



42TM
Rules
of Employee
Engagement

A Straightforward Look at What It
Takes to Build a Culture of
Engagement

SUSAN STAMM

FOREWORD BY CURT COFFMAN




**SECOND
EDITION**

“42 Rules of Employee Engagement (2nd Edition)” Book Excerpt

A straightforward and fun look at
what it takes to build a culture of
engagement in business

By Susan Stamm

Foreword by Curt Coffman

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Foreword by Curt Coffman

Author Christina Baldwin once remarked: “*change is the constant, the signal for rebirth, the egg of the Phoenix.*”¹

While so many organizations, leaders, and managers seem to reach for change, very few embrace it and see the opportunity for creating value in their enterprises. A good case in point is how we view employees and our philosophy about increasing productivity and impact. Fifty years ago, more than 80% of all jobs were industrial, manufacturing-based positions. Thus, the true value of the human contribution was the person’s hands and feet. The goal of managers and supervisors was to closely attend to (i.e., even babysit) every person to ensure they were doing what they were supposed to be doing, without interruption.

Frankly, we didn’t hire human beings 50 years ago, we hired pairs of hands! The manager or supervisor possessed great power over the individual employee. If the employee did not do what they were supposed to be doing, the manager or supervisor would fire them and dramatically impact their families’ financial security. The power base was clear—the employer did not need the employee as much as the employee depended upon the employer. Those days are now gone!

Today, less than 10% of all jobs in the United States are industrial, manufacturing-based jobs. This means more than 90% of all jobs require an employee to use their intelligence, instincts, and

ideas as means of creating value for their companies. Clearly, the true value of today's human contribution lies squarely in the head and heart of every person. While the employer possessed tremendous power in the past, the balance of power has shifted and today the employee owns the means of production and creation of value. In essence, the employer now needs the employee more significantly than the other way around.

The new challenge is simple, "*how do I get people to do what I need them to do, when I have no power over them?*" Management struggles with how to adapt to the new realities of fully utilizing and energizing the human side of their enterprise. The key is no longer merely satisfying or attempting to keep employees pacified or without angst. It is tapping into the core values and beliefs inherent in every individual. Creating a passion, rather than just providing tasks, is the key.

Successful organizations of tomorrow will be those that've adopted a holistic approach to managing the human condition. People are messy, but this messiness segues to unbelievable opportunity for innovation, contribution, and lifelong commitment. The best description of what a workforce needs is "engagement," not satisfaction or job security. Engagement is the degree to which we are relating to our employees and demonstrating a true commitment to their development, self-awareness, and the willingness to transform the workplace one person at a time.

Susan Stamm understands these issues on a truly intimate level. She has studied, observed, and ascertained both a poignant and pragmatic view of how organizations everywhere can leverage the new realities of the workplace. Through her *42 Rules of Employee Engagement*, she outlines the issues facing both managers and employees on a daily and even an hourly basis. Her ability to see the need for structure where structure is resisted is remarkable. Unless your organization can fully automate sales, production, service, and follow-through, you need this book! Sure, many believe they have adapted to the new world of emotional economics, but from my consulting experience, they are merely adapting the old paradigm. I challenge you to take a hard look at yourself as you read through these pages.

Curt W. Coffman

Coauthor, *First Break all the Rules: What the World's Greatest Managers Do Differently*

(Simon & Schuster) and *Follow This Path:*

How the World's Greatest Organizations Drive Growth by Unleashing Human Potential (Warner Books)

Intro

Have you ever hired someone who indicated very clearly on the job interview that they had little or no desire to participate in the work of your team? Not likely. You've probably never hired anyone who told you they planned to work hard at actively sabotaging your results either.

