



Lessons in Employee Engagement

I have been working with a unique insurance company in Sheboygan, Wisconsin named Acuity. I normally don't talk about my clients in this newsletter but [Acuity](#) warrants your attention. As you may know, Acuity was selected at the #3 position on this year's "Fortune Best Companies to Work For" list right behind Google and Boston Consulting. While this is the debut for Acuity on the Fortune list, they have been selected as the best mid-sized company to work for in America by Great Place to Work® in 2004, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013, and have been the only company in the nation to be ranked in the top five for 10 consecutive years.

Even if you do not aspire to have your business make a "best place to work" list, there isn't a business owner I know that wouldn't want the level of employee engagement demonstrated at Acuity. So, how did they achieve that type of culture and what can your business learn from them?

1. **Culture starts with leadership** - Acuity has not always been an engaging place to work. Like many companies that have been around a while, there were times when the culture at Acuity would have been considered "command and control." Thanks to the transformational vision of a stable leadership team (spearheaded by an energetic, passionate, playful, and empowering CEO Ben Salzmann), those days are gone. *LESSON: Love your people and practice servant leadership.*
2. **People are driven by purpose** - Acuity is in the relationship business. Of course they are experts in insurance and the technologies needed to serve independent agents, but

ultimately everyone at Acuity has been selected and inculcated in the notion that they play a role in advocating for one another and for their customers. *LESSON: The fuel of engagement comes from keeping a sustained focus on the higher purpose of your business.*

3. **People thrive with autonomy and mastery** - I talk about employee engagement in terms of "discretionary effort." Are your people just working to their salary level or are they giving you extra effort? People are most intrinsically motivated by freedom to create and a hunger for accomplishment and mastery. Acuity leadership has emphasized internal, not external, markers of success and offered wide-berth for employees to innovate and achieve. *LESSON - Engagement comes when people are stretching, growing and exercising some control over their time and the tasks they perform.*
4. **Work made fun gets done** - I never thought "insurance and fun" should appear in the same sentence. Don't get me wrong, Acuity associates are passionate about service and empathetic in times of need but they are also "real!" They have built a playful community that is catalytic to high performance and workplace joy. *LESSON: Play to win. Your people will be better for it!*

What are you doing to drive the engagement of your people? How would you evaluate the purpose, autonomy, mastery and fun in your work environment?

Timeless Wisdom

"Stop chasing the money and start chasing the passion."
-- Tony Hsieh

The Best of the Blog:

BE PERFECT or BE EXCELLENT: The Art of Getting Real

Sometimes we teach because we have something to share and other times we teach because we have something to learn. This is one of those cases where I am exploring an issue for myself as much as I am addressing it for you.

How do we balance all the demands necessary to serve the needs of our customers? [Read more.](#)



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