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March 23 , 2011 | Send us an email

FLOWERS CANADA RETAIL

NewsBud

GROWING YOUR BUSINESS TOGETHER

CONTENTS

THREE WAYS TO BOOST COMMITMENT AT WORK

The average worker seems to be sleepwalking their way through their jobs, according to the latest employee engagement surveys. Here are three mostly free tactics to give your team a boost.

While the economy recovers, the average worker seems to have lost a sense of meaning at work. They're disengaged -- and that disengagement is costing companies big money. According to a 2010 employee engagement study by Gallup, "disengaged employees erode an organization's bottom line, while breaking the spirits of colleagues in the process. Within the U.S. workforce, Gallup estimates this cost to the bottom line to be more than $300 billion in lost productivity alone." Ouch.

More importantly, that's a lot of people who are sleepwalking through the activity that takes up the majority of their lives: their job. And it's quite clear that throwing money at employees is not the answer. As Daniel Pink explains in Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us, it's "not how much money we make that ultimately makes us happy between nine-to-five. It's whether our work fulfills us."

I run a tech startup. Startups are known for their employee engagement practices. We have to be good at it. They might seem glamorous in movies like The Social Network, where Mark Zuckerberg goes from Harvard dorm to executive boardroom in 90 minutes of screen time. Working at a tech startup translates to years of long hours, below-market salaries, and the nagging fear that all of your friends are on the Facebook rocket while you've picked the MySpace horse and buggy.

So tech startups have some common practices to keep their talent motivated and engaged. While the basic principles behind these techniques are low-tech, tech companies have, unsurprisingly, found ways to enhance them by using technology. But the trick is to keep it simple. It's not rocket science -- it's about human connection.

Here are three ways I try to keep my team engaged:

1. Make time for face time: There's no substitute for personal contact. The personal touch can be challenging for today's distributed workforces, but technology can help. We link our Toronto and San Francisco offices with a corporate video Skype portal, so teams at one location have instant video access to teams at the other.

2. Say thanks: In 2009, during the depths of the economic downturn, a McKinsey study found that the most important incentive a company can offer to engage employees is praise and commendation from their immediate manager. Sixty-seven percent of survey respondents ranked praise as "effective" or "very effective," well above stock options (35%), an increase in base pay (52%) and even cold, hard cash bonuses (60%). My company uses software that lets everyone thank each other publicly by awarding each other badges for everything from great coding to hitting their numbers. But a simple thank you, in person or by email, can go a long way.

3. Connect work with meaning: In his new book PEAK: How Great Companies Get Their Mojo from Maslow, Chip Conley discusses encouraging housekeepers at his Joie de Vivre hotel chain to think of themselves as "clutter busters" and "the peace of mind police." While those labels may sound a little ridiculous, reframing the job encourages employees to connect their work with its impact on the people around them. My company uses a public company-wide feed (like a Facebook wall but only visible to our employees) to post positive feedback and stories we hear from our customers.

The best part of all these tactics? They are mostly free. That's critical for a startup running on investor capital. But in these uncertain economic times, isn't effective plus free the right answer for just about every business? Spending a little time to save some of that $300 billion in lost productivity every year sounds like a bargain to me.

Daniel Debow is co-CEO of Rypple, a social software company that allows people to stay on track, share continuous feedback and coach each other at work.

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR STAR EMPLOYEES QUIT

The day your best employee comes in with the news that they're moving on is the day you start recruiting them again. Here are a few things to keep in mind.

While you might have a bigger paycheck and you might have a special feeling inside now that you have a staff of your own, the gripes, hiring, and firing responsibilities are also all yours. Welcome to management. In You Can't Fire Everyone, Fortune deputy managing editor Hank Gilman lays out some of the most critical challenges managers face today, drawing from his decades of experience on the front lines.

The following excerpt addresses the unfortunate, inevitable day when your talented employees decide to leave. This excerpt also marks the official launch of You Can't Fire Everyone (sound familiar?), a series that will open our site to reader contributions on their triumphs and trials in the working world. Tune in next week for tales on firing and being fired.