We hire employees who arrive on the job on that first day eager to make a contribution. They anticipate the good they can offer and the synergistic relationships they'll build within their new workplace. If that is so, why would so many people underperform on purpose after only a short period on the job? Why have engagement scores fallen to such low levels?²

Think of it this way. If your organization fits into the national norms for employee engagement, over half your team is not giving you what they could to help you achieve greater results. It is as if they take their talent, ideas, and experience, and place them in deep freeze while going through the motions of work. Why would anyone do this when work is central to our very identity? Naturally, we want to offer our best. It is this inner desire to give work our best effort that makes employee engagement the low hanging fruit of organizational performance. People want to be engaged, they really do.

This is good news because it is not large, complex issues that push engagement scores down. It is also bad news. Well sort of ... you see, employee engagement has a lot to do with you and your style of management. It's those everyday challenges that wear away at the soul of your team: the manager does not mention appreciation of effort; there is no clear performance goal; no coaching or support is available; or, no one seems to listen. The list goes on and on. The result is that many employees

leave to continue the search for the perfect workplace that will value their mind and spirit while others “quit and stay.” Either action impacts the engagement level of your team.

This book responds to those day-to-day situations that seem to drive employees away from offering you their best. These ideas are not difficult to understand, but for some reason they are not common practice among many leaders. Each rule challenges you to take action immediately. Use these actions to transform your team. Meet with your team weekly over the next 42 weeks and discuss the implication of each rule for your workplace. Hold each other accountable to actions and goals that come from these discussions.

Specific tools are highlighted in a reference section at the end of this book, including a set of templates you can download to track the actions suggested in each rule. Another reference area describes some of my favorite books on this important topic. It is my hope you will embrace these rules and add your own to the discussion. A blog has been created for you to discuss these rules and share your own: <http://www.tinyurl.com/chvthb> (http://www.42rules.com/employeeengagement_blog/) I will look forward to meeting you there and hearing your contribution to this work.

Onward and Upward,
Susan Stamm
The TEAM Approach®
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You're Still the Boss

What's the minimum percentage of decision-making authority leaders should maintain in any decision-making process?

This week I met with an executive leadership team that wanted to begin a developmental leadership process. A proposal containing 360 feedback had been delivered and the entire team was invited to come and discuss it before the process was to begin. One member of the leadership team raised concerns about past experiences with 360 feedback indicating he did not see value in what his direct reports thought about him. I found this comment both interesting and surprising, and suspected this leader was concerned about the feedback his team might offer him.

I was not prepared, however, for the CEO to shut down the process because of this manager's concern. I was even more surprised to learn that this manager's direct reports had recently complained to HR, indicating he portrayed a different side of himself to those he supervised than to his peers around the executive table.

Rule 9, you will recall, suggests it is important for you to let go so your team can grow. It has been well documented that employee involvement fuels engagement while providing numerous benefits to the organization. It is important to note, however, that even though you create engagement by getting the team involved, you are still the boss. If a project goes south, or if someone makes a decision that creates legal trouble, who is ultimately accountable? You are, of course. So how do you balance this idea of letting go with having enough personal involvement to be a responsible manager? In these

types of situations, where you collaborate with a team member to reach a decision, you participate in a simple authority formula that looks like this:

$$\% \text{ Team Leader Authority} + \% \text{ Team Member Authority} = 100\% \text{ Decision-Making Authority}$$

In leadership workshops we often ask team leaders, “What’s the minimum percentage of decision-making authority you should maintain in *any* decision-making process?” The answers range from 1% to 100%, with many suggesting that somewhere around 60% of the decision-making authority should stay with the team leader. The answer, however, is a little bit different:

$$\text{Team Leader Minimum Amount of Authority} = 51\%$$

We suggest approaching decisions as equal partners while tucking the 1% veto power away, just in case it’s needed. If the decision is not in the best interest of the organization, you use the 1%, carefully explaining to the team member (or team) why you must override the decision.

