Creating a better place to work and avoiding the chronic and systemic problem of high call center turnover today…and forever.
Section One - Tom Peters on Workforce Engagement

Section Two - 7 Keys to Call Center Agent Employee Engagement

Section Three - Getting Long-term Call Center Employee Engagement

Section Four - Results Experienced

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Get with the Program

Time to Get Engaged (from Tom Peters)
I've often wondered why many organizational leaders don't get it about "workforce engagement."

Some pay lip service to it but don't invest in it, while others simply discount it. I had a conversation with a Big Pharma executive a few years ago who thought "employee passion" was "fluff." He said his company focused on talent and bottom line results, period. (He couldn't see that a company with a reputation for having an engaged, inspired workforce MIGHT be a better talent magnet.) Meanwhile the latest Gallup survey shows that only 31% of employees are "actively engaged," 52% are "not engaged," and 17% (over 23 million U.S. workers!) are "actively disengaged."

For those who want data on the quantitative value of employee engagement, there's plenty of it. Gallup estimates that the lost productivity of the 17% "actively disengaged" employees costs the US economy $370 BILLION annually (not to mention the lost productivity of those 52% who are merely "not engaged").

30% of colleagues are engaged in their work with passion and feel an active part of the company team. They are motivated to help drive company forward.

50% of colleagues unengaged, they are essentially marking time. They are in during the work day, putting in time, but not energy into their jobs.

20% of colleagues are indifferent or worse, they are disrupting your business, these people aren't just unhappy at work, they are busy acting out their unhappiness.

Every day, these people undermine what their engaged colleagues accomplish.

Curt Coffman and Gabriel Gonzalez-Molina in Follow This Path reveal that business units in the top half of employee engagement (compared to those in the bottom half) have a higher success rate of: 86% in customer metrics; 70% in productivity; 70% in reducing turnover; 78% in safety metrics; and 44% in profitability.

And according to a 2004/2005 study by Watson Wyatt USA "the financial performance of organizations with highly favorable employee attitudes is typically nearly 4 times better than the financial performance of companies with poor employee attitudes."

There are plenty more studies to cite, but you get the picture. How come more business leaders don't?
Impact of Call Center Agent Problems

Studies continue to show that the greatest source of inefficiency for companies lies in working relationships.

- 80% of people leave jobs because of relationship issues and most of those are with their immediate supervisor
- Managers typically lose 25% of their day to unnecessary conflict, argument and misunderstanding
- Two thirds of staff feel undervalued at work
- Managers are the greatest source of stress at work.

The same ‘people’ issues keep on reappearing in call centers. We don’t seem to have the solutions or indeed to be making much progress in preventing or resolving these ‘people’ problems in call centers.

After 20 years of research and 60,000 exit interviews, the Saratoga Institute reports that 80% of staff turnover is directly related to unsatisfactory relationships with one’s boss.

According to a recent Gallup Organization study of approximately 1 million workers, the number one reason people leave their jobs is because of “bad bosses.”

A conclusion reached by Roger Herman is that 3/4 of people voluntarily leaving jobs don’t quit their jobs; they quit their bosses.

Roger Herman. Winning the War for Talent.

The Cost
The human and financial cost of call center agent dissatisfaction is high.

The financial implications of managers losing 25% of their day to unnecessary conflict become obvious when we look at a medium sized company with 100 managers. If we take the average annual salary per manager as $40,000, then the cost to the company will be $1,000,000 per annum.

This only accounts for management time. The true cost will include poor performance, higher call center agent turnover, missed opportunities, absenteeism, low call center agent morale and poor teamwork.

Collaborative Relationships
When processes aren’t working, everyone sits up and takes notice but when relationships aren’t working, they are somehow seen as interfering with work. Really, relationships are every bit as much a part of work as processes are and also need to be engineered and tweaked.

Collaborative relationships don’t just happen. They need to be created and maintained once they are in place. They are critical to your call centers success.
Section Two - 7 Keys to Call Center Agent Employee Engagement (in the Beyond Morale™ program)

The Beyond Morale™ program uses seven keys (indicators) to measure call center agent employee engagement levels and by implication the impact of leadership in your call center.

Call Center agents who are well led:

1. Feel Valued – they feel appreciated and appropriately rewarded – people believe in them – they are made to feel special and hence they act special.

