EXECUTION: THE MISSING LINK TO SUCCESS!

BY WES FRIESEN

The ability to execute — to implement and carry out our plans — is the key ingredient in the recipe of success for us and our teams. The ability to execute well provides a competitive advantage and helps us stand out. Want to improve your ability to execute well and rise above the crowd? Let's explore 10 keys to help us further improve our execution.

1) Provide strong, positive leadership.
Good leaders explain well the mission of their team — which explains why the team exists. The best leaders also participatively create a strong vision of where the team is headed, a picture of a desired better future. And they develop an action plan (strategies) of how to reach and achieve the desired vision.

2) Emphasize the value of a "follow-through" culture.
Having an action plan and strategies to reach our goals and fulfill our vision is essential, but more is needed. We need to develop a culture of "follow-through," where team members are focused on executing the plans.

3) Build team camaraderie and unity.
Intentionally working to develop a team mindset of "one for all and all for one" will obviously help our execution. Research has shown that teams that build a strong sense of camaraderie have greater unity and significantly outperform teams that lack it.

4) Involve your team members.
Participation leads to greater buy-in and better quality of results compared to leaders trying to figure out everything on our own. Asking our front-line team members about the best ways to do the work will lead to greater buy-in and better work processes. Execution will improve as a result.

5) Set clear goals and priorities.
The most successful leaders excel at clarifying expectations. We should ensure that the goals and priorities are well understood, and continually reinforce them. By doing so, we will be benefiting our key stakeholders and helping the team earn the recognition they deserve.

6) Measure and celebrate progress.
One key principle I have learned is "success breeds success." We need to have targeted performance measurements so everybody is working together for the same results. We then need to hold ourselves accountable by measuring the actual results against the targets. And when the team is meeting or exceeding targets, we should recognize, reward, and celebrate the progress.

7) Reward desired behaviors.
We should recognize and reward our teams when they are meeting milestones and goals. At the same time, we need to reward individuals when they exhibit the behaviors we seek.

8) Plan for the unexpected.
As we all know, "stuff happens." Sometimes we have unexpected problems with materials, equipment, vendors, employees... even the weather! Having contingency plans in place before problems occur is crucial to meeting our goals and obligations. This preparation also increases the team's confidence and reduces the stress level when the inevitable problems do occur.

9) Communicate, Communicate, Communicate.
We need to give feedback often so people know how they are doing — both when they are meeting expectations and when they are not. We also need to communicate well about everything relevant to a team and avoid people filling in communication gaps with the "rumor mill," which can really dampen morale fast.

10) Just do it!
I love this motto from Nike. Talk by itself can be cheap; we need to be people of action and help our teams be action-oriented. Following is a simplified three-step process to getting the results we desire:
   a) Build the strategy
   b) Translate the strategy into the everyday work
   c) Execute the strategy

Let me share a closing thought from Steve Jobs, who said, "To me, ideas are worth nothing, unless executed. They are just a multiplier. Execution is worth millions." I wish you success in executing well and experiencing even greater success for you and your team! ∎

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CULTURE: DRIVER OF SUCCESS OR FAILURE!

BY WES FRIESEN

Developing a positive culture for an organization or team is critical for our success. What *is* culture, exactly? Organization expert Richard Daft defines culture as, "The set of values, norms, guiding beliefs, and understandings that is shared by members of an organization and taught to new members as the correct way to think, feel, and behave." A number of studies have shown a positive relationship between culture and performance. Adam Grant is a prominent organizational psychologist, and he sums up his research by saying, "The culture of a workplace — an organization's values, norms, and practices — has a huge impact on our happiness and success."

So, how do we intentionally build a culture that will create greater happiness for our employees and greater success for our teams? Let's explore important tips to help build the great culture that drives the success we desire.

Tips to Build A Great Culture

1. Be intentional. Great cultures that generate high performance do not develop by accident. Great cultures are created as a result of intentional efforts, including planful changes and consistent follow-through.

2. Clarify what's important to organizational (team) success. Clarifying the mission (why the team exists/its purpose), vision (what's the future desired state?), and values (what are our core values that we aspire to?) is a good starting place in developing your desired culture. Articulating specific goals and the strategies to help achieve the goals is also important.

