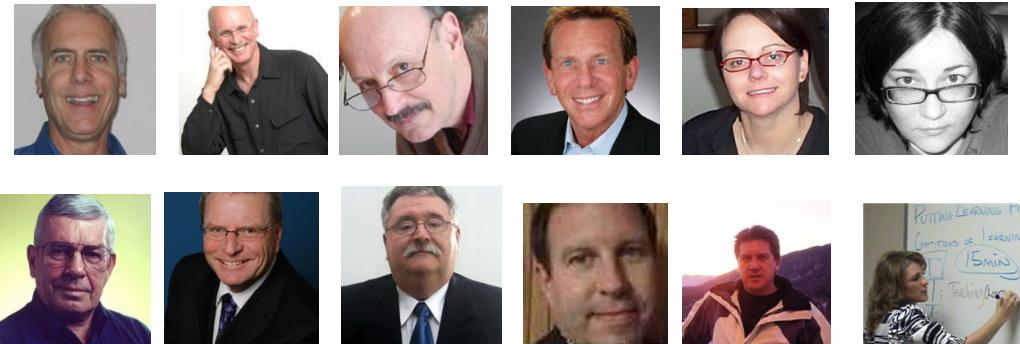


# The Keys of Employee Engagement

12 Authors and their Employee Engagement Alphabets

A Free E-Book on Employee Engagement

**One Dozen Contributors – Over 300 Keys**



## Contributors

**David Zinger, Tim Wright, Terrence Seamon, Steve Roesler, Lisa Forsyth  
Raven Young, Robert Morris, Ken Milloy, Stephen McPherson,  
George Reavis, Ian Buckingham, Angela Maiers**

Produced by

**David Zinger**  
[www.davidzinger.com](http://www.davidzinger.com)

A Free Offering of The Employee Engagement Network  
[www.employeeengagement.ning.com](http://www.employeeengagement.ning.com)

May 2008

---

# The Keys of Employee Engagement

---

**12 Authors and Their Employee Engagement Alphabets**

**Producer & Contributor**

**David Zinger, M.Ed.**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada**

**Phone (204) 254-2130**

[dzinger@shaw.ca](mailto:dzinger@shaw.ca)

[www.davidzinger.com](http://www.davidzinger.com)

## **Introduction**

Do you need some employee engagement ideas or concepts? This free e-book has about 300 of them!

Welcome to the ABC book on Employee Engagement. I think you will be delighted to use this resource in your employee engagement efforts. We are so pressed for time that alphabetical lists like this make it easy to consider a range of employee engagement ideas.

We have a bonus, the 12<sup>th</sup> contributor, Angela Maiers, applied the concept to student engagement. As we are all learners this may also benefit you in the workplace too.

I encourage you to join and participate in the employee engagement network. Visit us at [www.employeeengagement.ning.com](http://www.employeeengagement.ning.com)

## **Possible Applications**

- Scan the authors to get ideas.
- Use it as you begin to create your own alphabet.
- Use it to launch a team or project group exercise on engagement.
- Pick a letter each day and focus on that letter to enhance your own engagement or the engagement of others.
- Share it with others at work
- Offer it as a free resource during employee engagement sessions
- Develop your own applications based on your interest and focus on employee engagement.

## The Authors:

We had 12 authors contribute their alphabets. Here is a quick letter from each author before you delve into the complete book. You can visit or communicate with these authors at the Employee Engagement Network ([www.employeeengagement.ning.com](http://www.employeeengagement.ning.com))

**David Zinger,**

**Results and Relationships.** Employee engagement works best when results are woven with relationships.

**Tim Wright,**

**Tempt.** Can you make a chance to engage seem like a sandbox your people can play in? Tempt them: not necessarily with a get-this-done-and-you-get-a-reward message. Make the engagement temptation meaningful and valuable of its own sake.

**Terrence Seamon,**

**Unleash** - Take the leash off of employees. Trust. Turn them loose!

**Steve Roesler,**

**Isolate:** Only problems, not people.

**Lisa Forsyth**

**Failure** An engaged employee is more likely to fail, because we are more likely to fail when we stretch ourselves. Yet we often try to soften failure by calling it an oversight, a mistake, or an unfortunate result. This disavowal of failure reinforces fear of failure, so take back ownership of the word failure for the sake of engagement. Encourage self-reliant problem solving, engage employees in the redefinition of failure, and celebrate failing forward.

**Raven Young,**

**Communication:** "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." --George Bernard Shaw

**Robert Morris,**

**Authenticity** Natives of Maine are renowned for their colorful sayings, such as "Won't say he's dishonest but if he wants to get his cows to come

*home, he's gotta get someone else to call 'em." If trust is the "glue" of sustained relationships, it is the result of being authentic.*

**Ken Milloy,**

**Deliver:** Too often you make promises or indicate you will get back to us on something - please remember that by delivering on those promises you build credibility and trust - and if we can rely on you, rest assured you can rely on us.

**Stephen McPherson,**

**Character** – your character is the framework of engagement

**George Reavis,**

**Gratitude.** Another of the five principle ingredients of engagement. Without gratitude one cannot stay engaged for the long-term. Fostered by the activity of thanking others which in turn provides recognition and appreciation.

**Ian Buckingham,**

**Z – Zoo!** Whatever formal engagement strategies there may be it's always going to be a fantastic, colourful jungle out there with grapevines aplenty so open those cages and connect with the people.

**Angela Maiers**

**Kaizen:** Kaizen is the Japanese term for "continuous improvement", a concept we should take to heart if we want students to achieve their personal and professional best. Small changes, if done every day, can make a big impact over time. By creating an environment of Kaizen, reflection becomes part of the daily work and conversations. Continuous improvement can only be achieved, with continuous reflection. And with continuous reflection, students will become more and more engaged in their growth and learning.

# Employee Engagement: 26 Keys from A to Z



by **David Zinger**

Here are 26 keys to employee engagement from A to Z.

**Acceptance.** We must begin with acceptance of the current state of engagement and begin to make changes out of our full acceptance of what is as we move to what can be.

**Benefits.** If employee engagement is to be sustained over time it must benefit employees, leaders, managers, organizations, and customers.

**Connection.** Employee engagement is created through caring connections with others in the workplace and connections to our work — stay connected and you will stay engaged!

**Disengagement.** Although chronic disengagement is a workplace scourge we need to balance engagement and disengagement to maintain productive work over the long term.

**Energy.** Energy is the raw material of employee engagement and those who master energy management have a huge resource to draw upon for their own engagement and for energizing others.

**Flow.** The ideal state of work is when we experience flow - we engage so completely in our work that work, time, and self are transformed by the experience.

**Gumption.** Balancing flow is old fashioned gumption - sometimes we just need to engage in work even when we don't feel like it, yet this very gumption will act as the primer to experiencing higher levels of emotional engagement.

