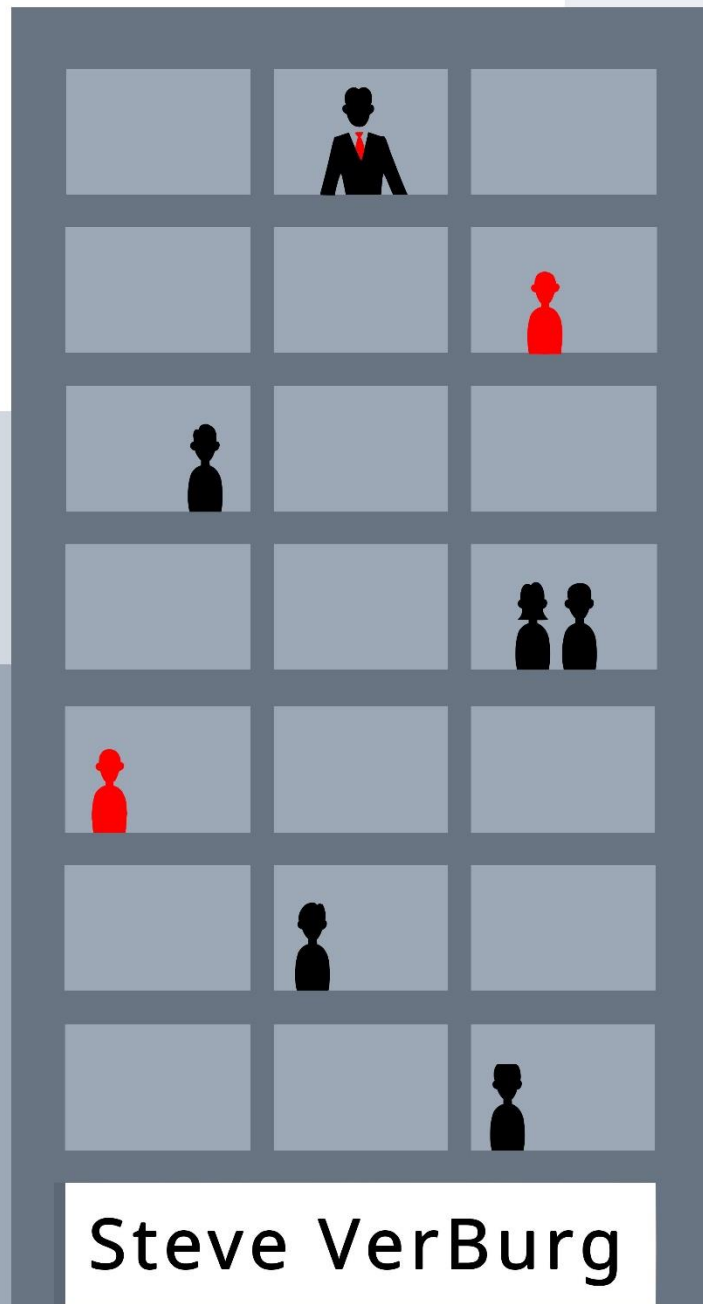# 13 Steps to Develop & Engage Future Leaders

Steve VerBurg

13 Steps to Develop and Engage Future Leaders

Imagine an organization where team members stay late to help others with important projects. They volunteer to handle mundane tasks that are vital to the organization's success. Once a week, they go out to lunch together, and on the weekends volunteer at a local homeless shelter.

Now, imagine a team member who is great at his/her primary job responsibilities, but refuses to help others, only works on tasks that lead to public recognition, never makes time for team lunches and always happens to be unavailable when everyone else volunteers.

Just doing the job is not always doing enough.

Engaged employees not only create a better culture, they become your best resource when looking for leaders to step in and take command. Engaging, developing and retaining future leaders is a crucial part of building a sustainable business in today's fast paced society. These emerging leaders will be able to face the challenges of tomorrow and be your business' security for future success.

This e-Book will explore steps to create a culture that can successfully engage, retain and develop your high potential employees into your organization's future leaders.

1. Treat Employees As "Valuable People" With Skills, Rather Than People With "Valuable Skills"
2. Get To Know Your Employees On A Personal Level
3. Identify Individual Talents
4. Communicate The Organization's Values
5. Build Pride In The Organization
6. Create A Sense Of Purpose In The Workplace
7. Create A Sense Of Ownership
8. Empower Your Employees
9. Listen To Employees' Opinions
10. Encourage Employees To Improve
11. Praise Employee Improvements
12. Give Employees Feedback
13. Provide Coaching And Training

The goal is to build an organizational culture to nurture and retain these high-potential employees, so organizations can quickly develop and place them into the new leadership roles as they become available. With today's talent war and

competitive environment, retaining an engaged team significantly improves the chances of future organizational success.

