

## ENGAGEMENT:

# The Flip Side of Accountability

By Valerie Atkin

We're at a crucial time where sales have ticked up but not quite enough to confidently add headcount. There is an opportunity to garner new customers and maximize current ones but only if all your team is rowing enthusiastically in the same direction.

You may already have enough employees. The good news (according to extensively validated research): 26% of them are rowing their hearts out. The bad news: 55% have dropped their oars and 19% are furiously rowing in the wrong direction.

So how do you increase accountability with numbers like that? By flipping the accountability coin over and working first on engagement.

Ah, but you say, "Those statistics don't reflect our company." OK, let's assume you are twice as good as the companies studied. That means 35% of your employees are less engaged than they might be. That's one out of three!

## What are they doing instead?

A recent study asked employees to identify their most common unproductive behaviors. Take a look:

- 93% .....Covering my tail
- 88% .....Blaming or being blamed
- 81% .....Feeling powerless
- 70% .....Being told what to do
- 68% .....Feeling disengaged
- 68% .....Ignoring problems
- 61% .....Waiting too long to act

But you still protest, "We have an AMAZING group of folks!" So you're sure they're engaged, but the question still remains: Are they engaged in the right things or are they focused mainly on yesterday's priorities?

Increasing engagement and accountability can have significant positive impact on revenues, profit, operating efficiencies and employee satisfaction.

At the same time, it can help to reduce costs without a corresponding headcount reduction.

If that's not incentive enough to spend some time on it with your employees, I don't know what is. Try this:

- Identify a cross-functional, multi-level group of employees—6 to 20 of them, depending on the size of your dealership. You can even have more than one group.
- Ask them to:
  - Identify what's working now —teams, smooth hand-offs, functional areas, etc.
  - Discuss the best team they have ever been on. What made it great? What were its attributes?
  - Which attributes does our dealership share with your dream team list?
  - What are our current most pressing challenges?
  - Given our strengths and challenges, which attributes are most important for us to develop?
  - How might we do that?

Why bother with all of this? Because people don't argue with their own data. You can't increase employee engagement without engaging employees!



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Valerie Atkin is founder and principal of Wells Street Consulting Group and a faculty member of the WPF Learning Academy. For more information, visit [www.WellsStreet.com](http://www.WellsStreet.com) or email Valerie directly [Valerie@WellsStreet.com](mailto:Valerie@WellsStreet.com).