

This newsletter: Nobody Ever Washes a Rental Car!

Stuff

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Contents:

Thoughts on Ownership and Involvement and the relation to productivity and organizational improvement

Jokes



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This newsletter is about Issues of Ownership and Engagement

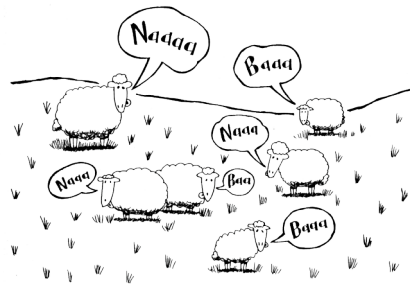
Do you wash *your* rental car?

Ownership is about active involvement and engagement and generating a sense of personal and team commitment. It clearly shows itself in Customer Care when the individual does more than you expect and positively surprises you – the behaviors that build customer loyalty. It shows up everywhere.

But, Nobody Ever Washes a Rental Car!

Well, not precisely, because 5% will for various reasons. But the idea should stimulate thinking about engagement and involvement needed in every work place.

Ownership is a key factor in why unmotivated people often succeed after they quit and then become business owners running their own companies. It is also why some managers generate much higher workplace performance than others. Ownership is the magical process whereby workers turn from spectator sheep into motivated and engaged tigers -- It is because they care about things.



Lots of performance problems link to a lack of employee involvement and engagement in the issues at hand, thereby, preventing ownership of

ideas as well as ownership of results and outcomes from occurring.

Okay, if you don't buy into ownership, then think about its opposite. A lack of ownership equates directly with a lack of commitment, productivity and quality. Why should people bother? Do we know that a paycheck really motivates high performance? Improving ownership will influence how people value their work, contribute ideas to organizational improvement and generate a higher level of commitment to goals -- *their goals!*

Force is not effective in motivating people, though it may give a "false positive" result while you stand there and watch.

TELL a person what to do and they may do it. However, it often generates negative side effects such as passive resistance. Often, too, people will generate a variety of reasons why some idea will not work and may even actively resist.

ASK them what they should do and how they should do it and they will be more active in defining ways to improve. The key is ownership – if it is their idea, it will be treated differently than if it is your idea.

I watched a TV show about a jailbreak and the planning and preparation that went into it -- YEARS of plotting and resource gathering! Prisoners devoted all their waking time toward generating ideas for escape and created elaborate plans. If only we can get this kind of creative workplace energy (*An analogy could be made with your employees planning their escape here, but we won't go there!*) and redirect it toward personal improvement and positive contribution. But doing so is not easy.

Let me share a personal learning experience as it applies to organizational improvement:

Once upon a time, an unnamed rookie consultant, armed with a doctorate in psychology for a tidbit of credibility, found the consulting business seemed to be really simple. His boss would send him into a client organization where he would wander around asking questions. Then, a couple of weeks later, he would run a series of training sessions focused on asking participants to define and evaluate improvement opportunities they saw. A series of pilot studies would test to see if these designs would improve results.

It was actually pretty amazing what was accomplished, even in very well run organizations. There were always ideas for improvement and the workers and supervisors became engaged in implementing these initiatives quite easily.

But over the next few years, results got harder and harder to get. After a couple of years away from the consulting business, that rookie consultant, who was me, looked back on what had occurred and it was clear what had happened.

In order to increase my efficiency, in part due to gaining more experience, I was able to shorten the investigation phases dramatically. What initially took me a few weeks to accomplish might take only a couple of days, in some cases. I might simply observe and not ask questions!

What was NOT working was simple: these programs became "Scott's Programs" and nobody but me seemed interested in generating results. No matter how hard I worked and how much sense these projects made, we just could not get them really rolling unless I was actively managing them. But, as a consultant, it was not my job to do so. Therefore, I worked hard but did not generate much impact. Only years later did I

really come to understand the dynamics and forces at work:

Ownership was missing; I had not engaged and involved the employees because I had quit asking.

Pushing generates resistance while asking generates involvement, all things being equal. Of course, a person's individual experience and history with another person will influence this to varying degrees. Having a long positive history with someone changes the trust dynamics somewhat.

