Becoming a Talent Magnet

How to Deliver the Employee Experience
A-List Talent Wants

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Becoming a Talent Magnet Requires:

1. Knowing what talent wants

2. Knowing how to deliver that in a work experience

3. Knowing how to tell the labor market about it

How to Communicate What It’s Like to Work in Your Organization and Why a Talented Employee Would Want To

“It’s all about the story”

1. Interview employees about why they love working in your organization.

2. Collect stories that communicate your Employer Value Proposition and how you deliver what A-List Talent is looking for.

3. Use video if possible.

4. Use these stories in all aspects of your recruiting and hiring process.

5. Include them on your website.
**Resources by David Lee on Employer Branding and Storytelling (these will be on your resource page)**

*Human Capital Institute Podcast: Storytelling and the Employer Brand*

*Magnetize Your Employer Brand: How to Create and Communicate a Compelling—and Truthful—Employer Brand That Attracts Top Talent*

*Make Your Employer Branding and Onboarding More Fascinating With a Compelling Origin Story*

**Quotes by Peter Drucker on “The Volunteer Workforce of the 21st Century”**

“What motivates---and especially what motivates knowledge workers—is what motivates volunteers.”

“Accept the fact that we have to treat almost anybody as a volunteer.”

“In the knowledge economy everyone is a volunteer, but we have trained our managers to manage conscripts.”

This is why it’s imperative that we understand the Psychology of Volunteering and how management can use this knowledge to create an intrinsically rewarding work experience that attracts, retains, and engages A-List Talent.
The “Big Idea”

“How Can You Replicate As Much as Possible, the Intrinsically Rewarding Volunteer Experience?”

To eliminate the things that prevent you from being a Talent Magnet

1. Continually communicate: “We need your feedback” and explain why.

2. Invest in training for managers on the skills that create Psychological Safety so they get candid, useful feedback rather than guarded, sanitized “I don’t to say the wrong thing and get in trouble” faux feedback. If employees feel safe enough to be honest, they are more likely to bring up issues that are causing disengagement, rather than remain silent, remain disengaged, or leave.

3. Conduct in-depth interviews with both your A-List Talent and your “Steady Eddies” to find out what their manager and the organization does that negatively affects their desire to recommend your organization as an employer.

4. Provide the training, coaching, support, and accountability to enable managers to have ongoing Engagement Conversations with employees.

Note: Just doing this well will boost engagement, because it communicates to employees “We care about you and our impact on you” and strengthens the relationship between manager and employee.
How to Create a Stronger Emotional Bond with Your Mission and Vision

Continually share stories and examples that illustrate:

1. The Why
2. “We do good things in the world”
3. “We are helping our community”
4. “We make a difference/YOU make a difference”

To Do This: Collect and share stories that communicate these messages. Use these stories both internally and externally. Share them in departmental and team meetings, in organizational newsletters, on your intranet, and where you post jobs. Get as many as possible in video format.
How to Cultivate a More Relational, Rather Than Transactional, Connection with Employees

Two of the top drivers of Millennial Employee Engagement have to do with the “people side” of the work experience. Thus, if employers want to be a Talent Magnet, it’s important for their managers and leaders to create a more relational connection with employees, rather than just an impersonal, “all business” transactional connection.

1. Use the same courtesies and pleasantries you would to friends and other people in your personal life, e.g. please and thank you, expressing appreciation, adding little pleasantries to emails and voice mails vs. being impersonal and “all business.”

2. Show genuine interest in them as people and people who have a life outside of work by asking them how they’re doing (and really caring about the answer) and inquiring about things they are interested in or having going on in their personal life.

3. Show the same respect to people with less power as you would to those with more power. Ask yourself “Would I use this same voice tone and word choice with my boss?”

4. Show you care about what they’ve shared by following up later and checking in about it.

Suggested Reading:

Why Your Employees Are “Just Not That Into You”

When Your Employees Want Yo to Really “See” Them
Relational vs. Transactional Managerial Behaviors You’ve Experienced and Their Effect

Think of managers you’ve had over the years with whom you felt a bond. You wanted to do your best to please them. You cared about their opinion of you. You trusted and respected them. Then think of those with whom you had no bond. Because of how they treated you, you didn’t care about their goals and what they cared about. While you still did good work because you are a professional, you weren’t interested in giving a 110%. Now, compare the two groups in how they treated and interacted with you.