**Human.** Employee engagement is human, not human capital or human sigma or human resources, just HUMAN, period.

**Integrity.** Our work must stem from integrity and our connections with others are strengthened by our integrity fused with their integrity.

**Joy.** Fully engaging in work can produce joy as *work becomes love made visible*.

**Keys.** If we carry too many keys we can feel weighed down - each organization and individual will need to determine the keys or vital behaviors that produce authentic and genuine employee engagement.

**Leadership.** Leaders need to create vision, direction, and strategy that foster engagement and also communicate this fully to all employees while also being open to employees helping to co-create the organization's vision and direction.

**Management.** In many studies, the single biggest contributor to employee engagement is the relationship people have with the person who manages them so managers must manage their own engagement while connecting fully with their staff to prime employees' engagement.

**Networks.** Employee engagement works better together - create a network of best friends at work, create a social media network to communicate with each other at work, or join the free Employee Engagement Network at [www.employeeengagement.ning.com](http://www.employeeengagement.ning.com).

**Oprah.** You know how engaged Oprah is in her work, imagine yourself on the Oprah show and she is asking you how you engage in your work, how would you answer her so that her audience would take notice and be inspired by your response?

**Purpose.** Employee engagement must be directed at achieving a purpose for the organization such as: productivity, profit, recruitment, retention, project success, high functioning teams, quality, customer engagement, etc.

**Questions?** We are all looking for answers to enhance and improve employee engagement but never overlook the value of a good question, such as: *Who is engaged, with what, for how long, and for what reason?*

**Results and Relationships.** Employee engagement works best when results are woven with relationships.

**Strengths.** Engagement levels increase when we know our strengths, hold strength-based conversations, work with our strengths, work strengthens us, and we move from listing strengths to fully living our strengths in the service of others and our organization.

**Today.** Employee engagement is about today, don't wait for some magic measurement or better time - do what you can, with what you've got, where you are.

**Understanding.** Employee engagement requires comprehensive understanding of the uniqueness of each individual and each culture within each workplace - seek first to understand and demonstrate that understanding before seeking to be understood.

**Values.** Make employee engagement a value or promise to all employees that their work matters and makes a difference and you will see economic value come out of this value.

**We.** In the co-created world of work the old line: *If it is to be it is up to me* must be rewritten to, ***If it is to be it is up to we***.

**X-ray.** We must get to the bare bones of engagement and avoid using anonymous surveys that at times seem to measure engagement but actually produce disengagement.

**You.** This alphabet list of employee engagement from A to Z will only become alive if you take the ideas from this article and put them into practice — did you notice the only thing missing from the Corporate Alphabet picture at the start of this article was “u”?

**Zen.** Zen teaches a person to engage with their breathing, their mind, and their world — as you let yourself become more mindful in daily activities, including work, you will find yourself becoming more and more engaged.

# Employee Engagement from Z to A



by Tim Wright

Being a bit of the contrarian, I'm taking the ZXY view.

**Zig (or Zag).** Sudden zigs or zags, changes in approach, demand attention and stimulate engagement. Provide changes. Invite your people to take on "change-gagement."

**Yearn.** Continually ask how much you yearn for employee engagement. Be prepared to give yourself shots of **vitamin Y** if/when necessary.

**X-trapolate.** Guess-take about EE, but base your guesses on well-grounded engagement. It's how you and your people take safe strides to move to next levels of engagement.

**Wager.** You can wager on a new opportunity to encourage your people's engagement. Or bet on a communication plan to enliven engagement. If you think from the organization's culture, you have the odds in your favor.

**Visualize.** Seeing engagement before it happens is almost as much fun as seeing it live and in person. Practice visualizing an engaged employee, an engaged team. Share your clear picture with your team. Invite them to turn on their visualizers and share what they see. Visualizations may not be identical, but it helps when everyone looks in the same direction.

## Upset the cart

A little chaos can have good results. The sudden change demands engagement. Opportunities to witness, enjoy, and learn from the experience can be great.  
HINT: Not a bad idea to involve the team itself in planning the cart-upset.

## Tempt

Can you make a chance to engage seem like a sandbox your people can play in? Tempt them: not necessarily with a get-this-done-and-you-get-a-reward message. Make the engagement temptation meaningful and valuable of its own sake.

### **Scintillate**

Emit sparks. Be animated, witty, sparkling as you promote, model and celebrate employee engagement. Engagement is a means to an end and makes the journey fun. Exemplify that by your exciting engagement.

### **Reconnoiter**

Reasons for engagement will change as your business, its marketplace, the economy, your personnel population, and many more factors change. Pay attention to what's coming and your engagement can be proactive.

**Quicken with Questions.** Questions can quicken engagement. Good questions allow employees to direct themselves with their answers...and take ownership of direction.

**Persist.** Persistence encouraging your people to experience engagement pays off. Engagement can/should be with more than just one's job. Think of *career, company, network, community, and personal development* as engagement arenas also.

**Opportunize.** Offer numerous engagement opportunities. Naturally, the job is where one should engage. However, there are surrounding engagement areas that stimulate job-engagement. I repeat: think of *career, company, network, community, and personal development* as engagement arenas.

**Nibble.** Engagement may be best experienced in small bites. An *Engagement or Else in the Next 30 Days* strategy may bite off more than your team can chew or more than they will swallow! Small steps establish familiarity, build acceptance, and ultimately produce greater strides.

**Mastermind.** Engage your people in developing their engagement. Invite discussion, ideation, forums that generate ways to engage. No matter what you call it, every time your folks turn on their idea-machines, they engage themselves.

**Landscape.** Make plans. Design the beauty. Build your own Big Picture. What you want to happen is more likely to happen--and *sooner*--if you've painted in broad strokes the landscape of the employee engagement you desire.

**Knit.** Well-formed, strongly coached, and frequently energized teams do more than individuals. You can knit and weave team structure. You can knit it with the yarn of engagement. Just know not to knot things up.

**Join in.** Communication with your people should come from nearby. Participate (don't confuse with "micro-manage") and your credibility and authenticity increase. Join in with as much concern and care for *what goes on* as your front-liners have. Sometimes you may wish to drop your *manager's POV*.

**Infuse.** Impossible to offer too much communication, encouragement, modeling, or examples of employee engagement. Develop ways to let engagement flavor everything you say and do, every example or illustration you share every compliment and congratulations you offer.

**Hold Your Horses (as You Hurry).** Since engagement is an investment of emotion, energy, time, ability, one may not jump in without preparation. No matter how eager you are to manage a team of Champion Engagers, you may want to rein yourself in a bit. Allow engagement to evolve, with your nurturing encouragement.

**Guarantee Attention.** Whether your attention is listening ear, good morning smile, specific job-question, or something else, it matters to your people. Every engagement survey questions the attention management gives employees: the more attention, the more likely the engagement. Guaranteed.