1. Treat Employees As "Valuable People" With Skills, Rather Than People With "Valuable Skills"

Smart leaders realize the most valuable assets at their companies are employees – not products or services – no matter how revolutionary they are. While interest in new products/services glow before fading over time, valuable engaged people are always there, always ready to bring new ideas to meetings, maintain company culture and connect with new customers.

These employees deserve to be treated like – better yet, celebrated as – valuable people as opposed to being viewed as people with valuable skills.

There is a huge difference.

Start-ups, small businesses, and large corporations that understand the difference are more likely to launch, grow and scale. After all, valuable people are a competitive advantage. What's the difference between treating employees as valuable people vs. people with valuable skills? The way the company approaches people. In other words, valuable people will always be valued.

Here are several reasons why CEOs and management must recognize valued people:

Valued People Increase Opportunities For Increased Profits

Showing appreciation for employees is more than just the right thing to do. It also benefits a company's bottom line. Businesses that show appreciation for employees are more likely to enjoy increased job satisfaction and successful company culture, which Dale Carnegie research has directly linked to lower turnover, reduced absenteeism, fewer workplace accidents, better customer service, and higher customer retention. Richard Branson, founder of the Virgin Group, which controls more than 400 companies in various fields put it in perspective when he said, *"Clients do not come first. Employees come first. If you take care of your employees, they will take care of the clients."*

Conversely, businesses that fail to make employees feel valued risk a negative company culture, lower productivity, high staff turnover, and low customer retention. Replacing dedicated, dependable employees is expensive and time-consuming, especially in start-ups, and small businesses where founders and

management can spend more than one-third of their days engaged with non-income generating tasks like hiring and training.

Valued People Are Ideal Company Ambassadors

Valued people embrace and protect a positive company culture, even when the bosses are not around. They go above and beyond: training new employees, supporting struggling co-workers and motivating others that need an extra push to perform.

Today, company reputations can affect your ability to retain top talent. Websites like Glassdoor and Indeed offer current and former employee's platforms to anonymously scrutinize the workplace. These reviews are often read by potential hires. What are your employees writing about your company?

Valuable People Become Management Material

Two of the top motivating factors in today's workforce are that employees want to feel like they are valued and growing. Companies that identify and recognize hard-working, empathic, problem-solving employees that are respected by their colleagues are more likely to promote from within. Who better to lead departments and teams than employees that previously served in similar roles? These in-house promotions also motivate co-workers.

Connecting With Valued Employees

Employees today demand to have a good relationship with managers, or they leave. Treating employees like valuable people offers managers opportunities to get to know them, leading to more meaningful work relationships and in turn higher retention. Employees that feel valued typically feel more loyal as well. They are also more likely to take ownership of the company vision and make decisions that help them achieve the vision. This is important because every company faces challenges at some point (financial, production, etc.), and it's vital to have loyal, committed, self-starting employees on board.

When you take the time to focus and engage valued employees, you are investing in the future success of your organization. Engaging valued employees allows you to increase retention and develop the most strategic assets that organizations have today…their people.

2. Get To Know Your Employees On A Personal Level

First, the bad news: two-thirds of employees believe management does not care about their personal lives. Now, the good news: companies can address this

problem immediately. All it takes is a willingness to share stories and experiences within reason, a dash of creativity, and a passion for connecting with people.

If your organization has this void, you can address it through practicing internal communication and team building. With continued investment, your management team can get to know your employees on a personal level. Let's dive deeper into why relationships matter.

How Does Relationship Building Affect Companies?
As a manager, it's not enough to be a great leader. Employees that believe their companies do not care about their personal lives are more likely to feel unappreciated, suffer from a dip in productivity or worse – leave the job. Workers in the younger generations are even more likely to switch companies if they don't have a good relationship with their manager.

People often just want to know someone cares about what they have to say. Think about it! Americans spend a significant amount of time at work, away from their families and personal interests. Imagine spending that much time around a co-worker who does not realize you worry every day about returning home in time to pick up your child from after school care or take your Yorkie for a walk before it has an accident.

What Are Some Activities That Can Help Companies Get To Know Employees On A Personal Level?
Organizations can create opportunities that allow employees to interact on a personal level. Here are a few ideas that have been implemented by other organizations:

- Host monthly team events (onsite or offsite) in the morning, at lunchtime or after work. Poll several staffers to decide if coffee, California rolls or cocktails are the best fit.
- Create pet-themed office parties or invite team members to bring their kids to the office. Start a book club or monthly matinee movie club.
- Upgrade the watercooler in favor of a café or better yet, a wine bar, a new trend at some U.S. companies.
- Identify volunteer opportunities where employees not only get to know each other but their families.

