

by Steve Ferrante, CEO & Trainer of Champions, Sale Away LLC

WINNING WORKPLACE

Having difficulty finding talented employees? Take a good look at the engagement level of your existing employees first.

In my 30+ years of business consulting, including the past two decades in my own practice, I've lost count of how many times I've heard owners and managers say, "We can't find good people." If you own or manage an auto service business, there's a good chance you've said it, too.

Of course, every business wants to attract, hire and retain "good people." Yet only the best businesses seem able to do it consistently. Why is that? To answer, let's look first at the talent pool; those who are unemployed, disengaged with their current employer or simply open to new opportunities. I call them "free agents," a term you may recognize from professional sports.

Put yourself in the role of one of these free agents with a bit of interactive imagination. Picture yourself as a professional basketball player with elite All-Star skills. Despite your standout performance, your team finishes last and misses the playoffs. Fortunately, your contract is up. You're now a free agent, and with your proven talent, you can write your own ticket to play anywhere.

So where would you want to go? Another losing team? Probably not. Like nearly everyone, you'd choose to join a championship-caliber team. In fact, given the choice, most people would pick the reigning champion,



whoever that happens to be.

The same holds true in business: top talent is drawn to winning workplaces, not struggling ones. If your company is seen as a leader, a place where people can thrive, you'll naturally attract more of the "free agents" everyone else is chasing.

ASK NOT WHAT EMPLOYEES CAN DO FOR YOU...

With a winning team mentality in mind, employers shouldn't begin by asking what employees can do for them. The first question should be: What are we offering potential candidates? And, it's not just about

pay plans and benefits, though those matter. The deeper issue is whether your business provides a true winning workplace. That's what ultimately determines whether you not only attract top talent, but also keep them engaged, productive and committed for the long term.

Winning Workplace Rule #1:

IF YOU WANT TO ATTRACT AND EMPLOY TOP TALENT, YOU MUST CREATE AN ORGANIZATION THAT TOP TALENT WANTS TO BE PART OF.

It's no secret to many market-leading companies that a winning corporate culture drives both success and

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performance. In my previous article in the July issue, *8 Practices to Build a Winning Team Culture*, I outlined the principles needed to build and sustain that culture.

One of those principles, Disengaged Employees Don't Create Engaged Customers, could just as easily be stated as Disengaged Employees Don't Create Engaged Employees. The point is clear: if you want to attract and retain top talent, you must first evaluate the level of engagement within your current workforce.

Research from Gallup, the global leader in performance-management consulting, shows that roughly 70% of U.S. employees are not engaged at work. That's a staggering number, and a critical wake-up call for business owners and managers who hope to build a winning workplace.



EITHER AN ASSET OR A LIABILITY

According to Gallup, companies with highly engaged

workforces outperform their peers by 147% in earnings, experience 25%-65% less turnover and see 37% lower absenteeism. For business owners, the takeaway is clear: engagement is not a "nice-to-have," it's the dividing line between a company that thrives and one that struggles.

Every employee is either helping your business win or hurting its chances of winning. They are either contributing to your mission or detracting from it. The typical disengaged employee may argue otherwise, claiming that while they aren't adding much, they certainly aren't doing harm. Don't buy it.

The truth is, disengaged employees aren't productively contributing. They're going through the motions, operating in the comfort zone, mentally – and often physically – checked out. As legendary coach John Wooden said, "There's a difference between activity and achievement." Disengaged employees may look busy, but they aren't moving the business forward in any meaningful way.

5 WARNING SIGNS OF DISENGAGEMENT

1) Bad Attitude

While the best employees bring enthusiasm and genuine passion to their work, disengaged employees often display the opposite – a consistently negative attitude. They constantly complain, spread their dissatisfaction, and contaminate the workplace culture. Left unchecked, their negativity damages morale and drags down the performance of those around them.

2) No Initiative

Engaged employees are proactive. They take ownership of their responsibilities and complete tasks correctly without the need for constant supervision. Disengaged employees, on the other hand, rarely take action on their own. They wait to be told what to do and waste valuable

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time in the process. A telling clue: disengaged employees often speak about the company in “they” terms instead of “we,” signaling that they don’t feel truly connected to the team or its mission.

3) Lack of Focus

Everyone gets distracted from time to time, but disengaged employees make a habit of it. They spend as much time “fooling around” as they do working, and need frequent reminders to stay on task. Worse yet, their lack of focus drags down others by creating distractions during business hours. The result is a direct hit to overall productivity.

4) Irresponsible

Disengaged employees often behave as if they have better things to do than their jobs. They show up late, miss meetings and blow past deadlines. They disregard directions,



make poor decisions and break commitments – all of which create unnecessary problems and workplace chaos.

5) No PRIDE

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Engaged employees embrace this responsibility and commit to doing their best work for both themselves and the business. Disengaged employees, by contrast, show little pride in what they do. Their focus is simply on making it through the day and collecting a paycheck, with no real investment in excellence or outcomes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF LEADERS

Employee engagement is influenced by many factors, but none more than management. Employees look to leaders to set the standard, light the path and show the way. That means managers must be the model of excellence within the organization.

Too often, managers talk about excellence without living it. If a leader isn't fully committed to excellence and consistently demonstrating the right behaviors, it's unrealistic to expect their team to do so. While a few standout employees may rise above poor management, most will mirror what they see. A weak manager creates a trickle-down effect that stifles productivity, engagement and results.

From the leader on down, every employee either adds to or subtracts from a winning workplace. Build and nurture that culture first, or you may find yourself among those auto service businesses still asking why they can't find and keep "good people." ■

An avid auto enthusiast, Steve Ferrante literally grew up in and around his family's auto service business in Massachusetts. Today, he is the **CEO and Trainer of Champions of Sale Away LLC**. A true student of his profession, Steve has over 30 years of successful sales, sales management and sales training experience. Specializing in the tire/auto service industry since 2009, Steve has received national acclaim for teaching independent tire and auto service businesses how to improve customer experiences, produce greater sales results, build a "winning team" corporate culture and be the "Top Shop" in their market. To learn more about the Pinnacle Performance program for your team, visit **pinnacleperformancetraining.biz**. Steve can be reached directly at **603-681-0787** or via e-mail at **steve@pinnacleperformance-training.biz**.