I know this will come as a shocker -- well, to some of you -- but eventually new and/or better jobs will come along for your more talented people. Or eventually they'll just get tired of what they're doing (and of you) and will want to experience something else. Or sometimes a job offer will come along and your star won't know whether they want to leave or not. But if and when a star decides to leave, you just have to understand and hope that someday they'll return. And you know what? It does happen. And a lot of it depends on how you act when they leave.

Now, some bosses will hold grudges. Pretty much like a scorned husband or wife. There's one story of a publisher I'll leave unnamed, that will not hire you back if you leave. It's a breakup pure and simple. (My boss kind of feels that way. Jeez, you should see his face when someone leaves. But he always lets them return!) But I like to look at it a different way. The day your best employee comes in with the news that they're moving on is the day you start recruiting them again. A few things to keep in mind:

1. Don't bad-mouth the new employer.

This is pretty classless. I once interviewed the late Sam Walton for a story I was writing and he not once said a negative word about his competitors. Hell, you could tell him that Kmart was the worst retailer you have ever seen and how could they compete with the mighty Wal-Mart? And by the way, they say Wal-Mart is run by a bunch of hicks. He wouldn't budge. In fact, he would even go on and on about all the good things Kmart was doing. (Hey, look at that Pennzoil display -- you can't do much better than that!) You knew he was fibbing a little bit. But the point was he was taking the high road. And it made him look good.

The same thing is true in any business. One of my employees, late in the courtship stage with a competitor, recently asked me what I thought of the people he might be working for. I knew their flaws (I actually thought they were evil trolls), but it wasn't worth getting into. For one thing, he might like the trolls. For another, it would make me look like a petty jerk if I started gossiping about people, some of whom I didn't know. (Not that I'm always above that.) Whenever I hear one of my bosses slander someone, I figure they probably do the same to me as well. So here's my standard line: "Look, you're lucky, you have two good options and you can't go wrong. Of course, I want you to stay. But that's your decision. I have a pony in the race." I actually believe that.

2. Come up with a counteroffer, but only if they really want one.

I tell this to people all the time. If it's partly about money, I'll get you some more. If it's about your title, we can do something about that. (It's only words.) But if you really want a new job -- or need a change -- take it. You'll be coming back to me anyway in six months if your idea of a good career move is a useless new title.

One of our more talented writers must have gone through this process three or four times before he eventually left. You know, walk in to me or one of his other bosses with a job offer in his hand. He'd come in and say he was being courted and we'd come up with more money. Then he'd come in again.

The final time I just said, "Look, it sounds like a great job and I know you need a change of scenery. You're bored. This is the only place you've ever worked. Go off, enjoy the new place, but think of us when you want to come back again. You still have a home here." So he took the new job. I later found out he was insulted

that there was no counteroffer -- also that I wasn't, no kidding, devastated enough at the thought of his leaving -- even though he didn't want a counteroffer and was going to leave anyway. Sometimes you can't win. (Postscript: By the time you read this, the writer may have returned. The grass isn't always greener, but sometimes you just have to let them find that out on their own.)

3. Don't be a hypocrite.

I've had, let's see, about six or seven major jobs depending upon how you count them up. I'm not going to sit there and tell someone that moving on is a bad thing when it isn't, and I've jumped around a lot. I wouldn't be writing this book if I hadn't had all those jobs, met all those people, and managed in more than one place. And my employees know that, too. It makes it easier to lose someone because you understand and it's just something they have to do. This is especially true of young writers and editors who have been at the same place most of their careers. Trust me, they'll want to work for you again if you're honest and helpful. Unless, of course, you're the reason they're leaving.

But having a lot of different jobs, as a manager, does have some advantages. I can, and do, tell employees with wandering eyes that I've been there. "Go off and have a great time. Enjoy the job. I've had enough of them and you're not going to get much better than this." And I believe that. And, again, sometimes they just need a change. A kind of young reporter left Fortune recently to go to The Washington Post. I knew she wanted the change partly because she wanted to work in a newsroom atmosphere. No way could we provide that for her. Sometimes you just say good luck, "I know you'll do great," and let them explore what's out there.