2. Are Open – they are receptive to new ideas and engage in genuine two-way communication – can talk freely about a wide range of topics including those delicate and difficult issues.

3. Engage in Feedback – they recognize the importance of regular constructive feedback to improving performance levels.

4. Are Motivated – their abilities are recognized and utilized – they have positive feelings about the job and their colleagues and have an intrinsic drive to achieve and support each other.

5. Manage Differences – they create collaborative relationships with colleagues and ensure that differences are not allowed to get in the way but are seen as a source of strength.

6. Take Ownership – they take ownership for getting their needs met rather than moan behind backs. They view leadership as a partnership and take joint responsibility with the leader for being led.

7. Are Conflict Free – they engage in proactive feedback and hence dysfunctional conflict is minimized and time is not wasted.

What is the Beyond Morale™ program?

It is an online, self-service resource (supported by a team of experts) for creating call center agent employee engagement by developing collaborative relationships and eliminating and preventing people problems from ever arising. It is not e-learning but it uses an IT platform to deliver a highly interactive system which allows your employees to take ownership for improving the quality of their work lives.

It is directly aligned to performance and will reduce costs and increase the profitability of your call center by creating an engaged, happy, motivated and well led workforce.

It will change the culture of your call center from within and works successfully with a single team, a center or a whole company. It is applicable at every level, where people want to minimize inefficiency and maximize efficiency at work.

It is a manageable, low cost, low maintenance system that will not add to the work load of managers.
We do not wish to imply that these 7 indicators are the only indicators for improving employee engagement or that the list is complete. It is a system based on 30+ years of experience working to eliminate workplace conflict. In addition, the model is designed to be friendly, manageable and has obvious benefits for the individual call center agent and call center.

Above all, we adopt this approach because it works - as the figure below shows.

![Actual Gains over 4-month Period](image)

The figure shows improvement in a global pharmaceutical organization.

After the program was implemented there were immediate improvements in employee engagement levels that showed up as measured.

**The Satisfaction@Work Index™ | Leadership Dashboard**

This is an online measure that gauges your staff satisfaction levels, tracks the impact of leadership and allows your people to know when they have achieved the objective of the Beyond Morale™ program...a more engaged call center workforce.

There are 7 indicators and 4 questions for each indicator; that focuses on "needs". It takes less than five minutes to complete which makes it ideal for busy people. Reports at an individual, team and call center level are immediately available.

This is more than a survey that your employees complete and then sit back with the expectation that call center management will sort things out. It is a tool that highlights where needs are not being met and recommends specific interventions to be made. The report also provides a structure and suggestions which your people can use to improve their personal scores. In measuring call center agent satisfaction levels, the indicator is indirectly measuring the impact of leadership in your business and call center agent employee engagement.

The Satisfaction@Work Index™ becomes a guide throughout the program, tracking progress, allowing individuals and teams to take action on the indicators needing development.
The Underlying Model of Call Center Leadership

Call Center Leadership is about individualizing not universalizing. It is responding to the specific needs of an individual call center agent rather than behaving in standard, generic ways.

Call Center Leadership is complex. It is not realistic to expect one person to be ‘getting it right’ for his / her colleagues no matter how many call center leadership courses they have attended. Call Center Leadership is likely to be most effective when viewed as a partnership between the leader and the led. When people are willing to engage and take ownership for being led rather than sitting back and expecting the call center team leader to be solely responsible for leading.

Do I pass ownership for my health to my doctor? Of course not! While the doctor is a significant resource in maintaining my health, I am responsible for my own well-being. Do I pass ownership for my appreciation and motivation levels onto my team leader? This happens in the ‘entitlement’ culture where staff blames others for not meeting their expectations and often do little themselves.

At the heart of the Beyond Morale™ program is this engagement of colleagues and people taking ownership for their issues and Satisfaction@Work Index™ levels. This will only work in a culture where people are open, welcome feedback and connect with each other’s needs. It is precisely this culture that Beyond Morale™ is designed to create.

It is in the context of joint responsibility for leading and being led that call center leadership develops across the center and grows. This model of shared leadership will not only improve satisfaction levels for your call center agents but will free up your call center managers’ time to focus on the strategic side of their role.

The question constantly asked is “What am I going to do?” not “What is management going to do?”

