



Why Employee Engagement Is Not Strategic

January 29, 2019

The Presenters



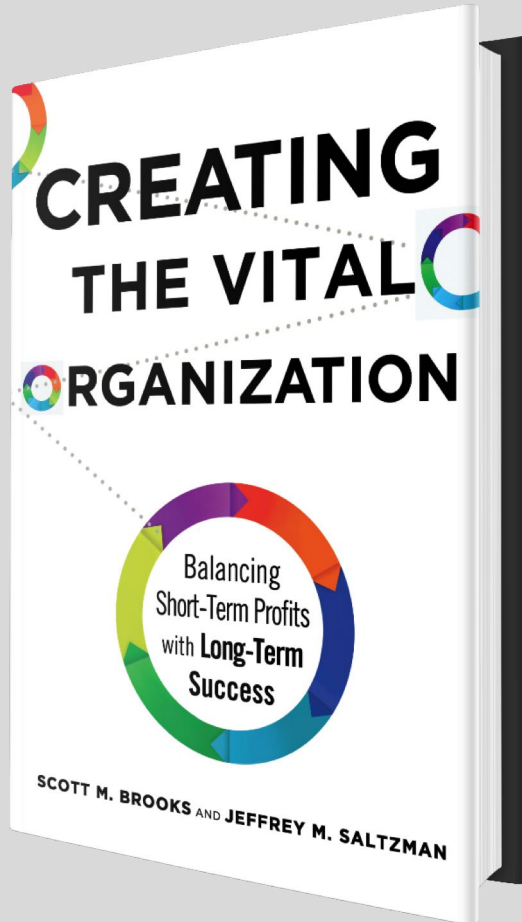
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“This book is a highly practical and detailed guide for executives and HR leaders.

– *Anna Tavis, HRPS People & Strategy Journal Book Review, Fall 2016*

“A must read for every start-up entrepreneur to every Fortune 500 board of directors member.”

– *Mark B. Segall, Founder and CEO, Kidron Corporate Advisors LLC*

“A compelling read, this book provides a commonsense approach to creating the vital organization.”

– *Upinder Dhillon, Dean School of Management, Binghamton University*



Van Halen and the genius M&M metric



Engagement...

- Can be useful
- Is not always what we'd hoped
- Needs some role clarity

Q. ■ Is the measurement and pursuit of engagement strategic?

Strategy is *Not Ambition*

Strategies need to suggest how to achieve goals or ambitions



A photograph of a gravel path in a forest. The path starts from the bottom center and splits into two paths that lead into the distance. The trees are tall and have green leaves, and the ground is covered with brown leaves. The lighting is soft, suggesting a forest setting.

Strategy is about *Choices*

*They suggest pursuing certain paths over others,
directly address challenges and bottlenecks*



Strategies will be *Unique*

They capitalize on factors competitors find costly or impossible to copy

Q. *How does engagement relate to these three characteristics?*

Strategy is *Not Ambition*

Engagement, like market share, customer loyalty, or more money in the bank, is an ambition or a goal

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Strategy is about *Choices*

*Engagement helps us understand how to energize
and motivate, not how to direct that motivation*



Strategies will be *Unique*

A strength of engagement—its universal applicability—is also a limitation, as it does not provide insights into unique challenges

Engagement...

- Is an ambition
- Does not squarely address executive choices
- Is not reflection of unique challenges

Q. Do we care?

Asked of HR directors and VPs...

Based on experience, what is best piece of advice?

Clear #1: FOCUS ON THE BUSINESS

Do we do a good job?

1/3 Good, 1/3 Acceptable, 1/3 Poor

* Brooks & Vosburgh (2011). *The Art and Science of Organizational Decision Making*, presented at annual SIOP conference.

** Seibert & Schiemann (2013). Results published in *Quality Progress*, by the American Society for Quality.



Overarching theme:

*Strategic metrics need to be
relevant to the boardroom*

The Role of Engagement:

*A lightning review of research in
four quick slides...*

Engagement Is Like Fuel



It is critical for performance

What's important is how it's used

It is not the engine

*You don't always fix the car
by filling gas tank*



Engagement, Like Fuel, Is Motivation

Confidence in Future Better General Predictor Than Engagement

Best Predictors of Specific “X” Based on Employee Observations of “X”



Research Implication

Don't start with the Engagement Toolbox



Design “backwards” from strategy into the survey...

... Start with the end in mind.

Surveys should be

Uniquely “You”

If you can't find elements of your organization's unique strategy or even your industry reflected in your survey, then you aren't doing it right.



