

## **Q&A: Business Guru Kevin Kruse on the Job Satisfaction Crisis and How Engaged Workers Are the Key to Everything...**

More people are unhappy at work than ever before, which is a crisis for individuals and businesses alike. We spoke recently with Kevin Kruse who co-authored with Kenexa CEO Rudy Karsan, *We: How to Increase Performance and Profits Through Full Engagement*, which hit stores in January. Kruse talked with us about the new world of work, how jobs impact our entire lives, and what employees and employers must do to generate engagement for the better of society.

### **Q) Why are so many people unhappy at work today?**

We are currently undergoing a rapid historical shift. For most of human history we didn't think of "work" as being separate from the rest of our life. We ate what we killed or tended the land and consumed our harvest. Even when we evolved and developed skills, we often worked where we lived, our surname reflected our craft, and performed our service when someone showed up needing them.

But with the Industrial Revolution we left our land and families to go to where "jobs" were located, typically in cities. We got paid for our time, not our output. We started to hand over responsibility for our health and retirement to others. And suddenly we had this notion of life and work being separate things. You "go" to work. You work from "9 to 5." And we look for a "work life balance."

Now things are rapidly shifting back. Work and life are increasing intertwined. There is a huge shift to variable pay plans based on output and performance, and away from just putting in time. More and more workers are being asked share equally in their retirement or pension savings. We are living longer, with disappearing retirement plans, means most will be working far longer than they originally planned. This is a time of great opportunity for those who know how to embrace this seismic shift; it's a time of pain and frustration for those who don't understand what's going on or choose to fight it.

### **Q) Why do you say this is a crisis for individuals?**

Psychologists have proven that our emotions at work spillover to other areas of our lives, and cross over to those around us. Studies show that on average people dissatisfied at work weigh five pounds more, have an increased risk of heart attacks, and have less marital intimacy than those who are happy at work. Another study showed that on days when fathers reported bad days at work, their kids were more likely to misbehave in school the next day. It is virtually impossible to lead a healthy and happy life without feeling great about your work.

### **Q) What about for business—what impact does engagement have on the bottom line?**

Well there has been a lot of prior research showing that employee engagement correlates to faster growth and higher profits for business. The linkage is that people who are fully engaged at work are more productive, provide better service and stay with their companies longer, all of which leads to better business outcomes. Kenexa did their own study recently looking at the engagement data and stock price of their public company clients. What they found was huge. The total shareholder value of

companies with the most engaged workers was *five times* higher than companies with the least engaged workers. Five times!

**Q) What should individuals do to increase their engagement at work?**

Many people focus just on making money, so they think in terms of “job”, and they really cheat themselves. Others focus on the stepping stones of their “career”, which does increase engagement, but it’s shallow and tenuous. Only when we discover our true “calling” can we reach lasting, full levels of engagement. So, how do you discover this?

Imagine a Venn diagram with three circles that overlap. The circles represent what we call the 3 Ps—your passion, your purpose and pay. The bull’s-eye is the intersection of those three things. You have to figure out what you are really passionate about doing. You have to figure out how or where you’re going to make a contribution and serve, which leads to true fulfillment. Yet of course, we all live in the real-world and need to figure out how to make money along the way. The intersection of those three items is the Career-Life Bull’s-eye you should be aiming for.

**Q) What can leaders do to drive engagement in the workforce?**

Great question because even if individual workers are doing their part, you still need a good manager—an effective leader—for engagement to take place. Kenexa surveys over 10 million workers, in 150 countries, each year, and from this research we describe in the book the eight drivers of employee engagement. Based on our own experience as business leaders, Rudy and I focus on three in particular: Growth, Recognition and Trust. Those three drivers are dominant in most situations.

Growth means you feel like you are growing as an individual and learning new things. Recognition isn’t about a cash bonus or plaque, it’s about feeling appreciated; it’s about knowing that your ideas count. Trust means both that you trust the ethics and competence of your manager, but also that you trust that your future and your company’s future are bright.

We came up with an acronym to help remember to focus on these things. GR<sup>E</sup>AT managers create an environment that focuses on Growth Recognition And Trust.

###

[918 words]