kinetix

| THE BOOTSTRAPPER'S GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT |

IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S ME.

| THE BOOTSTRAPPER'S GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT |

IT'S NOT THAT THEY'RE LAZY, IT'S THAT THEY JUST DON'T CARE

Employee engagement. Meaningless buzzword or real organizational dynamic that can be measured and managed?

Your view probably depends on who you've heard speak on the topic or what you've read. It's OK to be cynical and jaded - that's what we love about you. That's also why we're going to avoid deep science and lead with what we think everyone can relate to regarding employee engagement.

That's right, a clip from the Hollywood classic on employee engagement, **Office Space**.

You want the definition of Employee Engagement? Here's our definition: Employee Engagement is Discretionary Effort that you don't have to threaten someone to get.

Haven't seen the movie? You need to pick it up – **like now**. In the clip below, our hero, Peter Gibbons (line employee at Initech), explains to two layoff consultants (known as the two Bobs) why he doesn't give a flip about the company, his performance or the fact they might choose him to include in their list of recommended layoffs:

> **Peter Gibbons:** You see, Bob, it's not that I'm lazy, it's that I just don't care.
>
> **Bob Porter:** Don't - don't care?
>
> **Peter Gibbons:** It's a problem of motivation, all right? Now if I work my #$$ off and Initech ships a few extra units, I don't see another dime, so where's the motivation? And here's another thing, I have eight different bosses right now.
>
> **Bob Porter:** Eight?
>
> **Peter Gibbons:** Eight, Bob. So that means when I make a mistake, I have eight different people coming by to tell me about it. That's my only real motivation is not to be hassled, that, and the fear of losing my job. But you know, Bob, that will only make someone work just hard enough not to get fired.
>
> (Reading this on your digital device? **Digital Bonus:** **Hear the .wav file here**)

LET'S START WITH THE LAYMAN'S DEFINITION OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

We led with a clip from Office Space. You want the complex definition of Employee Engagement? **Read this** and stop reading this paper, because it's not going to be academic enough for you.

> *Here's our definition:* **Employee Engagement is *Discretionary Effort that you don't have to threaten someone to get.***

Lots of things go into creating an environment that draws discretionary effort. Hiring the right people is a start. Having managers who can have two-way conversations is a good follow up to that.

Or, you could just tell them what to do. Like Peter's managers (plural!) at Initech. More on them later.

THE 5 BIGGEST MYTHS ABOUT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Of course, our simple definition of employee engagement doesn't give you a roadmap for what to do next in your company if you want more discretionary effort, aka employee engagement. To help with that, we brought in an expert – Bob Kelleher, founder of **EmployeeEngagement.com**, a former VP of HR for a huge company and a practical, results oriented expert on all things related to employee engagement. He's one of our favorites.

Bob identifies the 5 biggest myths related to employee engagement as the following (our comments appear in the parentheses – we couldn't help ourselves):

You can spend a lot of money on engagement programs but if you don't concentrate on the most important things, you will get no improvement in employee engagement.

- **Myth #1- Employee engagement is HR's role.** (No doubt. If HR could solve problems like engagement on their own, they'd be rivaling your CEO in pay. Heck, they'd be CEO.)
- **Myth #2 - Employee engagement requires a large budget.** (Actually, you can spend a lot of money on engagement programs but if you don't concentrate on the most important things, you will get ***no*** improvement in employee engagement. Conversely, you can spend very little and get great improvements – if you focus on the right things.)
- **Myth #3 - Employee engagement isn't something to be focused on now. As some managers say, "People are fortunate just to have jobs."** (The worst kind of myth – of course, the high performers most likely to leave you are marketable even in a recession, and as the economy continues to recover, the folks behind them are at risk as well.)
- **Myth #4 - Employee engagement is warm and fuzzy, and there aren't statistics to back it up.** (Wrong. Plenty of stats show that the more engaged your workforce is, the more profitable your company becomes.)
- **Myth #5 - Employee engagement is a trend.** (Sure it is. Just like the Internet, Email and Facebook, right Brontosaurus?)