4. Keep in touch.

Of course, you always tell them they can come back. But the hardest part is keeping up connections. I always make it a point to have lunch or dinner and remain friendly. Sometimes they don't come back. But keeping in touch works in other ways. You have a scout in a new place if you want to recruit one of their colleagues. You also have a damn good reference in case you decide you need to look for work! (Hey, don't think it doesn't help.) Finally, former employees are, of course, asked by potential new hires what it is like working for you. And they'll be honest.

Excerpted from You Can't Fire Everyone by Hank Gilman by arrangement with Portfolio Penguin, a member of Penguin Group (USA), Inc., Copyright © 2011 by Hank Gilman.

Source: Fortune, By Hank Gilman, Deputy Managing Editor

SEARCH AND SOCIAL TOGETHER AID ONLINE SHOPPERS

Online buyers rely on a healthy mix of search and social media throughout the purchasing process

Purchasing funnel. Buying cycle. Path to purchase. Over the years, the desire for marketers to label and map the exact nature of the online buying process has uncovered the complexities of the journey and the growing number of resources buyers rely on as they move to make informed purchasing decisions.

Research from GroupM Search and comScore highlights the increased use of yet another resource consumers are turning to in combination with their tried-and-true search engine usage: social media.

Marketers still skeptical of the overall influence of social media on online purchasing habits have reason to rethink that skepticism. In fact, buyers who purchase or convert online are almost as likely to use a combination of search and social resources (48%) as they are to use just search (51%) along the path to purchase.

Furthermore, when consumers were exposed to both brand-specific search results and social media, search clickthrough rates increased by 94%, indicating the investment in social media can help marketers to better influence consumers during their purchasing process and boost search performance.

However, marketers looking to capitalize on social media's role in vetting shortlists and identifying new brands will have to look beyond standard media channels and brand-controlled experiences on Facebook and Twitter.

Buyers researching brands on their product shortlist depend largely on their peers' opinions--30% of consumers rely on user reviews to aid in their purchase decision, whereas only 17% and 9% turn to Facebook or Twitter, respectively.

In the 90 days leading up to purchase, less than 1% of all online purchasers engaged with brand-controlled social media from Facebook, Twitter and YouTube or ads on social sites, whereas 16% of consumers engaged with vertical- or industry-specific blogs offering expert opinions and product reviews. Reliance on review-focused social media channels makes it difficult for marketers to control consumer exposure to unapproved brand messages and interactions as consumers vet each brand on their shortlist.

Additional findings from ForeSee Results further emphasize the role of product review websites as an important influence on buyers visiting retail websites. Compared to other influences, product review websites were most likely to affect the shopper's likelihood of purchasing online, sharing this distinction with another highly influential factor: word-of-mouth recommendations.

Somewhat contradictory to the GroupM and comScore findings is the reported level of consumer satisfaction of interaction with branded messages and advertising on social networks, indicating an area ripe for further investigation to better understand the true influence of brand-created messaging on social networks.

In reality, the data further illustrates the complexity of the online path to purchase and further justifies the need for marketers to track their individual marketing programs, specifically their search marketing and social media efforts, to uncover the channels and resources that best optimize the consumer buying experience.

A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR DAILY DEAL SITES

Optimistic scenario puts sales at $6 billion by 2015

Deal-of-the-day sites, often featuring a group buying component, have taken off over the past year, with startups like Groupon getting big fast and major internet properties like Google and Facebook looking for their own ways to get in on the action.

Consumer spending on deal-a-day offers is poised to grow more than 35% to reach $3.9 billion in the US by 2015, according to a March 2011 forecast by BIA/Kelsey. Deal sites like Groupon, LivingSocial and others have become popular among users who are getting accustomed to receiving deals packaged conveniently in one daily email, eliminating the need for hunting around on the web.

