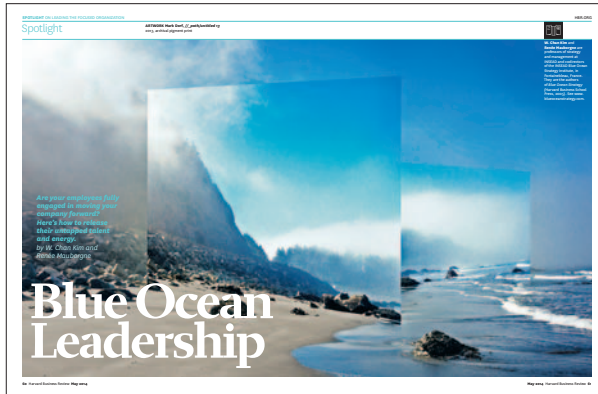


# Interaction



## How to Lead a More Engaged Workforce



HBR article by **W. Chan Kim** and **Renée Mauborgne**, May  
Disengaged employees are an unfortunate reality in the workplace, and poor leadership is often to blame. After

10 years of research and hundreds of interviews, the authors determined why leadership so often falls short. Their “blue ocean leadership” approach focuses on what leaders at all levels must do—not who they must be—to transform their organizations.

What really appeals to me is the idea of employees as customers of the service called leadership. Leaders engage employees, who engage customers, who in turn engage more customers. This all leads to better results.

**Jennifer W. Campbell**, senior consultant, leadership and change

The concept of employees as customers is similar to the concept of servant leadership. This style is excellent in the long term. For short-term projects or fast-paced work environments, it may not produce the desired results. Steve Jobs said that customers might not know what products they need. Similarly, you

sometimes need to educate employees or give them an extra push so that they’re motivated to give their all and rise to challenges.

**Ajatshatru Kaushal**, postgraduate student, Myra School of Business

One thing that stopped me in my tracks was that the piece opened with the problem of employee disengagement. Given that the rest of the piece rightly places responsibility with leadership, it would seem more appropriate to recast the data in terms of organizations’ failure to engage employees. Casting it as “Just 30% of employees are engaged” puts the blame on employees.

**Sandra Pickering**, founding partner, Opento

Most of this article is about a process for understanding expectations of leaders at different levels in an organization, which is often not well thought through. Saying that people are not engaged and that leaders need to engage them is a partial truth. People need to take some ownership of the problem themselves; it is not all up to the leader. Leadership is a relationship and requires action on both parts.

**Christopher Smith**, director, Bath Consultancy Group

What hasn’t been mentioned is the communication structure within the organization. Staff engagement depends directly



## Piketty’s “Capital,” in a Lot Less Than 696 Pages

HBR.org article by **Justin Fox**, April

**Fox gave a synopsis of the new economic tome *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, in which Thomas Piketty argues that capitalism won’t rein in inequality on its own and proposes a global wealth tax.**

I think your superb summary omitted only Piketty’s connection to “*Annales*,” the tradition of integrative historical, social, and economic analysis pioneered by Marc Bloch and Fernand Braudel. It’s an important reason his work is so telling.

**Peter D. Kinder**, board member, Trillium Asset Management

Whom does Piketty propose to collect this global wealth tax from, and where would it go? And while market capitalism may increase relative inequality, it also increases standards of living. The average person today has access to medical technologies the richest people 100 years ago did not. A century from now, the average person will have access to medical care that the richest people today do not.

**Prentice Alexander Adkinson**, student



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on the communications employees receive and the manner in which communications are delivered. This is where many organizations lose employees.

**Donna M. De Julius**, development and training lead, Maximus

Companies can inspire employees by communicating their strategy through storytelling. When companies take time to engage their employees through stories and visuals, it makes information memorable, accelerates understanding, and helps create a consistent language for all within the organization.

**Lucia Mamogobo**, production manager, Thinkspiration—To the Point

I would have loved to see how many companies actually applied blue ocean leadership to develop their managers into leaders. BOL is perhaps useful in conducting research and gaining some insights. In terms of application, I fail to see much practical value in it. Personally, I feel that blue ocean strategy was more insightful than blue ocean leadership.