When clarifying what matters, it should be our desire to add value to our key stakeholders, which are the investors (stockholders), customers, and employees. Research and experience show one factor that especially motivates people is being provided with an opportunity to serve and add value to customers and employees.

3. Define and explain the key values. The importance of values has already been mentioned, but what are some of the most important values we want to emphasize? There is no one magic list of desirable values that all teams should aspire to live. But following are a few values that various researchers and experts say contribute to a great culture and team success:

▸ **Integrity.** Virtually all people value integrity, and multiple surveys support this priority. Integrity (always doing the right thing even if it costs) is a value that should be expressed, but is best taught by consistent actions by leaders and other influencers.

▸ **Adaptability & Flexibility.** We live in a changing world, and to be successful, we need to be adaptable. We have seen the sad fate of organizations that are not adaptable to changes in factors such as customer preferences and technology (Toys 'R Us and Sears are recent examples of this). Another important value is flexibility. Employees (and customers!) appreciate flexibility to help meet their needs. Regus reports a 70% increase in productivity for companies that have moved to flexible working practices. Yes, we need to have policies and procedures in place to avoid chaos and promote efficiency, consistency, and provide compliance. But, there are times when we can and should be flexible when it benefits a customer or employee and does no harm to our organization. I agree with President Franklin Roosevelt's statement that, "Rules are not necessarily sacred, principles are."

▸ **Collaboration.** No individual by herself can be a lasting success. It takes a team effort to accomplish anything worthwhile. Valuing and practicing collaboration within and across teams will help lead to the success we desire.

▸ **Customer Orientation.** No organization or team can exist without customers (whether internal and/or external). Focusing on serving customers well is crucial to help our teams not only survive, but thrive.

▸ **Results Orientation.** At the end of the day, organizations and teams exist to get results for its key stakeholders. Emphasizing the bottom line results we seek is important. Equally or even more important is to also emphasize *how* we pursue the results we seek.

▸ **People (Employees) First.** Almost every leader would agree with the statement that employees are the most valuable resource of the organization. I love the sentiment expressed by Andrew Carnegie (who owned the equivalent of several billion dollars of factories and equipment) when he stated, "Take away my people but leave my factories and soon grass will grow on the factory floor. Take away my factories but leave my people and soon we will have a new and better factory!" But when it comes to putting people first, talk is cheap; we need action. There is a wide range of practical ways to show employees we value them — including respecting work-life balance, compensating fairly, and providing growth and development opportunities. A recent Career Builder survey found the top two drivers employees valued were flexible schedules and recognition. Anne Mulchay, former CEO of Xerox, emphasized, "Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person — not just an employee — are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability."

4. Provide linkages to employees on how they contribute to team success. Leadership expert Frances Hesselbein wisely observed, "People want to feel that what they do makes a difference." From my experience and based on recent

research, her statement rings true. I also agree with Ken and Scott Blanchard's advice, "Connect the dots between individual roles and the goals of the organization. When people see that connection, they get a lot of energy out of work. They feel the importance, dignity, and meaning of their job."

5. Implement performance culture tools.
Here are some tools we can use to help develop the desired culture:

▶ **Symbolic Reminders.** These are visible artifacts that reinforce desired behaviors and values. Examples are posters, pictures, and other wall hangings promoting key values, behaviors, and objectives; thank you notes from customers; rewards like trophies and plaques; and anything else that provides a visual reminder of what is important and/or past successes.

▶ **Keystone Behaviors.** These are desired behaviors that we want to encourage and reinforce. Examples include empowering employees by reducing the number of approvals needed for decisions, promoting collaboration by making it easier to work across teams, and building personal relationships by

following the advice of Richard Branson (Founder of Virgin Group), "There is no magic formula for great company culture. The key is just to treat your staff how you would like to be treated."