Unsure where to start? Start a hobbies survey and plan events around responses.
Leaders Need To Participate
Creating opportunities for employees to get to know each other is only part of the success equation. If you want employees to feel like management cares about them,

then management needs to participate in these events as well. Managers should be leading the charge toward creating an environment where employees feel personally invested through both work and relationships.

Engaging, retaining and developing people can take the form of simply getting to know your people better. When supervisors, middle management, executives and owners take the time to form stronger personal relationships at work, they create a stronger team. Then the team will be more likely to support each other during times of change and adversity.

3. Identify Individual Talents

Business leaders are tasked with managing people to achieve business success. This responsibility often includes creating and/or supervising teams of employees. To guide teams and achieve company goals, leaders must identify individual talents in employees.

Why Is Identifying Individual Talents So Important?
Identifying individual talents allow companies to discover employee capabilities that may be previously unknown. After all, an employee may receive high praise for their current job duties, yet their skills may be vastly underutilized. Or, they may have a passion for something that is not part of their current role. Helping employees to grow and stay passionate will help employees achieve the right balance of talent and attitude resulting in an increased level of productivity.

Companies that are not invested in employee talent identification are likely losing potential profits, people and productivity. That's why identifying employee talents should be incorporated into every company's talent management practices.

Underutilized Or Hidden Employee Talents
Some employee talents may be visible daily, but these skills may not be an official part of their job responsibilities – for example, leadership. Other talents may also be hidden, such as public speaking or speaking multiple languages.

How Identifying Individual Talents Can Impact Your Team
Identifying the individual talents allows the manager to engage, stretch and nurture each employee which helps create:

- Happy employees resulting in increased job retention.
- Motivated employees invested in the outcome of projects and company initiatives resulting in increased production.

- Successful employees resulting in creating a successful company culture and attracting top talent.

Tips For Identifying Individual Talents

There are many tools available that can help assess the talent of your team such as:

- Self-assessments.
- 360 Assessments.
- Stretch Assignments / Special Assignments.
- Open door policy for managers.

Individual Talents Contribute To Team Success
Successful teams are comprised of many individual personalities, as well as various types of experience, talent, dedication, communication skills and other proficiencies. This type of diversity makes teams stronger. Successful managers create teams of employees whose skills and personalities complement each other, fostering success and team spirit.

Managers are responsible for creating and promoting a team culture that promotes creativity and embraces feedback, ownership and teamwork. In addition, it is the managers responsibility to lead, nurture and motivate each member of the team to achieve its goals and prepare it to embrace new challenges and experiences as well as to help the individual team members grow.

As managers identify individual talents, they can create environments where employees can flourish, allowing organizations to transform increased production into increased profits. This type of culture engages and retains employees while developing future leaders.

4. Communicate The Organization's Values

While the company purpose statement paints a clear picture of the organization's impact on the lives of its customers, clients or community that it's trying to serve, the organizations values represent the foundation on which the company is formed. Organizational values guide employee thinking and actions. Organizations need employees that share common values. If you can successfully create a team that is aligned in their values, the rest will follow. Executives need to know and to communicate the organization's values to the rest of the team.

Why Is Communicating Organizational Values Important?

Employees are people. And people are emotional, capable of aiding or sabotaging the workplace. So, it's important to hire people that uphold your organization's values. But that is only possible when your employees are aware of what your organization stands for. If they lack purpose or direction, it will be difficult to reach that organization state we described above.

Conversely, employees that work in an environment where organization values align with their values are far more engaged. This engagement typically manifests itself into higher employee retention and production, as well as a financial success for the organization. Team members remain invested in organization outcomes, and organizations become stronger and healthier.

According to Imperative, mission-driven employees are 54 percent more likely to remain at an organization for five years, and 30 percent more likely to become key employees versus those that work for motivations that do not align with organizational values.

Communicating organization values equates to more than scribbling values, mission and vision on letterhead and filing it away. These core values should become a part of daily life at the organization, starting with the CEO.

Ways To Integrate Values Into An Organization

Consistently communicating defined values is no easy task. But it's an important task, a key ingredient to many successful organizations. Here are a few of the critical times values should be discussed:

- Orientation and training.
- Internal messaging (i.e., newsletters) and external messaging (i.e., social media).
- Rewarding team members that share the organization's values and goals.
- Incorporate values into hiring and performance review process.

When values are discussed, reinforced and demonstrated at every level in the organization, employee engagement and retention increases. Identifying the key people in your organization who live the values is also a way to identify your future leaders.

5. Build Pride In The Organization

Employees that love what they do and have pride in the organization they work for will do what it takes to get the job done right.