If you have only one leader you are short on leadership

Gerard Egan
Section Three – Getting Long-term Call Center Agent Employee Engagement

Beyond Morale™ recognizes that for call center agent employee engagement to be sustained the system needs to impact several key areas:

- **Mindset**
- **Skills**
- **Transforming Experiences**
- **Maintenance of changes**

**Mindset**: The paradigm offered challenges traditional understanding of relationships, removes value judgements and enables open communication and trust to develop and grow.

**Skills**: A range of skills are developed to support these new operational beliefs. These skills focus primarily on the giving and receiving of feedback.

**Transforming Experiences**: Theory changes little. It is only by using the mindset and skills about real work and relationship issues that transformational and long-term change happens.

**Maintenance**: Practical, workable structures are provided for people to take ownership for monitoring and continuing this transformation in the workplace.

**Engagement Levels**

Beyond Morale™ is a developmental program. Levels 1, 2, 3 are designed to transform behaviors and mindsets. Level 4 will maintain these changes. While each level stands alone, used sequentially, they become a powerful tool for improving employee engagement that will be sustained.

**Level 1 – Measure Plan: the Satisfaction @ Work Index**

The 7 Satisfaction@Work indicators are measured and tacked in a 28 question survey. Results are immediately available and call center teams meet to review scores and set team and personal goals.

**Level 2 – Action Plan: Speed Training** (12 month program)

This comprises short, fun based team activities grouped around the 7 Satisfaction@Work indicators. They are easy to run and promote real insightful conversations. It comes with an optional resource kit for ease of delivery. The Satisfaction@Work Index™ can be retaken as often as required.
Level 3 – Action Plus Plan: In depth Training
Everything from Level 2 is here plus full access to in-depth Key Skills Training. This enables your people to build on Level 2 and progress even further on the 7 Satisfaction@Work indicators.

Level 4 – Sustaining Action Plan: Maintaining the Changes (as required)
All aspects of the system are continuously available for your business to utilize at any time and for as long as needed. It now acts as a business tool for people excellence.

Personal Learning Space
Everyone has their own personal web space which they can use as they wish. In effect this becomes a personal learning space, which is an easy and efficient way to share learning, initiate conversations and keep the process alive. It is a catalyst for face to face work.

Everyone’s web space is confidential to them and contains a comprehensive resource section, especially in the giving and receiving of feedback. The intention is to leave people as self-resourced as possible for improving work relationships and the quality of work life.
Section Four – Results Experienced

Incremental Learning
Learning is most effective in small manageable and progressive segments spread over time. Beyond Morale™ through Employee Engagement Activities, paired work, resources, posters and indicators enable the mindset and skills to be developed into the consciousness and behaviors of call center employees.

Program Outcomes
Engagement with the program ensures that

Your call center agents
• more valued
• better motivated
• open to change
• receptive to feedback
• able to create positive working relationships
• taking ownership for managing their own issues

Your call center teams will
• be more solution focused
• have improved self belief
• have a stronger sense of identity
• take ownership for their own issues
• experience greater trust, openness and collaboration

Call Center Managers will
• become better leaders
• have to manage less conflict
• learn how to get more out of their call center agents
• have more time to focus on the business
• have less resistance (from team) with change and uncertainty
• invest less time for performance reviews

Your call center can expect
• greater efficiency
• improved call center morale
• less stress and conflict
• reduced call center agent and team leader turnover
• an improved bottom line

As a consequence of greater levels of understanding and collaboration between people, processes in the call center are likely to be quicker, cheaper and better thought through.
Section Five - How this Differs from Everything Else

Transforms rather than Informs

It is not management information to be digested but experiences which bring about an employee engagement transformation. The process is evolutionary and revolutionary.

You will get improved call center agent employee engagement results almost immediately with the ability to sustain the results.

It doesn't just talk about openness, trust and collaboration but enables you to create these realities. It doesn't talk about ownership but provides a structure and an approach so your call center agents will put themselves at cause and will make things happen.

Transforms from the Inside Out

People transformation will be at the heart of your call center's transformation.

By improving call center employee engagement at micro levels (one to one) Beyond Morale™ moves across teams and eventually improves employee engagement in your entire call center.

This is in contrast with most company initiatives that start from without - management defining the process, communicating this to their colleagues and then hoping to get the transfer to behaviors.