6. Recognize and reward good behavior and performance.
Research shows actions and behaviors that are reinforced (recognized and rewarded) get repeated; actions ignored for extended periods tend to cease. Dale Carnegie wisely said, "People work for money, but go the extra mile for recognition, praise, and rewards." Research over the years has led to the development of what some have called the "Greatest Management Principle in the World" — you get what you reward. Sincere, regular, and positive recognition and rewarding of desired behaviors is common sense — but not common practice. A Gallup poll of thousands of employees found that 65% claimed to have received no praise or recognition the past year!

7. Celebrate successes and have fun on the journey.
A cardinal principle I constantly emphasize is "success breeds success." The most extensive research project I have ever found on high-perform-

ing teams (involving 237 organizations and 2.5 million employees!) found three key ingredients that these teams shared: a strong sense of achievement, the ability to value and make room to have some fun, and a strong sense of camaraderie.

Here is a closing inspiring quote that speaks to the importance of our culture. Louis Gerstner, former CEO of IBM said, "I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aspect of the game, it is the game. In the end, an organization is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value." My best to you as you pursue a culture that will drive your teams to even higher level of success! ■

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THE POWER OF POSITIVE TEAMS

BY WES FRIESEN

All of us in leadership roles would like our teams to continually perform at a higher and higher level, and positivity plays a large role in this. Recent research by Kim Cameron and his colleagues at the University of Michigan found that teams who institute positive practices achieve significantly higher levels of productivity, customer satisfaction, employee engagement, and profitability. This begs the question, how can we develop more positive teams? We don't need to guess at the answer. From research by Cameron, Jon Gordon, and others, we can learn and apply the steps we need to follow.

Provide Positive Leadership. Positivity starts at the top; leaders create a "shadow" and set an example with their words and actions. As leaders, we need to ensure we are happy, emotionally healthy, and positive! Positive psychologist Martin Seligman has developed the PERMA model to highlight the five essential elements we need to be happy, which are:

Positive emotion
Engagement
Relationships (positive)
Meaning
Accomplishments/achievement

We also need to work on our emotional intelligence. It is important to be aware of our own emotions and how they affect other people to avoid passing on these negative emotions to our team.

Understand and Apply the "Pygmalion Effect." In a nutshell, the Pygmalion Effect is a self-fulfilling prophecy where the performance we expect from an individual (or team) becomes a reality. One of my sayings is, "People tend to live up, or live down, to the expectations placed on them." Leaders get the performance we expect, so we need to have higher expectations from our teams and build their confidence that they can meet those expectations. Jim Goodnight, CEO of SAS, summarizes the approach by counseling, "Treat employees like they will make a difference, and they will."

Create a Positive Culture. Cameron found that workplaces characterized by the following positive and virtuous practices did have positive cultures that helped the team excel:

▶ Caring for, being interested in, and maintaining responsibility for colleagues as friends.
▶ Providing support for one another, including offering kindness and compassion when others are struggling.
▶ Avoiding blame and forgiving mistakes.
▶ Inspiring one another at work.
▶ Emphasizing the meaningfulness of the work.
▶ Treating one another with respect, gratitude, trust, and integrity.

These practices benefit the company by increasing positive emotions, buffering against negative events, and attracting and bolstering employees, which makes them more loyal and likely to exert their best effort.

Remove Obstacles to Positivity. To really boost positivity on our teams, we need to remove things that stand in the way. Dr. Frederick Herzberg and other researchers have found work environments contain "hygiene" factors that, if not done well, lead to job dissatisfaction. Two key points are 1) not doing well on these hygiene factors will contribute to job dissatisfaction and 2) doing well on these factors will NOT lead to job satisfaction — but will keep motivation neutral. The primary dissatisfiers are company policy and administration; supervision; relationship with supervisor; work conditions; and salary.

The key here is to participatively engage with employees and develop policies, practices, and work conditions that are viewed as fair and positive. We may not be contributing much to the satisfaction and motivation of our employees, but we will avoid fueling dissatisfaction and demotivating them.

Herzberg also discovered a set of factors that are considered satisfiers or motivators. Assuming the hygiene factors are being satisfactorily met, these factors are what truly inspire and motivate employees. These six major motivators are achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, advancement, and growth.

