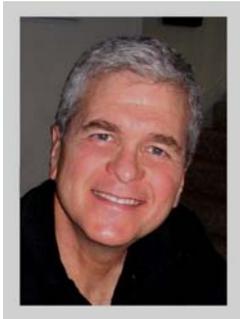


Employee Engagement Creates Mutual Bond



By Leigh Branham

(Adapted from guest column that appeared originally in *The Kansas City Star*)

Many companies still conduct employee "satisfaction" surveys in spite of research that for years has demonstrated that some of the most satisfied employees are the least productive.

Other organizations administer "commitment" surveys that ask whether the employee intends to stay in the organization. The problem with intent to stay, of course, is that many employees who plan to stay do not necessarily plan to perform at their best. As the saying goes, "some quit and leave — others quit and stay."

In other words, many stay and don't commit. Polls of the American work force consistently show that only about one-quarter to one-third describe themselves as: a. happy in the job/environment; b. planning to stay; and c. consistently giving their best effort.

When the "Great Recession" hit in 2008 more businesses shifted their concern to getting the most out of every remaining employee. As a result, we have a new term in the management lexicon — "employee engagement" — that combines and connotes the concepts of satisfaction, commitment to excellent performance and intent to stay. Unfortunately, many employees view employee engagement as a mere buzz phrase, seeing it as just another management scheme to squeeze more work out of employees without paying them more.

To engage is "to attract and hold," so it is a fitting word to describe attempts by the best employers to create a voluntary mutual bond. To engage is also to "engross and occupy," implying a worker who is interested in the work and in creating positive outcomes. In other words, an engaged worker is "in gear," bringing body, mind and heart to the work.

Workers are more likely to be willingly engaged when certain working conditions are present in the environment:

- Demonstrated business success, with a clear, compelling and credible plan for sustaining success
- Growth and development opportunities

