

MONDAY MANNA

7 September 2020

THE INSPIRATIONAL VALUE OF MANAGERS

By Rick Boxx

Gallup, a prestigious analytics and advisory company founded more than 80 years ago, has published a book called *It's the Manager*. According to an article about the book in the *Wall Street Journal*, Gallup research discovered "the single most profound, distinct and clarifying finding" in its 80-year history.

The Gallup organisation's study revealed that managers did not just influence the results their teams achieved; they accounted for 70 percent of the variance in the productivity levels of their people. As a result, Gallup began to advise companies to seek out managers who infect their teams with a sense of purpose, individuals that function more like a coach.

One of the study's conclusions was that managers can help bridge the gap between engaged and disengaged workers. We see this truth reflected in the biblical description of Israelite King David, a talented leader who knew how to engage others in his cause. In Psalm 78:72, we read, "*David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.*" If you want your business to flourish, hire managers skilled at engaging others.

It's the Manager also identified another factor critical for hiring the right managers. They must understand why it is so important for workers to become engaged in the work they do, not just show up and put in their time. The Gallup researchers observed that in previous decades, workers ranked their families, having children, owning a home and living in peace as priorities that ranked above having a good job. But by the turn of the 21st century, that trend changed. Those surveyed said *a rewarding job* ranked first.

The engagement level of workers can decline dramatically if their job feels unrewarding. Good managers have learned how to inspire the uninspired. The Old Testament book of Proverbs has an interesting insight about this: "*The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out*" (Proverbs 20:5).

For businesses to flourish in the future, they will need to identify discerning managers who have the capacity to "infect" their team with a sense of purpose, one that they find rewarding.

To maximise both productivity and morale, there is another step beyond keeping workers engaged. The truly effective manager has the ability to inspire their teams to become even more engaged and increase the level of engagement throughout the organisation.

Gallup's research determined only about one-third of employees are highly engaged in the United States, where the study was conducted. However, they discovered that in successful businesses, engagement can often reach as high as 68 percent of the entire organisation.

This is important, they noted, because their research also discovered the top 10 percent of companies, ranked in terms of level of employee engagement, posted profit gains of 26 percent through the last recession, while their competitors having lower levels of employee engagement experienced a 14 percent decline in profits. People of character, those who can inspire their teams toward new heights of excellence and performance, are to be prized – and pursued. "*But select capable men from all the people—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain*" (Exodus 18:21).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

How would you compare a worker who is engaged in his or her job, versus those who are disengaged?

Looking at your own work situation, how engaged are you in the responsibilities you are assigned to carry out? Do you start the day with enthusiasm and zeal, or do you find yourself distracted, even gazing at what appears to be the "greener grass" on the other side of the fence?

What steps can a manager – or anyone in a supervisory role – take to increase the engagement of the people they oversee? How would you describe a manager who is inspiring or inspirational in dealing with others?

From a faith perspective, why is it important for a manager who is a follower of Jesus Christ to place a high priority on keeping people on the team engaged and feeling rewarded through their work?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 11:30, 22:4, 27:23, 28:2

Matthew 22:37-40

Galatians 5:13-14

Philippians 2:3-4