

TIME OUT TO CELEBRATE: THE SECRET TO AN ENGAGED TEAM IN 2021

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Leaders in 2021 are facing one of the toughest challenges of their career to date: how to keep their team engaged and pushing forward despite the ripples (and sometimes tidal waves) of change that the global pandemic set in motion. This was made real by Gallup's June 2020 survey of engagement in US workers. They revealed a historic drop in engagement to **just 31% reporting they were "actively engaged."** Gallup commented that it was "the most significant drop we have recorded in our history of tracking employee engagement in the U.S., dating back to 2000." (Gallup, June 2020)

So, what's important for leaders to focus on as they face this reality? One real difference maker is not missing the chance to celebrate their team members. What we are asking for in 2021 is a spirit of resilience, which for many might be hard to muster. If leaders focus on ways they can recognize, celebrate, and appreciate their team members for the extraordinary work they are doing in these extraordinary times, there is an opportunity to boost engagement and build resilience.

TURN APPRECIATIVE THOUGHTS INTO CONSISTENT PRACTICE

For many leaders, appreciative thoughts run through their heads all day long, but they don't always get verbalized in their fast-paced environment. One simple thing to do is to commit to taking time out for recognition in some way every day. This simple act builds relationship equity that is so essential right now. What you do to share your appreciation does not need to be elaborate – a simple thank you and a few sentences of gratitude for the specific action they took or accomplishment they had will go a very long way in helping team members feel seen and heard.

TAKE THE TIME TO CONSIDER THE DIFFERENT WAYS YOU CAN CELEBRATE

All of us have had experiences being recognized or recognizing others at work. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you have seen be most effective. A quick conversation with other leaders to crowd-source some ideas and experience is a great way to push your thinking when it comes to celebrating your team. Questions you might consider include:

- What kinds of recognition tools exist in your organization today? Is there anything new you could try?
- What is the best way you have ever been recognized at work? What made it so powerful?
- How have you seen recognition go wrong? What did you learn from it?
- What is the most creative means of recognition you have seen? How effective was it?
- What kinds of things might you do to make sure you are celebrating wins with your team on a consistent basis? How can you easily hold yourself accountable?

CONNECT YOUR PEOPLE TO YOUR PURPOSE

Particularly in these times, it's important for people to know that the job that they do, the hours that they put in, the time away from their family, and the risks that they take matter. Leaders have a real opportunity to make sure that when they take the time to recognize team members that they step back and find a way to connect it to purpose. Knowing they are making a difference might be the single thing that is driving a team member forward and keeping them going right now. Hearing it from their leader will serve to reinforce their efforts. It's a simple, but important action leaders can take with recognition.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

We live in a world where personalization has become increasingly more important in our consumer experience – but it's just as important in our employee experience. When you consider ways to celebrate individual team members, take stock of what you know about them and how they might like to be recognized. Some team members may thrive with public recognition, while others may shudder at the thought of having a spotlight shined upon them. Some team members might enjoy a celebratory lunch with the team, while others might prefer a gift card for lunch and an opportunity to treat their family. Recognition is not a one-size fits all practice and leaders need to keep that in mind as they make it a more consistent practice. Take the time to know what makes a difference and if the answer isn't clear, remember that it's okay to ask people about their preferences when it comes to being recognized, appreciated and rewarded.

To learn more about unlocking talent, check out Root's thinking here:
<https://www.rootinc.com/unlocking-talent/>

Sources:

<https://www.gallup.com/workplace/313313/historic-drop-employee-engagement-follows-record-rise.aspx>