

CORPORATED MANAGEMENT / HUMAN RESOURCES

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Unlock your potential

Raising your engagement level will cause a positive chain reaction.

AFTER a health scare 11 years ago, I set out on a quest to find the secrets to working smarter, not harder. In other words, the best ways to work with what one has inherited (brains, bodies, emotions and the way one has evolved) rather than to fight against one's biological hard-wiring or physical limitations. This can help you achieve more than you ever thought possible.

Neurological breakthroughs

Recent discoveries in neuroscience – the science of how the brain works – have profound implications for just about every basic human activity: thinking, learning, feeling and interacting. And with businesses being nothing but organisations of people, these insights are powerful business tools for any leader or business owner.

A Harvard Business School research has revealed that specific cells within the brain explain the neural components of "emotional leadership".

Followers of effective leaders experience a rapport with them, created by a combination of mirror neurons (which cause us to reproduce the emotions of others), spindle cells and oscillators (which cause us to subconsciously mimic the movements of another).

The actions of a leader who has "engaged" his team affect the brain chemistry of all the team members. Because of the interpersonal dynamic of mirror neurons and oscillators, any emotions within team members quickly spread to other people. Soon, these emotions – whether positive or negative – can infect the entire team, inhibiting or boosting team performance.

Are you 'engaged'?

The Harvard Business School



research shows that successful, profitable businesses commonly have loyal, engaged employees who consistently perform at a high level to deliver a fantastic customer experience, which leads to customer loyalty.

Here are four steps to increase your level of engagement:

1 Increase your energy levels

The first step to becoming fully engaged or getting your team or workforce engaged is to get more energy in your life. It is almost impossible to make significant performance improvements if you are constantly feeling tired or unwell.

To do this, you need to understand the three sources of energy:

■ **Physical energy.** There are many simple yet profound changes you can make to improve your physi-

cal energy, centred around diet, exercise, sleep, rest and relaxation and concentration.

■ **Mental energy.** Increase your energy and effectiveness by focusing your daily activities on the most important things. Also, try to do more of the tasks you love doing (by doing them exceptionally well, you will keep getting those tasks to do), and decreasing the tasks you do not enjoy (by swapping or delegating them to others).

■ **Emotional energy.** Positive emotions improve the quality of your energy. Avoid negative emotions which sap emotional energy, and do more of the activities that boost emotional energy.

2 Boost your emotional connections

To feel engaged, you need to have an emotional connection with an activity or group. You need to feel valued, valuable and involved. If you are a leader, ensure people feel like they are an important member of the team. Ask for regular feedback about their experience in the team, how it can be improved and then act on the suggestions.

Recognise good performance, and keep everyone informed about the team or business. These activities can foster a stronger sense of unity, so people work together better and try harder for each other.

3 Change bad habits and relearn good ones

You can teach an old dog new tricks! The scientific term for this is "neuroplasticity", which is the ability of your billions of neurons



There are simple changes you can make to improve your physical energy centred around diet, exercise, sleep, rest and relaxation and concentration. - AP

to reorganise themselves to change established patterns. This can be done with deliberate, focused effort to change your learned patterns of behaviour and using the right framework. Often, the mental barrier of believing you cannot change yourself stops you from even trying.

4 Build skills in more effective ways

Why learn by your mistakes when you can learn by someone else's? Neuroscience provides an alternative to learning by trial and error.

By implementing a systematic approach to learning, and using techniques such as skill visualisation, you can dramatically increase the effectiveness of skill development and application.

These practical techniques have helped me to become better engaged. Not only that, these frameworks can help to engage others to boost their performance levels. - Singapore Straits Times/Asia News Network

● **ARTICLE** by Bill Lang, president of Training Edge International and CEO of Bill Lang International.