

Why Shops Have Careless Employees

By Dave Luehr | 19 May 2020

According to a [Gallup poll](#) I recently discovered, the U.S. economy suffers from between \$450-\$550 Billion dollars annually in lost productivity. The cause? 66% of the workforce are un-engaged at work. For you readers outside of the U.S., you are not off the hook by any means. Worldwide, the Gallup poll indicates an unbelievable 85% of workers are not engaged in their work. They hate it!

In a world where we are always seeking tools, tips, and strategies to improve productivity, why don't we discuss engagement more often? In the collision industry, many people, including myself, began as a [technician, then turned into a business owner](#). We are predisposed to look at the more technically oriented solutions instead of crucial soft skills.

Most shop leaders are not leaders; they are "managers." Funny thing is, people do not like being managed; they like being led. In the collision industry, I am watching this truth accelerate the distance between successful shops and the rest of the pack more than ever before. Clearly, a small handful of shops are figuring out this "leadership" thing. The most successful shops understand that an engaged workforce can take a business to any heights.

So, what is an engaged employee exactly?

An "engaged employee" is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work. They take positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests. Quite simply, they care.

Most shop owners tell me they are frustrated with their people and feel they act "careless." Common complaints include: frequent cell phone use, accidentally breaking parts, coming to work late, reluctance to work past five o'clock. Sound familiar? Perhaps people act "careless" because they could not care less?

Many shop managers mistakenly assume that everyone cares more than they actually do. They argue that, since their people are paid well for services rendered, they should care. This argument may be partially true, but it's not enough. These days people can get a paycheck anywhere, so why should they care about your shop specifically? Seriously – why should they care?

People become disengaged due to three primary factors. Anonymity, Irrelevance, and Immeasurement. In other words, employees want to acknowledgement; they want to know why their work is meaningful; and, they want to know where they stand relative to company goals.

Here is a system that can help you attack these three root causes...

Four-step Engagement Framework

- 1. Meaningful work** – Workers want to know if the service the business provides really matters in the big picture. Shops can demonstrate how meaningful the work is by reminding the team that they are not merely fixing cars; they are fixing lives. Technicians in particular are susceptible to losing sight of the importance of their work because they infrequently interact with the customers. Leaders need to bridge this gap by making sure they know how much the customers appreciate the quality work being done to keep them [the customer] and their families safe. Meaningful work solves the engagement root problem of irrelevance.

- 2. Relevance** – Once the worker understands the importance of the company’s work, they also need to know how they are individually contributing to the meaningful work and the vision and mission of the company. Relevance answers the question, “Do I matter?”
Leaders can make people feel relevant by praising them in front of their peers, offering encouragement, and reminding them how their specific actions are helping the company grow and succeed. Relevance solves the engagement root problems of irrelevance and anonymity.
- 3. Clear Expectations** – Despite common beliefs, most people crave [accountability](#). Work is much more enjoyable when someone knows whether they measure up to the company’s standards and expectations. The old joke goes, “I know I’m doing a good job when the boss doesn’t say anything.” This is no longer a joke! People really want to know how they are performing and leaders need to be able to communicate it regularly. This takes care of the engagement root problem of immeasurement.
- 4. Gamify** – When work sucks... make it a game! People will work harder on recreation than they do at work. Why is that? Why would someone spend hours and hours preparing and traveling to go hiking or mountain climbing? Why would someone dream about the next opportunity to run a marathon? Are they crazy? No, they are engaged because these activities offer a challenge to their deepest human instincts to evolve, to improve, to achieve the next level! Leaders may not be able to make coming to the office as exciting as spending the day on the lake water skiing, but I bet there are ways they could make the business more “game like” and take advantage of worker’s deep desires for accomplishment.
[How will you keep score?](#)

Are you cut out to be a leader?

[Patrick Lencioni](#), the popular leadership author, has interesting advice for those wanting to become better leaders. Lencioni believes a person needs to check their motivation for becoming a leader before getting into how to be a better leader. Because if you’re doing it for the wrong reasons, advice about becoming a better leader isn’t going to make any sense.

He is correct. Leadership is at the core of building a winning culture, which is at the core of performance. Shops often seek technically minded solutions to solve an employee engagement problem. For example, when a shop’s estimators are missing a lot of vehicle damage on their appraisals, owners send their people to yet another estimating class in hopes of solving the problem, when the real problem continues to be engagement.

To Lencioni’s point, becoming a leader is not a reward for aggressively and ruthlessly climbing the corporate ladder, it is a responsibility. It is a choice of responsibility to serve people in a manner that will guide the employees and the company towards its vision of success.

People are not tools of managers; leaders are the servants of those who are willing to follow them.

If you want support in becoming a better body shop leader, contact us at info@elitebodyshopsolutions.com for one-on-one mentoring and other support.

Elite Mastermind Groups are launching in July 2020. [Sign up here to be the first to know all the news!](#)