**Fun-da-mental-ize.** First, fundamentalize employee engagement as operational. Employee engagement can become second-nature behavior that leads to desired results. Second, fundamentalize employee engagement. Make it something you and your folks have fun doing/being.

**Educate.** Not just two-year olds want to know "why?!" When your personnel have to do something new, something different, they want to know why? If they have clear understanding of reasons, they more willingly, more quickly, more adeptly tackle the change. You own the power to educate why.

**Document.** Keep a journal of your employee engagement efforts and successes. You may hand your job over to someone at some point. You may derive new ideas from past successes. You may have to explain or defend engagement actions you've taken with your people. You may just enjoy reading about you've done.

**Circumnavigate.** A straight line is the shortest distance between two points, but it's not always fastest or easiest. Prepare to go around obstacles. As you plan your engagement strategy, include contingencies that will get you past hindering situation, policy, and/or individual.

**Be Blessing Aware.** Too many blessings come our way to ignore. Along with your people, express appreciation that good stuff happens (jobs, work associates, successes, and more). There are a number of good communication choices here: bulletin board, blast e-mail, staff meeting ice breaker, passed around Post-it(tm) notes....

**Advertise.** Take your good news outside. Brag and boast and blow your team's horn, and more good will occur. You'll attract new people. Your team will increase

its engagement. You'll achieve objectives sooner, more easily. Your employee retention rate will increase.

# Employee Engagement from A-Z



by Terrence Seamon

**Appreciate** - Take the time to appreciate each person you have on your team.

**Break Through** - Don't let habits or "the way we have always done it" hold you back.

**Coach** - Bring out the best in others by playing to their strengths.

**Develop** - Provide opportunities for others to stretch and grow.

**Energize** - Get excited and others will catch it.

**Fun** - If you aren't having fun, figure it out.

**Genius** - Each person is gifted in some way. (Thanks to Dick Richards, author of Is Your Genius At Work?)

**Help** - Be of some help every day.

**Improve** - Everything. Without ceasing. (Thanks to Edwards Deming)

**Joy** - This is something all too frequently missing from the workplace. (Thanks to Kenny Moore)

**Keep** your commitments.

**Learn** - Constantly. Look outside your field. Listen.

**Meaning** - It's up to you to create it. Invite others to join in.

**New Ideas** - Seek them constantly.

**Open Up** - Open the books. Open your door. Open your mind.

**Participate** - Invite others to join in.

**Quit** - Complaining. Pointing the finger. Blaming.

**Recognize** each person as an individual with wishes, hopes, and dreams.  
(Thanks to Matthew Kelly, author of The Dream Manager)

**Strengths** - Capitalize on them. (Thanks to Marcus Buckingham)

**Teach** - Remember that everything you do (or don't do) teaches. (Thanks to Father Douglas Haefner, pastor of my church)

**Unleash** - Take the leash off of employees. Trust. Turn them loose!

**Vacation** - Take one every year and insist that others do so too.

**Wisdom** - Every person on your team has some piece of the wisdom that your team needs. (Thanks to Sister Mary Benet McKinney, author of Sharing Wisdom)

**eXercise** - Stay in shape.

**You** are the CEO of your success.

**Zoopfiddle** - Make up words. It's fun. It can energize your team meetings. It can help unleash the inner poet or artist and lead to creative breakthroughs.

# ABCs of Employee Engagement



**by Steve Roesler**

**Amour:** Am I doing what I love to do?

**Bingo!**: We have work experiences that make us want to yell this every day.

**Croon:** Our projects make us want to sing about them--at least sometimes.

**Destiny:** We have a sense of more than just today.

**Echo:** What we do reverberates across the organization. We listen, so we know whether or not to make adjustments.

**Federline:** We don't make the same mistakes as Britney and skip the *engagement* part. Which means we also understand that winning a "trip to Paris" isn't always a good thing.

**Glad:** We take time to celebrate when good things happen.

**Harpoon:** When something starts to drag us down, we nip it in the bud.

**Isolate:** Only problems, not people.

**Java:** We're skilled at drinking it while the plug-in is downloading.

**Killer-apps:** We know how to apply our work to real business solutions.

**Latitude:** What we give to our colleagues.

**Mojo:** What our competitors think we've got an abundance of.

**Nah!:** What we say when others try to tell us we're *too* committed.

**Oh yeah!:** The kind of thing we say to each other when someone does something really good.

**Prada:** The stuff we'll never wear because we're too engaged to go shopping.

**Quirks:** What we admire in each other that the disengaged choose to criticize.

**Rigor:** We think this is a good thing, since the opposite is rigormortous.

**Serious:** About our mission, not ourselves.

**Telemarketing:** What we don't do with good ideas because we know the importance of face time.

**Utopia:** What we shoot for even though we know it doesn't exist.

**Vacuum:** We avoid operating in one. Because of our level of engagement, we may avoid using one as well. Life challenge: Learn the difference.

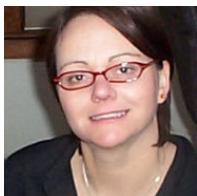
**Why Not?:** One of the first things we ask after hearing "Why?"

**Xenogamy:** We practice cross-fertilization of ideas. We also never say this word out loud in meetings.

**Yin & Yang:** We look for the complementary relationships in opposites.

**Zone:** What this is all about, as in, "We want to be in the . . ."

# Alphabet Soup: Employee Engagement from A-Z



by **Lisa Forsyth**

**Aspirations** Understand what your people aspire to and empower them to reach it—it is their aspirations that make them unique, and they are most engaged when working towards them.

**Balance** Sustaining engagement is about maintaining balance, yet organizations still reward (and rely on) people, usually the self-propelled and energetic, who sacrifice this balance at their expense when it serves the purpose of an organization's success. We can't force balance, but we can create the conditions for it when we understand the difference between effective and ineffective engagement and recognize its characteristics. To employ the analogy used by authors Jones Loflin and Todd Musig, ineffective engagement can feel like Juggling Elephants—learn how to become the ringmaster of your circus and teach the people you support how to do the same.

**Community** Communities embrace the individual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each member and mobilize based on the common belief that the whole is capable of accomplishing much more than the sum of its parts. If employee engagement is to be sustained over time, we must adapt this community mindset, and forge mutually beneficial connections between individual aspirations and company goals. Community cannot be artificially manufactured, but it can be nurtured. Create the conditions for community by adopting a common vocabulary around engagement as it relates to interaction, participation, sharing, fellowship, collective action, results, and success.

**Differences** Celebrate the differences between people. Differences are opportunities to step outside our frame of reference and connect with others in a way they find meaningful.

**Ego** We are all ego-driven individuals who want to be known for our successes. If you want your people to appreciate the impact employee engagement has on business results, show them how their work matters. We want to know our successes had a meaningful impact on the company's success.

