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"The nearest to perfection that most people come is when filling out an employment application."  
*Anon (Think about it)*

**This month's cartoon ...**



**Peter Rowe**

Your accredited



**PROFITUNE**  
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT SPECIALIST

Clear Goals, Better Management, Bigger Profits, Happy People!

T: 07 5510 3555 E: [peter.rowe@profitune.com](mailto:peter.rowe@profitune.com) M: 0408 844 000

Hi,

I'm seeing a distinct divergence in the business market at the moment; the good players have lifted their service offerings, refined their systems, improved their performance and doubled their activity. They're doing quite nicely.

The rest have battened the hatches, trimmed their teams, reduced their stock and cut corners where they can because they think things are tough. They're right.

This newsletter is about choosing your own reality.

Enjoy!

Regards Peter Rowe

Director Profitune Business Systems

PS: Looking for an entertaining and informative presenter? For information about booking Peter to talk to your company or association, contact our Presentations Coordinator on [info@profitune.com](mailto:info@profitune.com).

**Engaging Your Staff**

(Time to read this article: 8 minutes)

Employing people only fills your ranks; *engaging* people is what fills your *banks*. As a leader, you have a moral responsibility to engage your team; as a manager you have a commercial imperative to do so, a fact that is attested to by the latest in a round of research going back more than a decade.

## The Facts

Research on employees by Gallup over the last ten years provides some scary numbers, in that:

- Around one in every five workers is "engaged" which is to say that they are involved in and enthusiastic about their job.
- Three in every five workers are in the limbo of being "not engaged" and are unlikely to commit their full energy or resources to fulfilling their role to the best of their ability.
- Around one in every five workers are "actively disengaged", which is to say that they are dissatisfied with, and disconnected from any responsibility towards, their jobs. In fact they go further, and are quite prepared to actively undo the work of more engaged co-workers whose performance they feel threatened by.



## The Consequences

- Engaged workers are more productive by a significant margin than those not engaged or actively disengaged.
- Engaged staff are more focused on their role in producing outcomes that align with the company's interests; actively disengaged staff focus on producing outcomes that serve their own interests, even when these are at the expense of the company's interests.
- Engaged staff make less mistakes, are more efficient, stay with their employers longer, and set a positive example of engagement for others throughout the organization. Actively disengaged people make more mistakes, but often hide them or attribute them to others, set a negative example for others and do not stay as long. Paradoxically, some actively disengaged may stay in a role for long periods provided it continues to meet their needs.
- Engaged staff are more profitable for their company than disengaged or actively disengaged employees.
- Engaged employees have positive attitudes towards their jobs, most of their co-workers (they tend to identify and disassociate from the actively disengaged), their employer, and the goods and services that they produce, often actively recommending the latter two to others. Actively disengaged employees are often vocal or militant in showing their negative attitude toward their work, their fellow workers and their employer, and often actively disparage their employer and its products and services to others.
- Engaged staff take an average of three sick days a year; actively disengaged average 6.5 sick days a year.
- Engaged employees report being more satisfied with their life and personal relationships; actively disengaged employees report being less satisfied with their personal lives (with half reporting more than three extremely negative encounters with family and friends in the month before the survey).
- Engaged staff tend to feel low levels of stress and high levels of security about their job; actively disengaged workers report high levels of stress and insecurity about their jobs.
- Engaged workers are generally satisfied with their managers or supervisors; more than half of actively disengaged workers would fire their boss if given the chance.

## The Cure

It should be obvious that the cure for the malaise which Gallup is reporting - and which many of us witness as customers of other businesses, and hopefully, only occasionally (if at all) in our own businesses - lies with management.

It is one of management's key roles and responsibilities to engage every team member with the company's Vision - its "picture of perfection" - and to do whatever it takes on a day-to-day basis to keep them engaged. The alternative does not bear contemplation.

Workers responding to the Gallup survey provided some answers as to what they wanted from their managers, so it might be worth a moment or two to score your own performance (on a scale where 0 = lousy and 5 = brilliant) against these requests:

Action Required of Manager	My Score
Focus me	
Know me	
Care about me	
Hear me	
Help me feel proud	
Help me review my contributions	
Equip me	
Help me see my value	
Help me grow	
Help me see my importance	
Help me build mutual trust	
Challenge me	
<b>Score out of 60</b>	

So, how did you score?

Like some help? Here are some suggestions as to how to improve your score, from the survey respondents:

- Provide feedback and guidance
- Make real time to discuss problems
- Seek ideas and input from everyone
- Provide the resources to solve problems or to do a job well
- Give real recognition and/or reward
- Provide opportunities for people to develop their potential
- Be realistic when keeping the pressure on to perform and to achieve more with less
- Provide opportunities for social interaction
- Train people how to resolve interpersonal conflicts
- Promote joy and appropriate humour within the office
- Be flexible; help people to actively balance work and home responsibilities.