We liked Bob's list. So much so, we noticed a consistent trend and broke it down in the next section.

WHEN IT COMES TO ENGAGEMENT, YOUR COMPANY IS ONLY AS GOOD AS YOUR WORST MANAGER

You can bring in consultants. You can do a big tracking survey and use the Gallup 12. But, at the end of the day, your employee engagement levels are in direct correlation with the quality of your first level managers.

Like Bob (Kelleher, not the first 2 Bobs) pointed out with his 5 biggest myths, money doesn't buy engagement. HR can't make it happen. It takes quality managers.

They've got to be in tune. They've got to show they care. They've got to be able to have two-way conversations and listen rather than simply tell people what to do.

It's harder than it looks. So let's give you a list of things you can build a training program around to drive engagement.

If you, as a manager, want your employees engaged, you probably need to understand what they love and hate, then weave that into your stage banter...

BOOTSTRAP TIME – HOW TO BUILD ENGAGEMENT THROUGH YOUR FIRST-LEVEL MANAGERS

You want more discretionary effort/employee engagement. We think it all starts with your first level managers. And. You. Need. A. Plan.

There are a lot of ways to approach training up your managers to create an environment where discretionary effort flows and employee engagement lives.

You want that? Then we think your plan needs to help managers deliver on the following engagement keys:

1. **Managers should have a clue about what employees like and hate – both inside and outside of work.**

   We're at the base of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with this one, but it's true. If you, as a manager, want your employees engaged, you probably need to understand what they love and hate, then weave that into your ***stage banter*** (i.e. daily conversation) with them. If what they love is different from your interests, it doesn't matter. Engagement is your job. Act interested. You might even learn something. It's about connecting on a base level. It's the entry fee a manager has to pay for engagement.

   Example: Your employee is named Michael Bolton, but hates Michael Bolton and loves rap. You love Michael Bolton and think it's cool he has that name. You celebrate Bolton's entire collection every time you have down time with your Michael Bolton. #FAIL

   (**Digital Bonus:** The Bob's from Office Space disengage an employee named Michael Bolton. **Hear the .wav file here** & **See the YouTube clip here**.)

2. **Managers have to make employees feel like they really care about their career – even at the expense of losing them.**

Can you say this?

> *"You know, our job (in addition to getting the work done) is to give you a bunch of experiences that you couldn't get elsewhere that are going to make you more valuable. I hope you're here a long time, but if the time comes where you need to cash in on those experiences by moving to another company, that's OK. I hope we can give you the career path, but if not, we'll be better for having you on the team for a couple of years. Maybe you'd even come back when our growth catches up to your career"...*

Well, can you say that? Did I hear a gulp…?

No? You're not thinking about growing your talent enough, and you're leaving real employee engagement on the table. Scared? Here's the truth: The other way just gives you false hope. At least with the talent you really want.

Yes? Congrats - they're less likely to leave you than that statement implies if you deliver on what you're promising. They'll also give you much more discretionary effort if they feel like you're their career agent as a manager.

(**Digital Bonus:** Make them understand that you care about their career, and you'll never worry about them giving the following Office Space/Peter Gibbons quote to their shrink – "today is the worst day of my life"- **Hear the .wav file here.**)

The good managers get better buy-in to whatever the solution turns out to be. Engagement increases when you stop simply telling people what to do and make them participate in the solution.

3. **Managers have to stop telling employees what to do – and instead force them to help determine the solution.**

Coaching skills are easy to break down in any organization. When a performance issue in need of improvement is spotted with one of their employees, bad managers just tell the employee what to do. No interaction, no dialogue. Nothing. Do it, Sally.

Good managers make an observation, then shut up and let the employee talk.

The difference? The good managers get better buy-in to whatever the solution turns out to be. Engagement increases when you stop simply telling people what to do and make them participate in the solution.

If you want more on this, we've got another Kinetix whitepaper called "**Please Shut Up: The 6-Step Coaching Tool For Managers**." Check it out.

