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WE: How to Increase Performance and Profits through Full Engagement - A Review

by Meg Weber



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W*E: How to Increase Performance and Profits through Full Engagement* is freshly on the shelves of business and personal development books for 2011. The authors are Rudy Karsan and Kevin Kruse. Rudy is one of our own, so to speak, having earned his FSA in 1983. He is also co-founder, chairperson, and CEO of Kenexa, a global provider of business solutions for human resources.

Given the title, I thought the focus of *WE* would be on teamwork. In a world where it's discouraging that the likes of Bernie Madoff can still get press space, I was ready to think "we." But, while teamwork is mentioned, more core to the book is taking individual responsibility to achieve "we." What I found...

- *WE* appeals to people in different stages of their careers.
- *WE* incorporates multimedia to augment the experience of reading. However, videos and self assessment tools did not distract from the simple experience of reading (to my appreciation).
- *WE* offers tactics, not just the observations of the authors on the world of work.
- *WE* is thought provoking for staff people and management alike. It spurs introspection.

WE initially engaged me by providing a history of work, jobs, and careers. Using a broad definition of entitlement, it reminds us (US?) that even as white collar knowledge workers, we need to continuously anticipate change, learn and adapt.

The book has a strong basis in business analytics. Rudy Karsan's company Kenexa studies human behavior and team dynamics in organizations in over 20 countries, and he has drawn on that experience for this book.

Some of my key takeaways...

Work and personal life are not separate. "Health" to both means the two must be in harmony. One way to contribute to this harmony is ensuring the culture of where you work aligns with what is important to

you. If they aren't aligned, neither you, nor the organization will prosper from the relationship. This is important for me as an employee and it is important for me as a manager. It can be a difficult lesson to learn when lifestyles are so important to American culture.

WE suggests forming your own "Career Board" of people who really know you. These are people who are current with what you have done, and who you can bounce ideas off of on a scheduled basis. It is not necessary to have the CEO of your company on your career board.

And finally, there is the formula for success (after all, one of the authors is an actuary):

$$\text{Harmonization} = \text{Engagement} + \text{Alignment}$$

Within that formula there are additional variables, of course. For example, Engagement is built on Pride, Satisfaction, Advocacy and Retention. An engaged employee is priceless compared to those who are not. In my experience that employee has an intellectual curiosity beyond his immediate responsibilities and is far more likely to be proactive in avoiding problems and providing solutions.

Overall, the book had some very straightforward advice for me on a personal level and as a manager. I would recommend it to people interested in sharpening their focus on careers and on life.

Nooruddin (Rudy) S. Karsan, FSA, is one of the co-founders of Kenexa® Corp., a leading end-to-end provider of software, proprietary content, services and process outsourcing that enable organizations to more effectively recruit and retain employees. He was nominated by his peers as an actuarial pioneer and was featured in the August/September 2008 issue of *The Actuary* magazine. Read the article at <http://www.soa.org/library/newsletters/the-actuary-magazine/2008/august/act-2008-vol5-iss4-kirkwood.aspx> to learn more about this entrepreneur who builds and leads dynamic, growing businesses. Karsan may be contacted at rudy.karsan@kenexa.com.