



Human beings react differently to challenges and problems when they feel valued, respected, and recognized as important to team success.

The gap between leadership qualities that are important to employees and what they experience is significant.

Recent polls show that about 70% of U.S. employees are “highly disengaged,” only 13% say they are “highly engaged,” and 54% are actively seeking a new job. Furthermore, “belief in senior leadership” is the strongest engagement driver, and “opportunities for growth and development” is the second. (Modern Survey, 2015)

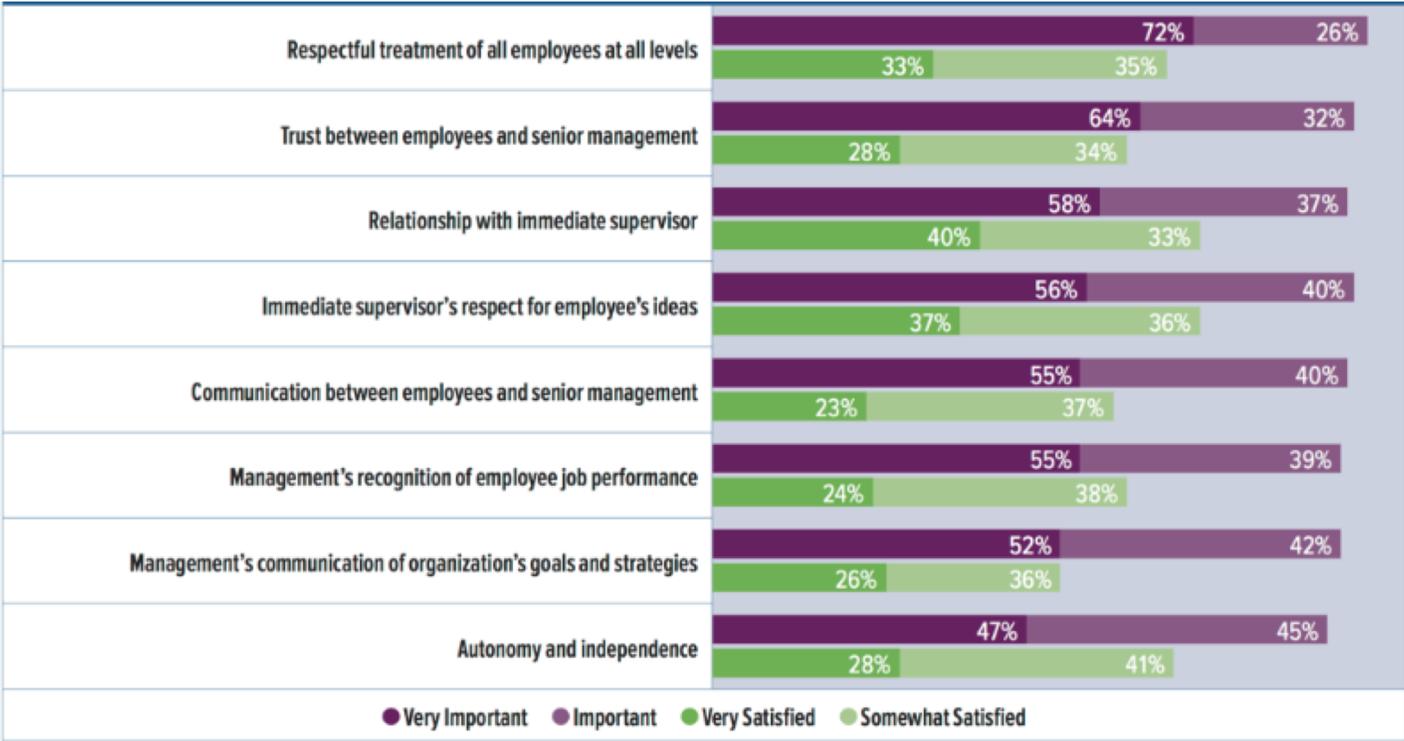
Still not convinced? Take a look at the SHRM 2015 Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement Survey. The disparities between the *importance of* and *satisfaction with* employee relationships with various aspects of management are telling. Employees identify the largest gaps in the areas of communication, trust, and recognition.

There’s no question that high employee disengagement represents both a failure of management and a fundamental challenge to today’s companies.

Meanwhile, back in the C-suite, leaders cite employee engagement, retention, and talent acquisition among the top resource challenges in 2015 (Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends, 2015).

It’s not rocket science. Everyone wants the same thing, really. Employers want people to do the best possible job, and employees want to do what they do best. According to a 2015 Gallup poll, more than income and benefits, the number one reason that job-hoppers take or consider a new job: “It will allow me to do what I do best.”

Importance of and Satisfaction with Employee Relationships with Management Aspects



Note: n = 600. Importance percentages are based on a scale where 1 = “very unimportant” and 4 = “very important.” Satisfaction percentages are based on a scale where 1 = “very dissatisfied” and 5 = “very satisfied.” Data are sorted in descending order by the percentage of respondents who indicated “very important.”

