

Eight Employee Needs You Must Address to Create Passion at Work

Employees in today's workforce are expecting more from their work, their leaders, and their organizations. Increasingly, employees want their workplace to provide them with a sense of meaning and identity. They want to be recognized as individuals. They want a chance to express themselves. They expect work to engage their abilities and develop their potential.

At the same time, organizations are looking for ways to unlock the discretionary energy of employees. These organizations recognize that this energy is one of their greatest sources of competitive advantage. The trick is to find a way to turn it loose. It's like having a high-powered engine in your car, but having the parking brake on while you're trying to get around. What happens when you finally discover a way to release the brake? The car zooms forward. That's exactly the situation that companies are facing today. They have a lot of horsepower stored in the combined abilities of their employees, but they're not able to take advantage of those abilities because they haven't found a way to release the parking brake.

Organizations can't afford to leave all of that potential energy dormant if they want to succeed in the future. In an era of global competition, limited resources, and increasing customer expectations, you have to fire on all cylinders if you want to be in the game. This means that leaders are going to have to be more aware of, flexible and responsive to the needs of their employees and provide an environment that meets those needs as completely as possible.

What Do Employees Want from Their Workplace?

New research by The Ken Blanchard Companies®, *Employee Passion: The New Rules of Engagement*, has identified eight needs that employers must address if they want their employees to perform at their best. Failure to meet even one of these needs will tend to "keep the brakes on" in your organization.¹

1. **Meaningful Work:** People need to know that their work is worthwhile and is connected to both the organization and a larger purpose. People need to understand where they are going in relation to the vision, to buy into the culture, and to know what the company stands for.
2. **Collaboration:** People need to work in an environment that is motivating and inspiring, and where people work together to help one another succeed.
3. **Fairness:** People expect to work for an employer where pay, benefits, and workloads are fair and balanced, and in which people treat each other with respect. Employees need to perceive that leadership and the organization as a whole are treating both them and the customer fairly and justly. In fact, the research showed that the number one reason that employees leave an organization is when they perceive that justness and fairness are not present.

4. **Autonomy:** People want to have input and influence over how their tasks are performed and they need to feel that they have the ability and information necessary to make decisions about their work.
5. **Recognition:** People need to be praised and appreciated, or otherwise recognized for their achievements.
6. **Growth:** Having opportunities to learn, grow, and develop skills that lead to advancement in one's career is also a core need. In addition, individuals need to feel that they are a part of the career planning process.
7. **Connectedness with Leader:** People need leaders who share information and make an effort to build rapport with them. Having a solid relationship that is based on integrity and trust is a key component in creating an environment where people are willing to go the extra mile.
8. **Connectedness with Colleagues:** Just as a solid relationship with their leader impacts an employee's willingness to apply discretionary effort, so too does a strong relationship with colleagues and coworkers.

The New Reality

With highly mobile, competent workers in demand, employers must find ways to attract and keep their best people. Good pay is no longer the only answer. Today's workers generally want more. They seek opportunities where they feel that their contributions are valued and rewarded—where they are involved and empowered, can develop skills, can see advancement opportunities, and believe they are making a difference.

That's why the concept of leadership needs to be redefined. Instead of a command and control style of leadership focused on short term results, a more participative style that focuses on long-term results and human satisfaction is more appropriate.

The current day-to-day management practices being used in most organizations are going to have to change. The reason is simple: most people are not getting what they need from their managers and it is negatively impacting their performance. If you are looking to create an environment that energizes and develops the people you work with, consider these questions as a starting point:

- To what extent have you successfully energized each member of your team?
- What specific things could you do to engage individuals more effectively in the work of the team and the organization?
- Are you connecting with the people on your team? Do you care about them at both a personal and professional level?
- How are you encouraging the development of the people around you?

Today's best leaders provide an environment where people can stretch, learn, and share their talents. People aren't interested in working for someone who just gives orders and conducts evaluations. Instead, today's employees are looking for a leader who will coach and support them in attaining their goals.

Great leaders—those who lead at a higher level—value both results and relationships. Both are critical for long-term survival. Not either/or, but both/and. For too long, many leaders have felt that they needed to choose. Companies hoping to grow and thrive in the future need leaders who recognize that people are not a company's most important asset—they are the company, period!

1. *Employee Passion: The New Rules of Engagement*. Available online at: http://www.kenblanchard.com/thoughtleadership/leadership_perspectives/employee_passion/