



FERENCE LEADERSHIP and STRATEGY

Alignment • Balance • Style

Hospitality Gaming Foodservice Retail Leisure Entertainment

Championing Employee Engagement

In a turbulent economy, everyone needs strong ABS

*When managers become disengaged,
employees are 37% more likely to be frustrated
with company systems, processes, and procedures.*
FLS Research 2008-09

In the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, Professor Marvel gazed into a crystal ball and pretended to see a careworn Aunt Em sick with worry over a missing Dorothy. This little deception from a kind heart was all it took to send Dorothy and Toto scurrying back to their Kansas farm and – after a well-known adventure – a new appreciation of family and friends. Unfortunately, crystal balls are less obliging when trying to determine the ways in which employee engagement and development impact corporate culture. Nonetheless, some 21st Century observations are emerging from the mist and becoming very clear indeed:

- Employee development increasingly focuses on the aggressive training of specific skill sets that help the organization thrive in a hypercompetitive global marketplace.
- The world is smaller, flatter, and smarter. Old business models are stress tested for application to a corporate world where every employee must contribute to the bottom line and no employee can get by without shouldering considerable responsibility. Even administrative assistants and first-year hires must clearly understand how their work impacts the delivery of customer service. Consequently, the delivery of superior customer service is now elevated from an idea ... to real, visible, and measurable action.
- The best business models embrace and grow a dynamic employee culture. What model are you using today? When was the last time you examined your business model? Is it current and cutting edge? To what extent do your employees understand the model that drives your culture? Do they understand the data that is generated, how the data is generated, and how the data is used to positively impact their professional lives? Does the data provide you with information you need to drive a 21st Century employee culture? Or is your model several generations old and just cranking out the same old blah, blah, blah that encourages poor decision making?

Many of today's models, formulas, and algorithms that purport to build and strengthen employee cultures are weak and outdated. The challenge isn't that we don't have enough data, but that we don't have the right data and, therefore, we can't leverage that data to achieve new levels of understanding.

Creating Competitive Advantage

Aligning Organizations
Through
Insightful Creativity
and
Operational Leadership



Gene Ference, Ph.D., President
Ference Leadership and Strategy, Inc.

Gene is a service-industry insider. His degrees in management and organizational development from Cornell University are backed by over 30 years of industry experience. He is an accomplished speaker and group facilitator, conducting management workshops, leadership retreats and strategy meetings. He has developed and implemented research surveys internationally, worked with Fortune 100 companies, contributed to client national quality awards, and designed appropriate strategies for optimizing human capital and growing organizational profits.

Supporting Divisions

Peak Performance Mindset
*Programs in Organizational Dynamics
and Service Practices*

Center For Survey Research
*Customized Metrics and Assessments
Positioning the Business*

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THE POWER OF EMPLOYEE FEEDBACK SURVEYS

Employee feedback surveys are invaluable when building a new corporate culture or revitalizing a culture for maximum results. Whether the global economy is humming like a well-oiled machine or not, employee feedback surveys can help drive an employee culture that leads to market success. Properly designed, employee feedback surveys measure the heart and soul of human capital. They measure the degree employees are engaged in the corporate culture, and they measure the degree employees are achieving peak performance.

THE ABS FORMULA ONE SYSTEM FOR ACHIEVING PEAK PERFORMANCE

Ference Leadership and Strategy's *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance* provides answers to the most crucial human capital questions:

- Is our organization aligned?

Organizational **Alignment** – or vertical thrust – is the degree to which a company's vision, mission, core values, and standards effectively drive organizational momentum. These fundamental elements of an organization's culture are continuously cascading down and rising up from within the organization and creating its *essence* and *spirit-of-being* – its culture.

- Are our departments balanced?

Departmental **Balance** – or horizontal thrust – is the degree to which an organization's propelling systems efficiently enable work to be accomplished. When departments are in balance, handoffs within and between departments are transparent, resulting in the smooth flow of products, services, and memorable experiences.

- What is our leadership style?

Leadership **Style** – building 360° relationships – is the organizational dynamic of influencing individuals and teams by providing optimum direction, meaningful support, and passionate engagement to create the best possible motivational environment, maximum unit performance, and exceptional brand experience.

Ference Leadership and Strategy's *ABS Formula One System* – **Alignment, Balance, and Style** – is used to successfully categorize survey results, answer these crucial human capital questions, and deliver employee peak performance.

- Use *ABS Formula One* to identify levels of employee engagement.
- Use *ABS Formula One* to turbo-charge employee productivity.
- Use *ABS Formula One* to ensure brand vitality.

With the *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance*, solutions to **Alignment, Balance, and Style** can be found on-site, within teams, and in each unit's backyard. Employee insights, observations, and suggestions are all uncovered with properly designed employee feedback systems. The *ABS Formula One*

Additional articles can be found at FerenceLeadershipAndStrategy.com

Topics include:

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System for Achieving Peak Performance is best used in conjunction with five forward-thinking steps:

Step #1: Understand How to Manage Down

The principles of managing up during a robust economy are not the same as those of managing down in uncertain times. Managing in an up-economy is built on growing abundance. Managing in a down-economy is built on maximizing efficiencies.

