

Powerful Leadership Wins Employees Hearts + Minds... Gains Customers

BY SUZANNE KELLY

This article explores how to use effective leadership strategies to win hearts and minds of employees to improve the bottom line. It draws attention to Gallup's most recent statistics on the state of employee engagement, both in the US and worldwide, and outlines the three different types of engagement. To attract and retain top talent, leaders must take an active role in inspiring employees with authentic leadership.

Richard Branson is a wonderful role model and powerful example of a leader who successfully wins hearts and minds. He has over 50,000 employees throughout the world and has been voted Britain's most admired business leader over the past five decades in a poll of top bosses.

Since your employees are your best asset and happy employees equals happy customers, it is essential that you do your best to optimise hiring success. Improving your talent selection provides the best opportunity to improve your business, thus increasing odds for success.

Gallup received more than 25 million responses to its latest employee engagement survey and reported some disheartening statistics:

- Of the approximately 100 million people in America who hold full-time jobs, 30 million (30%) are engaged and inspired at work. At the other end of the spectrum are roughly 20 million (20%) employees who are actively disengaged. The other 50 million (50%) are not engaged. They're just kind of present, inspired by neither their work nor their managers.

Three Different Types of Employee Engagement

1. **ENGAGED** employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organisation forward.
2. **NOT-ENGAGED** employees are essentially "checked out". They're sleepwalking through their workday, putting time – but neither energy nor passion – into their work.
3. **ACTIVELY DISENGAGED** employees aren't just unhappy at work; they're busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish.

The study found that engaged employees come up with most of the innovative ideas, create most of a company's new customers, and have the most entrepreneurial energy. Engaged employees are the best colleagues. They cooperate to build an organisation, institution, or agency, and they are behind everything good that happens there. These employees are involved in, enthusiastic about, and 100% psychologically committed to their work. They know the scope of their jobs and look for new and better ways to achieve outcomes.

Imagine how doubling the number of great managers and engaged employees in your company would impact your business.

11 Effective Leadership Strategies to Win Hearts + Minds

1. Lead by Example. This is the most powerful gift you can give as a leader and ground zero for establishing influence. Leadership is about winning hearts and minds through engagement and inspiration. By walking the talk, you become the person others want to follow, earning you the trust and respect needed to inspire others to follow you.

2. Hire Top Talent. Your company is only as extraordinary as your people. Identify top talent and realise employees *are* the business. A successful business is a group of people bound together by a common purpose and vision rather than the service or product it sells. In the case of Virgin Atlantic, they fly the same planes as their competitors. It is the employees that separate them from the competition.

3. Select the Right Managers. The best managers understand that their success and that of the organisation relies on employees' achievements. Great managers care about their team's success. They seek to understand each person's strengths, ideas and opinions and empower each employee to use them at work. It takes talent to be a great manager and selecting people who have this talent is essential to success.

4. Practice Active Listening. Listening is a prerequisite for understanding, and understanding is essential for a leader to motivate and influence others. Research has found that by listening effectively a leader can obtain more information from team members. The result is increased trust and reduced conflict, allowing the leader to gain a better understanding of how to motivate people. Those who have the most influence over others tend to be powerful listeners.

5. Be Authentic. Leaders who are self-aware, genuine, and exercise integrity are seen as authentic. Their approach to leadership emphasises honest relationships built on an ethical foundation. Authentic leaders not only lead with their minds, they lead with their hearts. They are aware of their strengths, emotions and limitations, and do not hide their mistakes and weaknesses. They are in pursuit of results, not power, money or ego.

6. Connect with Your Team. Great leaders have an infectious way of bringing out the best in people. Connection happens when you invest the time to learn about others, understand their unique personalities, and then coach and mentor. Demonstrate your attention through words and back it up with actions that validate your interest and commitment to making your people successful.

7. Empower Employees with the authority to



make decisions about their work. The more they feel they have the authority to make work-related decisions, the more engaged they become in the company. Allowing them to act and take action will build trust and respect for others in the workplace, leading to greater collaboration, sharing of ideas and ultimately increased performance.

8. Engage with participation in the decision making processes. Data from Gallup shows that only 13% of people worldwide are engaged at work, meaning they are emotionally invested in creating value for their organisations. Despite many companies' best efforts to address this problem, that number has barely budged since 2010. Long-term satisfaction is less about compensation and more about being on the team and part of something important. Employees need to know they can feel good about participating and contributing ideas. The key is recognising the need to engage and consciously creating the opportunity to make this happen.

9. Encourage employees to be open. Acknowledge their skills and achievements. Take Richard Branson for example, rather than focusing on mistakes, his philosophy is to catch someone doing something right every day. Part of Branson's culture is to foster employee development through praise. If recognition starts at the top, it will go far toward stamping out the employee fear of failure that can stunt a business.

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Sir Richard Charles Nicholas Branson is an English business magnate, investor, and philanthropist. He is best known as the founder of Virgin Group, which comprises more than 400 companies.

When mistakes happen – which is inevitable – you have to learn from them, not dwell on what went wrong.

10. Appreciate and Recognise. A pat on the back isn't enough to satisfy someone who puts their heart and soul into their work. Take the time to be grateful and give credit. Effective leaders notice unique and specific contributions and let people know, and that's a critical attribute of a leader. The two simple yet powerful words “thank you”, along with sharing positive recognition, makes people feel valued and is a strong indicator that you care. Think of this quote from Richard Branson. “People are no different from flowers. If you water flowers, they flourish. If you praise people, they flourish.”

11. Communicate with Clarity and Consistency. Offering clear feedback to employees is essential to improving performance. Be open about your expectations, successes, and failures. Remember that clarity leads to effective communication, which is vital for success in every business and requires an intentional approach. Be crystal clear about what you want to accomplish as a result of your communication. **EBR**

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Richard Branson's Favourite Leadership Quotes

Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower. – **Steve Jobs**

Tend to the people, and they will tend to the business. – **John Maxwell**

A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could. – **Zig Ziglar**

You manage things; you lead people. – **Admiral Grace Murray Hopper**

Leaders think and talk about the solutions. Followers think and talk about the problems. – **Brian Tracy**

Leadership is the art of giving people a platform for spreading ideas that work. – **Seth Godin**

Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality. – **Warren Bennis**

Great leaders are almost always great simplifiers, who can cut through argument, debate and doubt to offer a solution everybody can understand. – **Colin Powell**

Leadership is the ability to hide your panic from others. – **Lao Tzu**

The smartest thing I ever did was to hire my weakness. – **Sara Blakely**

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About the Author

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IntelliSight is a forensics referencing company that uses proprietary processes to uncover or discover the right team to lead acquired or emerging companies.

IntelliSight's clients are Private Equity and M&A firms looking for assurance that the existing, or potential C-suite team is the right fit for their investment. For more information visit **IntelliSightGlobal.com**