

Why Aren't You Hiring People Who Love What They Do?

BY TERRY KABACHNICK

“Enjoyment in what I do is more important to me than promotions. What I do is the contribution I want to make. It is my sense of achievement. I made that choice, and I am lucky because this company’s standards are the same standards I was raised with—we share the same ethics. That’s why I have been here for 30 years.”

— Carol Brooks, Senior Manager, Education & Development, Neiman Marcus

Why don't more companies have employees who love what they do and are passionate about where they work? Why are we blaming turnover and retention problems on generational issues? Why does an executive who works at a fashionable retail company buy her clothes at the competitor's? Why can't more employees love their jobs the way Carol Brooks does — a woman I have highly respected and admired for more than fifteen years?

I have discovered that the answer is the same for each question; it quite simply comes down to one thing — shared values. When an employee believes that the values of the company and their jobs match their individual values, a bond with that company is formed.

A Massive Mission

Twenty-some years ago, Bill Gates said he had a mission. His mission was to put a computer on every desk in the world. Back then, this was viewed quite skeptically. I too have a mission. My mission is to get people to love what they do and companies to hire people who love what they do. My mission, as was Bill Gates', is huge. It is also viewed by many with skepticism. But I fervently believe it is doable. It's doable because many people already do it — they love what they do. They have found the right opportunity and place to draw upon their passion and to bond with what they do. They found it by forming and sharing a bond with the company for which they work and for the brand they choose to live every day.

What's Love Got To Do With It?

Many may say today's workers don't want to bond — don't necessarily want to love what they do. They say job and life don't need to intermingle — it's healthier keeping the two separated. They say the thought of spending seven years at the same company is “sick.” But, I say that those perceptions are sick. What do mentally healthy adults really want in their lives and their jobs? Does anyone truly want to be miserable and hate what they do?

About the Author

Terry Kabachnick is an internationally recognized expert on “perfecting the human side of business.” In 1984 she founded The Kabachnick Group, Inc. (TKG) after achieving prominence in the retail industry for her innovative approaches to customer and employee retention strategies. Terri uses her first-hand retail knowledge and experience to help organizations hire, retain, and develop an engaged, productive, and peak performance workforce. Her recently published book, *I Quit But Forgot To Tell You*, has been selected as one of Society for Human Resource Management's top book picks of the year, recently awarded two distinguished lifetime achievement awards in the speaking and consulting industries, Terri continues to deliver proven practices which teach leaders how to unleash the people-power in their organizations. She also serves as a coach and confidante to some of the world's most distinguished leaders and is one of only a few people worldwide to hold certification as: speaking professional, professional behavior analyst, and attribute index analyst. TKG is now celebrating its 24th year in business.



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And who ever said that loving what you do is about loyalty or longevity or about generational mind sets? It's not even about bosses and salaries. But it's definitely about values. About passions. About connectivity. It is all about the *emotional* connection an employee has to the company, and emotional connections only happen at their best when there are shared values – shared standards – shared ethics. When these things are shared, that's when a bond develops. This bond can last for just a few years, or dozens, yet once developed it is rarely forgotten. But, to some extent you already know this. You use this strategy when capturing your customers.

Know Thy Customer

Retail companies spend millions on marketing campaigns which attempt to convince customers that their company should be that customer's choice – their top-of-mind destination – the one location where they will encounter an unforgettable experience. Many companies can not only tell you the market segmentation they are aiming for, but most even have detailed information on customer preferences, shopping and buying habits – right down to which direction customers head when they enter the store. But, how many companies have even a fraction of this information about their employees? How many know about their employee's standards, values, ethics, beliefs, preferred behaviors? And how many even know which of these to look for when hiring?

Fiercely Loyal

Today, company loyalty is dismissed as old fashioned and no longer a relevant trait. Experts proclaim that today's new generation of workers is not interested in anything other than satisfying their own needs – they label them self-indulgent.

I totally disagree! Instead, what I see is that company loyalty does exist when the needs of the individuals are being met and there are shared values. Yes, loyalty today may mean a shorter time span than it did twenty years ago, but when the employee's bond with the company is tight, it takes a lot to break it.

Today's workers may not be as willing to wait around and give the employer a second chance to build that bond – that's why we may see many of the new generation flitting around from company to company. But, job-hopping is also no longer a big issue on a job application – it's expected. What is dismissed in this false perception is the reality of what today's workers value – what they believe – what they want to be proud of. In a word – motivation.

I continually tell leaders worldwide that motivation is nothing more than a feeling of contribution – knowing you make a difference. When this happens here's what you begin to hear: "I'll be fiercely loyal even if only for a short duration of time." Thus it is crucial today to have an effective way to accurately assess an individual's match to the company and the job right from the beginning. The cost of not doing so is staggering.