**Failure** An engaged employee is more likely to fail, because we are more likely to fail when we stretch ourselves. Yet we often try to soften failure by calling it an oversight, a mistake, or an unfortunate result. This disavowal of failure reinforces fear of failure, so take back ownership of the word failure for the sake of engagement. Encourage self-reliant problem solving, engage employees in the redefinition of failure, and celebrate failing forward.

**Giving** Opportunities for employee engagement extend beyond opportunities within their own teams. Managers need to give. We need to give our employees the opportunity to move across assignments, teams, and other boundaries, and we need to give other managers an opportunity to leverage their talents. Organizations that foster giving with serial reciprocity remove barriers to full engagement.

**Humor** Appreciate the power of humor and laugh at the humors of work and life at work. People want to have fun on the job, and even brief moments of frivolity and levity generate energy and enthusiasm, spark creativity and innovation, and fuel productivity.

**Instruction** Teach the core beliefs and values of engagement to everyone in the organization.

**Judgment** Judgment plays a critical role in effective leadership, and poor judgment can undermine any leader's success. Be judicious. Understand what is critical to your people and organization, take all known facts and perceptions into account, and communicate the meaning behind decisions made. Make judgments visible. Engage your people in decision making. Teach them the basis of making sound judgments by involving them in the process where such judgments are made. Share an error in judgment with your team and encourage feedback that reveals errors in judgments, for these too are development opportunities for everyone.

**Kinetics** Direct the motion of engagement by understanding and adapting to the different styles, attitudes, feelings, and experiences that inform what people do and how they act.

**Loyalty** Inspiring loyalty is a fundamental objective of employee engagement, as feelings of loyalty motivate, empower, and drive us to achieve results. Once loyalty is achieved, it must be kept in balance in order to sustain engagement--don't throw too many sticks, as the loyal will fetch them whether they were intended to be fetched or not.

**Motivation** Forge and evangelize the connection between individual aspirations and the strategy and goals of the organization, and people will feel motivated to achieve results and empowered to make a difference.

**Nuance** It is easier to dismantle engagement than it is to build it, and it can be less obvious when engagement is lost versus when it is gained. Employment engagement requires astute attention to nuances, those subtle changes in tone or behavior that suggest disjoint between employees, leaders, managers, and organizations, and result in disengagement.

**Optimism** The belief that goodness pervades reality is what keeps us moving forward. Some people will always find a negative spin, and negativity is such a heavy weight to carry that it makes it hard for people to move. By embodying the belief of the optimist, we can inspire our teams to expect favorable results as they take on new challenges. We can create enthusiasm and a desire to excel that is not hindered by the roadblocks of negativity.

**Passion** Passion dwindles when it is left unsatisfied for too long. The concepts can be resurrected, the keys can be re-examined, and the commitment to engagement rebuilt, but if you want to sustain engagement, finds tangible ways of reaching it.

**Quality** The desire to improve Quality is the fuel behind employee engagement-- increase the quality of conversation, commitment, interactions, executions, deliverables, and results, and you increase the quality of the organization.

**Recognition** Build a culture of recognition that rewards the extraordinary, wonderful, unusual, and uncommon, as all employees, regardless of individual differences, want their hard work recognized, especially when it looks easy. Ask, listen, and find creative ways to recognize.

**Scarcity** Build win-win relationships based on a model of scarcity, not abundance. When resources are scarce, the focus is on linking and leveraging them in new and diversified ways to foster growth, but when resources are abundant, they are used in a standardized manner that actually stunts new growth. Embrace the idea that the unique talent of each employee is a scarce resource, and foster an environment where this uniqueness is leveraged to diversify the organization and ensure its success.

**Trust** Build relationships born of trust. When you trust your employees, they will feel honored and respected, but when you fail to trust them, they will feel undervalued and become disengaged. Examine your beliefs and check your actions--it is much easier to talk about trust, than to show trust, and much easier to lose trust than to build trust.

**Unity** Create one clear center from which you and all the people you support consistently derive a high degree of security, power, wisdom and success. Champion an “all for one, and one for all” attitude, and energize an organization around the common purpose of engagement.

**Visibility** Visibility, and the involvement that comes with it, is crucial to forging a shared purpose across an organization. Engage employees in the big picture and provide them visibility into where their own contribution is meaningful. Set up a clear communication process for reaching agreements about what individuals, leaders, managers, and the organization can expect from each other as they work towards engagement.

**Wonder** By challenging ourselves and our employees to look at things with the same sense of puzzled interest we did as children, we can empower new ways of thinking that challenge assumptions, stimulate engagement, and re-instill our sense of wonder in the world.

**Xanadu** When you seek employee engagement, you are embarking on a journey that is constantly evolving. But we all need a finishing line. The finishing line is Xanadu—that idyllic place of great contentment where it all comes together.

**Yielding** Engagement is an active and constantly evolving process, but when we continuously reach for new heights, the finishing line can seem further out of reach. We can find ourselves asking when a situation of opportunity became predictable in its sameness. Yielding, powering-down, and even letting go, are all key to sustaining employee engagement. “Winners quit all the time. They just quit the right stuff at the right time” (Seth Godin, The Dip).

**Zeal** When we approach a situation with zeal, we approach it with an enthusiastic diligence that reveals new possibilities, alternatives, and options. Create an atmosphere of zeal, where others can seize opportunities and solve problems, and you will empower them to achieve, generate enthusiasm, and foster their desire to excel.

# Employee Engagement ABCs



by Raven Young

**Atmosphere:** "Devising and maintaining an atmosphere in which others can put a dent in the universe is the leader's creative act." --Warren Bennis

**Beginnings:** "The beginning is the most important part of the work." --Plato

**Communication:** "The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place." --George Bernard Shaw

**Delegate:** "Delegating works provided the one delegating works, too." --Robert Half

**Empower:** "The vision is really about empowering workers, giving them all the information about what's going on so they can do a lot more than they've done in the past." --Bill Gates

**Flexibility:** "The bend in the road is not the end of the road, unless you refuse to take the turn." -- Unknown

**Growth:** "There are no such things as limits to growth, because there are no limits to the human capacity for intelligence, imagination, and wonder." --Ronald Reagan

**Humility:** "It is amazing what you can accomplish when you do not care who gets the credit." --Harry S. Truman

**Ingenuity:** "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." --George S. Patton

**Jest:** "Jesters do oft prove prophets." --William Shakespeare

**Keys:** "All one has to do is hit the right keys at the right time and the instrument plays itself." --Johann Sebastian Bach

**Learn:** "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go." -- Dr. Seuss

**Moments:** "Learn from the past, set vivid, detailed goals for the future, and live in the only moment of time over which you have any control: now." --Denis Waitley