1. In general...
2. How they showed appreciation vs. took you for granted
3. How they showed respect...or not...
4. How they responded to requests
5. How they gave feedback
6. How they dealt with mistakes
Are You Delivering These Key Components of an Intrinsically Satisfying Work Experience?

1. The Opportunity to Use One’s Brain at Work, Solve Important Problems, and Make a Difference
2. The Opportunity to Grow Professionally
3. The Ability to Feel “the Thrill of Victory” Rather Than The Agony of Defeat
4. Autonomy

Questions to Ask Related to “The Opportunity to Use One’s Brain at Work, Solve Important Problems, and Make a Difference”

1. “What problems do we currently have that we could involve employees in solving?”
2. “How can we create our own Millennial Think Tank like US Bank’s Dynamic Dozen?”
3. “How else can we come up with opportunities for employees to solve problems, such improvements, and innovate?” (hint: ask your employees)
4. “How can we help managers get better at asking productive questions that engage employees in problem solving and looking for ways to make a difference?”

For more articles, audios, and videos on being your best and helping others do the same, go to HumanNatureAtWork.com. For information on coaching, consulting, or training by David Lee, call 207-571-9898
Questions to Ask Related to “The Opportunity to Grow Professionally”

1. “How can we embed learning in employees’ everyday work life, so they are continually developing new skills, refining their current skills, and gaining knowledge?”

2. “How can we involve employees in projects that help them grow professionally and contribute to our organization’s goals?”

3. “Do we work with employees on their professional development goals and aspirations?”

4. “Do our managers coach their employees on how to recognize their talents and strengths, and use this knowledge to maximize each employee’s contribution...and help them develop professionally?”

Questions to Ask Related to “Set Up Employees to Feel The Thrill of Victory and not the Agony of Defeat”

1. “Do we enable our employees to feel ‘the thrill of victory’ rather than set them up for ‘the agony of defeat’ by giving them adequate training, technology, and time to do their jobs well?”

2. “Do we start employees off right with an effective orientation and onboarding program?”

3. “Do we ask employees for feedback about whether there are obstacles to doing their job well, that we could remove?”

Questions to Ask Related to “Autonomy”

1. “Do employees have a significant measure of control over their work, or do they have minimal flexibility and decision-making authority?”

2. “How can we give our employees more autonomy and decision-making authority?”

3. “What other ways can we give our employees more positive control in their work experience?”

4. “What else can we do to give employees as close to a “Small Business Owner experience” in their jobs as possible?”

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A Partial List of What A-List Talent Wants in a Work Experience

Directions: Please score your organization, using a scale of 1 to 10, on how well it satisfies these key drivers of employee engagement.

1. To be part of an innovative organization that’s doing important things.
2. To have their voice heard and ideas taken seriously.
3. The chance to solve important problems.
4. For their daily work to make a difference and to see that impact.
5. To have as much flexibility, decision-making latitude, and job autonomy as possible.
6. To have hard work, sacrifice, and excellence recognized and appreciated.
7. To engage in projects that add to their professional skill portfolio.
8. The chance to develop their leadership skills.
9. To have their supervisor and/or mentor show interest in their professional growth and them as a person.
10. Leadership that respects—and even encourages—their right to have a personal life.

Observations on What You MOST Need to Address:

For information on using the full version of this assessment, email David@HumanNatureAtWork.com

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Is Becoming More of a Talent Magnet Important to Your Organization?

Overview: This self-assessment will help you get clearer on whether focusing more attention on becoming a Talent Magnet would be helpful to your organization. Any area that you score lower than a 3 should be addressed. If you have positions that are extremely hard to fill, you would be wise to address any area you score lower than a 4.

Directions: For each item, please use the following scoring system.

1 – Strongly Disagree
2 – Disagree
3 – Agree
4 – Strongly Agree

1. We deliver the kind of work experience A-List Talent wants.

2. We know how to communicate what makes us the employer of choice for A-List Talent, in a way that makes us stand out from our competitors.

3. We are satisfied with our current ability to attract A-List Talent.

4. Our employees are our best recruiters.

5. We have a clear, deep understanding of what our key talent thinks about working in our organization, what they like best about working here and what areas we need to improve upon to keep them and to make us a Talent Magnet.

6. Our A-List Talent is committed to working in our organization; they are not taking recruiters’ calls.

7. Our managers know how to identify each employee’s unique Engagement Driver Recipe, so that they not only know how to fully engage each team member, but also how to facilitate each employee doing their best work.

