkers? Great managers discuss these and other questions with their team and make a plan to positively influence engagement and performance over the next year.

The key to success: Focus on performance and engagement

In the end, the philosophical battle between performance and engagement is no battle at all. High-performance managers understand that these goals are not mutually exclusive - they are mutually dependent. A team will never reach its full potential until it has a manager that is both performance-oriented and engagement-focused.

Survey Methods

Results are based on a Gallup Panel Web study completed by 8,287 employed national adults, aged 18 and older, conducted September 4 through October 9, 2013. The Gallup Panel is a probability-based longitudinal panel of U.S. adults who are selected using random-digit-dial (RDD) phone interviews that cover landline and cellphones. Address-based sampling methods are also used to recruit panel members. The Gallup Panel is not an opt-in panel, and members are not given incentives for participating. The sample for this study was weighted to be demographically representative of the U.S. adult population using the most recent Current Population Survey figures. For results based on this sample, one can say that the maximum margin of sampling error is +/- 1.4 percentage point, at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error are higher for subsamples. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error and bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Ryan Darby, Ph.D., is a former Research Manager at Gallup.

RELEASE DATE: August 5, 2014

SOURCE: Gallup <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/174197/managers-focus-performance-engagement.aspx>

CONTACT: Gallup World Headquarters, 901 F Street, Washington, D.C., 20001, U.S.A
+1 202.715.3030

Copyright © 2015 Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved.

Gallup, Inc. maintains several registered and unregistered trademarks that include but may not be limited to: A8, Accountability Index, Business Impact Analysis, BE10, CE11, CE11 Accelerator, Clifton StrengthsExplorer, Clifton StrengthsFinder, Customer Engagement Index, Customer Engagement Management, Dr. Gallup Portrait, Employee Engagement Index, Enetrix, Engagement Creation Index, Follow This Path, Gallup, Gallup Brain, Gallup Business Journal, GBJ, Gallup Consulting, Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, Gallup Management Journal, GMJ, Gallup Panel, Gallup Press, Gallup Tuesday Briefing, Gallup University, Gallup World News, HumanSigma, HumanSigma Accelerator, ICE11, I10, L3, ME25, NurseInsight, NurseStrengths, Patient Quality System, Performance Optimization, Power of 2, PrincipallInsight, Q12, Q12 Accelerator, Q12 Advantage, Selection Research, Inc., SE25, SF34, SRI, Soul of the City, Strengths Spotlight, Strengths-Based Selling, StatShot, StrengthsCoach, StrengthsExplorer, StrengthsFinder, StrengthsInsight, StrengthsQuest, SupportInsight, TX(R+E+R)=P3, TeacherInsight, The Gallup Path, The Gallup Poll, The Gallup School, VantagePoint, Varsity Management, Wellbeing Finder, Achiever, Activator, Adaptability, Analytical, Arranger, Belief, Command, Communication, Competition, Connectedness, Consistency, Context, Deliberative, Developer, Discipline, Empathy, Fairness, Focus, Futuristic, Harmony, Ideation, Includer, Individualization, Input, Intellection, Learner, Maximizer, Positivity, Relator, Responsibility, Restorative, Self-Assurance, Significance, Strategic, and Woo. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. These materials are provided for noncommercial, personal use only. Reproduction prohibited without the express permission of Gallup, Inc.