

# Top Five Ways to Engage your People and Tap into their Creativity and Innovation

According to the latest Best Employers in Canada study, "It's the activity to harness this discretionary effort that is particularly important; this commitment can make the difference in how organizations are impacted by the downturn, how quickly they emerge from it, and how strong they are after the downturn passes" ( <http://www.evolvedemployer.com/2010/02/02/keys-to-employee-engagement-from-canadas-best/> )

From my experience in working with organizations around the globe, here are 5 sure proof ways:

## 1/ Go to Gemba

In Japanese ... Gemba is the place of work. 70% of employees do not take part in continuous improvement processes (CIP) or company suggestion systems. In fact, 70% have never been asked at their place of work about problems they have and about ideas for improvement. Actively seeking out ideas from employees at their place of work works! That is 180 degrees different to how it is practised in most organizations today.

## 2/ Make Engagement a Part of Daily Business

Lean processes mean the systematic identification and elimination of all non value adding activities by all employees. An underlying attribute of best-practice organizations is that they take the time to listen bottom-up. Efficiency = doing things right. Effectiveness = doing the right things. Our employees know where these opportunities lie and can tell us. Waste has no future!

## 3/ Train Local Facilitators

Problem finding and problem solving in teams are skills that can be learned. Empowering and certifying employees at the shopfloor level and in the office corridors will ensure that creativity and innovation do not remain the braintrust of the select few.

Creativity is having ideas. Innovation is implementing ideas. Employees need to know that there are designated people in their workplace who can help them transform ideas into reality. Process innovation can come from anywhere.

#### 4/ Build Metrics into Manager's Balanced Scorecards

Four metrics, known in the field of idea management thinking for decades, need to be incorporated into every manager's and every business unit's scorecard:

- more ideas (suggestion rate)
- from more employees (participation rate)
- with greater potential (implementation rate)
- and more monetary benefits (benefits rate)

#### 5/ Uphold the Olympic Ideal

Citius, altius, fortius ... the 'faster, higher, stronger' mantra of Olympic competition was inspiring! Yet the actual motto was: participation is more important than winning! The Olympic Charter promotes respect, fair play, friendship and solidarity. We in business similarly need to cater to ideals that value employees:

- being respected and taken seriously
- everyone takes part
- all problems are important
- dialogue where the problems occur

#### In Summary

While ROI is important, ROP ... Return on Process needs to become our focus as well. People, process, profits ... soft facts will help determine the future. After all, the expert is the person doing the job daily. Organizations that know how to harness these hidden reserves in these difficult financial times help themselves become "fit" again. They also have a better chance to come out of this crisis strengthened.

For more information on the PiT-Stop idea generation process and on idea management please see the website [www.innovationtransfer.com](http://www.innovationtransfer.com)

Bernie Sander  
President, IT Innovation Transfer Inc.  
[bsander@innovationtransfer.com](mailto:bsander@innovationtransfer.com)  
[www.innovationtransfer.com](http://www.innovationtransfer.com)

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Bio:

Bernie Sander is an international consultant, author and workshop leader. He lives in Ottawa and travels the world working with Fortune 500 organizations and helping them save millions through his employee engagement methods. He is President of his own consulting firm, Innovation Transfer, serves on the education faculty of several international organizations and is author of the books, "A Wake-Up Call for Idea Champions" , "On Idea Management" and "PiT-Stop – Problem Finding and Problem Solving in Teams", all best practice thinking in the field of managing employee ideas. Bernie served as a past President of the North American Employee Involvement Association and speaks at many international conferences annually.