Encourage Connection Within the Team. Google recently completed a five-year study called Project Aristotle, which revealed the keys to their most productive and inventive teams. Surprisingly, the top teams were not the A-teams composed of their top scientists, but B-teams that contained people not necessarily considered the smartest or most knowledgeable. However, the top-performing teams had the best sense of connection between team members (fostered by interest in teammates' ideas, empathy, and emotional intelligence) and also a feeling of emotional safety. Team members' feeling safe to take risks and be vulnerable in front of each other was "far and away the most important dynamic that set successful teams apart." ∎

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PROBLEMS CAN BE TO OUR BENEFIT

BY WES FRIESEN

Do you like problems? I don't, and you likely don't, either. But experts say — and I am still learning this myself! — that problems can actually be our friends. Successful CEO and author Robert Kiyosaki said, "Inside of every problem lies an opportunity." If we address problems wisely, they can help us and our teams learn, grow, and improve. The bottom line is, problems provide an opportunity to make things better. To illustrate this point, look at the things that surround us that we use every day; many of them were developed in response to a problem. For example, listening to music on the go was practically impossible without carrying around a suitcase of CDs (which, naturally, no one wanted to do); the response to this problem is now the reason why we can listen to 3,000 songs on a one-inch square object clipped to our shirts. Problems are the reason we have phones that fit in the palm of our hands, back-up cameras on our cars, indoor toilets... the examples are endless. So, the first key to having problems be our friends is to change our mindsets and view problems as what they are: opportunities to make things better for us and the people we affect.

The next key is to have an effective and thoughtful problem-solving process that we carefully follow and execute. Following is an "IDEAL" problem-solving process that can help us achieve the desired outcomes and benefits we desire.

IDEAL Problem-Solving Strategy
This approach was introduced by Bransford and Stein back in 1984. Following is my modified version and explanation of this model:

I – Identify the problem
D – Define the cause(s)
E – Explore possible solutions
A – Act
L – Look and learn

Identifying the Problem
It is essential to be clear what the problem really is. Steve Jobs explained, "If you define the problem correctly, you almost have the solution." Charles Kettering adds, "A problem well-stated is a problem half-solved." It is helpful to ask questions of affected parties and avoid the blame game. I agree with Henry Ford's advice, "Don't find fault, find a remedy." Meanwhile, Albert Einstein said, "If I had an hour to solve a problem, I'd spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and five minutes thinking about the solution." I think Einstein was purposefully exaggerating, but the point is clear — we need to make sure we really understand the problem before moving on.

Defining the Cause
A huge part of solving a problem is finding the root cause(s). Why did this problem happen? One helpful technique is to consider if one or more of these key areas are causes: people (was there human error caused by inadequate training, carelessness, etc.?); process (is there a deficiency in our processes?); or technology. Let me illustrate using an example of a problem that happened over 15 years ago with my print and mail team. One day, we mistakenly mailed out 2,000 customer bills where the back of the bill had information from a different customer than the front of the bill. Oops! Fortunately, the consequences were minimal, but they could have been significant. We analyzed the root causes and found we had a people problem (a printer operator had carelessly not followed a standard procedure); a process deficiency (in hindsight, we could have had an additional quality check); and a technology weakness (our two printers had a switch to ensure that the second printer was printing the right customer data on the back of the bill; this switch had to be manually turned on by the operator instead of being a default that was always on).

Exploring Possible Solutions
Now that we know the problem and the root causes, we can turn our attention to possible solutions. Travis Kalanick said (and I tend to agree), "Every problem has a solution. You just have to be creative enough to find it." It helps to encourage brainstorming and solicit creative ideas from people close to the situation, such as team members and relevant support staff. Also, identify key stakeholders and look for "win-win" solutions from their perspective. One caution — be careful to avoid "unintended consequences." Unintended consequences can occur when we are too hasty in making decisions and have not thought through the effects on other people and/or long-term consequences. In the above bill problem example, we landed on multiple solutions, including: coaching the operator who made the mistake and re-training all operators on standard procedures; adding another quality check via a periodic visual check as bills are being printed; and setting the printer switch to always be on so it's verifying the front and back of bill information are in sync.