Research Reveals Results

Research shows a strong correlation between shared values, individual performance, company success, and one's ability to bond with the company brand.

Over the past five years research by my company, The Kabachnick Group (TKG), and Target Training International (TTI) studied nearly 50 worldwide companies and found conclusively that if your career runs counter to your values, you will find little or no satisfaction in your job – certainly no love.

"Your values are active, consisting of strong desires and feelings which I call passions," says Bill Bonnsetter, CEO of TTI and a behavior research scientist.

"When you are engaged in an activity or discussion that is in line with your values, you will be excited and enthusiastic about it. If your career is an extension of your values, you will love getting up in the morning and going into action."

Matching a person's passion to a job and to the organization which rewards one's passion always enhances performance. The research we have on values clearly demonstrates that behavior alone does not predict performance. Behavior preferences simply indicate *how* a person will behave on the job.

Many companies have relied on time-tested behavioral assessments for decades, however, today we know behavior alone does not provide adequate information to predict whether the person will be a reliable match for the job and the company. Today, knowledge of an individual's behavior preferences provides only one small component of identifying a person's fit for the job. I liken it to having a *snapshot* of the individual vs. having an *MRI*.

When we add values – the primary indicator of a person's passions and motivators – to the behavior component, we get an X-ray, with enhanced insight into that individual. We now can also know *why* an individual acts the way he does, and what passions drive his behavior.

Add the attributes or competencies – the *what* factor – to identify what the individual is capable of doing – the learned experiences – and now we have an *MRI* – a powerful tool which ensures that you hire the right person for the job and for his ability to bond with your company.

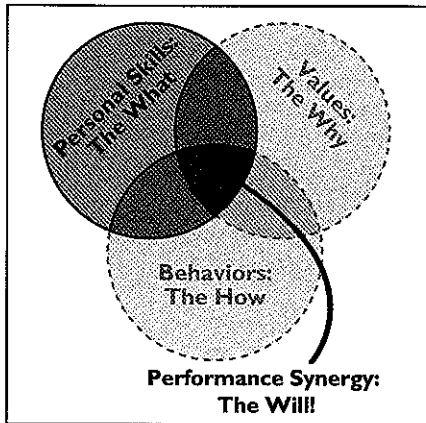


Figure 1.

Therefore, understanding the individual's values – how well they are matched to the job and the company's values – and then knowing the competencies they have mastered – becomes the greatest predictor of superior performance.

The Value of Values

We first heard of values through the work of Eduard Spranger when he published a book in 1928 titled *Types of Men*. Mr. Spranger was a German professor of philosophy and pedagogy, and a psychologist. Bill Bonnstetter has taken Spranger's writings, developed them to adapt to our modern world, and then validated a values assessment named Motivation Insights.®

This assessment measures the six values first identified by Spranger. These were referred to as our attitudes – our windows through which we see the world. Remember, values are our passions. They drive us to action.

The six values are:

1. **Theoretical:** A passion to learn, search for knowledge, discover, and analyze.
2. **Utilitarian/Economic:** A passion to gain a return on all investments of time, resources, energy, and money.

3. **Social:** The passion to help others and eliminate hate and conflict in the world.
4. **Individualistic:** A passion to achieve position and to use that position to influence others.
5. **Aesthetic:** A passion to add balance and harmony in one's own life and protect natural resources.
6. **Traditional/Regulatory:** A passion to pursue the higher meaning in life through a defined system for living.

Values at Work

In a pilot study at a luxury goods retailer, we created a job benchmark for a specific sales position for which we were to hire approximately 50 people. The team who would identify the values, behaviors, and attributes necessary to success in this job consisted of people from various positions within the company – but all were very familiar with the job. This team completed online assessments related strictly to the job – not the “type” of person we were looking for.

After the assessments were completed we brought the team together to arrive at a consensus of the findings. During this process, in addition to the behaviors and attributes, we identified two values which were required by the job in order for the person hired to become a top performer. We then hired the people who matched, or came the closest to matching, these specifications – focusing first on values.

One year later, of the forty-eight people hired the results were as follows:

- Every person hired was still in the job, with one exception. This person left to go back to school.
 - Their average sale was 27% higher than associates not hired to the benchmark.
 - Each benchmarked associate surpassed their sales goals within the first four months of employment.
 - Customer satisfaction scores were high and customers commented on the associate's obvious “love for what they do.”
 - Attitude and behavior were proactive and exemplary – specifically, they arrived at meetings on time, took notes, and volunteered to pitch in and help out in other areas when needed.
- When a company takes the time to understand the power of what each individual is capable of accomplishing, when their values and passions are known, directed and rewarded, results like these become common and are to be expected.

Attributes, Accountabilities, and Performance

Additional research conducted by Bill Bonnstetter – based on a norm of 1255 people – also found that in addition to values, one of the strongest predictors of superior performance was one single attribute – Personal Accountability.