These employees are pleasant to work with; they're leaders without the titles. So much so, that they recruit potential employees that match their enthusiasm! Furthermore, these employees present management with constructive feedback, are involved in company events and work towards company initiatives, including making the company an even better place to work.

That being said, there are endless reasons to build organizational pride. Probably the most important reason of them all is that employees that have pride in your organization, are more likely to remain with the organization long term.

What Does It Mean To Have Pride In Something?
Pride is a feeling of deep satisfaction derived from personal achievements or the achievements of others; this includes an organization or group. Pride can manifest itself in big and small actions, for example you may feel proud when completing an important project or when you have a successful interaction with co-workers and clients.

What Are Some Ways Pride In An Organization Helps The Bottom Line?
Smart organizations build pride by creating purpose. Purpose gives employees a reason — other than a paycheck — to be proud of their work. And, of course, happy employees perform better, from following management directives to tag-teaming projects with co-workers, all the while, spreading the company's message of pride.

The Difference Between Pride & Performance
Bob is good at his job; he meets all his deadlines and is one of the organization's overachievers. But there's a problem. He doesn't think much of the organization. He doesn't hate it, but he doesn't enjoy working here either.

How do we know? A combination of daily mumbles and his body language in meetings and everyday interactions. We're not sure why he lacks positive energy (alertness, enthusiasm, a hunger for knowledge).

The attitude of employees like Bob lack motivation for anything more than a bi-weekly paycheck. Their energy, or lack thereof, threatens to wear down the morale of a department, if not an entire company. In order to engage and retain employees' leaders must focus on building pride in the organization.

Here are some tips for building pride in an organization:

- **Understand the Bigger Mission**: Ask yourself: *How does your organization improve the lives of clients and customers?* The answer to that question is the key area of focus to start building pride.
- **Lead by Example**: Creating pride requires taking action. And who better to showcase organization pride than management?
- **Employee Solutions**: Empower employees with the ability to solve problems instead of bringing every issue, big and small, to management.
- **Support Training**: Investing in continuing education of employees offers another way to show the organization cares about its workforce.
- **Embrace an open-door policy**: This allows employees to freely express opinions.

When employees have pride in the organization, they become fully engaged and will do what it takes to get the job done right. Retention of these employees is much higher. They tend to become the next generation of leaders.

6. Create A Sense Of Purpose In The Workplace

Your company Mission and Vision give direction to your organization, but a purpose is what people believe in and connect to. The company purpose paints a clear picture of the organization's impact on the lives of its customers, clients or community that it's trying to serve. Working for a paycheck is not enough to satisfy newer generations of young Americans. The younger generations in the workforce want to know their jobs – a collection of important projects and mundane tasks – are part of a bigger picture. They want jobs that are meaningful. Jobs that create a sense of purpose in the workplace.

This mindset places companies that are financially successful or innovative at an advantage. Employees today want to feel their careers are part of something special, part of a bigger purpose.

Does Your Workplace Give A Sense Of Purpose?
Here's a quick way to discover if your company's employees feel a sense of purpose in the workplace: Regardless of rank, do your co-workers feel connected and motivated to the success of the organization? Does the low man on the org chart at your company feel just the same sense of pride in the success of the company as the top executive? If the answer is yes, this will lead to improved job performance, productivity and satisfaction, all of which are likely to improve employee retention.

How President Kennedy's Interaction With A Janitor Shaped A Generation of Leaders

Perhaps the most famous example of creating a sense of purpose in the workplace in modern American history is a story about President John F. Kennedy visiting NASA in the 1960s. During his visit, Kennedy saw a janitor carrying a broom. Kennedy asked him what job he had at the space station.

> *"Mr. President, I'm helping put a man on the moon."*

More than five decades after Kennedy's passing, this story continues to motivate a generation of corporate leaders. In recent years, Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg repeated the Kennedy story during one of his speaking engagements.

> *"This idea was so clear to us," Zuckerberg said, "that all people want to be connected."*

Here Are A Few Ways To Create An Environment With A Sense Of Purpose.

Share Company Mission, Initiatives, & Purpose
Owners and managers should share the organization's overall mission, initiatives and purpose with employees, helping them understand why everything they do fits into a bigger picture.

Create A Community That Gives Back
Create a workplace where individuals can give back to the community. This can be accomplished by starting groups or clubs that participate in community service programs. Some organizations have contests to see which department of team can have the biggest impact. An example might be to see what team or department can collect the most cans for a local food pantry. Make sure to tie the contests back to the overall purpose of the organization.