**Now:** "Forever is composed of nows." --Emily Dickinson

**Objectives:** "First, have a definite, clear practical ideal; a goal, an objective. Second, have the necessary means to achieve your ends; wisdom, money, materials, and methods. Third, adjust all your means to that end." --Aristotle

**Profits:** "When we cast our bread upon the waters, we can presume that someone downstream whose face we will never know will benefit from our action, as we who are downstream from another will profit from that grantor's gift." --Maya Angelou

**Question:** "Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning." --Albert Einstein

**Results:** "When I have fully decided that a result is worth getting, I go ahead of it and make trial after trial until it comes." --Thomas Edison

**Success:** "Success is simple. Do what's right, the right way, at the right time." - Arnold H. Glasow

**Try:** "Do, or do not. There is no try." --Yoda, The Empire Strikes Back

**Uncertainty:** "True genius resides in the capacity for evaluation of uncertain, hazardous, and conflicting information." --Winston Churchill

**Vision:** "A leader has the vision and conviction that a dream can be achieved. He inspires the power and energy to get it done." --Ralph Nader

**Why:** "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how." -- Friedrich Nietzsche

**Xerox:** "Once the Xerox copier was invented, diplomacy died." --Andrew Young

**Yearnings:** "We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams." -- Jimmy Carter

**Zest:** "True happiness comes from the joy of deeds well done, the zest of creating things new." --Antoine de Saint-Exupery

# Employee Engagement ABCs



by Robert Morris

**Authenticity** Natives of Maine are renowned for their colorful sayings, such as “Won’t say he’s dishonest but if he wants to get his cows to come home, he’s gotta get someone else to call ‘em.” If trust is the “glue” of sustained relationships, it is the result of being authentic.

**Balance** The most effective people, the happiest people are not those who balance *everything* (that’s impossible) but rather, those who balance what is *most important* to them.

**Determination** Jack Dempsey was right: “Champions get up when they can’t.” That said, it makes no sense to continue to feed hay to a dead horse. Therefore, determination must be *enlightened*.

**Execution** Thomas Edison was right: “Vision without execution is hallucination.” Only those who are results-driven can achieve their personal objectives. When a member of a successful team, they are usually its MVP.

**Frugal** Generally associated with money, the term has a wider and deeper meaning: a contempt for *waste*.

**Grateful** Decades of research involving many millions of employees and customers reveals that “feeling appreciated” is consistently ranked most important. Gratitude unexpressed is appreciation denied.

**Humor** Raphael Sabatini tells his reader that Scaramouche “was born with the gift of laughter and a sense that the world is mad.” It is noteworthy that Scaramouche laughed much more at himself than he did at anyone else.

**Inquisitive** One of the dominant characteristics of creative, innovative people is their insatiable curiosity to know *why*, *why not*, *what if*, etc. They delight in learning and understanding for its own sake, to be sure, but they also leverage what they know to achieve an improvement of some kind.

**Knowledgeable** True, many people have what Jeffrey Pfeffer and Robert I.

Sutton characterize as a “knowing-doing gap” and it is also true that know-nothings are invariably do-nothings.

**Leadership.** Leaders need to create vision, direction, and strategy that inspire engagement while always being supportive of others’ efforts to establish engagement at all levels and in all areas of an organization.

**Management.** In many studies, the single biggest contributor to employee engagement is the relationship people have with the person who manages them so managers must manage their own engagement while connecting fully with their staff to prime employees’ engagement. Employees join companies but leave “bosses.”

**Objective** Prior to making a decision or reaching a conclusion, it is imperative to obtain as much information as possible from as many different sources as possible, and rigorously evaluate the information. “Prejudice” means pre-judgment. Challenge all assumptions and premises. Be open-minded. *Then take appropriate action.* The doing-knowing gap probably causes as much damage as the “knowing-doing gap.”

**Potential** Darrell Royal once said that “potential” means “You ain’t done it yet.” Merely advocating engagement does not achieve it.

**Truth** I agree with Voltaire: “Cherish those who seek the truth but beware of those who find it.” Truth is a journey of discovery, not a final destination.

**Uniqueness** No two snowflakes are identical nor are any two human beings, however much we may share in common. Engagement is a shared commitment by individuals, each of whom is not required to become anonymous.

**Vision.** People need to be inspired by compelling images of what can be accomplished, especially of what they can be a part. Great leaders attract followers who share their dream, yes, but who also are convinced that making the dream come true is in their self-interests.

**Well-Mannered** Whatever the circumstances, inappropriate behavior is inexcusable. Those who comport themselves as ladies and gentlemen demonstrate a respect for the dignity of others. Regrettably, so-called “common courtesy” is less common now in the business world than it was previously. The most highly-admired companies are those whose people are well-mannered in relationships between and among themselves but also with everyone else with whom they come in contact. It is no coincidence that most of the most highly-admired companies are also on the annual list of those most profitable.

**Youthfulness** What can be learned about engagement from children? These are among the lessons Robert Fulghum learned in kindergarten: clean up your own

mess, hold hands and stick together, share everything, and play fair. Pablo Picasso claimed that he spent the last 60 years of his life (he died at age 91) struggling without success to see the world with the innocence of a child.

**Zest** Passion's first cousin, zest combines enthusiasm with faith, energy, and determination, the three pillars of engagement.

# Engage Me If You Can - It's as easy as A B C ...



by Ken Milloy

**ASK:** Ask me questions, ask me for ideas and ask me to participate - in doing so you will get my attention and be on your way to capturing my heart.

**BEHAVE:** How you behave towards me and others we work and interact with conveys a great deal to me...treat me like an adult and someone who can assist, treat all those around me in the same way and we have a chance at moving ahead here. Treat me as overhead, as a resource or as human capital (whatever that is) and I will drift off to another place. Yelling and screaming...that won't work. Ignoring except when I mess up...that won't work either.

**COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE:** If you want me to be engaged help me understand what is going on around here and let me in on the context (another 'C') that led to or must shape our decisions. That is called communicating with me. And once we have that in order - well let's work together - you and I and the others on our team - to clarify the opportunities and determine how we will succeed. We call that collaborating.

**DELIVER:** Too often you make promises or indicate you will get back to us on something - please remember that by delivering on those promises you build credibility and trust - and if we can rely on you, rest assured you can rely on us.

**ENCOURAGE AND EMPOWER:** It is actually a simple concept. Let me know when I have done well and I smile a little more, I learn and I carry that perspective forward. Let me know also that you trust me to get the job done in the way that makes the most sense to me and my smile will lead to a willingness to do more. Encourage me and empower me - keys to my long term engagement.

**FEEDBACK:** Tell me how I am doing - not once or twice a year - but all the time. Tell me when you like what I have done; tell me what didn't work and why. Providing me feedback - both positive and constructive (but please don't yell!) on a regular basis will do so much to help me improve you will be surprised at what can be achieved.