So how do you create ownership?

A key leadership principle is very simple:

Ask and Ye Shall Receive!

Ask for ideas and you will generally get ideas. Ask for ideas and you will generate participative involvement. Ask for ideas and start developing the feeling of ownership. Expect people to become involved. Ask and engage. This stimulates the process of employee involvement and engagement, a good thing.

Maybe that is too simplistic but probably not, based on my experience. By asking people for ideas and suggestions, you are starting a process whereby the ideas for change are their ideas and not yours. Yours will often be resisted for one or another reason; theirs are the ones which cause them to work around roadblocks and keep inventing until they generate an impact.

People often resist other people's ideas (just tell a teenager!). Perceived attacks are almost always met with resistance of some kind. In warfare,

people defend their homelands most aggressively. They fight for their own causes and are less committed to fight for the causes of others.

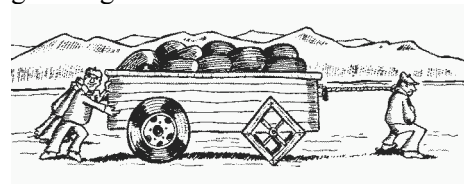
Make the people look good!

Give them publicity and credit for originating the ideas and for generating the impacts. By feeling successful, it helps them to continue to make improvements as well as generating peer support for these initiatives.

We need to generate pride (shown below) but we also need to focus on improvement and progress! We need to engage and lead, and aligning people to a shared mission and goals is powerful.



Asking for their ideas and then allowing them to implement them generates intrinsic motivation. Having peer support along with little risk will help get things done.



So how does this apply to the use of our Square Wheels tools? Quite simply, I think.

By focusing on what is NOT working smoothly, one focuses energy on these things. As such, these discussions around a cartoon are not perceived as attacks on people. Thus, little resistance is generated and people develop ownership because they have participated in the discussion.

Remember: Round Wheels are already in the wagon!

People already have ideas about what can be improved and, in many cases, are already doing things differently. So now they have a forum in which to share them, led by a manager who has a vested interest in generating motivation and engagement as well as workplace improvement. The key is to start discussions around possibilities and to avoid jumping right to solutions without discussing issues and ideas.

And remember that exemplary performers are already using Round Wheels in some way.

Discussions and active involvement generate downhill momentum and the Square Wheels® illustrations do it fairly seamlessly. The beauty of the process is that it is simple enough to do and nearly bombproof. The process moves across teams easily and the ideas can keep rolling.

“There is nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer.”

Jimmy Doolittle before the raid on Tokyo, 4/18/1942

Ownership and Managing Ideas

An effective idea management system can generate ideas for most everything. Square Wheels operate in most places in most organizations, with all sorts of things thumping and bumping along. And most people have Round Wheel ideas that they might implement themselves (if they are risk-tolerant and performance-oriented).

However, they may also experience frustration if they mention an idea but see no action taken on it or if their boss takes their idea and ends up getting the credit and recognition for it.

(BOSS spelled backwards is self-explanatory.)

The areas that often offer the most profit impact or the most leverage seem to be the interdepartmental ones that can easily become political and difficult to manage. Different “wagons” tend to get “up to their axles” in the mud of organizational power and politics. There are often huge impacts to be made, but the ideas cannot generally be forced down on the organization, since that generates resistance of many kinds, sometimes including sabotage.

One of the highest impact areas can be in getting ideas about best managing the idea system itself!! Some work seamlessly but most don't.

I am reminded of the new hotel manager at a major property in Hilton Head who asked about how often the suggestion box in the employee lunchroom was opened and the ideas read. The in-place HR guy said it was checked every week. The GM then asked why no one had come to him, as he requested, after his note was in there from his first day of arrival nearly 3 weeks ago. (I was there and the reaction was most interesting -- he sure sent a message about what he thought of the importance of getting people involved in organizational improvement, which is why I was there. Sure made my job easier!!)

I use a simple framework when talking about organizational improvement:

It's about CONTINUOUS continuous improvement.