Offer Validation
It's not enough for employees to be good at their jobs, or to know they're good at them. Humans desire recognition for a job well done, and how they made an impact. This does not have to be a grand exercise in praise. A handwritten note connecting what they have done to the overall purpose of the organization will suffice.

Organizations that want a dedicated and engaged workforce must develop a purpose statement. Defining a clear purpose that employees connect with, and are proud to be part of, will allow them to retain these future leaders.

7. Create A Sense Of Ownership

If asked, would employees say they work for you – or with you? If the answer is the former, your company must do a better job of creating a sense of ownership. A sense of ownership increases productivity while transforming team members into future leaders.

Why Creating A Sense Of Ownership Matters
Employees that feel a sense of ownership are more likely to remain with the company. Also, employees put more effort into work and find creative ways to prevent and/or solve problems when they feel a sense of ownership.

Employee retention and happiness equate to superior work in reduced time, often leading to increased company profits. That being said, let's review a few tips to help you create a sense of ownership in your organization and team.

Share Your Long-Term Vision
On a daily basis, employees are told what to do. Oftentimes, these conversations do not explain the "why." Company executives and other management are aware; shouldn't employees – the front-line executors – be armed with the same information? Understanding the "why" empowers them in their decision-making process to pick the best solution for the company.

The sharing of information could occur at a quarterly or monthly meeting. Share company goals, initiatives and objectives. Explain how they impact everyone. Next time you assign a project, reinforce the goals mentioned in the meeting, explaining why this project is vital to the company's bottom line.

Include Them In The Decision-Making Process
If you want employees to take more initiative, include them in the decision-making process. After all, there is a difference between completing a project and owning a project, as Dale Carnegie said, "people support a world they help create." To do this, approach employees with the problem or challenge. Facilitate a "Green Light" session to discuss options and solutions. Make sure that the manager always gives his/her opinion last to avoid any roadblocks to employees contributing their ideas. This helps to create a micromanager-free culture that allows employees to solve problems.

Reward Dedication And Success
If company leadership receives bonuses and other compensation for reaching initiatives, why not reward employees? Stock options are an example of literal

employee ownership in the company. Stock options are a motivating factor for eligible employees, as well as new and potential employees.

Yes, an employee paycheck is a form of reward. But after-hours events paid for by the company, additional vacation time and monetary gifts are a great way of showing extra appreciation for the extra effort involved in reaching lofty company goals. Remember, employees want to feel appreciated, not just compensated. Here are examples of no-cost or low-cost rewards:

- Handwritten "Thank you" notes.
- Conference/seminar registration.
- LinkedIn recommendations.
- Social media shout-outs.
- Coffee mugs.

In order to truly engage and retain your employees help them to feel a sense of ownership in the success of the organization. When this happens not only will the company win everyone will win.

8. Empower Your Employees

"Guard rails" do not disenfranchise employees. In fact, they empower staff, rewarding them with direction and boundaries. This allows them to go about their daily duties without second-guessing actions, and just as important, clogging up your (and their) calendar with "Can I" and "Should I" mini meetings.

This management strategy saves smart organizations both time and resources. It makes employees feel more confident, capable and determined.

Why Employee Empowerment Is Critical

Employee empowerment is a hot topic in workplace culture. According to the Society for Human Resource Management, 70 percent of employees in a recent survey ranked being empowered to take action at work as important. In other words, employees feel more invested when they are in positions that allow them to complete tasks without oversight.

As Dale Carnegie says, "people support a world they help create." And, "they support processes that help them succeed." This approach to decision making rewards go-getters with the chance to take greater initiative with important matters that fall within the scope of predetermined boundaries that you or your leadership team sets. What better way to identify the high-potential, future leaders in your organization!

How To Promote Employee Empowerment Among Your Leadership
In order to create this environment of empowerment, it's important, first, that managers involved are confident in their roles and responsibilities. Employee empowerment does not diminish managerial power. Actually, employee empowerment accomplishes the opposite by fortifying workplace processes and procedures, while freeing up time for managers on all levels of an organization to lead other efforts.

Empowering employees also leads to increases in employee retention, efficiency and customer service. All of these increases lead to less time the manger needs to devote to hiring, training and "putting out fires." Managers should create systems that allow them to monitor this employee autonomy - ensuring employees do not neglect duties - without negatively affecting the "space" for growth they created.

Steppingstones To Create More Autonomy
Managers should pinpoint existing empowerment bottlenecks and then provide tools to build autonomy. Use these steps to further empower your employees:

- Anytime a team member says, "let me talk to my boss," there is an area to further empower customer-facing roles to get more decision-making power.
- Set up every employee with a mentor, so they are coached and build their confidence to make decisions without their manager present.
- Arm your leadership with the appropriate training and tools to understand how their team makes decisions and how to get them to make SMART decisions.
- Offer positive reinforcement for employees that increase production due to newfound employee empowerment.