8. Our managers know how to engage employees in Help Me Help You conversations that uncover key factors, such as:
   - Each employee’s unique Engagement Recipe
   - Managerial practices that bring out the best in them and those that don’t.
   - Feedback on how to improve your organization’s ability to attract, retain, and engage talent

9. Our managers have the knowledge and skills to bring out the best in the new generation of employees.

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Research, Stats, and Quotes on Attracting, Retaining, and Engaging Talent

“The Engaged stay for what they can give, the Disengaged stay for what they can get.”

The “State of Employee Engagement” Has Basically Remained Unchanged Despite Billions of Dollars Having Been Spent on This Issue

“While the state of the U.S. economy has changed substantially since 2000, the state of the American workplace has not. Currently, 30% of the U.S. workforce is engaged in their work, and the ratio of engaged to actively disengaged employees is roughly 2-to-1, meaning that the vast majority of U.S. workers (70%) are not reaching their full potential — a problem that has significant implications for the economy and the individual performance of American companies. Gallup’s research shows that employee engagement remains flat when left unmanaged.”

The Bottom Line Impact of Employee Engagement

“Companies that have a successful employee engagement program in place are 3.3 times more likely (11% vs. 3.3%) to enjoy greater customer loyalty on a year-over-year basis.”

Companies with high sustainable engagement enjoy an operating margin that is 3x higher than companies with the lowest levels of engagement. High sustainable engagement companies also experience 6.5 fewer days of presenteeism (7.6 compared to 14.1) than those with the lowest levels of sustainable engagement.
Millennials and Engagement

Twenty five percent of Millennials expect to leave their employer within the next year. Thirteen percent plan on doing it within the next 6 months.


Another study revealed that 43% of Millennials intend to switch jobs.

Source: Inside the Employee Mindset, Aon Hewitt, 2015

Sixty three percent of Millennials believe their “leadership skills are not being fully developed.” This is problematic because of the role this factor plays in whether Millennials plan on staying with their current employer. Of Millennials planning on leaving their employer within the next 2 years, 71% are unhappy with how their leadership skills are being developed, compared to 54% of those who intend to stay past two years.


The Top 5 Drivers of Millennial Employee Engagement:

1. I feel I am valued in this organization.
2. I have confidence in the leadership of this organization.
3. I like the type of work that I do.
4. Most days, I feel I have made progress at work.
5. This organization treats me like a person, not a number.


“An organization’s support for innovation is important for Millennials. More than three-quarters of Millennials say they are strongly influenced by thoughts of how innovative an organization is when deciding if they want to work for it. Only about half of Millennials feel the organization they work for encourages its people to suggest new ways of doing things or rewards them for innovative ideas.

Source: The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2016: Winning over the next generation of leaders

“Many Millennials believe they are not being given the opportunity to develop professionally. Only roughly half of Millennials agree that their organization does all it can to develop their skills as a leader...”

Source: The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2016: Winning over the next generation of leaders
What Millennials Want Most From Their Manager

1. Will help me develop my career
2. Will give me straight feedback.
3. Will mentor and coach me.
4. Is comfortable with virtual and flexible work schedules.
5. Will sponsor learning and development opportunities.


What Millennials Want Most From an Employer

1. Will develop my skills for the future.
2. Has strong values.
3. Offers flexible benefits and rewards.
4. Offers a clear career path.
5. Offers the ability to blend work and life.


Why Employees Leave

“...the second biggest reason why employees leave an organization (after a poor relationship with their manager) is an inability to foresee a future with their companies. None of this has to happen if organizations, specifically leaders, understand that their workforce consists of humans before it consists of employees. After all, humans want to love, be loved, and love what they do, both in and out of work. It’s high time for organizations to elevate how they treat their employees by prioritizing human emotions.”

Drivers of Attraction, Engagement and Performance

The top five attraction drivers identified by employees were:

1. Base pay/Salary
2. Job security
3. Career advancement opportunities
4. Learning and development opportunities
5. Challenging Work


The top four drivers of sustainable engagement in Canada were:

1. Leadership
2. Stress, balance, and workload
3. Career development
4. Supervision


When asked to “Choose the item that would most improve your performance,” the top three items chosen by North American employees were:

1. More resources
2. Greater clarity about what the organization needs me to do—and why.
3. A coach or a mentor other than my manager.

Source: Employee Engagement Research Update: Beyond the Numbers, A practical approach for individuals, managers, and executives, BlessingWhite, January, 2013.

