Essentially **uninspired**

Understanding and addressing the gaps in engaging and inspiring "deskless" employees

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In March of 2020 there was a huge spike in online searches for several terms. One of them, of course, was "COVID-19," but another related to a group of employees:

"Essential"

We are speaking, of course, of those front-line employees in manufacturing, distribution, healthcare and retail that provided so many necessary—essential—products and services.

One might argue these employees were essential before the pandemic, but we are paying more attention to this important segment of our workforce.

Our attention, however, does not appear to have helped create workplaces for these employees that, in their eyes, is meaningful, motivational and engaging. According to our ongoing proprietary New Rules of Engagement® studies, essential workers are far less engaged and inspired than those who work in offices.

BI WORLDWIDE New Rules of Engagement® | 2020

Employees who work in roles such as production, distribution, retail, healthcare and hospitality are **less likely** to agree with the following statements:

- We have a **great company culture** where I work
- Received **learning or development opportunities** to further my career
- Been given the opportunity to have **leaders listen to you**

- Had a **one-on-one meeting with your manager** to discuss just you or your work
- Received an **update from leaders**
- I receive **excellent benefits**
- I feel **safe expressing my opinion** at work
- My **unique strengths** have been identified and are valued
- My organization takes active steps to **listen to diverse points of view**
- My team **respects me and my unique characteristics**

Several of our New Rules trend lower if you are a deskless employee — **Make it personal. Make money a non-issue. Be boldly transparent. Foster belonging.**

These themes are amplified in the comments of essential employees:

"My supervisor is a person that I have trouble with. He has no trust in anybody. He makes the job difficult for everybody. He takes credit for everything. **Makes it hard to want to do your best.**

I continue to **feel like I'm punched in the gut** with continuous changes coming from upper management, unclear motives and agendas.

I feel that **my talents and skills are not fully utilized** in the current position I have. I have many talents and can be productive.

The company **won't let me take training** that will help me be better prepared for a promotion."

They are essential employees, yet too frequently are uninspired and demoralized in their workplaces.

When it comes to recognizing these important employees, the results are equally dismal. Each of the statements below for essential workers is also significantly lower than other employee groups:

- I am confident that if I do good work, **it will be recognized.**
- Recognition is **provided fairly across my organization.**
- I have received **meaningful recognition** in my current job.

Employee comments again give you a sense of the lack of genuine appreciation in the workplace:

> "For the most part I feel very **underappreciated** and **underpaid.**

> The management team here **does not recognize employees enough**. The plant manager will not even speak to us at times; she just acts like we aren't there.

> My superior **never offers praise, thanks or gratitude**. The hourly people are the lowest priority in the company, where those who exempt are more than taken care of."

In a highly competitive labor marketplace, engaging and inspiring deskless employees can reap significant benefits. Consider:

- Are we investing in managers who, in turn, are building strong relationships that support the growth, development and engagement of their team members?
- Are we providing a total rewards package that fairly represents their value to our success?
- Do we have a listening strategy that gains feedback from employees and a strategy to follow up, so they know we are hearing and addressing their concerns?
- Are we communicating important information that helps our team members do their job and helps them know where we're going—one that offers them opportunities for two-way dialogue?

- Are we building a culture where employees feel truly valued and where there is a genuine sense of physical and psychological safety?

There are numerous enablement tools that can help you more effectively communicate to these important work groups. And we've helped our clients build a business case that shows how investing in programs to engage deskless employees easily delivers a meaningful return in lower turnover and absenteeism, improved safety and better customer experiences.

If they truly are essential, let's show them.

No excuses.

Learn more about how BI WORLDWIDE can provide recognition and reward programs to support your "deskless" employee engagement strategy:

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