One Tech Company

Ambition: More Sales

Strategy: Own Version of “Solution Selling”

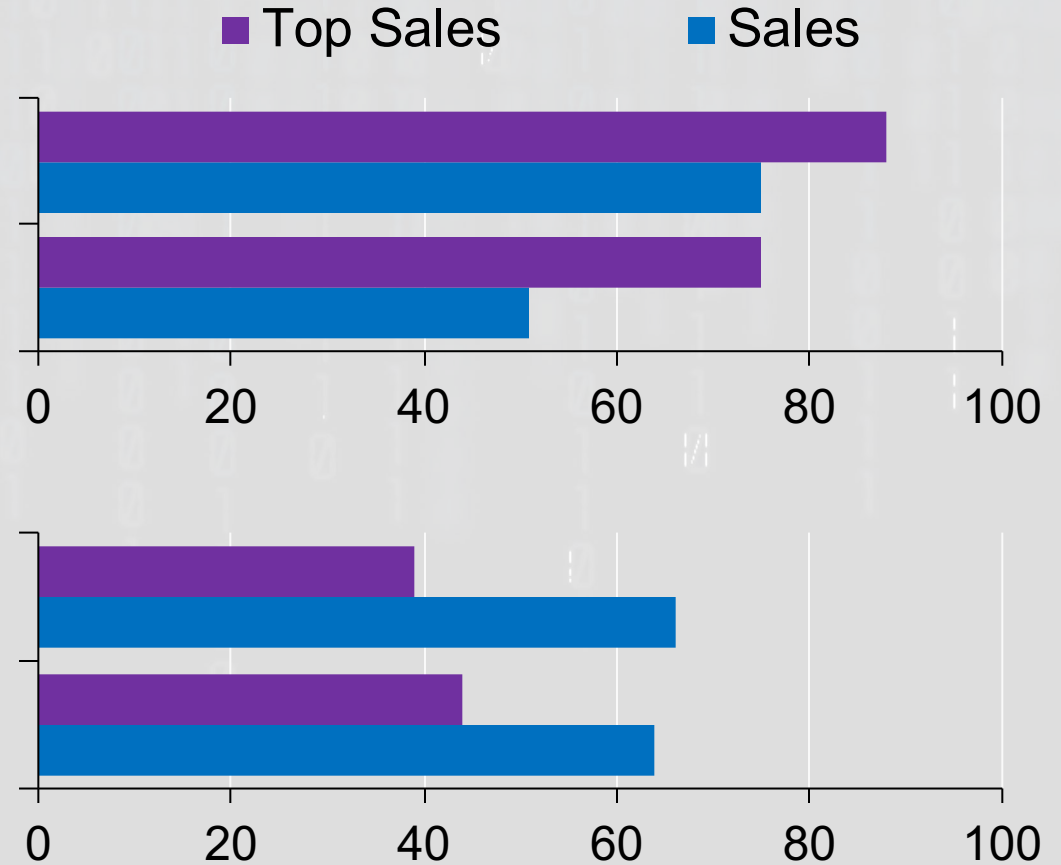
Sponsors: Executive Committee

Survey Approach: Sales Focused,
Research Inspired

Example Insights

New sales strategies are working.
Involve customers in designing solutions.

Deliver as promised.
Customer problems corrected quickly.



A Few Survey Lessons

Content flows from strategy

Not all employees' opinions equal

- Supplements/branching
- Focused segmentation

Engagement not in this survey at all

Conclusions

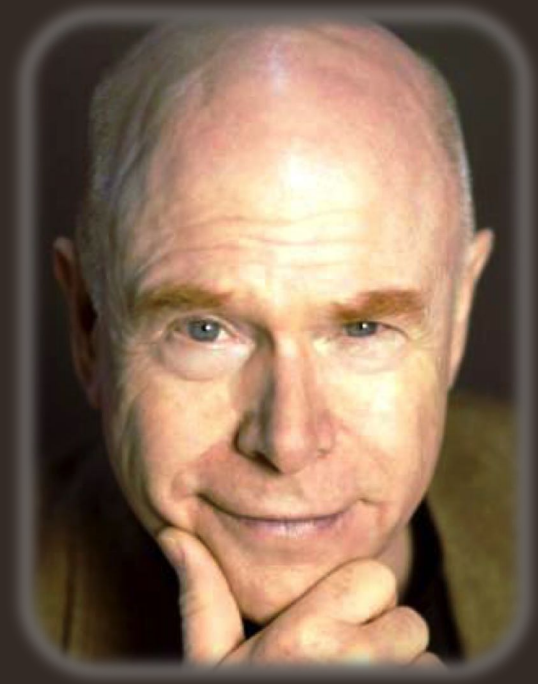
- Strategy is about choices to promote unique competitive edge
- Engagement useful, but not unique, nor directly about strategic choices
- Strategic surveys require focused thinking, uniquely solved for each organization

Strategic surveys help leaders evaluate and shape decisions, clearly identify challenges, and enhance an organization's competitive edge

“ Good strategy grows out of an independent and careful assessment of the situation, harnessing individual insight to carefully crafted purpose. Bad strategy follows the crowd, substituting popular slogans for insights. ”

Richard Rumelt

*Good Strategy/Bad Strategy:
The Difference and Why It Matters*



Evaluating Strategy

- ☐ Our strategy is unique, clearly different from competitors.

- ☐ Our strategy offers clear, actionable plans for improvement, steps for implementation.

- ☐ We are aware of environmental, marketplaces changes that will impact the organization.

- ☐ We are successfully navigating environmental/marketplace changes.

- ☐ My organization or work group generates products or services that customers cannot obtain elsewhere.

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How will you navigate strategy and engagement?



To submit a question or your top take-aways,
submit via chat box

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