(from the Department of Redundancy Department)

Too many people talk about having "done" continuous improvement in their workplace, as though it is one more thing they can check off from their list of things to do. Continuous improvement IS continuous.

The Round Wheels of today become the Square Wheels of Tomorrow.

We need to keep improving.

**Change is good.
You go first."**

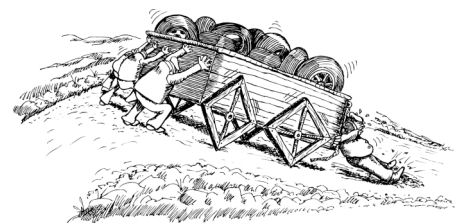
from the Dilbert Principles

Ideas are good.

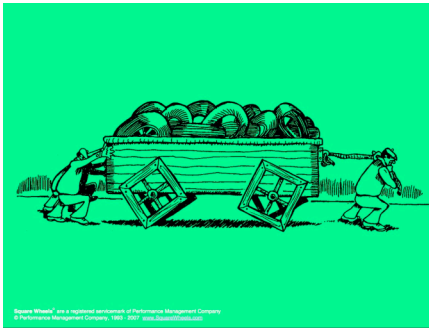
Implementing ideas is even better!

The other issue also needs to be mentioned. A good bit of ownership needs to also belong to the "wagon pullers." In my experience, if these people do not have an ownership stake in the process, they will often actually resist good ideas that might simply make them uncomfortable. This is actually the illustration we call,

“Nobody Ever Washes a Rental Car!”



We need the **active** involvement of engaged people and their managers.



Creating involvement and ownership is not a difficult thing, although there are some highly complicated models and methods put forth as **The Answer**.

I suggest you use simple cartoons and games like ours, which seem to accomplish a good lot in this area.

Interesting Facts

1. Barbie's full name is Barbara Milicent Roberts.
2. It is impossible to lick your elbow.
3. A crocodile can't stick its tongue out.
4. A shrimp's heart is in their head.
5. People say, "Bless you" when you sneeze because when you sneeze, your heart stops for a millisecond.
6. In a study of 200,000 ostriches over a period of 80 years, no one reported a single case where an ostrich buried its head in the sand (or attempted to do so).
7. It is physically impossible for pigs to look up into the sky.
8. A pregnant goldfish is called a twit
9. Between 1937 and 1945 Heinz produced a version of Alphabet Spaghetti especially for the German market that consisted solely of little pasta swastikas.
10. By law, every child in Belgium must take harmonica lessons at Primary school.
11. On average, a human being will have sex more than 3,000 times

- and spend two weeks kissing in their lifetime.
12. More than 50% of the people in the world have never made or received a telephone call.
 13. Rats and horses can't vomit.
 14. The "sixth sick sheik's sixth sheep's sick" is said to be the toughest tongue twister in the English language.
 15. If you sneeze too hard, you can fracture a rib. If you try to suppress a sneeze, you can rupture a blood vessel in your head or neck and die.
 16. Rats multiply so quickly that in 18 months, two rats could have over a million descendants.
 17. Wearing headphones for just an hour will increase the bacteria in your ear by 700 times.
 18. If the government has no knowledge of aliens, then why does Title 14, Section 1211 of the Code of Federal Regulations, implemented on July 16, 1969, make it illegal for U.S. citizens to have any contact with extraterrestrial or their vehicles?
 19. In every episode of Seinfeld there is a Superman somewhere.
 20. The cigarette lighter was invented before the match.
 21. Thirty-five percent of the people who use personal ads for dating are already married.
 22. A duck's quack doesn't echo anywhere, and no one knows why.
 23. 23% of all photocopier faults worldwide are caused by people sitting on them and photocopying their buttocks.
 24. In the course of an average lifetime you will, while sleeping, eat 70 assorted insects and 10 spiders.
 25. Most lipstick contains fish scales.
 26. Cat's urine glows under a black light.
 27. Like fingerprints, everyone's tongue print is different.

28. If you keep your eyes open by force, they will pop out.

Male/Female Nouns

From the Washington Post Style Invitation, in which it was postulated that English should have male and female nouns, and readers were asked to assign a gender to nouns of their choice and explain their reason. The best submissions:

SWISS ARMY KNIFE -- male, because even though it appears useful for a wide variety of work, it spends most of its time just opening bottles.