**GOALS:** Give me goals to work towards. Better yet, let me in on developing goals that make sense for me, for us and for the company.

**HELLO and HOW ARE YOU?:** Stopping by every now and then to say hello and ask how I am doing, how my family is doing or to talk a little about nothing overly important (did you know I play golf?) - what could be simpler? It shows you care. More importantly it helps build the bond we need to enjoy our time at the office.

**INTEGRITY:** Earn it, keep it and reap the rewards. I'll do the same and so will our team mates. Just imagine!

**JOURNEY:** I am on a journey - and so too is the company - can we please find a way to link the two? That will take a bit of work of course. You will have to get to know me a little. Well, maybe a lot! Find out what you can about me and my own goals and ambitions, about my hopes and dreams and about where I hope my journey will lead me. About who I am...outside of work as well. I will return the favour by getting to know you and your hopes and dream and.... Ah yes, don't forget to share with me the journey the company is exploring. Only then will getting engaged become a possibility.

**KNOWLEDGE:** Share with us what you know. Allow us to share with you what we know. And ensure we share what we know with each other. And help us apply that knowledge in a way that leads to success.

**LISTEN:** Listen. Listen actively. Listen with your ears....your eyes...your mind. Let me know what you heard and check that what you heard is what I said or intended. If you do that, you will be surprised at what you learn...

**MEANING:** My work has to have meaning. I am here for much more than a pay cheque and to spend my day with others. I want to contribute and in return I want to gain. Work with me on building that meaning, on linking it together with our goals and you will really begin to capture me, my heart and my mind.

**NOTICE:** Take notice of what I do and how I do it. Better yet - take notice of what all of us do - individually and collectively - and give us credit for our efforts and achievements. Taking notice goes a long way. Oh...don't forget that taking notice means that you actually share with me that you noticed.

**OPPORTUNITY:** You know who I am and what matters to me. Please consider opportunities for me to get involved in places I may not otherwise have the chance to get involved with. Special assignments, leadership roles, cross organizational work, training, development and what have you - give me opportunities to deepen my capabilities and contributions. I will succeed!

**PASSION:** Show me yours and I will show you mine.

**QUESTIONS:** Questions, questions and more questions. Ask, consider, answer, probe, challenge. They are indeed the gateway to deeper levels of awareness, understanding, knowledge and potential.

**RECOGNIZE, REWARD and RELATIONSHIPS:** If we can have the ABC's then we can redefine the 3 R's. Recognizing what we do and rewarding us appropriately is key to engagement. Building relationships with us on a personal and work basis is a darn good idea as well. Forget the 3 R's at your own peril.

**SMILE:** As the saying goes "a smile goes a long way!" Try one on for size - and see just how far. You will be surprised.

**TRUST:** Showing that you trust me - and giving me reason to trust you is maybe the most important of all the ABC's - without the rest just means so little. Understand that trust is earned and earned over time. Understand also that it is not all that hard to earn - but once lost, very hard to get back.

**UNIFY OUR TEAM:** Work with us as a team and let us work as a team (there is a difference Mr. Boss). Allow us to share in building our vision, in setting our goals, in having some ownership. Let us participate in the way that makes most sense - by allowing us to do what we can in the way we can. Let us share our hopes and dreams and fears with each other - so we can then work together as one.

**VICTORY:** Celebrating our wins - large, small and anywhere in between is important to us - it lets us know that our efforts have paid off, that some cares and that you have noticed.

**WE:** What is that old saying...'*many hands make light work!*' **We** are here - let us in on what is happening and **we** can succeed together!

**X-TRAORDINARY!:** The results we can achieve will indeed be extraordinary...let's try!

**YES...AND...not YES BUT:** When you say "yes but" as you so often do you have the impact of shutting down our conversations and creativity. And that's just not good. How about trying "Yes...and..." for once. You will be surprised and where that may lead and how it will make us feel!

**ZENITH:** Follow the ABC of Employee Engagement and our full potential and commitment will be your forever!

and that's it for now.....go forth and engage!

# Employee Engagement ABC's



by Stephen McPherson

**Attitude** – your attitude is the fuel of engagement

**Behaviour** – your behaviour is the foundation stone of engagement

**Character** – your character is the framework of engagement

**Duty** – your duty to others is the execution of your engagement

**Enthusiasm** – your enthusiasm is the accelerator of engagement

**Fun** – your fun is directly proportional to your engagement

**Glue** – you are the glue holding together all the elements of engagement

**Honesty** – your honesty is a prerequisite for engagement

**Identity** – your identity is a reflection of your engagement

**Join Up** – get engaged

**Kinetic** – bring energy to your engagement

**Light** – lighten up to engage

**Membership** – membership fosters engagement

**Necessary** – engagement is a necessary ingredient in success

**Opportunity** – opportunities to engage are everywhere

**Participation** – your full participation is required for true engagement

**Quality** – quality can only happen in the context of complete engagement

**Respect** – engage demands respect for all

**Superior** – superior results are the result of full engagement

**Truth** – is the first victim of disengagement

**Unanimous** – unanimously engage your physical, emotional and spiritual self

**Valour** – valour is the action of the truly engaged

**Winning** – winning is only possible through complete engagement

**Xenophobia** – engagement conquers xenophobia

**Yes** – say “Yes!” to engagement

**Zest** – share your zest for engagement with all

# Employee Engagement: 26 Keys from A to Z



by **George Reavis**

Here are my 26 keys to employee engagement from A to Z.

**Ask.** Asking is key to reflection and learning. To engage employees, lead them in re-asking the critical questions for "How are we doing?" both individually and collectively. These are the questions that supervisors are asking but modified so as to relate to frontline daily operations.

**Beneficiaries.** Everyone must be aware of whom the groups efforts benefit. Typically in an enterprise this would be the 'Customers' but in classroom settings for instance it is often, to a large degree, the group members themselves.

**Commitment.** As one of the five principle ingredients of engagement, people must demonstrate intentions in order to sustain their commitment. Without commitment one cannot remain engaged long-term.

**Dialogue.** Two-way communication to bring about discussions and share ideas which is an environment that is essential for employee engagement to thrive.

**Enjoyment.** A second principle ingredient of engagement. Without enjoyment one cannot remain engaged long-term. Happiness is nice but only if you enjoy what you are doing will the activities strengthen you.

**Feedback.** We all have a lot of experience with feedback from colleagues and supervisors, but to stay engaged one must learn from their own activities to provide them feedback. This latter feedback is needed to capture the heart and mind.

**Gratitude.** Another of the five principle ingredients of engagement. Without gratitude one cannot stay engaged for the long-term. Fostered by the activity of thanking others which in turn provides recognition and appreciation.

**Heart.** Part of the definition of employee engagement. Symbolic of one's passion, emotions, feelings, and enthusiasm which inspires, motivates, and strengthens one's efforts.

