

Making Your Firm a Great Workplace

Have you ever been to a business or resort that provided exemplary services and made these look easy and enjoyable for the team serving you? We all know that it takes a lot more than just hiring qualified people and giving them policy and procedure manuals to put together a great team that can make everything look easy.

The Gallup organization surveyed over 80,000 successful managers. Some of their conclusions make great sense, and others might surprise you.

Here is our summary of their report:

The team at the Gallup organization, and in particular Gary Buckingham of Gallup, Inc., have put together a fantastic book called *12: The Elements of Great Managing* by Rodd Wagner, Ph.D. and James K. Harter based upon comprehensive surveys of what it takes to create, have, and maintain a great workplace.

Their first discovery was that, “there are no great companies, there are only great workgroups,” and that “there appear to be 12 characteristics that will consistently describe great workgroups.”

While many of these are well-known and based on common sense or intuition, a few of them may come as a surprise.

Item 1: Knowing What is Expected. Confusion over expectations and desired outcomes can be extremely frustrating and cause loss of effectiveness and morale.

Do your team members know exactly what is expected, or is that a nebulous situation?

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Item 2: Lack of Frustration by Having All of the Necessary Workplace Tools Needed to Do the Job Right.

Confusing or poorly working computer systems, forms that are inappropriate, and other systems that get in the way as opposed to help can be the downfall of what might otherwise be an effective and positive team member.

Item 3: Doing What the Person Does Best.

“Frank Sinatra never moved pianos.”

Everyone has an innate instinct as to what he or she does best, but in our law firm we test talents using Omnia Profiles and the Kolbe Index, which are personality tests and are very mindful as to what the team member can do best, and what they can develop to be better at.

If the team member is not in a job that allows them to be their very best, then it may be time to change the job or the person.

Remember the recurrent theme from the book *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell – once you find somebody who is a good fit for what they do, and they do it for 10,000 hours they can be at the genius level and lead the world.

That only takes 5 years if everything is properly situated.

Item 4: Praise and Recognition are Completely Essential in a Great Workplace.

A study of more than 80,000 managers found that there is a significant difference between “don’t complain if the team member does a good job” versus giving consistent and well directed praise.

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Item 5: My Immediate Supervisor or Boss Cares About Me.

The Gallup poll study showed that the fifth most important item with reference to a good workplace relationship is that the person with supervisory or mentorship authority sincerely cares about the welfare of the team member.

Item 6: Does Someone on the Team Encourage the Employee's Development.

Good team members want to get better, that is part of the human psychological makeup for successful and positive people.

Knowing that someone is there to help make this occur is an important component.

Item 7: The Opinion of the Team Member Counts. Team members each have a unique view and ability to contribute to improve ideas, systems, and services. If they think that their opinion doesn't count, then you may be counting them out for helping you to maintain and grow your business.

Item 8: The Link Between the Team Member and the Company's Mission or Purpose. Team members at every level like to know that they are integral part of an organization that has a purpose and mission.

Everyone on the team should contribute directly to that mission in their own unique way.

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Item 9: Doing Quality Work. Team members like to know that they are provided good quality work that need not be criticized or cause stress that would result from errors. “Pride in workmanship” is an important part of the work experience that each team member should have the opportunity to thrive with.

Item 10: Having a Best Friend at Work (BFW). Gallup found in their 80,000 manager study that employees who report having a best friend at work achieved as follows:

43% more likely to report having received praise and recognition for their work in the last seven days.

37% more likely to report that someone at work encourages their development.

35% more likely to report co-worker commitment to quality.

28% more likely to report that in the last six months, someone at work has talked to them about their progress.

27% more likely to report that the mission of their company makes them feel their job is important.

27% more likely to report that their opinions seem to count at work.

21% more likely to report that at work, they have the opportunity to do what they do best every day.

What are you doing in your company to help make sure that good team members are properly introduced to good influence co-workers, are able to socialize and meet each other’s families in simple but enjoyable “company picnic” and happy hour events? Employees don’t need expensive and fancy parties and events – simple and relaxed low-key after-hours opportunities to mingle can have a significantly positive impact on all team relationships.

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Item 11: Team Members Like to Discuss Their Progress. Gallup reports that great managers are always encouraging employees to know themselves and the roles that they are likely to succeed in. Gallup recommends that feedback be specific and given in the context of a positive employee/manager relationship.

Item 12: Are There Opportunities to Learn and Grow?

Good team members are always interested in learning new things and growing as team members. An appropriate atmosphere and methodology can advance this.