How To Measure Empowerment In Employees
If done correctly and with the right team, empowerment in the workplace can have many benefits. When you stay on top of your employee details and allow them to make decisions in line with their preferences, you create a better workplace culture.

Measure the key performance indicators of Employee Empowerment in the following areas:

- *Customer Service*: Expect tickets to close faster now that employees have decision-making power to service customers.
- *Employee Turnover*: See reduced turnover due to increased engagement.
- *Quality of Work*: With ownership comes the determination to do a job well.

- *Employee Collaboration:* Flattening the organization promotes conversations at all levels and improves cross-communication.
- *Production and Profits:* Last but not least, you will find that the increased productivity has a direct impact on your bottom-line revenue and profits of the organization.

When it comes to engaging, retaining and developing your employees and future leaders, employee empowerment is a must for maintaining the health of the organization.

9. Listen To Employees' Opinions

Employees are on the front line of organizations, communicating with customers and potential clients on a regular basis. Because of this, employees are keenly aware of organizational strengths and weaknesses — information that can lead to improvements.

High Performing organizations obtain this information by creating healthy environments that promote employee opinions. Listening to employees, after all, fuels increased production, improved communications and better employee retention.

Employees spend much of their time listening to or following orders from supervisors, executives and owners. So, it's refreshing for the tables to be turned. After all, employees are humans at their core. Everyone wants to be heard!

Why Listening To Employees Opinions Is Important?
As mentioned, listening to employees creates a productive and pleasant work environment, full of diverse ideas that are respected, as well as innovative solutions and effective workflows.

Listening to employees opinions encourages team members to be open and honest while empowering them to find solutions to problems on their own. When employees communicate with high-ranking colleagues, they transform into better team members. Additionally, improved communication also often morphs into better on-the-job performances and better work relationships. Making it possible for you to build a team that not only understands but appreciates organization directives.

All in all, listening to employees builds trust and improves employee engagement. It makes them feel like they are not only employees but part of a team. It makes them realize their ideas matter, no matter how big or small!

How To Encourage Open Communication
Teach leadership how to listen to employees. It takes patience — likely the same patience that it takes for team members to listen to you.

Be approachable! Before employees can share opinions, they must trust you. Initially, trust revolves around whether their opinions (which may not fall in line with organization directives) will lead to action. Later, when employee opinions are shared throughout the company and ideas are deemed innovative, it may revolve around steps taken to implement changes.

Find out your employees' preferred communication style – emails, texting, calls, meetings. Everybody works differently. Also, tell employees your door is open. Let them know you welcome face-to-face feedback and input (when possible). Give employees opportunities to contribute to conversations on a regular basis, from meetings and suggestion boxes to feedback-focused meetings. Whether you use their ideas or not make sure the employee knows the outcome, so they feel that their opinions were considered.

Tips For Listening To Your Employee's Opinions

- Remove distractions (cell phones, telephones, background noise, etc.).
- Be an active listener. Face the employee.
- Allow employees to finish their thoughts without interruption.
- Take your time to respond.
- Don't be defensive. You don't have to have an instant answer. It's OK to get back to them.

Create a culture that listens to its employees' opinions. This will increase employee engagement, improve organizational production, and give your organization the agility it needs to stay competitive.

10. Encourage Employees to Improve

The best leaders do not wait until employees decide on their own to strive for improved production. Leaders encourage employees to improve regularly and equip them with resources.

Similar to praise and feedback, encouragement offers employees an opportunity to focus on progress, including specific job duties.

The Challenge? All Employees Are Different.

Some must be encouraged to improve. Others must be reminded why improvements are important to their careers. Still, others may not realize they can do more or how every deadline and deliverable is tied to the organization's bottom line.

Some employees struggle to meet job goals and deadlines; routinely surpass expectations; are new to the organization and adjusting to new roles. Because every employee is different, encouragement techniques should vary depending on the individual.

Why Is Encouraging Employees To Improve So Important?

In a well-run organization, leadership shares skills with team members – on-the-job tools that give employees better ways to tackle production. Other times, management may teach team members skills that fall outside of employees' primary job responsibilities. This strategy creates knowledgeable, well-rounded team members that are ready to embrace new challenges and larger roles.

Research shows that the more often engaged employees are with managers and executives, the better chance they will learn career-building skills. This engagement creates a culture of growth.

Leadership may not have time to give every employee a long list of career-changing tools or opportunities. However, that knowledge can spread from one team member to another, until it reaches the entire organization, creating an amazing company culture!