**Kavin S. Kanagasabai**, lecturer, Regent's University and Webster University, London



**The author responds:** *Piketty is not entirely clear on who would collect this tax or where it should go, though he implies that it might help reduce other taxes and make them more progressive. He has ambitious ideas about linking the world's banking systems, which would allow for easier tax collection. And I agree that market capitalism has enabled progress, but the big question is whether wealth inequality might have other, negative consequences (on democracy, for example).*



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## Why I Tell My Employees to Bring Their Kids to Work



HBR.org article by **Sabrina Parsons**, April

**The CEO of Palo Alto Software makes a case for establishing a work culture that emphasizes the importance of employees' personal lives, which means flexible hours and the option to bring kids and babies to the office as necessary. Respect for people's families and personal time achieves loyalty, hard work, and better results, she argues.**

I've read about high-profile companies that employ five-star chefs or provide services like dog walking and laundry. It's pretty obvious that these "perks" are in place to keep people at their desks for as many hours a day as possible. In contrast, the benefits you offer would keep someone employed at your company for longer.

**Kelly Schrock**, owner, KingStreet

This model just isn't realistic for many industries. It would have been great if the fast-paced PR firm I worked for had this policy, but it would have required a total cultural shift—and a completely different, more family-friendly clientele. This CEO is doing amazing things; I would love it if she could help spread this way of thinking by, perhaps, making sure her outside consultancies are family-friendly places too.

**Rachel Konik**, MS candidate in speech-language pathology, Kean University

The pressure shouldn't be on families to adapt to rigid work paradigms; work must adapt to families. When our office manager returned from maternity leave, she brought her baby with her. We've had issues along the way, but we retained a fantastic employee and learned how much is possible when you have open, flexible thinking. We

strive to adopt creative strategies for our employees' unique life-cycle needs, and we have high loyalty and pretty much zero turnover. All of us (even our clients) have benefited from the delightful presence of a baby in the workplace.

**Carey Brown**, general partner, Employee Assistance of the Pacific

Companies need to recognize that the definition of a family doesn't apply just to people with children. People will "ooh" and "ahh" over a baby in the office, but I doubt the same reaction would happen if someone brought in a cognitively impaired parent who needs as much supervision as a child. Many companies offer child care; I would like to see them offer options for adult day care as well. It's just as costly as child care, if not more.

**Marci Sheeran**, account executive, MacCorkle Insurance Service

This is a very good initiative that would enable an employee to channel his or her strength toward the growth of the firm. Kids are part of our success whether we accept it or not.

**Folawiyo Kareem Olajoku**, senior special assistant to the governor of Osun, Nigeria



## Navigating the Cultural Minefield

HBR article by **Erin Meyer**, May

Many managers make embarrassing faux pas when working abroad or with foreign colleagues. To help people understand cultural differences, Meyer has created a tool that maps eight behaviors—such as leading and persuading—where cultural gaps are most common.

It's risky to create expectations based on behaviors anticipated by assessment tools. A vital element of successful cross-cultural engagement is unique, rather than general, cultural traits.

**Kenny Leahman**, founder and owner, KELeahman Coaching and Consulting

Much of the advice offered here is quite applicable—if we are talking about countries like India and the United States in the 1980s and 1990s. I can attest that things have dramatically changed in both contexts. We should not jump into tackling such a multidimensional subject with tool kits and infographics.

**Majdi Haroun**, director of enterprise strategy and architecture, Microsoft

Your approach to working across cultures is more accessible than the usual conceptual frameworks. One question is how to motivate team members across cultures. Have you collected data on that?

**Elizabeth Abbot**, intercultural specialist, Brookfield Global Relocation Services

**The author responds:** *Though motivating isn't one of the behaviors in the tool, if managers adapt their leading style (egalitarian versus hierarchical), evaluating style (frank versus diplomatic negative feedback), and persuading style (deductive versus inductive arguments) using the Culture Map, the result will be a more motivated global workforce.*