Source: Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement (SHRM, 2015)

Common Leadership Behaviors that Cripple Engagement

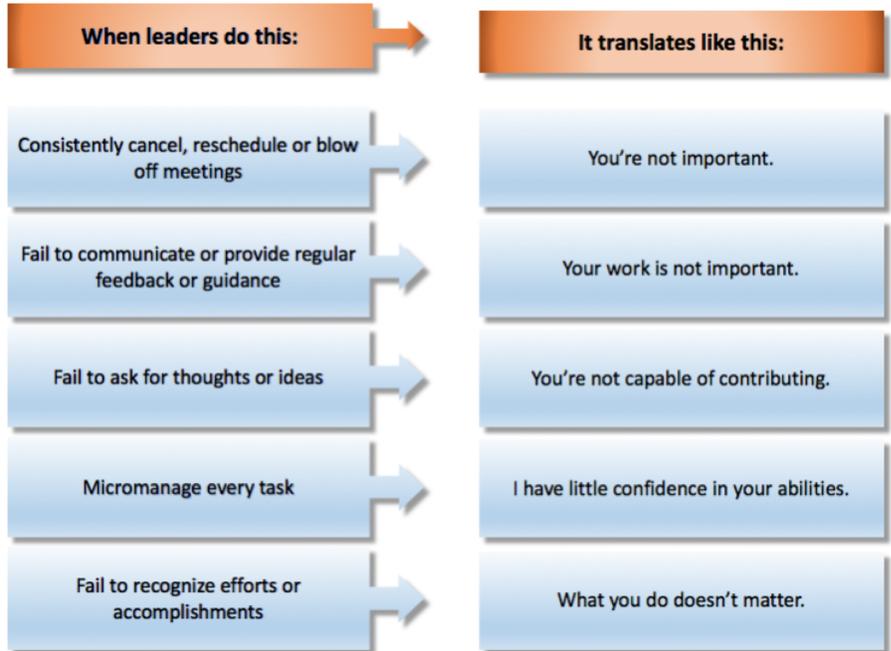
Would you ever tell your employees that they don't matter to the success of the company? That's ridiculous, right? But, actions speak louder than words and many leaders communicate those very messages in their every day behaviors. Consider the top complaints about leadership and how those behaviors actually translate.

Seems harsh, doesn't it? Yet, these are common behaviors among leaders, and the translations are very real to employees. Most leaders would say they are dedicated hard workers, have multiple responsibilities and the effects of their behaviors are not intentional. It's not personal.

But the reality is that these very common behaviors actually *cripple the engagement* of the very people they expect to be invested, productive team members.

Isn't it just a little unreasonable to expect people to be engaged, contributing members of the team if they feel their leaders have little confidence in their abilities, what they do doesn't matter... they don't matter? Never mind that those perceptions may not be accurate. Those are their perceptions.

Think about your most disengaged employees; you know who they are. Do you really think they want to spend 40 hours each week

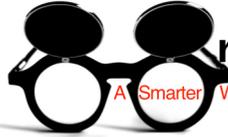


doing work that is unfulfilling and unrewarding? Of course, not. People at all levels genuinely want to be engaged, contributing members of the team. Given the choice, everyone wants to contribute to that team's success rather than sit on the sidelines. Everyone wants to know that what they do really matters.

But, when people feel managed and controlled rather than led and empowered, it won't take long for engagement, productivity and retention to plummet with a "what's the point?" attitude. Disengagement leads to turnover as they take their skills, talents and passions elsewhere. In fact, Millennials, the biggest job hopping segment, overwhelmingly cite the lack of opportunities to grow and make contributions as their top reason for leaving. People don't leave companies; they leave managers.

"Leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that your impact lasts in your absence."

-Sheryl Sandberg



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Developing a Learning Culture

Successful companies share some common characteristics. They have disciplines and processes in place to monitor and adjust to changing market conditions, disruptions, growth, spend, operations, profitability, quality control, marketing, etc. They prioritize the development of their people and they create an environment that fosters learning and collective collaboration.

If businesses managed their money with the same level of care that they manage the development of their people, how many would be bankrupt?

Perhaps the most defining factor between the best and the rest is a leadership model that doesn't confine learning and leading to the C-suite. The most effective leaders look for opportunities to learn from the people around them, give others opportunities to utilize their strengths, inspire them to embrace challenges, support them when they fail, and recognize them when they succeed. Great leaders create a culture of mentorship at all levels of the organization empowering people at all levels of the org chart to both teach and learn. They prioritize the development of a *culture of learning*.

Factor in the complexities of a multi-generational workforce and a learning culture becomes even more critical. For the first time in history, we have five generations working side by side - each thinking and learning very differently. Despite these differences, the biggest obstacle for many organizations may be a culture that neither promotes nor nurtures opportunities for people to teach and learn from one another.

For example, Millennials view mentoring opportunities as a workforce benefit. A large majority of them would actually trade higher salaries for greater mentoring opportunities. But they also want opportunities to show what they know. One of the biggest factors of job dissatisfaction among this segment of the workforce is not about what they're not getting, but rather that they aren't empowered to contribute their full potential toward organizational goals.

In fact, 28% of Gen Y employees feel their current organizations aren't making full use of their skills and strengths. (Deloitte 2015 Millennial Survey)

Human beings react differently to challenges, problems, and failure when they feel safe, valued, and respected.

If you want people at all levels of the org chart to overcome the inevitable obstacles that come with changing markets, disruptions, innovation and growth, you must shift from the traditional, top-down mentorship and leadership model to cross-generational opportunities that encourage collective engagement and collaborative contributions.

If your leaders are not committed to give people opportunities to both learn and to teach, then you'll likely lose some the best and brightest people - perhaps to the competition.



Dr. Melissa Hughes is the President and Founder of The Andrick Group. Melissa specializes in employee engagement, effective communication strategies, and the unique dynamics of the multi-generational workforce – all of which contribute to organizational culture and are essential for success. Having worked with learners from the classroom to the boardroom, she incorporates brain-based research, humor, and practical strategies that impact how organizations think, learn, communicate and collaborate. Melissa has worked with Fortune 1000 leaders enabling them to harness the skills, innovation and creativity from all members of the organization to build collective intellectual capacity and create a culture of learning and leadership. Learn more at www.andrickgroup.com.