Personal Accountability is defined as: A measure of the capacity to be answerable for personal actions.

Having this attribute means the individual:

- Accepts personal responsibility for the consequences of personal actions
- Avoids placing unnecessary blame on others
- Maintains personal commitment to objectives, regardless of the success or failure of personal decisions

- Applies personal lessons learned from past failures to moving forward in achieving future successes

Among the 23 attributes identified as important to most jobs, Personal Accountability stood out as the single attribute – which when ranked in the top seven of an individual's attributes – will bring another 76 attributes with it. Bonnstetter narrowed those 76 to the top 15. So if the person you are hiring has Personal Accountability as one of their top seven attributes, the research proves that this person will also bring the following attributes to their job and to your company:

- Meeting Standards
- Goal Achievement
- Self Management
- Project Scheduling
- Self Starting Ability
- Teamwork
- Resiliency
- Internal Self Control
- Planning and Organizing
- Self Confidence
- Project and Goal Focus
- Results Orientation
- Continuous Learning
- Personal Drive
- Interpersonal Skills

During the same time of Bonnstetter's research, TKG was studying the behavior, values, and competency patterns of successful leaders and sales people within the retail industry. Coincidentally, we also found that the one common component of top performers at all levels was Personal Accountability. In the assessments we did on these top performers, Personal Accountability was

always ranked within the top seven out of 23 attributes measured.

Because of the competitive environment and pending talent shortage, the companies that begin to assess values and attributes to hire, develop, and promote will clearly have the advantage going forward of ensuring that their employees bond with the company – thus loving what they do.

What's Your 3-H Quotient?

Several years ago at the annual Retail Advertising Conference in Chicago, Brad Davis – Chairman of RAMA, the parent organization and retired Chief Marketing Officer of Washington Mutual – asked this question: "What is your company DNA? What does it sound like, feel like, smell like, taste like, look like? Twenty percent of what you see goes right to your pituitary gland which affects emotions."

I have never forgotten Brad's words and have as a result developed my 3-H Test: Head – Heart – and Hugs, which translate to Think – Empathize – and Care. When I visit a client for the first time I use this 3-H test to discover whether a company is emotionally connected with its people – whether there is a bond with the brand. Do people love what they do?

Recently I visited HSN – Home Shopping Network – the mega star of television online and mobile retailing. HSN's mission is, "Deliver the joy and excitement of new discoveries everyday." Their mission is all about the customers being able to effortlessly purchase an exciting and new item 24 hours a day.

Now the key question: Will I find the 3-H's at HSN? Well, within fifteen minutes of my forty-five minute tour of the company's approximately 70-acre site my answer was – most definitely yes!

Ana Maria, my tour guide and an executive assistant, has been with the company for nine years. A smile never left her face as she proudly pointed out the different areas of their business. As I walked through the massive customer service center the folks who were not on the phone smiled and said, "Hi," seeming happy to see a visitor. For the few brief times that Ana Maria had to step aside to speak with someone, everyone who passed by asked me if they could help – and I had no big badge that said "Guest." As we walked from building to building, everywhere I went I saw displays of that week's featured products. Whether it was in the set design building, the service center, the studio, the cafeteria or the executive office building, featured products were on display with descriptions and prices. Everyone had to know this information just in case an employee had to answer a question and HSN did everything in their power to provide this knowledge. Ana Maria explained that they wanted everyone to be proud of that week's featured products – to be able to touch the products, examine them, and build an emotional connection by understanding the efforts that HSN buyers went through to provide their customers with products which were unique and would provide excitement and joy when purchased. It was so obvious that Ana Maria loved her job.

Although the 3-H's – head – heart – and hugs – were physically evident throughout HSN, the company is determined to ensure they hire people who love what they do. They are now embarked on a mission to add the "values component" to their selection of people so they can match the values, behaviors, and attributes of job candidates to the company's values and to the job's.

Getting people to love what they do is everyone's job. Creating a greenhouse for employees to grow means providing the tools, the opportunities, and knowledge just as they do at HSN. Yet to do this you must start at the beginning.

Bonding Begins At the Beginning

Like an individual, a company has a culture of values. What does the company reward? Where does it focus its efforts? What actions does it deem critical to its success? To what degree does it value knowledge? How deeply is it involved in the community? Is product king? Is painstaking focus on appearance of both the store and its associates an imperative and is it closely regulated?

If the company and its people do not have a clear definition of what is valued the chances of hiring the right people, retaining them to live the brand every day, and loving what they do significantly drop. It all begins at the very beginning—the interview process.

The Seductive Interview

The interview is where either love begins or sets the stage for future disappointment. Forming this bond and building the foundation for loving what you do happens during this first date—when the job candidate meets the company for the first time.