(**Digital Bonus:** The 8 managers of Peter Gibbons could use our coaching tool. Check out their interactions with Peter over some TPS reports. **Hear the .wav file here**, and **also here**. See the **YouTube Clip here**.)

4. **When it comes to Performance Management, stop counting widgets and focus on what great performance looks like and how it helps the employee build their career. Then recognize the good stuff when you see it – publicly.**

Bad performance reviews suck and kill employee engagement. You know that. But you might need some ideas on how to get out of the crappy cycle you're in.

Bad performance reviews suck and kill employee engagement. You know that. But you might need some ideas on how to get out of the crappy cycle you're in.

Broaden your game as a manager and company. Stop letting raw metrics and completion counts rule the day, and start doing these three things:

- **Include more notes on what great performance looks like in any goal area.** You actually think the employee might be able to innovate something? Shocking!
- **Be an agent for the employee's career** and brainstorm on how they can make themselves more valuable and marketable while they chase those goals on behalf of the company.
- **When you see innovation/great performance that goes above and beyond, recognize it publicly.** Don't recognize average performance, note only what's great.

Here's a well know fact: Not all employees are going to want to stretch. Some just want to clock in and clock out and make the donuts. But you'll never know unless you try. And it's your job as manager. See the next point for why you have to do it.

Here's a lesser known fact: Your top employees, fully engaged, are worth many, many times what an average employee is. Do it.

(**Digital Bonus:** If all you're doing is counting widgets as a manager, you'll be accused by your top performers (like Jennifer Anniston) of just counting flare. Do you need 13 pieces of flare or 37? Where's the value? What's their motivation again? **Hear the .wav file here** & **See the video clip here**.)

5. **For maximum engagement, always pay your top performers significantly more than your average performers. But don't expect that to yield dramatically increased engagement unless you do the other things first.**

Money matters, without question. As Bob Kelleher notes in our interview:

"When it's time for managers to dole out merit compensation, you want to make a distinction between your "rock stars" and "average Joe's/ slackers. For example, if you award 2.5% to underperformers, 3% to average, and 3.5% to top performers, you are at risk for discouraging your top performers, and not incenting underperformers to improve."

You want more discretionary effort/employee engagement. You've got two choices – either get engaged (pun intended) on making your managers better, or live with what you've got.

You can't expect engagement if the high-performers get paid the same as the plodders/ zombies. Be brave and pay differently. Check out the tools section of this white paper for more from Bob (Kelleher, not the 2 Bobs) on a merit increase approach that drives engagement.

WHAT NOW?

You want more discretionary effort/employee engagement. Rolling out a task force on engagement or a (gasp) committee to explore what to do isn't going to cut it. You've got two choices – either get engaged (pun intended) on making your managers better, or live with what you've got.

But before you say that pushing your managers for more is "just too hard", remember the immortal words of Peter Gibbons:

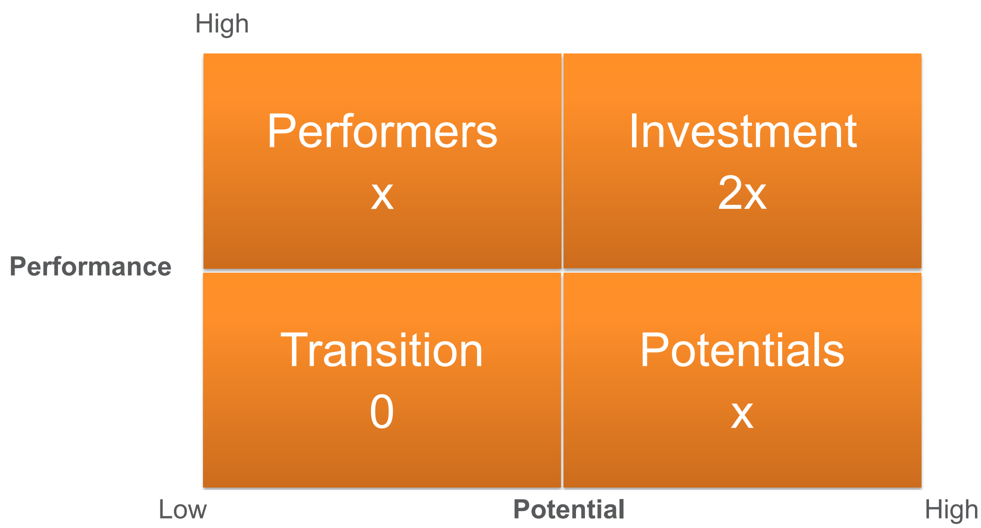
> **"But you know Bob, that'll only make someone work just hard enough not to get fired"** (**Digital Bonus: Hear the .wav file here**)

