

# Ten Ways to Engage Your Workforce in 2012

By

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As we start a new year, leaders will once again ask themselves how they can engage their people—often asking employees to do more with less. Let me start by observing that you can't *motivate* people. You need to hire motivated top performers and then make sure you don't demotivate them. Here are some ways to ensure you don't:

1. Make sure people and their jobs match. Too often people want to move to management when they are better solo performers, or they prefer to work individually, but the job requires collaboration. People perform better when they and their jobs are in synch.
2. Give feedback. Top performers will be more engaged when they receive constructive information about what they do well and what they need to improve.
3. Delegate. Give each person whole projects instead of pieces or parts of a project. Grant authority and freedom to get the job done
4. "A" players want access—to you, your top clients, investors, and anyone else who is important to the organization. Give them this access, and they will engage.
5. Start the year by establishing realistic and achievable objectives. Stretch people; don't snap them. Dangling the carrot just beyond the donkey's reach will just make for a very angry donkey.
6. Star performers expect recognition. When you don't provide it, they feel cheated and devalued. Stars require praise, but unless you offer it sincerely and specifically, they will dismiss it. When you provide it, they repay you with loyalty and exceptional performance
7. Compensate fairly. Don't pay an average wage unless you want average performers.
8. Allow for life balance. Top performers tend to be overachievers in all aspects of their lives. Just as they expect to do exceptional work when they are on the job, they insist on outstanding relationships in their private lives. Clever people know the difference between critical and unimportant uses of their time. If you insist on long hours, rigid schedules, and busy work, they will disengage.

9. Don't micromanage. Communicate, set timeframes, establish goals, and get out of the way. Talk to others about *what* needs to be done, but let them decide *how* they will go about it.
10. Establish trust as a two-way street. People who don't trust their leaders lose their motivation first and their desire to work for the un-trusted leader next. Be consistent in behavior, mood, and policies. Conduct your personal life with the same integrity that you do business, and trust others.

Star performers, by definition, come through your door motivated and ready to engage. They want to contribute to the success of an important organization and work with other "A" players. Make your organization a place where the clever choose to work, and your stars will become your best magnets for other top performers—and all will stay engaged throughout the year.

Dr. Linda Henman, the catalyst for virtuoso organizations, is the author of *Landing in the Executive Chair*, among other works. She is an expert on setting strategy, planning succession, and developing talent. For more than 30 years she has helped executives and boards in Fortune 500 Companies and privately-held organizations dramatically grow their businesses. She was one of eight succession planning experts who worked directly with John Tyson after his company's acquisition of International Beef Products. Some of her other clients include Emerson Electric, Avon, Kraft Foods, Edward Jones, and Boeing. She can be reached in St. Louis at [www.henmanperformancegroup.com](http://www.henmanperformancegroup.com).