In my example above, the CEO, as the top leader of the organization, might have exercised his 1% veto power and suggested that the need to examine and develop leadership skills was central to the organization’s success. This leader obviously deferred this decision to the team member. Did the leader engage his team? Maybe. Was this the best decision for the overall organization? Maybe not. Being the leader is never easy. Engaging your team means involving them as often as you can, but it does not diminish your responsibility for results. By reviewing outcomes regularly, and asking yourself how things would have worked if you had chosen another path, you can improve the quality of results while building a culture of teamwork and engagement.

Action: Reflect on the amount of authority you carry into the decision-making process. If it is significantly less than 51% you may be running a social club. If it is significantly more than 51% you may be running a dictatorship. Plan now to use the next opportunity to make an adjustment that brings more balance to you and your team’s decision-making process.

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Right Actions Bring Engagement

When too much time goes into activities that do not produce results, I call this “playing work.”

I once worked with someone on a sales team who would call prospects with the goal of “checking in” with them. He never set a goal to introduce a new solution, identify new needs, learn new information that could help position a potential solution, or concrete action of any kind. Consequently, he failed. While this was sad enough, the fact that this person had no direction in choosing how to invest his time for success was a bigger issue for management. Only people who could figure it out on their own succeeded. Those not lucky enough to figure it out fed the growing cycle of turnover, or became actively disengaged, costing the organization untold sums of money.

This scenario demonstrates a key need for managers to help people understand the difference between being activity-focused versus result-focused, and why it is critical that we invest our time in actions that move us toward results. In this example, the employee was busy, but his actions produced little results for the time invested.

This is becoming a fairly large problem in this information age we live in. A single e-mail today, for example, can end up taking a 15-minute block of time or longer just to understand the implications of the message and explore its relevance to our work. Few of us are aware of how much time goes into this kind of activity in the course of a week. When too much time goes into activities that do not produce results, I call this “playing work.” One can

appear to be working, and in fact may be quite busy, but his focus is on low potential or even time-wasting activities.

A great way to get a handle on this problem for you and for your team is to do a time study. It is a simple process in which all team members record what they are doing every 15 minutes over a period of 1 to 2 weeks. Just the process of doing such a study can have major payoffs by increasing awareness of where time is being wasted. Sometimes activities have a relationship to our results somewhere out in the future, but other more pressing actions may be needed right now to meet more demanding business objectives. As the leader, your role is to accomplish results through others. Such a process will help you stay on target for the results the organization is expecting from you. By using such a process you'll be sending a message to your team that results and right actions are what count on a winning team.

Action: After the team completes several days of personal time study, host a "town meeting" forum. You and the team can chart all the tasks that the team is investing in and together do some analysis. You can calculate how time is being applied and analyze whether or not time is being invested in things that tie directly to performance goals. This is a great way for everyone to get a handle on what is really happening and determine the efficacy of individual activities. Of course, such a process will work better if each member of the team already has SMART³⁰ (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound) performance goals in place.

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Honesty Is Always the Best Policy

Should any of us be surprised to learn that people do not like being deceived?

We arrived for our vacation in the Pocono Mountains in time to enjoy a perfect Pennsylvania autumn. We could only spare 3 days away from work, and I was eagerly anticipating our annual hike on the Appalachian Trail. As we checked in, we discovered our timeshare had been purchased by a new entity who invited us to a short meeting to “solicit our feedback as owners.” I didn’t want to go, but Rick suggested we should, since we’d been owners for many years.

We arrived at the appointed time the next morning and quickly realized that we had been completely misled about the purpose of the meeting. In fact, it was not a meeting at all, but rather a sales presentation with a seasoned arm-wrestling veteran, trained in all the latest manipulative sales techniques. He told us we had somehow missed out on a once-in-a-lifetime offer to transfer our three timeshare weeks into some new metric used to get higher trade value. Perhaps we had ignored a mailing they had sent to us earlier in the year. Then, later, as we were trying to end the meeting, he sprung a “deal” on us that was in conflict with what he had told us earlier. As we tried to leave, he asked us to give his supervisor feedback on his performance, and we found this was just another trick to have the “supervisor” put yet another “deal” in front of us. As we finally managed to exit the building we were astonished to be handed \$50 cash for having sat through all the abuse we’d endured. We were confused and dumbfounded by the entire experience.