Good luck with your engagement initiative. We hope the employee survey goes really well.

TWO ADDITIONAL TOOLS TO DRIVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

If you want to maximize employee engagement, it all starts with your managers. But we've beat that to death, haven't we? Here are two more tools to think about related to engagement:

Tool #1 - The Four Quadrant Matrix - an Easy and Practical Way to Fix Your Merit Increase Problem



This one comes from our expert, Bob Kelleher of **EmployeeEngagement.com**. For compensation or bonuses, plot your employees into the 4 quadrants, based on performance, and potential, using "X" being an average award. Here is how it works:

- **Investment** employees should receive no less than 2X on average.
- **Transition** employees should not be rewarded.
- Between **Potentials and Performers**, give the edge to the performers (likely to be new or junior staff whose compensation will be related to recent, specific achievement).

Tool #2 – Areas to Measure on Employee Surveys Related to Employee Engagement

If you're bootstrapping an employee survey that you'll use to track engagement, writing survey items that measure the G12 from Gallup is a good place to start. The Gallup G12 outlines traits of engaged employees:

- *Consistent levels of high performance.*
- *Natural innovation and drive for efficiency.*
- *Intentional building of supportive relationships.*
- *Clear about the desired outcomes of their role.*
- *Emotionally committed to what they do.*
- *Challenge purpose to achieve goals.*
- *High energy and enthusiasm.*
- *Never run out of things to do, create positive things to act on.*
- *Broaden what they do and build on it.*
- *Commitment to company, work group, and role*.

If you're doing an employee survey, it's a smart idea to write survey items that measure these traits since Gallup has generated so much quality research in the area of employee engagement.

IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S ME.

| THE BOOTSTRAPPER'S GUIDE TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT |

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kinetix is the recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) firm for growth companies. We exist to help you become the biggest thing that ever walked the planet. Your company is good at what you do – and you know it. But you also know you can't hire good people fast enough to keep up with your growth. That's why you're here.

And that's what we do. You've got the product or service. We'll bring you the people. Our clients never need to worry that their growth will be slowed by an inability to acquire and retain the best talent.

Kinetix is different because we include HR Consulting hours with every RPO engagement we do. We can help your company's managers become better interviewers, and we can show you how to eliminate bad hires by securing brains/behavior/processing speed data on every candidate through our Talent DNA program.

We don't just slam candidates to you. **We help your organization learn how to determine who the best candidate is for the job.** For real.

What a concept, right? **Visit our webiste** and learn more about **what we do** and **how we do it**. **Check out the profiles of what makes our team tick**. If you want to keep growing, you've come to the right place.

Call us today at 770.390.8370 to kick it around and learn more about how we can help you look like a star.

ABOUT BOB KELLEHER

Bob Kelleher is an award winning author, thought leader, keynote speaker and consultant, and travels the globe sharing his insights on employee engagement, leadership, and workforce trends. Bob's best practices are culled from his years of researching and consulting with "best-in-class" companies, along with his experience working in the "C-Suite" for a Fortune 500 global professional services firm as Chief Human Resources Officer, and during his years as Chief Operating Officer and EVP of Organizational Development for an international consulting firm. As CEO of The Employee Engagement Group (**www.EmployeeEngagement.com**), Bob also helps leadership teams better engage their employees and drive profitable growth.