In its most optimistic scenario, BIA/Kelsey projects that daily deal sales could exceed $6 billion by 2015, representing a 47.4% compound annual growth rate. The bullish forecast seems entirely plausible, given Groupon's meteoric growth from sales of $33 million in 2009 to $760 million in 2010, said eMarketer principal analyst Jeffrey Grau.

"It's plausible because it appeals to consumers' desire to get a good deal, and as daily deal sites target offers, they will stimulate consumer demand," Grau explained. In addition, sites that aggregate daily deals like YipIt, Dealery and Dealnews will make it easier for consumers to find compelling offers.

A pre-holiday 2010 survey by deal site Eversave suggested consumers' keen interest in using daily deal sites as they prepared their holiday shopping. The survey revealed that 66.8% of US online buyers said they would use a daily deal website for online holiday shopping and 46.2% for restaurants.

Strong consumer interest in the convenience of such deal sites and the entry of new players, including AT&T and The New York Times Co., into the space will only add more options. That could also potentially dilute revenues by making the pie smaller.

"What could derail the market is that people get tired of daily deals," Grau noted. "People were very excited by the novelty of eBay's online auction marketplace in its early days but that enthusiasm eventually waned causing eBay to build up its fixed-price sales."

Source: eMarketer.com

STATUS UPDATE: COMPETITION BUREAU OF CANADA REVIEWING FLOWERS CANADA FILING

Flowers Canada Retail filed a complaint on behalf of the industry in relation to misleading website listings and addresses.

The Competition Bureau of Canada has formally responded to the filing by Flowers Canada Retail and is currently reviewing the case.

FLOWERS CANADA
R E T A I L

RE: RULING ON MISLEADING TRADE PRACTICES

I am the Executive Director of Flowers Canada Retail (FCR), the national trade association representing retail florists in Canada. FCR has recently received a complaint from Denise Scapellino, owner of the Flower Cellar, a member florist in Mississauga, concerning a website operated by a competitor. The offending website has included the complainant's business address in a list of Toronto-area florists without the complainant's knowledge or consent. The biggest problem with the offending listing is that is accompanied by a hypertext link which, in fact, goes directly to the competitor's website under the generic URL, www.afloristintoronto.com. As a result, unsuspecting users who access this website through the link are left with the impression that they are purchasing flowers from the listed florist, when they are, in fact, placing the order with an entirely different florist. According to the complainant, there has been a substantial downturn in her business since this link was placed on the afloristintoronto.com website. She believes that many of her former customers have been misled to place orders with her competitor as a result of the misleading listing and link.

While the offending listing does not purport to offer any specific product, this misuse of the complainant's business address does on its face, appear to constitute an unfair trade practice under the Competition Act.

As the trade association representing retail florists across Canada, FCR is particularly concerned that this is not an isolated issue between two individual florists. Rather it is representative of the sort of misleading advertising within the florist trade that has become commonplace on the Internet. Companies represent themselves as being local florists in a particular town or city when, in fact, they are nothing more than call centres that gather orders which they then re-direct to local florists after charging a substantial commission for obtaining the order. The damage being sustained by legitimate local florists as a result of this misleading trade practice is very substantial.