You could always score yourself on these too, but a braver move might be to share this article with your whole team, and open the entire field up for debate: Their feelings, your performance, and actions on both sides that would produce a better result than you presently have.

What might come of that?

### Gallup Q12 survey

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission or purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

*The Q12 questions are the copyright of Gallup, Inc 1993-1998.*

## Last Word

In the course of researching this article I came across a gem from John Wood of Gallup: When it comes to the reactions of the Actively Disengaged to the changes that are essential to lift any business to the top of its game, Wood said, "We call them *CAVE dwellers* because they are *Constantly Against Virtually Everything!*"

## The Upside of a Down Market



*(Time to read this article: 2minutes)*

Unemployment in Australia is currently hovering around 5% and while low unemployment is both an economically and socially desirable goal, from a commercial point of view, very low unemployment makes it harder to find and attract better staff.

Up until recently, full employment and heavy competition for labour from the financial sector and the resources boom made it something of a challenge. Many businesses settled for less than they wanted in new and existing staff, and paid more than they wanted to gain or retain them. But the last six months has seen a shift and the release of some high-grade talent into the marketplace.

## Top Grading

It pays to constantly train, skill and motivate in order to raise the performance levels of your entire team (including you), and to review the bottom 20% of performers against what's currently available in the labour marketplace.

Now is the time to see who's out there and how you might include them to strengthen your team.

Sure, times are tougher than a year ago, but we're seeing the tougher and better managed players lift their game, their service and product levels, their overall performance and, with it, their market share. Many are busier than ever, with some of our own clients more than 40% up on last year's figures.

In the meantime, on the other side of the equation, the weaker players have cut their service standards, cheapened their products, cut their activity levels and marketing and downsized their staff - all proven losing strategies in any downturn.

Now's a good time to run an ad for new staff, just to see who's out there.

One thriving client with two vacancies for skilled tradespeople recently had more than 60 responses to their advertisement. They took the two they wanted - and took two more because, in our client's words, "*They were too good to leave out there on the market; it's easier for us to find new work for them, than to find them when we need them!*".



## 15 Things to Derive On a Drive

*(Time to read this article: 4 mins)*

If your work puts you on the road for hours a week, we have some simple strategies for making that time behind the wheel more productive and enjoyable. We have shortlisted 15 things to do while driving, and added four unusual safety tips to go with them.

## 5 of 15 Things to Do While Driving

We don't have space for the lot, here, but these are the first five. If you'd like the full set of 15, [just email](#).

1. Make all of those follow-up phone calls that otherwise slip through the cracks of your "normal" days.
  - a. Use a quality loudspeaker car-kit or wireless bluetooth headset for your phone (normal wired earpieces work, but the trailing wiring can present a danger in the driver's action zone.



- b. Find the voice control features on your phone (or buy a new phone that has them) and program the contacts you plan to make, before you leave (it's twice as quick to do this at your desk rather than while you're driving - and with zero danger).
  - c. Put your common calls on speed dial and link a voice command to them.
  - d. Use the voice record feature on your phone (or on a separate Dictaphone) to keep your notes (and avoid writing them while you drive).
  - e. Don't text, it's a crime and can be deadly.
  - f. Be aware that even with legal technology enabling you to make calls, your attention levels will *still* be impaired - so compensate with the awareness of this fact.
2. Create a list of things you'd like to learn, that are amenable to passive learning while driving. Buy the material you require and have it in a "I take this when I'm driving" bag, then work your way through your list. Candidates could include:
    - a. A foreign language - imagine how good that holiday is going to be if you can actually understand the waiter, or the cute MOTDS\* tour guide! (\*Member of the Desired Sex).
    - b. History; art appreciation; or music appreciation - not the music itself, but a treatise on your favourite music.
  3. Download your favourite podcasts before departure and catch up on the road. Take an MP3 recorder to capture your thoughts or commitments to action from these.
  4. List the family members and friends to whom you owe calls, then make them feel good and win some brownie points by catching up while you drive.
  5. Carpool with team members then brainstorm key challenges, or seek new solutions to old problems while you all have nothing else to do! This could also get you out of your work place earlier, couldn't it, since you are going to "finish your working day" on the road!

## A Safety Tip

Below is one of four safety tips we offer our clients and readers:

1. **Think & Drive:** While driving time is great for thinking, avoid daydreaming on "pleasure topics". When we imagine ourselves in pleasurable situations, whether they be our favourite recreation or that soft, warm motel bed that's still an hour away, our brain rhythms drop to around the 7-14 cycles per second range where we are prone to "zoning out" of the present and associating into the future. Being zoned into the future can be creative and fun, but it's likely to become something entirely different when approaching a level crossing, road works or a stationary truck that's very much in your present! Keep to rational subjects if you're going to think and drive.