Act

Now is the time to choose the best solution(s) and fix the problem. Ensure that all relevant team members and other support staff are being effectively used so the implementation of our selected solutions work. Make sure we have an appropriate implementation plan, set expectations, and err on the side of over-communicating versus under-communicating. In the bill problem example, we implemented the proposed solutions identified above.

Look and Learn

The first part of this last step means to monitor results and make sure that our solutions work as intended. In the bill problem example above, since the described solutions were adopted, the team has produced over 160 million bills. Guess how many of these bills had the wrong page problem: zero. However, in the real world, solutions don't always work as planned, so we need to carefully monitor and avoid premature celebrations. If solutions are working, we need to make sure they are documented and people are trained and supported in following these solutions.

What about the second part of this step? Perhaps the best learning experiences we have is when we make mistakes, then resolve and reflect on what we can do differently in the future. There is an old saying that "Experience is the best teacher." I think a better saying is, "Reflected experience is the best teacher." Respected leadership expert and acclaimed professor Warren Bennis had the opportunity to have extended interviews with some of the most successful leaders in various fields across our country. One of the key takeaways from his study is that all of these great leaders acknowledged making mistakes, but by reflecting and learning from mistakes, they became better people and leaders. This concept is supported by Michael Alter, President of SurePay, when he said, "Mistakes are the tuition you pay for success."

In closing, I like the sentiment that Tony Robbins expressed when he said, "Every problem is a gift. Without them, we wouldn't grow." On that note, let's go and make problems into our friends! ■

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PASSION: THE KEY TO SUCCESS IN THE WORKPLACE

BY WES FRIESEN

There is a big problem we often face in today's workforce, and it might not be what you think. Deloitte completed a large study and found that a full 88% of employees don't have passion for their work, so they don't contribute their full potential, which means their teams don't perform as well as they could.

What Is a Passionate Worker?

Prior research has shown that job satisfaction — how satisfied and happy we are at work — does influence performance (a recent *Wall Street Journal* study found 51% of workers are satisfied). Beyond satisfaction, job engagement — how engaged we are at work — has been shown to be even more important to performance than satisfaction (unfortunately, Gallup research shows about 30% are engaged). But for optimal performance, workers need to move beyond satisfaction and engagement to become passionate about their work.

As Deloitte's report explains, "Passionate workers are committed to continually achieving higher levels of performance. In today's rapidly changing business environment, companies need passionate workers because such workers can drive extreme and sustained performance improvement — more than the one-time performance "bump" that follows a bonus or the implementation of a worker engagement initiative. These workers have both personal resilience and an orientation toward learning and improvement that helps organizations develop the resilience needed to withstand and grow stronger from continuous market challenges and disruptions." When an employee is passionate about what they do, they consistently look for better ways to improve themselves, their role, and the business in general. Passionate employees can spread their passion to others, have more energy and motivation, are more loyal, and have lower absenteeism.

Martin Luther King, Jr. beautifully describes what a passionate worker looks like in this classic quote, "If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep streets even as a Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well'." We need passionate workers like that, don't we?

Why Aren't Employees More Passionate?

Deloitte's report hits on a major part of the problem — managers aren't creating the type of environments where passionate workers can thrive. The report states, "Unfortunately, not only do many companies not recognize the value of worker passion, they view it with suspicion. Many work environments are actually hostile to it. The types of processes and policies designed to minimize risk taking and variances from standard procedures effectively discourage passion. Passionate workers in search of new challenges and learning opportunities are viewed as unpredictable, and thus risky."

Managers are missing out on a huge opportunity by being too risk averse. We need to be much more trusting of our employees if we expect to achieve great things. Most people would like to get passionate about their work, want to do good work, and desire to continuously develop. For many different reasons (politics, processes, and policies, etc.) employees can get turned off and lose that passion.

How Do We Develop More Passion at Work?

Fortunately, there are strategies we can use to help create work environments where people can develop passion for their work. Following are some ideas to consider, which I have derived from the Deloitte report, other experts, and my own personal experiences and observations:

1) Set a positive example. Sadly, Deloitte found that 80% of managers aren't passionate about their work. How can we expect employees to give 100% of their effort and go above and beyond if we as leaders aren't passionate? On the other hand, if we are passionate, our passion is contagious.