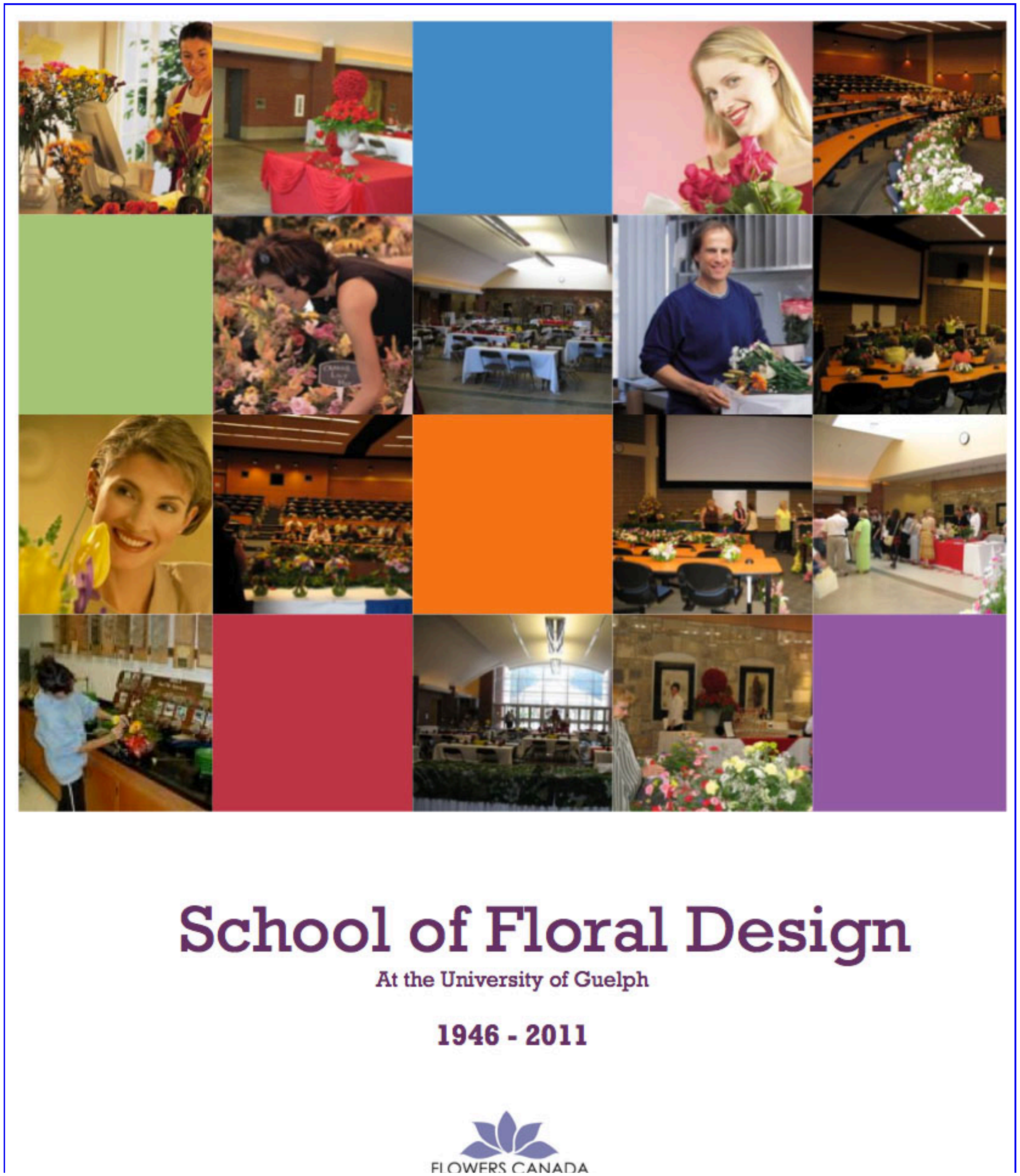
In the case of the website that is the subject of this complaint, we find that, in addition to the complainant's address, it lists addresses of over 65 individual shops in the metro Toronto area, each of which links to the e-commerce website operated by the owner of the www.afloristintoronto.com website. Thus the listing of the complainant's business address is not an isolated case.

We would be obliged if you could look into this matter and let us know whether the listing of other businesses in this misleading way does, in fact, constitute an unfair trade practice under the Competition Act. If so, we would ask that appropriate enforcement action be taken to compel the offending party to remove the misleading list from their website and to compensate any parties who have been adversely affected by their unfair trade practices.

Sincerely,

Arman Patel, B.A.,M.A., MBA
Executive Director
Flowers Canada Retail

FLORIST DESIGN SCHOOL AT UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH



Our goal is helping you achieve yours!

Flowers Canada Retail represents all segments of the Canadian Retail Floral Industry.
Our goal is helping you reach yours.

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