For the remaining ten driving items and three safety tips, [just click](#).

**Web Profitability = Visibility + Credibility**



*(Time to read this article: 5 minutes)*

In a very real sense, if you're in business today, a key part of your "presence in the marketplace" is your "web print" - your footprint or visibility on the web.

In a very serious sense, your website has almost displaced or become your "shopfront", for six out of ten new contacts will Google you - after first contact - to gain a better feel for who you are, what you do, and how you could be useful to them.

Your website is fast becoming a key part of the "first impression" you create and in that sense one thing has not changed - you only get one chance to create a great first impression.

So what makes a good website, and what are some of the traps to avoid?

## Visibility

Your website is often the first visual aspect of your company that a prospective new Client will encounter and, if you're part of the exodus from bricks-and-mortar into *clicks*-and-mortar and don't have a flashy office, your website may be "all there is" in terms of the face of your business.

Visibility has two aspects:

1. Findability - how highly do you rank in the search engines when someone keys the words that relate to the products and services in which you specialise?
2. Remarkability - how positively impactful, relevant, engaging and memorable is your site?

## Credibility

Nowadays when a 15 year old can build and publish websites it's vital that your website shows you as a credible business, and there are few things to be aware of when it comes to boosting your credibility.

1. Is your website current and up to date? No ones wants to be reading information from 2000!
2. Have you put time into your 'About Us' page? It is one of the most important pages on your website and often the most commonly overlooked by business people when setting up their sites (and, ironically enough, one of the most referenced when they are checking other business people). It's your chance to create a great first impression by telling your story, how long you have been in business, what your company stands for, your experience and, most importantly, why they should deal with you - your value proposition. And, don't underestimate the impact power of a good professional photograph of you and/or your team - note I said "*professional*": No dark circles under eyes, fuzzy focus or lousy lighting - all things in amateur shots that create subconscious negatives for the viewer.
3. Does your 'Contact Us' page provide an immediate contact option? Remember your website is at work 24/7 and you're not, so ensure that any phone number is professionally answered either live or with a professional-sounding voice message (First impressions, remember? If you work from home or provide an after-hours contact, you don't want their first impression to be of a five-year-old screaming "*Dad, it's for you!*").

So, at this point, on a scale of one to ten, where ten is "shining like a star" and one is "lost in space", how would you rate your "visibility + your credibility". Would it equal "profitability"?

If you've put no importance on a website of your own up till now, would it now be a wise move to become visible to those searching to do business with you?

If you do have a website, but it's tired, out of date, behind the times or was created with less awareness than you have now, does it need a professional makeover?

## Deal with Professionals

I love the saying, "*If you think dealing with professionals is expensive, you should try dealing with amateurs!*".

You would not consider using anything less than a professional sign writer to front your building; don't consider using anything less than a professional developer for your website.

We avoid plugging other businesses unless we know and trust them, and on this occasion we're happy to answer the question, "OK, I don't where to start; where do I go for a brilliant website?" with "*Talk to Natalie Alaimo at Brilliant Web Design, and ask her for the Brilliant offer she has for our readers.*"

That offer (which expires 31 March 2009) includes:

1. Professional graphic design of your website
2. Five pages including a "Contact us" email form
3. Content Management System to make website updates easy for you
4. Full Training & Support
5. Sitemap
6. Submission to Google.

For full details please click [here](#) and download Natalie's free eBook "37 Ways To Increase Your Web Traffic".

## Thoughts on Employment & Commitment



(Time to read this item: Do you really care?)

Most are engaged in business the greater part of their lives, because the soul abhors a vacuum and they have not discovered any continuous employment for man's nobler faculties.  
*Henry David Thoreau*

The crowning fortune of a man is to be born to some pursuit which finds him employment and happiness, whether it be to make baskets, or broad swords, or canals, or statues, or songs.

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Work is Love made visible. And if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy. For if you bake bread with indifference, you bake a bitter bread that feeds but half man's hunger. And if you grudge the crushing of the grapes, your grudge distils a poison in the wine.

*Kahlil Gibran, The Prophet*

The nearest to perfection that most people come is when filling out an employment application.

*Anon (Think about it)*

The nature of commitment (to the job) is best understood by considering a bacon and egg dinner. In such a dinner, it can be said that the chicken has "an interest", but the pig - he has a commitment!

*Peter Rowe*

## The Brevity Brief



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**Peter Rowe**

**T: 07 5510 3555 F: 07 5510 3544 M: 0408 844 000 E: [peter.rowe@profitune.com](mailto:peter.rowe@profitune.com)**

**Suite 401, 130 Bundall Road, Bundall, Queensland**

**PO Box 8917, GCMC, Queensland, 9726**