Tips To Encourage Employees To Improve

- **Create Weekly Goals**
  Specifically, create SMART goals with small milestones to hit. For example, aim to increase production by two percent over the next week or set realistic deadlines (and achieve them).
- **Be Transparent**
  Let them know what occurs at the organization's highest level, as well as how their daily performances shape the company's future.
- **Create an Open-Door Policy**
  This empowers employees on all levels with an opportunity to learn vital skills that can increase production.

How Encouraging Employees Empowers Future Leaders
Sometimes, it takes a manager or owner to realize the employees' potential–
potential that the employees may not even see in themselves. A little
encouragement and creating opportunities to grow enables the employee to start
fully developing their skills.

Today's entry-level employee can develop into tomorrow's supervisor, executive or
CEO. That's why it's important to arm all employees with reassuring feelings that
spark growth.

11. Praise Employee Improvements

In most cases, praising employees does not cost your organization a dime. All it
takes is a small amount of effort!

Managers and executives praise employees when they make a conscious decision
to improve (or attempt to improve) their job performances. It's such a simple
gesture that can go a long way. It can be as simple as a handwritten note or email,
or as lavish as a cash gift or bonus for a job well done.

Praising Employees Can Have A Positive Impact On Organizations
Giving employees praise on their improvements is one of the quickest ways to
motivate employees, and for a good reason. This conscious effort to point out what
employees are doing well promotes that the behavior should be repeated. Giving
praise also improves employee self-confidence and motivates them to aspire for
continued improvements.

*As you might expect, employees who receive praise often experience higher job
satisfaction and are more likely to be retained.*

Praise can lead to improved team collaboration while increasing the chance other
employees follow these positive examples. After all, everyone wants to be praised,
right? It's human nature to want to feel valued and respected. That's why "pats on
the back" are just as important as wage increases, fringe benefits and other
productivity rewards.

How Should Organizations Praise Employees?
Employees appreciate sincere praise, especially when it calls out specific
accomplishments. Organizations should make sure all employees have an
opportunity to be recognized. Managers need to use some emotional intelligence
when praising employees. High achievers may need to be recognized in private to

avoid a feeling that managers are playing favorites, while those that do not get recognition as often should receive it publicly.

Be careful: Do not transform recognition rewards into expectations – for example, awarding gift cards every time a new client signs up.

Managers: Praise Employees Often
Some bosses focus on what people are doing wrong and overlook what they are doing right. Some managers and owners (falsely) believe praising one employee places extra pressure on them to praise others.

The truth is you can (and should) praise your employees when the opportunity arises. When you do, take into consideration that you praise with the following in mind:

- Praise: Be genuine based on observed behaviors, values, accomplishments, successes, qualities, attributes, etc.
- Example: Provide a specific example.
- Context: Explain how this quality will help you, the team, the organization, the customer, etc.
- Reinforce: Top it off with a final positive statement or suggestion for future.

  Note: When thanking employees, address them by name. As Dale Carnegie said, "*A person's name is to that person, the sweetest, most important sound in any language.*"

As a manager or owner, it's your responsibility to engage, develop and retain future leaders. When you praise the positive behaviors and demonstrate gratitude for a "job well done" you place employees on a path to success and retention.

12. Give Employees Feedback

Productive employees embrace personal growth. Several years into their careers, experienced professionals are pleased with their skillsets but are eager to master new skills, increasing the likelihood that they become future leaders. Likewise, inexperienced employees – likely the younger generations – are also career-minded. These motivated team members want to climb the corporate ladder, and they know the best way to do this is to learn as much as possible.

Both appreciate praise, an important dynamic in successful organizations. Yet a leader's job does not end with compliments. Employees also crave feedback. After all, these professionals are working to reach certain goals. So, open your Google

calendar, and schedule a monthly or bi-weekly chat. This is important for a host of reasons.

Why Is Feedback Important To Employees?

- Highly productive employees understand the difference between good and great; or great versus near-perfect. Oftentimes, clear and consistent direction from management makes it easier to excel.
- Productive employees want to know what areas of their job duties can be improved, even if improvement leads to minimal growth. They realize every increase in job performance, big or small, counts toward the organization's bottom line.
- Employees often serve as role models for their peers.
- Regular employee feedback sets standard, and let's employees know what they are being judged on. That way, when it's time to discuss a raise or bonus, there are no surprises.
- This feedback lets employees know what is most important to the organization. That way, employees know where to focus on future improvements.
- Employee feedback increases self-confidence. It validates their processes and can lead to more improvements.
- Regular feedback creates an open, honest work environment that fosters communication.

How To Create A Work Environment Where Employees Get Feedback?

