

Turning Positivity into Profit: 5 Tips for Leveraging Employee Strengths

Seventeen to one.

According to some media studies, if you pick up a newspaper, surf the web, or turn on the 24-hour news cycle today, that's the ratio of bad news to good news you can expect to find.

And while many factors have led to this arguably destructive trend in American media coverage, it's also true that our brains are hard wired to pay more attention to negative information than positive. It's an attribute that can be traced back to our survival instincts, and unfortunately, it can affect more than just what headlines draw us in.

Negativity bias can also affect our mindset in the workplace, including where we focus our energy, and how we treat and manage those around us. For example, although we generally hire new employees for their strengths, once they're on board, our negativity bias can sometimes divert our efforts to honing their weakest skills rather than embracing what attracted us in the first place.

Certainly it's not wise to ignore critical shortcomings, but if we can recalibrate our minds to think more positively, research shows that focusing on employees' strengths is a far more beneficial use of our time.

According to Gallup, people who use their strengths every day are six times more likely to be engaged in their jobs. They also perform better, are more loyal employees, and yes—even generate higher returns for their companies.

So to help you build a more productive and profitable organization, here are five quick tips to stay focused on what matters most—recognizing and leveraging employee strengths:

Drop the One Size Fits All Mentality.

Most companies hire around standard job descriptions, but that doesn't mean talent should be forced into fixed molds. To enable employees to perform to their greatest potential, be sure you allow them opportunities to capitalize on their individual strengths and natural talents.

Invest in Employee Strengths.

While training is commonly used to offset weaknesses, it's a far better investment to provide additional training to employees in areas where they already shine. There may be short-term benefits to bumping an individual's skill set from poor to average, but the potential return is exponentially greater anywhere good can become extraordinary.

Build Strong Teams.

Rather than aspire to hire only well-rounded individuals, it's important to take into account what unique strengths new hires could bring to the table to compliment the skills and competencies of current team members. At the end of the day, it's far more productive to have a well-rounded team full of unique individuals than a team of well-rounded, like-minded people.

Think Outside the Desk.

As *Inc. Magazine* pointed out, "One of the reasons Google is a top employer is 85 percent of their employees believe their immediate leader is interested in them as a whole person, not just an employee." Taking the time to learn what drives your employees outside of work is a great way to not only build relationships, but also uncover personal strengths that can be creatively applied in the workplace.

Ask Instead of Assume.

Just because an employee is performing well, that doesn't mean his or her potential is being maximized. Rather than assume a successful team member has reached the peak of what they can achieve, make it a priority to ask whether they feel their current position provides them with the opportunity to do what they do best. If the answer is anything less than yes, consider how you may be able to optimize their role.

So what does this all mean?

Perhaps George W. Bush had it right earlier this year when he said "Too often we judge [others] by their worst examples, while judging ourselves by our best intentions."

According to Gallop research, only 37% of employees say their supervisor focuses on their strengths or positive characteristics. This means over 60% of managers today are making a critical mistake. Although it's not always easy to cast aside negativity biases, the results of doing so have proven time and time again to be mutually beneficial to both employees and employers.

So as you're going about the rest of your workday today, challenge yourself to be more mindful of where you focus your attention and energy. What you'll likely find is that one of the ways you can most positively impact your organization is simply by thinking positively.

Could your organization achieve greater success by better leveraging unique employee strengths? If you need help getting started, give us a call today at #708-738-5040, or visit our website at RRGExec.com