2) Give them purpose; explain the why. Purpose is what gives a team the "why" to go the extra mile as they work for you. It can be described as something that is bigger than us which we can work towards. Purpose is a psychological need that is basic and pursued by every person who wishes for a brighter tomorrow.

3) Build connections with each other. Whether it's a team lunch, celebrating employee birthdays, or a volunteer project, these events provide our team members with the opportunity to interact on a personal level with each other. They also serve as a great opportunity for boosting engagement levels in our workplace.

4) Maximize people's strengths. There are two important aspects to this strategy. First, place people in positions where they can use their strengths and giftedness, and avoid placing people in roles they are ill-suited for. For example, if you have an extroverted team member who is very friendly and engaging with people, place them in a customer-facing role, not a back office role with minimal human contact. Second, identify people's strengths and intentionally work at using and developing them further. Dr. Kenneth Leithwood wisely said, "Great leaders

build trust and collaboration while focusing on developing people's capacities rather than focusing on their limitations."

5) Fan the flames. Find ways to share and celebrate the passion of your team. Recognize, reward, and highlight your team successes. Look for opportunities to share the good work your team does in your company newsletter, by shooting videos of your staff in action, and making time to celebrate your joint accomplishments.

6) Appreciate and recognize. Do you like to be shown appreciation for what you do? Of course; we all do! Showing sincere appreciation and recognizing people for who they are and for their specific contributions is priceless, and will help build great passion in the recipients.

7) Encourage creativity and sharing of ideas. The Deloitte study really hit on the importance of making sure that politics, processes, or policies not get in the way of people sharing their creativity and ideas to make work better. People want to have a voice and have their ideas heard, especially the millennials and the upcoming Generation Z workers.

8) Give team members autonomy. It's hard for someone to get passionate if they don't have the autonomy to grow as a person. If someone's micromanaging and controlling every move they make, there's no way they'll be able to develop passion and feel that excitement for what they're doing.

9) Listen. Asking team members for feedback and implementing their ideas may well be the easiest way to engage your workforce. If people feel they contribute to decision making, they'll feel more entrenched in the team and committed to working toward team success.

10) Trust. Trust is foundational for having positive relationships and inspiring people to give their best efforts. Trust can be built by admitting we don't have all the answers, asking for help, admitting mistakes, and showing our human side and allowing others to be human too. Our goal is for our team members to trust us and for us to trust our team members.

11) Don't sedate your rock stars. We should give all our team members the autonomy to do the work that interests them as best we can. Then watch what

happens when they put their energy and talent fully into their role. This is especially true for our most talented and committed stars; we need to encourage them and let them shine and not hold them back.

12) Have fun! Having fun at work makes it a happier place to be and keeps the team motivated if they see that you care about their happiness as well. Plus, customers like dealing with happy motivated people. And when customers are delighted with the service they receive, our team members feel better about themselves and the potential for increased passion is created. ∎

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IT'S THE MANAGER!

BY WES FRIESEN

What is the single biggest factor in the long-term success of an organization or team? The Gallup organization has spent over 30 years researching what drives success and, in the process, interviewed over 10 million people to find the answer. Turns out, the number one factor in success is the manager!

For all of us that are in management roles (or aspire to be), Gallup's findings are sobering and challenging. The good news is there are a number of tools available to help us be better managers and, in turn, help our teams achieve greater long-term success. One such tool is the highly regarded Gallup Q12 survey instrument. The Q12 survey covers 12 crucial elements that are needed to build an engaging and productive workplace culture. Q12 is based on extensive research and been proven to be reliable and valid. Over 30 million people in 198 different countries have taken the survey. I have used the survey with virtually every team I have ever been involved with, and I encourage you to do likewise.

