

**Maximizing Profits Through People**  
**A CEO to CEO Quarterly Newsletter -- 5-15-01**

Dear fellow CEO:

**Fighting Employee Disengagement**

The Wall Street Journal recently quoted a study from the Gallup Organization that stated, “actively disengaged workers cost American companies from \$292 to \$355 billion per year.” That’s Billion. Actively disengaged workers, according to the article, “don’t know what is expected of them, don’t have the materials to do their jobs and can’t get the attention of their bosses”.

Three hundred billion dollar bills make a pretty tall stack. That stack represents the difference between the best performing and the worst performing companies in our country. And the worst performing companies’ let their stack of money blow freely in the wind as a result of active employee disengagement.

What creates active disengagement? Do workers start their first day on the job actively disengaged? When does the process of disengagement start and where does the fault for it lie? And more importantly, how do you as a manager turn it around? How do you create an environment where your employees are actively engaged? An environment where they enjoy and gain satisfaction from their work?

Let me tell you a quick story about how active disengagement is created and what results from it.

My middle son, Brandon, decided he wanted to try football as a sport in 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He was an average athlete who thought it might be a cool thing to do. The local sponsoring organization had all the kids (probably 150 or more) practice together the first week of the season. This served two purposes. First, it gave the organization an opportunity to teach the kids rudimentary football skills. Second, they could rate the talent of the boys so their physical talents would be evenly distributed among the teams.

Brandon was really excited about this part of the season. They taught him how to play. They encouraged his development. While it was a lot of work, he looked forward to practicing for two hours every night. He’d leave home happy and come home dirty, tired, and still happy. The last day of practice they divided the teams up, gave the boys their uniforms and told them to report the following Monday to meet their new coach.

Brandon got number 43 and spent the weekend watching college and professional football on TV (something he hadn’t done before and hasn’t done since). He told me how he’d catch the ball like this guy, or tackle like this other guy – both who wore # 43. He was excited about football.

We dropped him off for practice on Monday enthused to meet his team and begin play. He was actively engaged. We picked him up two hours later and he was miserable. His new coach called all players by their numbers. He was 43, not Brandon. The coach didn’t show them how to do things right and if they did, he said nothing. He only yelled at them for doing things wrong. Brandon said he wanted to quit. As parents, we said he had to fulfill his commitment.

The season went on, the coach didn’t change, and the team lost every game it played. Brandon sardonically related after scoring a rare touchdown, the coach finally said something positive to him: “I guess that makes up for all the blocks you missed”, the coach had said. Brandon wanted to quit, but was reminded that he committed to play and he needed to finish out the season.

The league had a single elimination playoff at the end of the season the winner of which would actually claim the championship. The coach preached that his team could still rise from the ashes like the Phoenix to fly to heroic victory. Brandon rolled his eyes.

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The first playoff game was actually pretty close – the other team also stunk. We were ahead by a field goal with about 3 minutes to play when the other team ran an end around and Brandon was the only player between a win and a loss. He valiantly leapt to tackle the sprinting runner at the last second, but the young athlete broke the tackle and danced into the end zone for victory.

The coach was so mad he didn't speak to Brandon or the team after the game.

Brandon, on the other hand, literally skipped to where our family had watched. We congratulated him on his fine effort and underscored how he'd almost saved the touchdown and the win. He smiled and responded, "You shouldn't congratulate me. I missed the tackle on purpose. No way I was playing another game for that jerk!"

Brandon became the quintessential example of active disengagement. He came to his duty excited about accomplishing it. After two months of not getting any of the things he needed to succeed - praise, recognition, being made to feel part of the team - he brought his organization failure and was proud of it.

How much better could his team have performed had the coach been aware of and delivered to the needs of his players? What's the difference between the wins and losses of this football team and the profits and losses of the best performer vs. the worst in a given market?

I would offer that awareness of and attention to the needs of the people on your team means everything in creating organizational success. It is the difference between being the market leader and attempting to eke out a subsistence living in that same market.

Virtually every worker comes to a new job excited to be there. They are looking forward to some form of success as defined by them. Our job as a leader within our organization is to take that excitement and channel it into a job in which the new employee can be successful. We need to give that employee the tools and training they need to thrive. And then, we need to appreciate them in the ways they want to be appreciated. This is how we engage an employee and it is the fundamental lesson Predictive Index teaches us.

Predictive Index gives us the tools we need to engage our employees. From the day they start work until the day they retire and every day in between. Study it. Understand it. Practice it. See all the necessary people in your organization are trained in P. I. Predictive Index provides gives you the ability to understand how to engage each of your employees. And that assures you will be rewarded for the efforts you make to succeed.

Thank you for your time,



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P.S. If you would prefer to receive future editions of this letter via e-mail, please e-mail that preference to [jshafer@bobwilsonconsulting.com](mailto:jshafer@bobwilsonconsulting.com). We'd also welcome comments, thoughts or suggestions by sending them to [bwilson@bobwilsonconsulting.com](mailto:bwilson@bobwilsonconsulting.com).