Initiatives often fail because they are seen to be meeting the agenda of management or the call center rather the interest and needs of the individual. Beyond Morale™ will appeal to the self-interest of your call center employees and hence its long term sustainability and success.

Grows Internal Ownership

A weakness with many employee engagement initiatives is their dependency on external agencies.

Take away this support and the initiative falters.

Beyond Morale™ is owned by your call center and your people, not by external consultants or trainers. From the moment of registration, every step is delivered internally by your people. Team members run activities, teams decide on the Employee Engagement Activities and frequency of meetings and your people take ownership for improving their Satisfaction@Work scores.

Systematic and Sustained Change

Beyond Morale™ is incremental and developmental.

Your people can progress from Level 1, through Level 2 and Level 3, to Level 4. It begins as a program that impacts on attitudes and behaviors and then converts to a business tool for people excellence which allows you to maintain what has been created in your call center.

This ensures the changes to attitudes and behaviors of your people are sustained. They embed and become part of the DNA of your call center.
Avoids the Knowledge Trap

**Beyond Morale™** bypasses the problem that call centers can give themselves by going down the training route i.e. how to translate the knowledge into workable call center practices.

Rather than give your people lots of good theory **Beyond Morale™** is the tool that gets you results. It is the car, rather than the theory of the internal combustion engine. You can hire the car and when you arrive at your destination and get the results you want, just hand the keys back!

Creates a Critical Mass

Evidence shows that running an employee engagement program in a tight time frame, creates a critical mass of awareness and of skilled people which sustains these new ways of working.

**Beyond Morale™** is an online, self-service system, it can be used in teams sizes from 4 to 4,000+. It is flexible and can also be placed to roll out across large populations and allow you to create a simultaneous awareness, mindset and skills. This is just not possible with a more traditional 'teaching' approach.

This online approach also allows the program to be highly cost effective. Not only will your financial costs be minimal but the 'time-out' cost per employee is marginal, allowing your call center to keep functioning.

Engages Call Center Staff and Generates Commitment

Call centers can create problems for themselves by how they go about improving call center agent employee engagement.

Managers can run an employee satisfaction survey and then give themselves the problem of what to do with the results. The ways forward suggested by management are often rejected.

People usually don't take care of a rented car, because it does not belong to them, they don't own it. Unless people are engaged and involved expect them to be compliant but not committed to the change.

By engaging your staff, **Beyond Morale™** will enable you to retain your call center agents and get the best from them. As you roll out the program, your call center employees will develop a strong sense of connection to your company, its people, leaders, mission and business. You will be creating a culture of shared values and vision.
Now’s the Time to take Action

The true worth of a call center lies not only in call center metrics and customer satisfaction but also in employee engagement and particularly the quality of its leadership.

A call center’s success lies with shared leadership that creates valued people who will drive productivity.

Start improving call center employee engagement now. Call for a risk-free demo or go online to register.
**Q: What is Beyond Morale?**

A: It is not so much a program, but a business tool for getting the best from your people

A: It is all about personal responsibility - the question asked is not “What is management going to do” but “What am I going to do?”

A: It is not going to add to the workload of managers but actually frees up their time

A: There is no great burden of time or effort on any one person

A: It is not expensive yet makes substantial savings

A: You don’t have to wait months to see differences – they are felt immediately

A: It is not a fad but a systematized approach that gets lasting results

A: It is not for management but for everyone in the organization

A: It is not elearning but uses an IT platform to get people talking about real work and relationship issues

A: It requires minimal time out of the business allowing the day job to continue

A: Sustained engagement is easy as to engage will be in people’s interest

A: It is not owned externally but internally and works from the inside out not top down

A: It is a fast track way to collaborative relationships
Q: How can Beyond Morale be used?

A: It can be used as a framework for a people strategy across the call center

A: It can be used with a single team as a team development program and also as a culture change program…creating a culture of openness, trust and collaboration

A: As an online program Beyond Morale is ideally placed to roll out to small teams or across large populations and create a simultaneous awareness, mindset and skills. This is just not possible with a more traditional teaching approach

A: It is capable of releasing the leadership potential of people…creating not only leaders but leadership across the business

A: It is closely aligned with the 100 Best companies Awards criteria both in the UK and the USA

A: Companies that have an existing leadership development program often welcome Beyond Morale as a practical 'How To' for moving leadership theory into workable practice

A: Supports and enhances 360 feedback, appraisals and similar review systems

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Q: I can't ask my call center managers to take on something else - they are already overloaded...how much time does this take?