**Involve.** A second part of the definition of employee engagement and the 'foundation' on which engagement can build. Involvement requires that challenges and skills remain somewhat equal. Everyone has the abilities to perform the tasks they need to perform.

**Justify.** When we are involved with heart and mind, we justify our experiences and activities. One of the most important ways, and least talked about, is demonstrating intentions--we get into trouble when we try to manage intentions but we can lead them. Everyone knows what these people stand for, what is important to them, what they are about--they commit themselves.

**Know.** Knowledge leads to action. In leading engagement just as with managing people is it actions which get results. Here are five actions we suggest you practice to sustain the engagement of everyone in your group. Thank, Invite, Ask, Feedback, and Share.

**Learning.** One of five principle ingredients for employee engagement. No one can remain engaged without continuing to learn. Asking fosters reflection which stimulates learning.

**Mind.** The third part of the definition of engagement. Represents the thought processes of the brain. One of the largest and most exciting areas of current research into human performance. Helping people think, reflect, learn, focus, and experience.

**Non-verbal.** To sustain employee engagement we must lead everyone with activities which are also non-verbal for as groups mature most learning and communications becomes informal and non-verbal.

**Ownership.** Engagement is about maintaining those critical connections between customers and those providing products and services on the frontlines of daily operations. We call this the 'entrepreneurial ethic' as it creates the cycle of employees engaging customers and in turn being reengaged by the customers themselves. Accomplishment, recognition, and appreciation flow back up the organization!

**Process.** Merely a set of steps or actions which may occur anywhere or anytime within the organization. May be a part of a program but does not need to come from the top down. A 5-step process, or recipe, for employee engagement!

**Question.** A prerequisite to help employees think for themselves and create the "ah ha" moments for self-realization and inspiration.

**Recognition.** Key to building the connections between Employees, Customers, and Stakeholders in the organization. Facilitated by the pivotal step in the practice of 'Thanking' which builds momentum.

**Share.** The fifth of the 5 steps in the process, or recipe, in building employee engagement. Sharing helps build and maintain the people connections which create enjoyment for everyone involved. The other critical result of sharing is to facilitate assessments. Assessments are nothing more than opinions but, unlike measurements, they foster a dialogue or two way discussions among all parties.

**Thank.** Key to recognition, appreciation, and gratitude. Beneficiaries of your group's efforts will not remain engaged and reengage your group members if they are not thanked both verbally and non-verbally. The pivotal step or action for any group leader to lead the engagement of their members.

**Unconscious.** Every successful group leader must understand that a large percentage of learning and communications (the majority in a mature organization) is 'informal' or unconscious. This is human nature. The group leader can choose to help everyone thank, invite, ask, get feedback from their own daily activities, and share with everyone the connect with to move toward engagement. Few employees consciously choose to not be engaged or worse yet to be actively disengaged. Most simply respond to previous habits, learning, instruction, and beliefs. If you started ten new employees today three would show up engaged, five not engaged but very receptive and willing to follow all instruction, and two would simply not get it from previous bad habits and training.

**Visualize.** There is an exciting new movement toward helping others picture in there minds what could happen with their participation and efforts.

**Win.** More correctly win-win-win for customers, employees, and stakeholders of the organization. This is the acid test for all activities on the frontlines of daily operations!

**X-Ray.** Examine (a mental picture) why we take any action on the frontline of daily operations. This needs to be a coordinated effort among team leaders, line managers, and their supervisors (middle managers) on a continual basis. And do not forget to thank, invite, ask, get feedback from the activity itself, and share with everyone--everyday!

**Yourself.** Practice, help, and expect changes, or movement towards full engagement, from within each and every person (customers, employees, and stakeholders) on each and every day. It will be gradual but just like organizations, each individual gradually increases or decreases--never accept or assume a static.

**Zone.** Everyone is in the 'zone', or as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi describes it as "Flow". This is the time when you performed a task or job when your abilities and challenges were so well matched that time flew by before you realized it.

# Employee Engagement from Olde England



**by Ian Buckingham**

**A – “Anarchy in the UK”.** The Sex Pistols taught us a lesson about engagement and control that's worth remembering as we become part of the establishment ourselves.

**B – “BS Bingo”!** A great way to pass the time at the next leadership conference.

**C – chief** engagement officers are the new CEOs

**D – Engagement** – enough planning already - just DO It!

**E - encourage** your line managers to be the great communicators their people already know them to be.

**F – Facebook** is the organisation’s friend. Social media isn’t a fad, embrace it.

**G – “it’s great after being out late, walking my baby back home”.** Now that’s engagement!

**H – Hire** people who are in tune with the values of your organisation.

**I – However well crafted communication should start and end with and “I” - “I see what’s in it for me”**

**J – Jack Johnson.** He’s on message with several generations! What can we learn?

**K – “knock, knock”.** It’s an economic downturn. Can the leaders come out please?

**L – Leaders** look in the mirror when things are going wrong.

**M – Managers** are an endangered species we’re not campaigning to save.

**N – “Naked”** (and other “power” words)

**O – Ordinary** is good. Take back ordinary. Let’s make authentic communication ordinary, the norm!

**P – Planning** is our friend. But rather like doughnuts, too much planning really slows you down.

**Q** – “The Queen is dead. Long Live the Queen”. Whatever you may think of them Hero Leaders come and go. Line managers last a lot longer.

**R** – “With great power comes great responsibility”

**S - supercalifragilisticexpialidocious.** You remembered it. Geddit?

**T – Taste**, sight, sound, smell, touch – engagement’s about appealing to the lot.

**U – U2!?**. More than a legendary rock band but a reminder that we’ve a great network out there and we’ve all got something to share and learn.

**V – Veal!** A controversial topic and a great reminder that great engagement relies on communication that is fit for audience purpose.

**W – Wales.** I wonder what lessons we can learn from the Welsh about post-colonial centralised communication functions?

**X** – The generation who are responsible for much of the engagement activity.

**Y** – The generation who are responsible for translating much of the engagement activity.

**Z – Zoo!** Whatever formal engagement strategies there may be it’s always going to be a fantastic, colourful jungle out there with grapevines aplenty so open those cages and connect with the people.

# 26 Keys to Student Engagement



by Angela Maiers

## Bonus ABCs - Student Engagement

Engagement is such a hot topic in education, I thought this was a great idea for educators to follow the lead.

So, here it goes: **26 Keys to Student Engagement.**

**Authenticity:** We hear it all the time, "Why do we need to know this stuff? When will I ever use this?" There is no doubt that successful learning is directly related to its relevance, purpose and authenticity. We are more motivated to learn if we see a clear connection to the purpose and use. If our desire is for students to engage, the work they do must be significant, valuable, and real.

**Brain:** The brain is intimately involved in and connected with everything educators and students do at school. Any disconnect is a recipe for frustration and potential disaster. Every school day changes the brain in some way. We can influence and ignite that change when we understand the way the brain learns, and act accordingly.