- It's as simple as creating a plan and scheduling regular weekly or bi-weekly feedback sessions with employees.
- Create guidelines for formal and informal feedback sessions so everyone understands process. Set the standard by asking employees for feedback.
- Be honest, focus on what employees can do to improve, and provide action items and plans for each employee.
- Be detailed. Spend time learning their processes and search for actionable answers that lead to improvements.
- Don't forget to schedule a follow-up meeting.

It is no longer acceptable to give employees feedback once a year; managers need to be diligent in their quest to develop their people. Consistent feedback is a key ingredient in developing and engaging employees as well as retaining future leaders.

13. Provide Coaching and Training

High-potential employees want to continually improve. One of the best ways to accomplish this is on-the-job coaching and training provided by organizations.

Coaching and training equip employees with new skills, improving their knowledge. This allows them to contribute more to their teams and pass on innovation and know-how to peers.

These methods are not limited to hard skills. It's often soft skills that allow them to better communicate with co-workers, customers and vendors or work without constant manager supervision or guidance. Soft skills range from teamwork and dependability to adaptability, conflict resolution and problem-solving.

How Coaching And Training Employees Can Help Your Organization Thrive

Coaching and training – internal or external – impact the entire organization. These engagement methods lead to lower employee turnover and allow organizations to meet production and financial goals faster. Why? Instead of hiring new employees, businesses can promote from within their ranks, boosting employee morale. Coaching and training allow managers to reward high-performing team members. While underperforming employees often receive a large portion of manager time, coaching and training allow organizational leadership to focus on employees that are ready and able to learn more, do more.

Remember: One of the reasons employees leave organizations is frustration over not being developed. A lack of regular feedback can damper the spirit of team members with lofty career ambitions.

What's The Difference Between Coaching And Training?

Training allows employees to learn and develop specific skills. Coaching, meanwhile, enhances the talents and goals of employees. Both are important, but the implementation is slightly different.

Implementing A Coaching And Training Program

The first step to implement a coaching and training program is to set the goals: how many training hours should each employee get? Is there a budget for training? What is a measurable goal for employee training?

Note: You should document all the training hours and investments so it can be referred back to for professional development or reimbursements.

Next, to ensure a successful coaching and training program, formalize it. Organizations should create a formal framework and incorporate it into their company culture, so everyone gets involved. Be sure to reward coaches and team members that participate in coaching programs and include coaching progress in employee reviews.

Popular Methods Of Training & Coaching Employees

- **"Lunch and Learns"**: This new format of employee training has become a popular way organizations impact thousands of team members. These sessions can be attended live, on-demand or employees at multiple sites can participate live remotely.
- **Leadership Coaching**: Formalizing check-ins with leadership to provide coaching can be a great way to grow more of the soft skills that are not learned on the job. Even if done on a monthly basis, leadership coaching can get employees in that growth mindset.
- **Peer Mentors**: Unlike coaching, this type of -development can be done by employees within the same team. It's a more casual form of coaching
- **Online Training**: Every industry has online training programs that can provide your employees with new skills and spark their creativity. Make the option available to your team to take online webinars, join online training courses or even pay for an online course.
- **Outside Training Companies**: If you have employees that want to work on developing their skills, outside training companies like Dale Carnegie are a fantastic way to do that. By focusing in on a specific attribute for several weeks, employees get to practice what they learn. And as we say at Dale Carnegie, practice makes permanent!

With the talent shortage that most industries face today, it is imperative to coach and develop people. Creating a culture that supports coaching and training allows organizations to succeed now as well as in the future.

CONCLUSION

Organizations need to proactively create a plan to engage, develop and retain their future leaders in today's competitive landscape. Deliberately nurturing a culture that engages and retains employees is a strategy that will allow organizations to prosper as new generations search for organizations that care about them and help them develop.

Engaged employees are irreplaceable resources that give competitive advantages to organizations. These employees are the lifeline for customer feedback,

innovation of products and processes, as well as becoming the leaders that will be able to face the businesses challenges of tomorrow.

Today organizations must be intentional when it comes to building a culture to nurture and retain high-potential employees significantly improve their chances of future organizational success. Follow the 13 steps in this book to create a culture that will engage, develop and retain your future leaders.

Steve VerBurg has a diverse background working in and with industries such as Aerospace, Automotive, Education, Finance, Manufacturing, Technology, Telecommunications and Retail.

Currently, Steve is the President of Dale Carnegie of Orange County. He specializes in helping organizations plan and implement employee engagement programs, executive coaching, customer service and sales initiatives focusing on increased productivity & revenue.

Over the past 15 years with Dale Carnegie, he has coached thousands of professionals to help them achieve their personal & professional goals.

Dale Carnegie Orange County
1805 E. Dyer Road, Suite #109
Santa Ana, CA 92705
(949) 833-3253