



Do your employees have an acute case of “Stickittothemaniosis”? If you have never heard of this term, it was coined by Jack Black in the movie [School of Rock](#). Stickittothemaniosis is a disease characterized by the uncontrollable urge to “stick it to the man”. Most often this disease can, in fact, be found in rock bands and is easily cured with a very loud and distorted guitar solo. Today, however, this terminal disease has mutated, spread to corporate America and is affecting the workforce in epidemic proportions.

Right now, employers are functioning with a survival mentality. Jackets are off, sleeves are rolled up, and company leaders have been laboring twice as hard as they ever have in order to press toward company goals in this economy. However, many leaders have not been paying attention to their constituents during this recession; and their constituents’ commitment levels are dropping. They have “Stickittothemaniosis” and they have got it *bad*.

Do your employees view you as “the man” or do they view you as a leader that is worth following all the way to company goals? Are they inspired by your vision of the future at your company or are they looking around for other options?

What if they knew that you were doing your

best to keep them on, and that you too were hoping for better times that haven’t come yet? You wouldn’t be “the man” anymore. You would be the head of a team that is engaged, interdependent, and invested in the future of your organization.

During times of economic stress, your company brand can suffer in the eyes of your employees – even with the best of efforts. Why? [Jack Welch](#), in his recent article, [Winning Back a Wary Workforce](#) asserts that the employment climate has changed. He says that the American workforce has experienced a fundamental shift in attitude toward working for “the man” and that future trends will make hiring even harder for big business.

Think about it . . . In the past two years, employees have seen their co-workers get laid off; those lay-offs have shifted work onto remaining workers, and in an effort to cut costs, some employers have begun to shave benefits. So even if you are an employer who has done everything you know to do for your employees in this environment – the increased pressure created from the realities of a recession can leave workers with a bad taste in their mouths. They can become disengaged, and could leave just as soon as the economy begins to move forward. With that in mind, leaders need to take action now to ensure that their employees are committed and feel valued.

Trust Begets Employee Engagement

Trust is one of the most essential and intangible factors of a fully functioning team. Teams that can stay cohesive in this economy are

poised for success when recovery begins to build. It's a simple fact: Employee trust produces employee engagement and employee engagement produces higher production levels. Conversely, employee disengagement leads to a self-focused rather than team or company-focused attitude, and production can suffer. A disengaged workforce affects your bottom line. (Who needs *that* in a recession?)

The beginning of this much-needed trust begins with confidence in current leadership. In their book, [Credibility](#), authors James Kouzes and Barry Posner place honesty, the ability to be forward-looking, competence, and a talent to inspire at the top of their list of qualities that credible leaders possess. These qualities are even more vital in today's environment. Begin now to build trust with your employees by being transparent. Consider the following:

Be Honest

Be honest with your employees about the state of affairs at your organization and where they stand.

Be Forward-Looking

Give your employees insight into your vision and plans for your company's future and/or the future of your department. It will let them know that they are considered a part of that future and give them direction.

Be Competent

Let your employees know what you are doing to make a difference right now. Tell them your plans for organizational and departmental success. Most of all, let them know how they are included in those plans. Execute those plans and include your constituents in your successes.

Be Inspiring

Replace your team's microcosmic view of their individual roles by inspiring them with a wide vision of your company's future. Give them the big picture. This will engage them in the company's goals, and once they are engaged – they can invest themselves in the company's future. No one wants to work toward a future that fails to inspire.

Now is the time to position your team for recovery. Transparent and forward-thinking leadership will help to develop wider perspective in your teams. "Sticktothemaniosis" can be eliminated when you and your constituents build trust. Mutual respect, honest communication and shared vision will bring out the best in your employees. Press through to company goals by inspiring your employees to high engagement. Engaged, productive, inspired and committed employees are worth the effort.

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