

How to keep a team engaged on a journey of positive disruption

Forget about the cliché of the swaggering leader who can do no wrong. We all have strengths and weaknesses, however committed we are to our purpose and driving our organisation forward to achieve our goals. We are, after all, human. Plus, if the disruptive ambition is substantial, we'd be a fool to try to go it alone. This means we need resources. Resources are the fuel that helps our fire burn.

If you don't have fuel, you are simply a hothead with a big idea. With fuel, you have the opportunity to be a fire starter. People are an amazing type of fuel. Being part of a disruptive movement energises everyone involved. Engagement levels are off the charts. This in turn gives you a competitive advantage, a greater source of innovation and growing revenues. As momentum builds, a belief takes hold that the impossible is possible. Yes, it can be hard work, but there is joy and fulfilment too.

There is no more exciting place to be than working alongside others with a vision to achieve. When a leader's passion inspires others, it's like playing an E note on a piano and hearing the guitar in the same room start to resonate (a guitar has two E strings). The clearer a leader is about their purpose and the more energy they expend in seeking to fulfil it, the more attracted like-minded

people will be to the cause. Birds of a feather flock together.

If you want to be truly disruptive, it is imperative that you vibrate clearly. If you sound a D#, only badly tuned guitars will respond. Many leaders, if asked, would say they were clear about their purpose. Yet, according to Gallup, only 22% of employees strongly agree that their leaders have a clear direction. That means around eight out of ten leaders are either not clear about their purpose or are not living it. If either of these apply to you, it will be costing you dearly. If no one understands what they are there for, you'll see lower engagement, revenues and profits. Lack of urgency results in inefficiency, procrastination, prevarication and paralysing conflict. Employees will feel frustrated and confused, and the best ones will leave. After all, 70% of the variance in team engagement is determined solely by the manager.

It is imperative that leaders ensure their purpose is clear, compelling and understood by all. It should be central to everything you do. My own – to enable leaders to achieve meaningful purpose themselves – underpins everything I do – and it should be the same for you. As well as repeating your purpose at every given opportunity, every decision must be made in line with it. Every penny spent, every hiring decision, every marketing campaign, every aspect of research and development, every training programme, every engagement with customers, every project is embarked on with that purpose in mind. Get it right and you will experience a sustained increase in temperature.

A disruptive leader must ensure their vision is compelling and urgent. Shout it from the rooftops. Vibrate with it. Loud and clear. When you have urgency, everyone will prioritise. Spend will be targeted. Executives will be held to account. You will create a culture of 'us' not 'I'. Vanity projects will be abandoned. Every employee will understand why they are employed. Every department, every decision, every meeting, every conversation, every penny and every breath will be directed towards achieving that purpose. Being part of something with a powerful, uniting vision is life-giving, purpose-inducing and energy-releasing.

Employee engagement is a buzzword much loved by HR, and for good reason. Yet how many people really understand what this means? It's more than job satisfaction, discretionary effort, job involvement or commitment, though all of these are relevant. For true engagement, you need to add persistence, focused energy, motivation, adaptability, positivity, task completion and achievement. All these things are directed towards achieving purpose. Each member of the team brings their all, adding their own fuel to the fire.

Every individual has a particular mix of potential and kinetic energy. Effort in action is the kinetic part. The most successful organisations engage their people in such a way as to release the most amount of potential energy possible while protecting against burnout. Even small movements in this

direction can have astonishing results. Increased engagement not only boosts revenues, but also profitability, customer service, innovation and wellbeing, and reduces staff absences.

For full engagement, your goal as a disruptive leader is to align people's personal sense of purpose with the organisational purpose. If a team member is interested in climate change, bring them into a project related to that and they will be significantly more likely to do everything they can to make it a success. They will give it their energy and time and be much more engaged.

All those wonderful people on your team are full of energy, which is potential fuel for your cause. It is your responsibility as a leader to make sure that energy is not wasted. Leave them to become disengaged and there will be a cost. Their resistance to your purpose

will drain fuel from the company. Any resistors will make others uncomfortable too – doing nothing about employee engagement is not an option. Ensuring a team is engaged doesn't always happen naturally; it takes time and attention to detail from managers.

Mark Bateman is the CEO of [WeQual](#) and the author of [Disruptive Leadership](#).

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Article by MARK BATEMAN