

From Rants To Raves: How To Engage Your Employees

*LCT East speaker and workforce expert
Randi Busse explains how to
create a company culture where
everyone thinks like owners.*

By Lexi Tucker, LCT assistant editor



ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Are your employees engaged? In other words, are they emotionally committed to helping make your company successful?

Randi Busse, president of Workforce Development Group Inc. and session speaker at the LCT-NLA Show East, would like to remind you your staff is the face, name, and voice that represents your brand. If they aren't engaged, then how they act and what they are thinking will affect the kind of experience they provide your clients.

Compliant Vs. Committed

The title of Busse's session, "Moving Employees From Compliant To Committed," re-

flects the challenge of changing a bare-minimum, "I do it because I have to" attitude into one that takes pride in going above and beyond to make customers feel special. Because what do customers who feel special like to do? "Buy again and tell other people," Busse says.

Why is this important? As she puts it, word of mouth has become word of mouse. "I don't think I'm the only one in the room who has one of these," Busse says, as she holds her cell phone in the air. "Your clients have these also, and they are not afraid to use them. We want the stories they are telling to be good ones, and that happens with who's been taking care of them."

This all starts with ensuring your employees are engaged; the tough part is figuring out how. "Do your employees tell you 'I'm at an 8.5 today, boss'? I recently saw a shirt that said 'I quit...,' and on the back it said, '...but I still work here.' That's someone who's not even compliant — they are just there for a paycheck."

During the session, Busse asked what the audience



Randi Busse, president of Workforce Development Group Inc., reminded the audience to look at themselves in the mirror to ensure they were serving as a good example to their employees.

thought is the most important thing employees want from an employer. Respect, appreciation, recognition, and a sense of "why" were all mentioned. She then asked, "Why didn't anyone say money?"

The answer? "We want our employees to be engaged not

staff is still making contact with your clients," she says. And that's whether they are speaking to customers over the phone, dispatching a car, or whether they are actually driving one of your clients.

But before you start freaking out and decide to com-

"ONLY 30% OF YOUR EMPLOYEES ARE ENGAGED."

because we are giving them a paycheck, but because they feel like they are a part of something bigger. You have a great deal to do with that."

Scary Statistic

Busse cited a Gallup poll that shows only 30% of all employees are engaged. This means if you have 100 people working for you, 70 have checked out in some way, shape, or form. "That's really scary, because 70% of your

pletely overhaul your staff, here's the good news: You can turn your rant employees into rave ones. Busse describes a "rant" employee as those who are standoffish, never smile, and act closed off from the rest of the team. "Rave" employees, on the other hand, are proud of what they do, happy to be with your company, and are always ready to help when needed. It doesn't matter if you have 99 rave employees; if you've got one rant,

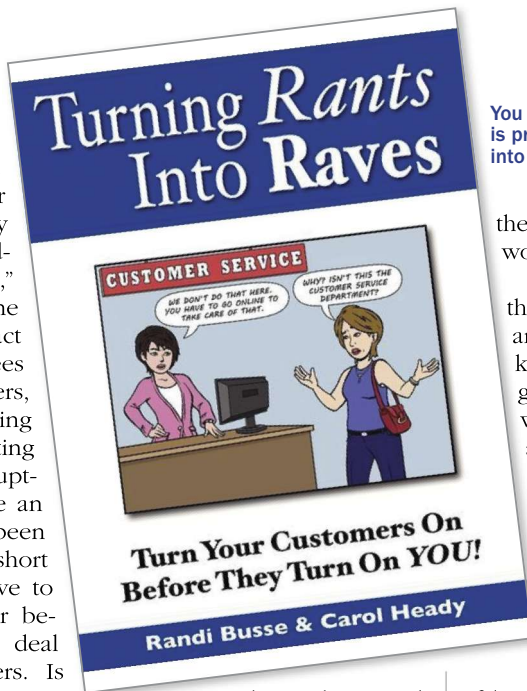
it's one rant too many.