When asked what items would make the biggest difference in their job satisfaction, North American employees identified these as the top three:

1. More opportunities to do what I do best
2. Career development opportunities and training
3. More flexible job conditions

Source: Employee Engagement Research Update: Beyond the Numbers, A practical approach for individuals, managers, and executives, BlessingWhite, January, 2013.
The New Hire “Honeymoon” Does Not Last Long

Employee engagement starts to decline after 6 months.

“Engagement declines with tenure. Engagement drops nine percent after the first six months and continues to drop after that. Overall, the engagement score for the typical new hire — on board for six months or less — is more than 11 percent higher than for the typical employee with longer tenure.”
Source: Driving Business Results through Continuous Engagement, Watson Wyatt, 2009

The Impact of Leadership and One’s Manager

“Effective leaders and managers influence sustainable engagement. In organizations where employees perceive their managers (but not their leaders) to be effective, 23% of workers are highly engaged. And in organizations where leaders (but not managers are perceived as effective, 35% of employees are highly engaged. When neither managers nor leaders are perceived as effective, only 8% of employees are highly engaged. Not unexpectedly, in companies where both leaders and managers are perceived by employees as effective, 72% of employees are highly engaged. Companies with effective leaders as well as managers can expect to have more highly engaged employees.”

Because managerial effectiveness plays such a central role in employee engagement, knowing what managerial behaviors are considered important by employees is an important part of any engagement strategy. Employees rated these as the top five behaviors that comprise managerial effectiveness:

1. Manager does what he/she says
2. Manager helps remove obstacles
3. Manager differentiates between high and low performers
4. Manager treats employees with respect
5. Manager clearly communicates goals/assignments

The Importance of Customizing the Employee Experience

One size does NOT fit all when it comes to engagement drivers. Differences in profession and demographics translate into the necessity of tailoring engagement strategy. According research by Gallup and other firms shows that engagement drivers vary across industries, occupation, and position in organization. Also individual factors, such as an employee’s tenure within a company, age, and gender, influence engagement levels and drivers. Thus, getting to know one’s own workforce and their unique set of drivers is crucial when devising engagement strategies. Furthermore, strategies an employer would use for one division or profession would not necessarily be optimal for another.


One of the six megatrends that will shape organizations, including employee engagement is the trend towards Individualism, according to research by the Hay Group. The implications? “A single message to the workforce will no longer cut it. People will demand to be treated as individuals. Engagement will need to be more personal, tapping into each employee’s needs, drivers, outlook and expectations. Job descriptions, appraisals, development plans, career paths and reward systems will need to be more tailored. Tom Plug, Lead Engagement Expert at KPH, told us: ‘One-to-one-dialogue is critical: it’s conversations between managers and their employees which allow us to start acting in a more personal way that’s appealing to them.’ The individualism megatrend will create huge complexity for engagement professionals.”


After decades of emphasizing employees’ responsibility to know the customers’ needs and meet them, many employees are starting to expect the same from their employer. Seventy percent of employees agree that their organization should understand employees to the same degree that employees are expected to understand customers. However, fewer than half (43%) report having an employer that understands them in this way.

About David Lee

David Lee, the founder of HumanNature@Work, works with employers who want to improve employee engagement, productivity, and customer service through his consulting, coaching, and training. He has worked with organizations and presented at conferences both domestically and abroad.


In addition to his research and work with both struggling and “best in class” organizations, David Lee’s work draws from a wide range of scientific disciplines that seek to understand human nature. Taking this research which typically doesn’t find its way into the business world, David translates these principles of human nature into practical leadership and managerial strategies that optimize employee performance.

To capture the impact understanding human nature makes, David borrows from the popular TV show *The Dog Whisperer*, and explains “Understanding human nature helps you become a People Whisperer, and by doing so, dramatically improves your ability to get the best results from others (and yourself).”

