

**3** MINUTES WITH

## Bob Kelleher

BY ALLEN SMITH

**B**ob Kelleher, author of *Louder Than Words: 10 Practical Employee Engagement Steps that Drive Results* (BLKB Publishing, 2010) and *Creative-ship: A Novel for Evolving Leaders* (BLKB Publishing, 2012), is a Mega Session speaker at 4-5:15 p.m. today and 2:15-3:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Kelleher recently answered some questions about engagement and the workplace for *SHRM Conference Daily*:



Bob Kelleher

**Much of your work and presentations deal with engagement. What do you think is the most important measure of how engaged or disengaged an employer's workforce is?**

I believe the best metric is an employee engagement survey. Employee engagement surveys measure engagement, not satisfaction. I suggest that organizations conduct employee engagement surveys to gauge their organizational pulse.

Over the years, I have conducted employment surveys for many companies, large and small, and

have learned that you need benchmarks, both internal and external.

You also need to make sure your leadership team is committed to listening and acting on feedback. If you ask your employees what they think and then do nothing with the results, you will foster cynicism and skepticism. In fact, you will be worse off than if you did not conduct a survey in the first place.

**What is the relationship between engagement and innovation?**

Disengaged employees lead to complacency, while engaged employees are vested in the company's success.

Why didn't Polaroid see the emergence of digital photography? Folklore has it that Polaroid actually invented the digital camera but was afraid of investing in a product that could potentially cannibalize its cash cow base business.

These are all examples of great leaders and great companies leading their organizations for "today" and not creating cultures of engagement

and innovation for tomorrow.

Creating cultures of innovation requires investing today's cash to discover tomorrow's new technologies, products, services, geographies and approaches.

**What do you think the No. 1 challenge is for HR today as Baby Boomers retire or reinvent themselves and Millennials enter the workforce?**

Today's Boomers are part of the knowledge workforce, and many of them actually like to work. Work defines them, so the thought of sitting on a rocking chair is not at all pleasing. Their intellectual capital is still in demand, so it is important for firms to develop new work categories and classifications to encourage these talented Boomers to remain employees ... albeit at reduced hours and stress levels.

As for the Millennials, they're coming fast and furious. Some reports predict that they will be the dominant workforce demographic by the end of 2015.

Job rotation used to be a "nice-to-have." I believe firms will have to make job rotation a "must-have" if they're going to retain this generation. They are not interested in "cradle-to-grave" employment, and they have an attention span that is more about breadth than depth. They don't read newspapers, are technology-dependent and grew up with hundreds of television stations.

Mark Zuckerberg made it when he was in his 20s, and they can, too. 