**Collaborative:** Collaborating with others in solving problems or mastering difficult materials prepares students to deal with the messy, unscripted problems they will encounter in life. Students are valuable resources for one another. If they have opportunities to engage and explore topics, assignments, and content in a collaborative way, understanding and engagement are natural outcomes.

**Disengagement:** Students are sometimes labeled as lazy, unmotivated, off-task, and disrespectful. These behaviors can and often are a direct result of disengagement. When learning involves wondering, dreaming, playing, interacting, communicating, exploring, discovering, questioning, investigating, creating - the disengaged become engaged.

**Environment:** Just as architects create the environments in which we live and work, we teachers create the place and space that become home to learning. The decisions we make -- from the arrangement of furniture to the feeling students experience -- greatly influence conditions of learning.

**Feedback:** Feedback is a powerful force. It can be a stimulating motivator or a suffocating inhibitor. Feedback that is specific, non threatening, and frequent

changes performance, attitude, and behaviors. So, the next time we say, "good job", we must follow that with, "...and here's why!"

**Generative:** Learning is about the creation of meaning, value and action on the part of the learner. Learning is not something you 'absorb', it is something you create for yourself - mentally or physically. Generative learning is the active process of linking, sharing, re-creating, and co-creating. Engagement comes about when we encourage learners to construct and produce knowledge in meaningful ways by providing experiences and learning environments that promote active, collaborative learning.

**Habitudes:** You may have observed that the most successful individuals in life are not necessarily the ones who got the best grades in school. Successful people learn to be successful because they develop specific attitudes and behaviors to ensure their success in *all* aspects of life. We can teach students the specific habits of preparedness, mindfulness, and persistence to use and apply when engaging in any task, challenging or otherwise.

**Joy:** Children are learning machines and have untold hours of play and joy... until... they are "educated" - educated to behave otherwise. If we want a better class of thinkers and innovators -- people with explosive curiosity and creativity, we need to bring FUN back into our classrooms. We need giggles and laughter, enthusiasm and excitement. School can become a place remembered for the love of learning, if for no other reason than it feels joyous!

**Kaizen:** Kaizen is the Japanese term for "continuous improvement", a concept we should take to heart if we want students to achieve their personal and professional best. Small changes, if done every day, can make a big impact over time. By creating an environment of Kaizen, reflection becomes part of the daily work and conversations. Continuous improvement can only be achieved, with continuous reflection. And with continuous reflection, students will become more and more engaged in their growth and learning.

**Listening:** Both learning to listen and listening to learn are critical to literacy in the 21st century. Listening is a powerful and essential means of developing and mastering both old and new literacies. Listening is not only part of the engagement process, it's the first step. In any culture or community, listening first will earn the right to be listened to.

**Motivation** Motivation is essential to learning at all ages. Students have the primary responsibility to own their own learning, yet we have a shared responsibility in the task. The environments we foster, the cultures we contribute to, even the aura of a classroom, all make a difference.

**Networks:** One of my mantras is *Together we are Smarter*. Students are connected to friends and family outside the classroom; creating a network inside the school makes sense too: schoolmates can become brain mates. With tools like blogs, wikis, and Youth Twitter, networking in school can be as easy and engaging for them as doing it at home! In fact, there's reason not to do it.

**Outside:** To really engage students, we must bring and **allow some of the their outside into the classroom** (don't groan!). Every student we teach has something in their lives that is engaging - something they do well AND love. If we can identify the engaging and creative ways they do their work outside of school and find ways to bring that into the classroom, students may start to see that school is not such a bad place after all.

**Participatory:** Students have come to depend on us for learning to happen - sometimes. IN reality, most know they can rely on each other these days. They are becoming a community of learners. If we're smart about it, community begins within ourselves. Encouraging participation fosters engaged student body. Engaged learning is active; it is hands-on, minds on, eyes on, and demands participation at all levels.

**Questions:** Questions that stretch student minds, invite curiosity, provoke thinking, and instill a sense of wonder, keep students engaged. Successful student engagement requires a classroom culture that invites mutual inquiry, gives permission to investigate open-ended and suggestive questions

**Relationships:** To grow 'em you must know 'em. Knowing our students seems obvious, yet many students claim that we do not "get" them. Students want and need a relationship with us. They work harder and smarter when they know that *their* learning matters to *us*. When students feel valued, honored, and respected, there is an interest and energy in the process of learning that reaches far beyond the content we teach.

**Self Efficacy:** Self efficacy is commonly defined as the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome. Students with a strong sense of efficacy are more likely to challenge themselves with difficult tasks and be intrinsically motivated. These students will put forth a high degree of effort in order to meet their commitments, and attribute failure to things which are in their control, rather than blaming external factors. Self-efficacious students also recover quickly from setbacks, and ultimately are likely to achieve their personal goals.

**Teacher** (as student). Students see the teaching part of our persona every day. We stand before them telling and showing them how wise and passionate we are about the topics we teach. But, do we stand before them as learners? What would that do to engagement, if we shared with students how we came to know, how we faced and conquered learning challenges, and most importantly how we can help them do the same. Teachers who stand before their class as learners first, are more successful teachers because of it.

**Understanding** A wise saying we're familiar with goes, "seek first to understand and demonstrate that understanding before seeking to be understood." How do we demonstrate to our students that we understand and value them; in our words, with our actions, and by our expectations?

**Variety:** Variety adds spice to life and to our teaching. We must use a variety of teaching methods. No matter how gifted a teachers you are, using the same method to teach each class can become monotonous- for you and the students.

**WWW:** The information super highway. It is not only the pathway learners in the 21st century seek out and locate information. It is a place where we engage in the creation, and co-creation of content and understanding.

**Xtra:** I have heard educators say that there is no time for engagement, there is too much content to cover. Giving kids time to collaborate, create, talk, and reflect is just Xtra work. Can we turn "Xtra" into "Xpectation", so engagement is no longer an option, it becomes an expectation.

**You.** This alphabet list of student engagement from A to Z will only become alive if you take these thoughts and ideas and put them into practice — did you notice the only thing missing from the Corporate Alphabet picture at the start of this article was "U"? Engaged learning requires leadership. Our leadership reflects the research and philosophies we believe in and promote: a team of educators engaging and supporting one another. As a leader, U can coach, model, mentor and support our colleagues in the process of creating and sustaining engaging classrooms.

**Zeal:** Energy and enthusiasm are contagious. One of the best compliments I ever received from a student, "I did not really like the topic you were presenting on, but you were so excited, I couldn't help but pay attention!" When we show kids our zeal and passion for what we believe in, we welcome them to share their own. Love what you do, and present it with zeal everyday! Even if it is the 100th time you have presented it, remember it is the first for these students!