A: Call Center team leaders can lose large chunks of time managing poor quality relationships at work. The great thing about Beyond Morale, it will actually free up your managers' time as call center team members resolve their own issues and become less dependent on their team leaders. It is leadership through engagement.

Beyond Morale is designed so there will be no additional burden of time or effort on any one person in your call center. In fact as the program progresses and impacts behaviors, there will be a generic freeing up of time for all your staff as there will be less moaning, misunderstanding and conflict and much higher levels of collaboration.

Your people can expect to enjoy coming to work more and to find fulfillment at work rather than outside of work.
Q: We are 'initiated' out - is this just another initiative?

A: Initiatives can struggle because they are seen to be management's agenda. Beyond Morale is about the individual's agenda and hence will create a pull rather than the push effect for you. People can react to the latest 'flavor of the month' as it usually involves even more work for managers. Beyond Morale frees up your managers' time and is a systemized leadership program that will get you immediate results.

You can decide whether you want Beyond Morale to have a high profile or move quietly through the call center, people can just get on with the program in pairs, in teams and then across teams, even to suppliers and customers.

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Q: Do you think we have the time to run this program?

A: The only formal time commitment is to the activities which take approximately 60 minutes per month or 15 minutes a week. Compare this to the time cost of arguing, misunderstanding and conflict.

On average, employees spend the equivalent of 12 days each year dealing with conflict in the workplace – significantly more than the time lost to absences. Employers typically spend a total of 13 days on each disciplinary case and 9 days on each formal grievance submitted. (Willmott and Purcell CIPD Impact issue 28). The real question may not be whether you have time for this program but can you afford the time lost through dysfunctional relationships by not having this program.

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Q: Do you think our people would engage with the program?

A: If you want to get people committed to something rather than compliant, it must be in their interest. Beyond Morale is about connecting with the needs of individuals and improving the quality of work life - it is obviously in the interest of your people.

Initially your people may not be aware of this but once they start to engage they will quickly realize how it benefits them. This creates the pull rather than the push effect.

Companies have made scoring in the green high performing area of the polar chart a performance objective for managers. This can stimulate managers to engage and in turn to engage their teams. We find that, once engaged, people experience the benefits of the program and want to continue.
**Q: Do senior leaders need to participate in this program?**

A: It is critical this program has the support of your senior team. If the only message heard from your senior team is about the business needs there is the danger your people will feel undervalued and disengage. Beyond Morale is about connecting with the needs of individuals so the business needs can be met more effectively. Of course the business need is the priority but this requires motivated people which is the consequence of having personal needs met at work.

Not only must your Senior Team actively promote the values behind Beyond Morale but by giving your people time from the 'day job' to run this program, they will give a powerful valuing message to everyone - leading to higher levels of engagement.

By taking part in the program the Senior Team will demonstrate they value the mindset and the behaviors promoted by Beyond Morale.

**Q: We already use a staff satisfaction survey...what's the difference?**

A: The Satisfaction@Work Index is not primarily for your managers to have a measure and then they decide on actions.

It is for your people, so each person can have a baseline, decide actions and measure progress.

It is a tool for everyone, a tool that aids ownership and equips your people to take responsibility for improving the quality of their work life. It is not only a measure but a solution especially if you use it with the speed training activities of Level 2 (Action Plan).

If your company already uses a survey that works, Beyond Morale can act as a solution to the people issues presented by the survey i.e. Beyond Morale is a 'partner' to your survey.

**Q: Can Beyond Morale be integrated into a company intranet?**

A: Yes. All that is required is: A link to be made on one of the intranet pages to beyondmorale.com

The IP addresses of the servers need to be allowed through the company firewalls.
Q: Is this elearning?

A: Because the program is delivered online, people may be inclined to view this as elearning. It's not elearning as much as it is "edoing"!

Yes, it uses technology. Yes, it is a hosted software. But unlike all other programs, it is a full turnkey program that provides the opportunity for people to take ownership for their issues and then have specific conversations with their colleagues about specific real work and relationship issues.

The program is full of proactive feedback moments and activities i.e. inviting feedback rather than waiting for the problem to arise before doing something about it…in this way preventing many of the people problems and creating an engaged workforce. This paired work is at the heart of the program.