

7 Steps To Win Employees' Hearts And Minds

| Treat your employees as family

 By [Evan Hackel](#)

Employees in some companies can be heard saying, "I work at that company." Employees at other companies can be heard saying, "I love working at that company."

Those two phrases differ only a little - it's a matter of just a few words. However, there is a vast chasm between the emotions they convey. Some people have jobs, other people love them. The question is, how can you get them to love working in *your* organization?

Let Employees Make Meaningful Decisions

I was once hired by a franchising company that was facing a challenge. They were only a few months away from their annual convention, where they were going to unveil a new store design that all their franchisees would soon be using. They wanted to get as many franchisees there as possible and get their buy-in. And in previous years, attendance at the convention had been dropping.

I called some franchisees, who told me, "Why should I go, they will tell me everything about the new design anyway?" So, I asked the company, "Why don't you show three designs and let franchisees vote on them and vote and make suggestions, instead of showing just one?" They did that and when franchisees heard they were going to have the chance to participate in a decision that would have a great impact on their businesses, they decided to show up. In fact, attendees filled one hotel and spilled into a second one. Why? Because instead of being told what they had to do, they had the opportunity to participate in decision-making.

The lesson? When people are talked with, not talked at, their level of engagement soars.

Communicate the WIIFM

WIIFM stands for, "What's in it for me?" It sounds like a small thing, but when you make it a central component of your company

communications, motivation and participation can increase dramatically.

WIIFM makes the difference between telling employees, "You could take home 15% more in your paycheck by reviewing your deductions" or, "We need you to fill out this form to review your payroll deductions." The first statement gets results, while the second is a demotivator. With only a little effort, you can build WIIFM into perhaps 80% of your communications and see a dramatic increase in enthusiasm and input.

Hire for Attitude

Attitude is an infectious force in company culture. People with cynical, bad attitudes can do much more harm than most companies realize. And people with great attitudes make companies great places to work and elevate everyone's energy and effectiveness. And hiring people with good attitudes is more proactive than trying to improve the attitude of the "sour apples" who are already part of your organization.

Ron Willingham, the author of *Integrity Selling for the 21st Century* and other books, has designed a very simple way to evaluate attitude when hiring:

- **First**, evaluate the person's expertise – how much he or she knows – on a scale of 1 to 10.
- **Second**, evaluate his or her experience – how long has he or she been doing this kind of work – again on a scale of 1 to 10.
- **Third**, assess his or her attitude on a scale of 1 to 10.
- **Fourth**, add together the numbers from the first two steps, and multiply the result by the number from the third.

For example . . .

- **Applicant A** rates an 8 in expertise, an 8 in experience, and a 2 in attitude. Her overall score is then 16. $[(8+8) \times 2 = 16]$
- **Applicant B** rates a 2 in expertise, a 4 in experience, and an 8 in attitude. His overall score is then 48. $[(2+4) \times 8 = 48]$

Willingham's belief is that you can hire someone who has skills relevant to your needs and 30 years of experience, but who will still not create value for you if he or she has a negative attitude. However, if you hire someone who has a can-do attitude and very little experience, he or she

can be much more productive than a negative employee with far greater experience and skill.

Provide the Best Benefits You Can Afford

Offering excellent benefits to the people in your company is expensive, but it is critical to cultivating and retaining a strong base of satisfied employees. If you are not providing comprehensive healthcare coverage and another company offers a better package, people in your company will become dissatisfied and look for work at that other company. The same is true in relation to funding a 401(k).



Investing in benefits ultimately means that you will keep happier people longer. I have been a small businessperson and I have worked for large companies, too. I am fully aware of how time-consuming and expensive it is to offer good benefits. However, the reality is that doing so is worth it. The money you invest is money well spent.

Create a Plan for Each Employee Who You Expect to Remain with You for the Long Term

The people who work with you are always changing, always in a state of flux. Some are becoming more committed to your organization, while others are growing dissatisfied. Good companies understand that change is part of working and become committed to cultivating employees, so they consistently take the higher road and improve.

Employees' performance reviews offer a good setting to cooperatively create plans with them. What specific goals would employees like to reach in the coming year and beyond? What skills and experiences would you like them to add? If you put those expectations onto a timeline, you will have taken a step toward helping your employees grow, become more fulfilled in their work and become more valuable to your organization too.

Delay Your Company Communications

If you have ever worked for a supervisor who doesn't listen

to you or who shuts down your best ideas, you know what a demotivator that can be. Are you sure that similar patterns have not taken hold in your organization? Is it possible that employees are eager to contribute their best ideas, only to be shut down?

If you are not sure, find ways to delay communications so that employees at all levels have an opportunity to be heard by people throughout the organization, not only by their managers.

One effective way is to hold company-wide meetings where everyone can make suggestions and observations that are then captured on whiteboards and commented on by people from all levels and sectors of your organization. And remember that the way you treat ideas that you cannot use is just as important as the way you treat ideas that you implement. When a company leader visits a suggestion-maker and says, "That was a very promising idea . . . let's see how we can develop it," you have taken an empowering step.

Consider Sharing Company Financials Openly

When employees work for a company with "open books," they are more likely to understand the current challenges that your company is facing, and less likely to see cost-containment and other upper management initiatives as arbitrary. Similarly, they are more likely

to see successes as personal achievements. So, my advice to you is that if you possibly can, open your books for examination by all.

If you follow the steps above, you will come closer to treating your employees as if they were members of a family, not just a money-making enterprise. They will reward you in many surprising ways.



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