KIDNEYS -- female, because they always go to the bathroom in pairs.

TIRE -- male, because it goes bald and often is over-inflated.

HOT AIR BALLOON: male, because to get it to go anywhere you have to light a fire under it... and, of course, there's the hot air part.

SPONGES -- female, because they are soft and squeezable and retain water.

WEB PAGE -- female, because it is always getting hit on.

SHOE -- male, because it is usually unpolished, with its tongue hanging out.

COPIER -- female, because once turned off, it takes a while to warm up. Because it is an effective reproductive device when the right buttons are pushed. Because it can wreck havoc when the wrong buttons are pushed.

ZIPLOC BAGS -- male, because they hold everything in, but you can always see right through them.

SUBWAY -- male, because it uses the same old lines to pick people up.

HOURGLASS -- female, because over time, the weight shifts to the bottom.

HAMMER -- male, because it hasn't evolved much over the last 5,000 years, but it's handy to have around.

REMOTE CONTROL -- female...Ha!...you thought I'd say male. But consider; it gives man pleasure, he'd be lost without it, and while he doesn't always know the right buttons to push, he keeps trying.

Catch 22, by Joseph Heller

Many of us have heard the phrase "Catch 22" but I will guess that not all of us have read the book. I reread it a few months ago – fantastic. So, I thought to share the simple elegance of Catch 22, which many of you will see in the working world around you.

Here it is:

There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.

"That's some catch, that Catch-22," he observed.

"It's the best there is," Doc Daneeka agreed.

Nothing made sense, and neither did anything else.

From Catch 22

(Yeah, I repeated this from the last one, but it does need repeating. SO True!)

Some One Liners

"My Mom said she learned how to swim when someone took her out in the lake and threw her off the boat. I said, 'Mom, they weren't trying to teach you how to swim. "

* Paula Poundstone

"A study in the Washington Post says that women have better verbal skills than men. I just want to say to the authors of that study: *Uh, duh!* "

* Conan O'Brien

"Why does Sea World have a seafood restaurant? I'm halfway through my fish burger and I realize, Oh my Goodness. I could be eating a slow learner. "

* Lynda Montgomery

"If life was fair, Elvis would be alive and all the impersonators would be dead. "

* Johnny Carson

"In elementary school, in case of fire you have to line up quietly in a single file line from smallest to tallest. What is the logic? Do tall people burn slower? "

* Warren Hutcherson

"When I die, I want to die like my grandmother who died peacefully in her sleep. Not screaming like all the passengers in her car. "

Advice for the day:

If you have a lot of tension and you get a headache, do what it says on the aspirin bottle: "Take two aspirin" and "Keep away from children"

Simple Realities

Everyone has a photographic memory.

Some don't have film.

He who laughs last, thinks slowest.

A day without sunshine is like, well, night.

Change is inevitable, except from a vending machine.

I just got lost in thought. It was unfamiliar territory.

When the chips are down, the buffalo is empty.

Seen it all, done it all. Can't remember most of it.

Those who live by the sword get shot by those who don't.

I feel like I'm diagonally parked in a parallel universe.

She's always late, in fact, her ancestors arrived on the Juneflower.

You have the right to remain silent.

Anything you say will be misquoted and used against you.

I wonder how much deeper the ocean would be without sponges.

Honk if you love peace and quiet.

Nothing is foolproof to a sufficiently talented fool.

It is hard to understand how a cemetery can raise its burial costs and blame it on the higher cost of living.

Just remember...if the world didn't suck, we'd all fall off.

The 50-50-90 rule: Anytime you have a 50-50 chance of getting something right, there's a 90% probability you will get it wrong.

It is said that if you line up all the cars in the world end to end, someone would be stupid enough to try and pass them.

You can't have everything. Where would you put it?

If the shoe fits, get another one just like it for the other foot.

The things that come to those that wait may be the things left by those who got there first.

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to fish and he will sit in a boat all day drinking beer.

Flashlight: A case for holding dead batteries.

