

Radical Engagement... what does that look like?

One simple case study

When employees are really engaged, really committed, millions of dollars of improvement and opportunity become a reality. It's not easy, but clearly worth the effort.

The challenge is making this person's attitude a cultural norm, not an exception.

We are up for the challenge.

"And what are YOU going to do about it?" That was the question posed by an hourly employee to the president of the division regarding productivity. Yes, she was very upset over the lack of company performance. Ever had that happen? Ever had an employee (at any level) show real emotion over the lack of company performance? And have the courage to confront management and ask for accountability? If not, I would suggest there is room to redefine employee engagement.

About six months prior to that encounter, we had designed and implemented our Equishare System™ into this New England business. A system, where every employee shared in the financial performance of the business, every month.

That day I was sitting in the president's office when a lady came to the doorway. It was obvious she had come from the factory floor. Ron (the president) asked if he could help her. She said, "the guy next to me has been making junk all morning... the supervisor has walked by twice and hasn't said a word. He is wrecking my bonus and I want to know what you are going to do about it!" Wow, an employee chewing out the president over lousy performance... that's novel. Was she engaged? I would say so. Radically engaged.

This level of engagement was a product of several core fundamentals. Her monthly earnings were significantly impacted by company performance. Beyond that however, the Equishare System™ had been designed in such a way to drive real changes in the way employees think and act at work. This behavioral change was a product of:

- A real understanding of the key metrics that drive company-wide performance
- Measured and communicated frequently
- An operating plan to achieve it
- Timely – monthly bonus opportunity – long enough to tie to the financials, short enough to keep people engaged
- Opportunity of variable pay was enough to affect her standard of living.

Now the rest of the story: as it turned out, this employee was a single mom, and an extra \$200-300 every month meant the world to her. Nothing was going to stand in her way. Most of her peers agree! AND, since the system was set up on the factors that truly drive improvement in operating profits — there was a fair sharing of the incremental gain, so president Ron was committed as well. I hate clichés, but that is a win-win.

This is example of a mindset that transcends hourly, salaried, or senior management – whether in manufacturing or service. Are your employees at all levels deeply concerned and engaged in the financial performance of the business this month, next month and beyond?