On the first day back to work following our little vacation, our phone rang and the person on the other end wanted to confirm our printer model number, saying he was from our copier supply company. When I asked him to repeat where he was calling from he promptly hung up on me. Then, a few days later, I had a call from someone claiming to be from our telephone provider, wanting to save us money on the business package on our phone lines. When our next bill arrived I discovered I had unknowingly authorized a change of our service providers. I had been fooled again!

Just to be sure, I've asked a few people to check that I was not wearing a big sign on my back that says, "believes everything you tell her" ... but sure enough, I am clean. Should any of us be surprised to learn that people do not like being deceived? Yet, some businesses use deception as a strategy, and managers and team leaders teach employees how to use deceitful techniques to win business. I do not feel that these approaches can be successful long-term strategies, even if a few people (like me) are gullible enough to fall for them once (okay, every time).

According to Yaankelovich Partners,⁴¹ a marketing services consultancy, 80% of consumers think American businesses are too concerned about making a profit and not concerned enough about their responsibilities to workers, consumers, and the environment. I wonder if employees can really be engaged in organizations that ask, and expect, them to be dishonest. I feel that most of us have an inner need to be truthful. By asking team members to be dishonest you are immediately putting them at odds with the job. How can this climate create engagement, success, or any positive outcome?

Action: Make it your policy to be truthful and to employ only marketing and selling methods that are truthful. Should you discover gross deception as a strategy in your organization's marketing mix, call the organization to task. Discuss your sales and service approach with your team to be sure there are no practices that could mislead customers.

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Give It Your All

Management itself is a profession. For some it is truly an art form. For others it is the part of the job that is most dreaded.

Not long after joining my husband Rick at The TEAM Approach⁴² we were working on a project with a pharmaceutical firm. There was a large team of trainers on the project and at the end of each day, we would have a debriefing session sharing ideas and techniques that seemed to get good results. On my very first day on the project, I wrapped up at the appointed time. As I left my classroom I went immediately to Rick's room to join him in making the trek to the appointed meeting place. Upon arriving in his classroom, however, I found him still busily working with a number of folks from his class, assisting them one-on-one, answering their questions, and providing personal support. As I observed him in action, I remember thinking to myself that the scheduled day was finished, why didn't he wrap it up and "get out of there."

Afterward, I thought about this incident a number of times and something about my own behavior that evening was very troubling to me. I realized that for some reason I was not fully engaged in the process, I was merely going through the motions of getting information into the hands of my class and leaving them to their own devices to work out the subtleties of it all. But not Rick. He was hard at it, making sure every last person got what they needed before he was satisfied that it was time to close up his shop. As I thought about it some more, I felt certain that his class was more responsive to the material; they were more engaged learners, because of his own engagement and commitment to give it his all.

Rick was role modeling his commitment to personal excellence that day and in doing so he was challenging me, without even knowing it, to examine my own commitment to such. As I did, I found it wanting, and I had to do some real soul-searching for a period of time to determine if this chosen profession was really what I wanted. I had to work through “my own stuff” and, after examining all my personal fears and shortcomings along with my strengths and gifts, I decided that this profession was the way I would choose to live my life. Now this is important, so I hope you are paying attention. I said, I decided that this was how I would choose to offer my talents to the world. It wasn’t some job I applied for and got, it was a choice based on an assessment of my strengths (and limitations) that this was the right career for me and I wanted to give it all I had to offer.

