

*“How to Get Twice the Productivity Out of Your Employees
... and They’ll Thank You for it!”*

Employee Engagement and Performance Management are challenges that every company executive agrees are important to their organization’s growth and profitability. But with past Downsizing, continued Outsourcing, continuous New Technology and a Younger, more Diverse Workforce, many of their traditional Recognition and Performance Improvement programs are proving to be ineffective – and they want to know why!

The psychological studies of Maslow, Gallup, Dr. Ken Kovach, Walker Information and Great Place to Work Institute agree on the benefits of focusing on the emotional aspects of the work experience, rather than the logical. Yet, more and more companies are moving to more cash-equivalent recognition programs, believing they’re giving their people “What They Want”. While the response seems valid, it usually yields less than satisfying results.

Why the discrepancy between what the experts have proven and what employees respond in company surveys? A 2004 University of Chicago Study may offer part of the answer.

For their study, the University of Chicago selected two groups of people and had them play a word game with the goal of improving performance. One team was offered cash as an incentive and the other was offered non-cash rewards of the same value. When the scores were totaled, the performance increase of the non-cash group was more than twice that of the cash group (39% vs. 15%), not an insignificant difference. However, as the rewards were about to be presented, they asked the non-cash group if they would prefer to receive the cash value instead of the reward item. Amazingly, almost 80% said they’d prefer the cash.

Why did this happen? It has to do with the answer given to another question – “Would you likely purchase the reward item offered if you did not win it here?” Surprisingly, the people who answered that they were least likely to buy the item with their own money, correlated highest with the “I’ll take the money!” answer. The study supports the ineffectiveness of cash, but also points to the benefits of offering unique, luxury or experiential items that employees are not likely to buy for themselves.

This is all well and good, but if you were to sit down with all of your employees and ask them the open-ended question, “What do you want us to provide for recognition”, the top three answers would be the same as they have been for decades:

1. Cash
2. A Day Off
3. Something that I can use (a cash-equivalent retail reward).

Making sure they know you care as much as you really do.

This shouldn't be that big of a surprise, because it's like asking the Third Grade Class what they want for lunch and assuming they'll say broccoli, not ice cream. Maybe it has something to do with the question? Perhaps employees are reluctant to admit they are satisfied with their pay. Maybe they just don't trust your motives behind the question.

Asking employees what they want tends to imply that you don't know and really don't care all that much. The moment they think that you are using recognition more out of obligation than desire, they will emotionally disengage, feel a bit insulted, and give you the answer they think you want to hear –

“ . . . Aw, what the heck, just give me a gift card!”

Bottom line, you don't have a recognition or awards problem, you have a communications problem. The reason that this is so prevalent in many organizations, is because employees just don't believe you really mean it. Overworked supervisors don't need anymore “to do's” on their already full plates, so they'll prioritize your requests to recognize employees based on their personal beliefs and styles. When under pressure, that style is all too often a version of the old, autocratic view – “yea, I recognize 'em, every two weeks with a paycheck; now quit whining and get back to work!”

Sure, that's a bit over the top, but I'll bet it's not too far from how the message is perceived by many of your employees during the hustle of a normal work day. And because it's a habit, your well-meaning supervisors aren't even aware that they come across that way.

It's all about perception, Making it Real, and being Genuine in the eyes of your people. When that happens, and they believe you Truly Care, they'll bring their “A” Game to work (and all of the productivity, creativity, profitability, teamwork and cost savings that entails) . . . *and you get it for free!*

This is one of the secrets of today's great companies, and the best part is, it's easier to make it happen in your organization than you think! To learn more about negative habits and their impact on your workforce productivity, visit us at <http://www.SchaeferRecognitionGroup.com>.



John Schaefer is a Consultant with more than 26 years of experience helping companies realize and react to what he calls the *Employer/Employee Disconnect*. “Your people have the capacity and desire to become far more involved and productive than they are today. The resources required are freely available, if you simply choose to use them,” says Schaefer. “The key is to get your managers and supervisors to embrace this challenge by seeing what's financially in it for them.” John is the author of the book *Get More Productivity for Less Money . . . Your Employees will Love You for It! How to turn your existing recognition and incentive expenses into profits and prove it to your CFO.* , as well as *The Manager Training Program “Why Should Supervisors Care (or what they're really thinking) . . . What's in it for Me?”*