

Unbridle the Employees

Shomona Mukherjee
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According to the latest Gallup Report, only 15% of employees worldwide are engaged in their jobs.¹ This staggeringly low percentage results in loss of trillions of dollars worldwide each year. It's not surprising that the most engaged employees are employees in positions of power. Officials in executive positions and managers show the highest engagement rates within organizations.² Also, regions with strong hierarchical structure, like East Asia, have as low as 6% of employees feeling engaged.³ It is apparent that organizations around the world face a problem with engagement in teams. This apathy translates into lack of trust and thus exhibiting the base characteristics of the five dysfunctions of a team.⁴

Giving employees autonomy is a viable solution to increase engagement. This often seems counter intuitive as its human tendency to enforce more layers of authority to keep employees in check. However, through this course I've discovered that giving people autonomy often results in the best functioning teams. ShipIt Day in Atlassian is a paragon of this very sentiment.⁵ Quarterly, one day where Atlassian employees can work on any passion project with members they choose. It gives them all an opportunity to be the change they wish to see. True to theory, this turns out to be one of Atlassian's most productive days. The sense of impact is what brings about engagement and increases productivity.

Personally, this theory puts results from my previous work place into perspective. Being a part of Consulting firm that handled multiple fortune 500 accounts, some accounts seemed to be doing better than others and as a result had a great influx of repeat business. These highly successful accounts had one thing in common, the leaders placed greater responsibility and decision-making ability in the hands of the team members. As a college graduate, I was treated no differently and had complete ownership of the part I was creating right from design and implementation to demonstration to clients. This sense of control and autonomy harbored trust which resulted in constructive dialogue within the team. While there was autonomy, there was no unquestioned autonomy thus these mutually beneficial conflicts resulted in commitment and clear accountability. The account flourished for years and till date is one of the most successful accounts held by the firm. It

1. *State of the Global Workplace*. New York, NY: Gallup Press, 2017.

2. *State of the Global Workplace*

3. *State of the Global Workplace*

4. Lencioni, Patrick. 2012. *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: Team Assessment*. San Francisco, CA: Pfeiffer.

5. Silvers, Jon. 2012. "ShipIt Day in the Wild - Atlassian Blog." Atlassian. Atlassian. June 28, 2012.
https://www.atlassian.com/blog/archives/shipitday_in_the_wild.

was clear that the leaders of the account wanted to create more leaders in its members instead of mere followers and thus this formula slowly became the recipe for success which many other accounts within the firm started adopting. By unknowingly checking off each of the five dysfunctions by simply putting power in the hands of many helped create extremely efficient and engaged teams.⁶

Going ahead, it puts into perspective the kind of leader I aspire to be. Industrial revolution management techniques of command and control for execution type work cannot still be applied to post revolution highly skilled populace.⁷ While they might have been effective on an unskilled population to do repeated manual tasks, these techniques cannot factor in engagement which is necessary for modern day productivity. Without engagement, there can be no fully functional teams and without teams there can be no results. As Gary Hamel said, bureaucracy is kryptonite to productivity.⁸ Empowering individuals in a team rather than creating layers is the solution to enhancing efficiency and avoiding the five dysfunctions of a team.⁹

6. Lencioni, Patrick

7. McGrath, Rita Gunther. "Management's Three Eras: A Brief History." Harvard Business Review. November 02, 2014. Accessed September 22, 2018. <https://hbr.org/2014/07/managements-three-eras-a-brief-history>.

8. Hamel, Gary, and Michele Zanini. 2016. "The \$3 Trillion Prize for Busting Bureaucracy (and How to Claim It)." *SSRN Electronic Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2748842>.

9. Lencioni, Patrick