Recently, his work on what makes organizations resilient and employees perform at their best has focused on the central role productive relationships and productive conversations have on these outcomes, with this being the take away message:

“Every better business result you want requires having a better conversation.”
Comments About David Lee’s Work

“David Lee has provided the employees of the City of Manchester with a breath of fresh air in his training programs. Employees always rave about the relevance of the training to their real life work situations. David also has the unique ability to allow participants to bring up other subject matters while at the same time, he works their concerns into the program that he is presenting.” - Ginny Lamberton, former HR Director, City of Manchester, NH

Thank you for doing such an outstanding job keynoting our conference. As you could tell by the response, participants loved both the content and the delivery of your presentation. - Dr. Ian Gawler, Director, The Gawler Foundation, Victoria, Australia

“Weeks after David Lee spoke to our college, people are still talking about the message he sent. One employee thanked our President and said it was a gift to employees to hear David speak. David took the time to get to know US before he stepped foot on campus. We didn’t expect the level of service that he provided. He interviewed people, sent out surveys and dug deep to find out exactly what our college needed to go from good to great. He then customized a program that fit what we needed and has been great with follow-up and feedback. It’s clear he truly cares. David does more that give a great speech a leave, he transforms the culture.” - Deb Carlson, PhD, Director of Institutional Research and Communication, Nebraska Methodist College: The Josie Harper Campus, NE

“The value David provided our organization went far beyond the actual classroom experience. In addition to the wealth of information he provided during class, David provided a broad support system to further the development of our senior management team.

Specific elements included working with the team to articulate a behavioral vision, one-on-one coaching, individualized professional development plans, and a variety of other support services that enabled us to build a culture of teamwork, accountability, and excellent customer service. While everyone says they will help you be more productive and get better results from your people, David is the only one I’ve worked with who really helps you get there.” - Eric Henry, CEO and Chief Investment Officer, Hershey Trust Company, PA

“Having seen a lot of speakers, I can’t tell you just how impressed I was by David. I even waited in line to talk with him... I learned a great deal and laughed my butt off in the process... When we have someone who is so genuine and so well prepared, we owe it to each other to spread the word.... I take it very seriously when I recommend someone else’s work and... he’s great! - Naomi Judd

“David Lee facilitated our senior leadership retreat recently. I was most impressed with how well and how quickly David engaged with the team, and the members with him. It provided for a very smooth and effective transition into what was an open, honest and valuable discussion. David’s facilitation skills put people at ease and at the same time allowed for broad participation. At the end of the day, there was unanimous agreement to bring him back for our next retreat!” - Jim Donovan, CEO and President of Lincoln County Healthcare, ME

I recently attended a meeting at which David Lee spoke about employee engagement and retention, and could not have been more impressed by his enthusiasm, subject matter expertise and ability to draw the audience into his topic. He is truly passionate about what he does, and it shows in his ability to engage participants across different levels of an organization, which made his seminar extend far beyond the bounds of a traditional presentation.

He is a fantastic listener and is attuned to the interests and issues faced by his audience, quickly shifting gears to address individuals while still holding the attention of the larger group - no small task! His break-out sessions were also terrific; well executed and thoughtful, without seeming like run of the mill icebreakers. I could not recommend him more for a fun, innovative approach to employee onboarding and engagement!

Sarah Canapari, Human Resources Generalist at Nixon Peabody LLP, MA

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Related Programs By David Lee

Engagement, Motivation, and Leadership

Bring It On!: How to Create a Culture with a Resilient, “Can Do” Spirit

Inspiring U: How to Bring Your A-Game to Work and Help Others Do the Same

Why Your Employees Are Just Not That Into You...And How to Change That

Professional Development for All Employees

Hack Your Awesome: Tools, Techniques, and Practices to Perform at Your Best and BE Your Best

How to Be a VIP at Work—Valuable, Influential, and Promotable

Coaching and Constructive Conversation Skills

Help ME Help YOU Help US: Manager/Employee Conversations That Customize the Employee Experience and Optimize the Value Each Employee Provides

How to Give Feedback So They Want to Hear It...and Act On It

Let’s Talk for a Change: How to Engage People in Productive Conversations About Difficult Issues

For information on consulting services or leadership coaching, call 207-571-9898

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Next Steps

1. Talk to your managers and your employees about what you learned in the program and that you need their input on how you can be more of a talent magnet. Share the resource page link with them: www.humannatureatwork.com/AAMVA

2. Have your managers fill out the self-assessment on Page 9 and use it as a catalyst for discussing both examples of where managers are doing a really good, so others can benefit from what they’re doing, and to identify where you need to improve.

3. Use the self-assessment with a group of your employees, both your high performers and your “Steady Eddies.” Use it as a catalyst, just as with your managers, for identifying both positive examples that can be spread throughout your organization, and areas that need improvement.

4. Interview employees, using questions on Page 1 to capture stories and examples that illustrate what makes you a great place to work.

If you would like to discuss assistance with this,
call David Lee at 207-571-9898