To a large extent over the past 20 years, executives were prepared to sacrifice efficiency for growth. This includes more employees and more departments wanting to prove their worth to senior executives. This often encouraged departmental silos and the hoarding of information crucial to other departments and the overall success of the organization.

Today, we need to do more with less. We need to find new ways of generating more ideas, revenue, and operational efficiency with fewer people, dollars, and equipment. This requires change. Some employees find it harder to change than others.

For this reason, more than ever, organizations and departments need to be in touch with their employees. Department heads need to bring their people together on a continuous and systematic basis. They need to know their employees' level of engagement and understand why the engagement is working or not working.

Well-designed employee feedback surveys – using the *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance* to categorize survey results – serve as a dynamic foundation for these initiatives.

Step #2: Focus Energies

In lean times, challenging employees to focus their energies and achieve more with less can be a major motivator. This is a perfect time to revisit what is and isn't working within a company. Five questions must be asked:

- What is working well that we need to keep doing?
- What is not working that we need to eliminate?
- What do we need to do more of?
- What are we not doing that we need to start doing?
- What is working but not needed anymore?

Well-designed employee feedback surveys – using the *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance* to categorize survey results – can help generate buy-in from each employee.

Step #3: Review Standards

Quality standards must be examined with a virtual microscope. This is crucial. In tough economic times, standards generally slip and quality is reduced. Peak

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performers revisit standards continuously because they know *standards make the brand*. They also know that regardless of the economic climate, customers still expect top value for their hard-earned money. Smart companies get back to basics and review standards continuously and systematically.

Well-designed employee feedback surveys – using the *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance* to categorize survey results – can uncover where standards are slipping and where they are gripping.

Step #4: Avoid Negativity

The Walt Disney Company's service principle – *Always Smile When on Stage* – has been one of their secrets to success. So are the *Always-On* and *Can-Do* attitudes of their cast members. Positive people create positive energy. This is necessary for teams to forge ahead in tough times. Negative comments foster dissatisfaction, frustration, and, ultimately, a climate of failure.

Individual involvement is the cure for negativity. Smart managers facilitate increased involvement by asking each employee for his or her ideas and valuing those ideas whether or not they are incorporated in the final product. The greater the number of employees who share their ideas – the more everyone hears different points of view – the greater the chance of having full employee engagement.

Positive communication is key. Keep morale up by restating your vision and mission and undertaking enormously high levels of communication. Employee feedback surveys serve as a dynamic foundation for these initiatives. Survey results are an on-going platform for vibrant, insightful communication.

Well-designed employee feedback surveys – using the *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance* to categorize survey results – allow employees to share their ideas, give their opinion, and be heard. This process guarantees employee engagement, improves employee attitude and motivation, and ensures the success of change processes.

Step #5: Be Competitive by Being Creative.

It's during the challenging times that peak-performing companies strive to aggressively differentiate themselves from their competition. Be creative! Explore new ideas, create more efficient practices, and update business models.

Well-designed employee feedback surveys – using the *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance* to categorize survey results – can uncover performance areas that are ripe for a creative punch to knock out the competition.

IN SUMMARY

Organizations don't need Professor Marvel or his crystal ball to see that employee satisfaction and engagement surveys are a major success factor in developing a dynamic employee culture. Survey results serve as a roadmap to

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solidify values, re-align attitudes, and provide the vision for a stronger more competitive organization. The ABS formula – **A**lignment, **B**alance, and **S**tyl – identifies levels of employee engagement, turbo-charges employee productivity, and helps deliver a brand that thrives in tough times.

Today is a great time to learn what well-designed employee feedback surveys from FERENCE Leadership and Strategy can do for your organization. The approach and constructs we take form a vigorous yet easily understood model for growing a dynamic culture and successfully engineering change initiatives. With 30 years of organizational development experience in the service industries, our *ABS Formula One System for Achieving Peak Performance* has assisted clients in increasing their employee satisfaction and engagement scores and building new and revitalized corporate cultures. Many domestic and international clients who have used this model have earned prestigious national quality awards.

About FERENCE Leadership and Strategy

Gene FERENCE, Ph.D. is President of FERENCE Leadership and Strategy. The company was founded in 1980 as an independent, organizational development consulting company with two support divisions: Peak Performance Mindset, providing programs in organizational dynamics and service practices, and the Center for Survey Research, providing customized employee feedback surveys and metrics for operational improvement, human resource development, brand engagement, and business positioning. The *ABS Formula One System* measures Organizational **A**lignment, Departmental **B**alance, Leadership **S**tyl, and how these key factors produce Peak Performance Results in quality products, personalized services, and memorable experiences. At the Center for Survey Research, our extensive data bank of service-industry norms is based on employee feedback surveys conducted worldwide and cross culturally.

Further information about ABS is available on our websites at:

www.FERENCELeadershipAndStrategy.com

www.PeakPerformanceMindset.com

www.CenterForSurveyResearch.com

To share your feedback regarding this article, please contact Dr. Gene FERENCE at:

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