



Using Effective Leadership Strategies in the Workplace

How Strong is Your Workplace?

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What does a strong, vibrant workplace look like?

This question is at the core of a recently published book entitled, "First, Break all the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently", by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman (Simon and Schuster, 1999). The book is the product of two large research studies undertaken by the Gallup Organization over the last twenty-five years. The first study concentrated on employees, asking, "What do the most talented employees need from their workplace? The second focused on asking, "How do the world's greatest managers find, focus, and keep talented employees?" In searching for patterns, the authors identified twelve key questions that can be used to measure the strength of the workplace. These twelve questions don't capture everything you may want to know about your workplace, but they do capture the most information and the most important information. They measure the core elements needed to attract, focus, and keep the most talented employees.

Here they are, in the form of a "quiz" you can take yourself and give to your employees - the higher the score, the stronger the workplace:

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1: Strongly Disagree; 5: Strongly Agree), answer the following questions:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of my organization make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

I've used these questions numerous times with various groups with whom I've worked, and the exercise never fails to energize a lively discussion of workplace priorities and values - and, of course, suggests areas for improvement in terms of the overall workplace environment. What the authors of the book have found is that those employees who responded more positively to the twelve questions also worked in business units with higher levels of productivity, profit, retention, and customer satisfaction. Also revealed was the fact that employees rated the questions differently depending on which business unit they worked for rather than which company. This meant that, for the most part, these twelve opinions were being formed by the employees' immediate manager rather than by the policies and procedures of the overall company. In other words, the manager - not pay, benefits, perks, or a charismatic corporate leader - is the critical player in building a strong workplace.

As a manager, if you want to know what you should do to build a strong and productive workplace, these questions are a great place to start.

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