To help this transition, owners need to set an example for all. "As owners, every job is our job, including cleaning the toilet," Busse says. "Imagine the negative impact your rant employees are having on others, whether they are saying 'It's not my job,' acting annoyed, or interrupting. Imagine if you're an employee that's just been yelled at or spoken short to, and now you have to get on the phone or behind the wheel and deal with actual customers. Is there a good chance some of that negativity from rant is going to rub off on you, then ultimately on a customer?"

The fish stinks from the head down; if you're the owner, you're the fish. If you have rant-like employees working at your organization, you're part of the problem. If you as an owner don't do the right thing, can you really fault your employees?

Think Like Owners, Not Like Renters

Rave employees think and act like owners of the business, while rant employees think and act like renters who are only there until something better comes along. To change the rant mindset, you have to realize your staff and customers share similar traits. Both want you to care



about them and their needs. They want help accomplishing their goals. "Yes, your employees have goals, and if you don't know what they are, this might be a good time to find out," Busse says.

Clients and employees want to be treated well, valued, and to have good reasons to work with you. Busse mentions the consequences of not following through on this. Glassdoor, a website where former employees can anonymously review the companies they've worked for, is where they might take out their frustrations.

Just like customers talk when they have a good experience, so do employees. If your employees believe they are having a good experience with your company,

You can read more about improving the customer service your team is providing in Randi Busse and Carol Heady's book, "Turning Rants into Raves: Turn Your Customers On Before They Turn On YOU!"

the reviews are nothing to worry about.

"If they feel like they've been slapped around or yelled at, what kind of reviews are they going to be writing? The way you treat them will affect how they feel about you and your company and how engaged they'll be," Busse says.

Your employees are watching and listening to you, too.

"If you're the kind of boss who says things like 'you idiot, I told you not to do that,' what is going to be the engagement level of that employee? It can't be 'you do this, but I'm going to do that.' Our employees are kind of like our children; they are watching everything we do. We think they aren't really listening, but they are."

Are you being a role model for your employees in terms of how you want them to act? "If you get off the phone with a customer who pushes your buttons and you go 'that guy is an idiot,' and your employee heard you say that, what's going to happen the next time that employee talks to that customer? You can't expect someone to act differently if you're not doing it yourself," Busse says.

Power To The People

Your employees are on the front lines and are speaking to your clients daily. If you don't tap into the intelligence your employees have as to what's working and what isn't, you're missing a big opportunity.

"Give the power to the people. Empower your employees, listen to their feedback, and don't micromanage. If you don't trust your employees, is it possible you don't have the right people working for you?" Busse asks.

"We are so quick to hire people. And yet, on the backside when it's time to fire, we are slow. Why is that? It's a lot of work to find good people, but here's the thing: If you hire someone, that person is representing your business."

Your employees have skills, but the other most important piece is their attitudes. Therefore, when you're interviewing a prospective employee, don't just look at the resume. If the attitude isn't aligned with your company's vision, trouble will abound.

Ask open-ended questions such as, "What would you do if a customer said this to you?" and "How would you handle a situation like this?" Busse says she'd rather take someone who has no industry experience and mold them if they have the right attitude.

"That's where it starts. By the time you realize one of your employees is a rant, your clients knew it weeks and months before."

For your staff to succeed, you have to provide them with the necessary tools. Give them confidence, train them properly, allow them to make mistakes, and then explain how to do it differently.

"Our employees need to feel if they do make a mistake, it won't be the end of the world. But here's the thing: Some of our employees have made mistakes in the past and we didn't react properly. If we have a one way discussion with them, that's going to make them internally say 'I'm never going to make another decision again.' We create that situation."

Finally, know a satisfied customer is a former customer waiting to happen. "Satisfied isn't enough. If I'm satisfied, I'm not loyal; satisfaction is temporary. It starts with how you're hiring and acting." **LCT** — Lexi@LCTmag.com

WHAT DO EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS HAVE IN COMMON?

They want you to...

- Care about their needs
- Help them accomplish their goals
- Treat them well
- Give them good reasons to work with you
- Value them



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