Management itself is a profession. For some it is truly an art form. For others it is the part of the job that is most dreaded. If you find yourself in this second category, I encourage you to do your own soul-searching around this critical role you play in your organization. It is far too important to live in conflict with it. Your role is key to the engagement of your team. If you focus mostly on the task component of your job and pay attention to the team only in times of crisis, you are missing out on numerous opportunities to increase engagement just through your simple interest and involvement. The old expression “it’s not rocket science” holds true for engagement. It’s created with plain, simple interest in the team. An investment of you makes the difference. Try it and watch the result.

Action: Reflect on how you can give more to your role of manager. How can you offer more of yourself and your special talents to your team? Pick something and get started.

About the Author



Susan Stamm is the president of The TEAM Approach®, a team development firm dedicated to helping people play nicer at work for the mutual benefit and profit of all. She believes that relationships are the key ingredient to happiness and success, personally, professionally, and globally. As host of the monthly “Bookends” teleconference and podcast, Stamm interviews authors of great books written for leaders, and HRD professionals, to discover their implications for today’s workplace.

Stamm claims she has been a student of human behavior ever since her high school psychology course and is fascinated with how people transfer learning into consistent performance on the job. Susan is a co-creator of the “Team Leader Café,”

a radical approach to team leader development, which guarantees permanent measurable performance improvements for supervisors and team leaders. Susan enjoys classroom facilitation, and speaking or writing about workplace performance issues. She is especially motivated to help people put what they learn into action and feels training that does not support a transfer back to the job is a waste of everyone's time and resources.

Susan has an Associate of Applied Science's degree in Human Services from Delaware Technical and Community College and a Bachelor of Science degree in Management and Organizational Development from Eastern Mennonite University where she earned an Outstanding Achievement Award. She was a contributing author to the book: "10: The Top Tens of Employee Engagement" edited by David Zinger. Additionally, Susan serves on the advisory boards for Vital Learning Corporation and Performance Support Systems. A member of American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) National, and the Central Pennsylvania Chapter of ASTD, she also cohosts the monthly Red Rose Learning Community gatherings in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Susan is married to her best friend, Rick Stamm, and has three children: Rachel, Adam, and Sarah, and three grandchildren: Bryan, Dylan, and Anna.

Getting “42 Rules of Employee Engagement”

(<http://www.happyabout.com/42rules/employee-engagement.php>)

“42 Rules of Employee Engagement” can be purchased as an eBook for \$14.95 or tradebook for \$19.95 at <http://www.happyabout.com/42rules/employee-engagement.php> or at other online and physical book stores.

Please contact us for quantity discounts sales@happyabout.info or to be informed about upcoming titles bookupdate@happyabout.info or phone (408-257-3000).

"Susan provides an excellent no-nonsense set of guidelines that managers at any level will appreciate. Most will say that they know this is important, but will agree that they often just forget to take these actions. Susan provides great reminders. She uses vivid examples from her own experience that make her points come alive. This is one book that you can open to any page, and tips and suggestions will just jump out!"

Beverly Kaye & Sharon Jordan-Evans: Co-authors of *Love 'Em or Lose 'Em: Getting Good People to Stay*

"Susan Stamm is right on the money when she says that "engagement begins and ends with leadership." Each one of her 42 Rules of Employee Engagement offers practical, actionable steps that you, as a leader, can implement right away to encourage the full and enthusiastic participation of everyone on your team. And in times like these, no organization can afford anything less!"

Richard Hadden, Co-author, *Contented Cows Moove Faster*

"*42 Rules of Employee Engagement* cuts through the clutter to offer quick, practical actions you can apply to boost performance. It's easy to get lost in the concept of employee engagement, but Stamm delivers the clarity and simplicity needed to find your way to an fully engaged team. Read it and reap the rewards!"

Lee J. Colan, Ph.D., Author, *Engaging the Hearts and Minds of All Your Employees*



SUSAN STAMM

believes that relationships are the key to building engaged workplaces, creative collaborations, and healthier bottom lines. She is certain that the most powerful employee engagement solutions are so simple that they are often completely overlooked.

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