Imagine, you're about to interview a job candidate who seems real good. You've already decided she is a keeper—a strong talent. Now you have to do whatever it takes to keep her—you have to sell her on your company. So the seduction begins and the words begin to weave a magic spell.

Let's listen in to this actual interview.

—Heather, let me begin by telling you a little

about our company. The first thing I'd like you to know is that we're very people focused. Our people are our greatest asset. Everything we do is done with that in mind. We are also a team organization. No one individual stands alone. We believe in and reward teamwork. At the same time we reward our people for their individual contributions and their creativity. So we look for people who are able to interact with their co-workers, build relationships, and at the same time always be on the lookout for how they can help improve their jobs and further the mission of the company. We listen and we react. Your job as a store manager will focus on the people aspects—your associates and your customers. As you know, both are critical to the store's success. If you can lead your associates, motivate them, and develop them then our customers will benefit from those results and reward us with their business. Right now you'll have a great team to work with—and I know you can take them to new heights. Heather, how does this picture of our company fit in with what you'd like to do and where you'd like to work?

Does this have any resemblance to how your hiring managers are selling your company to job candidates? What are they saying about the company? The people? The team? The leadership? The job itself? And, IS IT THE TRUTH?

Six months later Heather walks into Dan's office—the District Manager.

—Dan, I just want you to know how excited I was when I started this job. I had so many ideas to help improve our store and our business. Now I'm finding that nothing I say matters. I'm supposed to follow orders, do what I must do every day, and as you've told me—don't worry so much about my people. Most important is I've got to get all the reports in on time and focus on following the directions for visual and markdowns. I feel like a robot—but more important I'm now being blamed for

associate turnover. Dan, I have no time for my associates and no time at all for customers—unless there's a major complaint. I have no interaction with the merchants other than when they come in and tell me what's wrong. If I had any clue this was the job I was taking I would have never even applied.

No one takes a job with the intention to fail. No manager hires with the intent to fire. So what happens? It begins at the beginning—the interview.

By definition, an interview is:

A formal consultation usually to evaluate qualifications (as of a prospective student or employee) 2a: a meeting at which information is obtained (as by a reporter, television commentator, or pollster) from a person.

Having witnessed dozens of these events over the years I believe interviews today have become selling events. Whether it's because of the talent shortage, poor training in interview techniques, or simply the need to talk rather than listen, interviews are not what they should be. They should be evaluations of the applicant based on a clear understanding of what the job requires. In today's technology focused world why aren't companies using assessment technology to aid their hiring managers by providing an "MRI" of the applicant? Why aren't the company values clearly defined and articulated? Is it that too many are afraid they'll lose an applicant if they're honest and clear?

What are the clearly defined definitions for the company, the people, the job? Who has defined these and taught hiring managers the language to use? Clearly defined expectations and definitions provide a MAP—enabling you to Make Action Possible. You cannot expect a store manager or any employee to love what they do if

they lack a MAP to show them where to go – let them know what will be rewarded – what will be listened to and recognized. When a conflict occurs in a loving relationship it's usually because both parties are not on the same page. Each has different expectations of the other. If the issues are defined, discussed, and deflated the conflict is then resolved and will usually not resurface. People who love their jobs are no different. No one expects a conflict-free environment. Issues happen. But, how those issues are resolved determines whether the love continues or gradually wanes. The disappointment in promises made during the interview that conflicts with the reality of what actually happens on the job will almost always turn into divorce.

How do you truthfully and clearly create the best and most honest delivery of what the applicant can expect in a position? The best answer in two words – Brutal Honesty.

The Matchmaking Interview

1. Benchmark the position before you try to fill it.

Determine: What are the values, motivators, behaviors, attributes, and emotions necessary for success in that position?

2. Assess the applicant prior to the interview.

Verify: How closely does the applicant match the benchmark?

3. Set standards for the interviewing process.

Ensure: That the interview questions are based on the job benchmark and time frames are allocated for questioning, listening, telling, and discussing. Rigid? Yes. Necessary? Absolutely!

4. Follow the process. Be mindful that you bring your biases into every interview.

Understand: There's always a psychological response we have to others and the effect they have on us. Countless errors in judgment are made solely because of this factor.

5. Towards the end of the interview ask the applicant to tell you the five things he remembers most about what will be expected in the job. Based on those five responses ask which is the one he loves the most.

Confirm: Watch and observe for emotion in these responses. Engagement, commitment, and passion can rarely be hidden.

Through the years I have asked many managers and executives this question: "Are your employees excited to get to work or excited to go home?" Rarely is this question answered quickly – more often it is pondered. Few answer it correctly – which should be "both." And, how about you? You see I believe that if

you can answer this correctly then you probably love what you do and, if that's the case, you will see the value in making necessary changes to ensure that the important aspects of hiring and retention I have shared with you are fully implemented. Then you will have employees who are aligned with your company values, bonded with your brand, and love what they do.



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