

The Giving Advantage: A Boost To Workplace Engagement

Allowing your employees to support social causes through work can help them achieve personal as well as business objectives, says global entrepreneur and YPO member Ammar Charani. In a recent discussion with YPO's Social Engagement, Thriving Communities and Global Family Business Networks, he offers for-profit business leaders insights on how to give new meaning to their lives and the lives of their disengaged employees, creating an effective and easy-to-implement business advantage.

Commented [MOU1]: Find a way to make this happen for employees. Support them in their endeavors.

MOTIVATION THROUGH PURPOSE AND MEANING

According to Charani, society in general, including the business community, is suffering from an epidemic of loss of purpose. Even among business leaders, articulating the meaning of life is challenging and the subject of many discussions. This in time spreads to their businesses, creating disengagement among employees, a phenomenon that, according to the latest Gallup studies, has become the new normal in the corporate world globally.

Commented [MOU2]: Employees need purpose in order to perform at their peak.

“Employee disengagement is clearly a challenge that chief executives are aware of. But despite all the investments in engagement programs, engagement levels to a large degree have remained stagnant,” says Charani, who believes it is time to adopt a different solution based on rewarding intrinsic human needs. “Employees want work that offers meaning to their lives or a sense of higher purpose. This is achieved through giving, the most basic human value and the common denominator of happiness.” By leveraging the natural genetic tendency to give, he offers a “simple and more natural” approach to increase employee engagement and with it business productivity and growth.

Commented [MOU3]: Must make sure that the work given to employees suits their capabilities and motives.

THE ELEMENTS OF GIVING

Charani highlights three important areas of giving. The first and most important is giving time, even if it is a few seconds to smile to a stranger. The second is giving well, something that makes a difference to the recipient, and the third is to give consciously and mindfully. “Giving is not a once-a-year occasion but should be done regularly and with intention, even if it's only to say thank you.”

Commented [MOU4]: Make sure to show individuals that one cares.

Commented [MOU5]: Make sure to cater the gift towards their preferences.

Commented [MOU6]: Do not over give or under give.

Applying this to a business context, he cites research from Adam Grant, professor at The Wharton School and the author of “Give and Take,” showing that only 25 percent of employees of companies can be classified as givers — with the rest considered takers, who advance their own agendas, or matchers, a group that tries to maintain an even balance of give-and-take in their interactions. Grant's research also shows that organizations have a strong interest in fostering a giving behavior as that promotes effective collaboration and innovation.

Commented [MOU7]: People are typically self-interested so there must be a shift.

IGNITING THE GIVING ADVANTAGE

Charani also believes that encouraging giving among employees is not as complicated, or costly, as it may sound. “When you ignite giving, you don’t only help immediate recipients but inspire and influence others in the company to do the same,” he says. “When employees become conscious givers, they will take this back to their family and community. The impact to the business and community will then grow exponentially every day.”

While the cost of allowing employees to give appears prohibitive for most for-profit businesses, Charani says it does not have to be that way. Working with a fellow YPO member Gene Brown, Founder and CEO of the City Bin Co. in Ireland, he applied his theory to practice. The company rearranged a budget originally allocated for traditional public relations and other board level corporate social responsibility projects, and redirected it to employees, giving each a small amount to give to the charity of their choice on a regular basis. The process was managed through a cloud-based platform called GivDay.org. One year later, the weekly giving on behalf of the company to the 36 local causes chosen by employees not only generated employee engagement and loyalty, but also fueled followers to the company and generated unexpected media attention.

“We all know that we have a problem with disengaged employees,” says Charani. “The solution is to create a giving culture. This is not hard and once ignited multiplies and becomes contagious.”

Commented [MOU8]: People look towards others for guidance and follow their examples.

Commented [MOU9]: Last take away from the article — create a culture of giving.