How to Use the Q12 Survey

Sometimes an organization will hire Gallup to administer the survey for all the teams within the organization, which is great if your parent organization sponsors the survey. Apart from that, many individual teams will administer the survey themselves. If you self-administer, following are some considerations I have found:
1) You can use a "Yes" or "No" choice for responses, which is the simplest approach. Alternatively, you may want to use a five-point scale.
2) You can choose to have responses be anonymous or require respondents to include their names. I have done both ways and feel it's a case-by-case judgment call.
3) I suggest you invite respondents to write a short description explaining their answers if they wish.
4) I typically would add two to three open-ended questions to the end of the survey to gather additional feedback. Questions to consider include: "What do you feel are the strengths of the team?", "What ideas do you have to make the team even more successful?", and "What is one area you feel the team needs to improve?"
5) Follow-up is important. I suggest you summarize the results of the survey and share with your team. You can highlight and capitalize on the perceived strengths of the team, as well as single out the one or two weakest areas to participatively work with the team to make improvements. Follow-up builds trust, earns respect, and will help your team take future surveys seriously because they know they will be acted on.

Now let's examine each of the 12 questions on the Q12 Survey:

#1: I know what is expected of me at work. Clarifying expectations is considered the most basic and fundamental employee need. The most effective managers define and discuss the explicit and implicit expectations for each employee and for the team. Best practices include involving employees in setting expectations, providing frequent formal and informal feedback on performance versus the expectations, and continually assessing and fine-tuning expectations as circumstances change.

#2: I have the material and equipment I need to do my work right. This element is the strongest indicator of job stress. The best managers ask employees what they need, and after vetting, advocate for the funding to meet the needs. The best managers are transparent about what they can and cannot provide, but also resourceful and creative to get employees what they need to be successful.

#3: At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day. Giving employees the opportunity to work in their areas of strength boosts employee attraction, engagement, and retention. The best managers know their employees' strengths and position them so they are engaged and provide value to the organization.

#4: In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work. Employee recognition motivates, drives performance, and makes employees feel valued and less likely to leave. The most effective managers promote a recognition-rich environment with praise coming from multiple sources (peers, customers, management) at multiple times.

#5: My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person. Employees need to know that someone is concerned about them as people first and as employees second. Employees are more than a number or glorified widget makers. The best managers know their employees, acknowledge achievements, have performance and development conversations, and show they value and respect their employees.

#6: There is someone at work who encourages my development. Gallup data shows that the number-one reason that employees leave a job is a lack of development and career growth (especially among Millennials!). The best managers take personal responsibility for developing their employees through ongoing development conversations, creating opportunities to learn and grow, supporting learning of new or enhanced skills, and, in some cases, providing mentors.

#7: At work, my opinions seem to count. All employees appreciate having a voice on matters that affect them, especially Millen-

nials. The best managers solicit input and ideas from their employees and are active listeners. They also provide open and honest feedback on ideas and suggestions, advocating and pursuing the good ones and tactfully dealing with unfeasible ones.

#8: The mission or purpose of my organization makes me feel my job is important. Employees want to feel that what they do adds value to stakeholders and the world in some way. The best managers help their employees understand the value they create and how they fit in the bigger picture.

#9: My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work. Trusting your co-workers to share your commitment to quality is essential to excellent team performance. The best managers deal with poor performers and work at ensuring that all team members are committed to individual and team quality.

#10: I have a best (good) friend at work. This is the most controversial of the 12 questions. But research has demonstrated that it's important for employees to feel connected to others and have at least one close friend at work for mutual encouragement and support. The best managers recognize that people want to build meaningful friendships at work, and they should create situations for employees to get to know each other. I found that having some team meetings focused on relationship building, in addition to having at least one off-site team day annually, are helpful.

#11: In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about progress. Employees want to know where they stand and if they are doing good work and meeting expectations. The best managers provide regular feedback, including positive expressions of appreciation. The best managers view themselves as "coaches" that are there to help support and encourage, and not "policemen" that are there to punish.

#12: This last year, I have had opportunities to learn and grow. Research has shown that when employees feel they are learning and growing, they work harder and more efficiently, have higher morale, and are more likely to stay with the organization. I resonate with Richard Branson's philosophy to, "Train people well enough so they can leave, treat them well enough so they don't want to." The best managers create individual learning and growth opportunities. I have found that having individual learning plans that are updated and reviewed regularly are great tools to support learning and growth. ∎

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