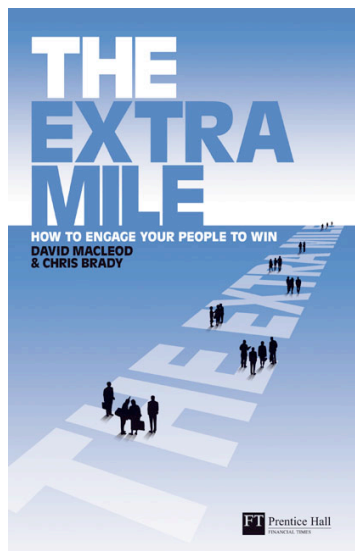


# The Extra Mile: How to engage your people to win

By David Macleod & Chris Brady



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Do your employees trust you? Are you good at inspiring them? Do they know what they are expected to do? Do they really care about doing it? Do they believe that you have a sincere interest in their wellbeing? And do you think these questions are important?

If you pay any attention to current management thinking, you will have answered yes to this final question, and in that you are right: these are concerns which are vital to the success of your organisation. If you have also automatically answered yes to the all the other questions, however, you should almost certainly think again. The disquieting truth is that only a quarter of employees in the UK trust their leadership, only 37% consider their managers are able to inspire enthusiasm for their work. Only 12% would describe themselves as highly engaged. Put simply, if only 12% really care about fulfilling their jobs to the best of their ability, a massive majority of the workforce must be operating at a level below their potential best.

- *The Extra Mile* reveals why and how you should engage the other 88%, those who are not fully engaged. The route to success lies in the latent energy contained within this 88%.

So what is engagement? We have all seen it, sensed it or, if we are lucky, have worked in organisations where it was ingrained in the culture. It is the willingness and enthusiasm with which an inspired employee gets to grips with the tasks in front of them. It is the discretionary energy which, in the right circumstances, employees use to go above and beyond the call of duty in putting themselves into their jobs. What does it look like in practice? It is the customer-facing employee who takes the trouble to ensure that every client walks away from every meeting with a sense of satisfaction; but it is also the assistant who takes extra care to double-check a boss's mistakes; it is the NHS orderly who goes out of his way to clean the wards; it is the sales force who are completely on board with the latest drive into their new territories; it is the middle manager who makes it her business to ensure that everyone who works for her is motivated to give of their best.

And it is vital. You may think that a brilliant strategy is the key ingredient in a successful business. But whatever sector you are in, there are likely to be competitors out there whose strategy is just as far sighted as yours. So long as your strategy is easily communicable and sensible – so long as your business model is not broken - then your competitive edge will lie not with your strategy, but with your *people*. It is your people who are going to be responsible for delivering your vision; it is your people upon whom your business relies. And if you are going to rely on them, it is vitally important that they care about the organisation as much as you do. The linkage is clear: engagement levels predict success. Sainsbury's CEO Justin King, put it succinctly: 'In my business, with 140,000 people, engagement is my number one concern. In businesses of scale, you don't even get started without engagement.'

Employees have been hectored and lectured: they have been machine gunned with logic, analysis and strategy. They are being ever more closely monitored, measured and assessed through increasingly sophisticated management techniques. Isn't this sufficient, doesn't this show you are paying attention? No. While communication is important, and metrics are useful they are not sufficient to encourage success, because they don't encourage your people to care. There is a key difference between employee *alignment* – their knowledge of what they should be doing, and their *engagement* – their desire to fulfil their job to the best of their ability. Both need to be present in your company, and the balance between them is crucial: is your workforce made up of **Tin Soldiers** (too much alignment, too little engagement) - lined up in

neat and rigid rows, but going nowhere? Or are they **Headless Chickens** (plenty of engagement, without proper alignment?) – a chaotic workforce, each enthusiastically pursuing their own goals, to no overall effect? Or are they simply **Bookends** – low in both, and going nowhere? It is only when both alignment and engagement are present and in balance that your people, and your company, will really succeed.

*The Extra Mile* shows you how to truly engage your workforce. How do you go about it? The quick answer is that there is no quick answer. Building a culture of engagement is not something that can be addressed by faddish management drives or the odd away-day. Implementing engagement involves taking a long hard look at your company, starting with yourself and your immediate team – engagement is founded on trust, and trust can only come with meaningful, open and honest leadership. It entails exploring the crucial, and much-maligned, middle-management layer of your company – not a ‘permafrost’ layer characterised by obstructiveness as it is so often painted, but a vital component of your success. It means examining the ‘reservoir of employee well-being’ and working out how to make sure that it is not, fatally, draining away. It means acknowledging the value of involving your workforce in conversations, rather than haranguing them from a soap box. It means investigating the proper use of metrics and measurements.

Threaded through all this is a simple philosophy: we want to turn engagement from a hypothetical buzzword into an attainable goal. And the reason behind this is even more straightforward: above all, engagement is a path to success. The extra effort, the extra mile, is the mile that will make your organisation win.