

Engage Your People With The *Book Of Zapp*¹

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In the many employee surveys I've conducted over the years, people repeatedly tell me how their managers are very quick to criticize them for making a mistake or doing something wrong, but rarely praise them for doing something helpful or constructive, something beyond the call of duty.

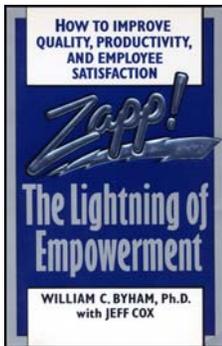
As a result, those employees more likely:

- ◆ Believe they don't they have a say in anything. They just do whatever they are told.
- ◆ Are bored with work and only do what needs to be done to get by.
- ◆ Stick to their own jobs and don't see the jobs of others as their responsibility.
- ◆ Don't feel good about their jobs—they don't see what they do as important to the organization.
- ◆ See themselves and everyone else in the organization as out for themselves.



This isn't good for any organization. It de-energizes people, who simply "put in their time." It sabotages teamwork

I use a technique to develop a culture that recognizes and rewards people for doing something helpful or constructive, for going beyond the call of duty. It is based on a delightful little book about empowerment written over 20 years ago by William Byham and Jeff Cox entitled, *Zapp! The Lightning of Empowerment*. A powerful little book that is as relevant today as it was when it was written in back in 1988.



A basic premise of this little book is that the survival and success of any organization calls for everyone in it to be *engaged*. The authors call this feeling of engagement *Zapp*. People are *Zapped* when they are empowered—when they feel a sense of responsible ownership and pride in what they are doing, when they feel recognized for their importance to the organization.

The authors describe how managers can get people *Zapped* by following three steps:

- ◆ Help employees feel confident and satisfied in the work they do.
- ◆ Understand employee needs and concerns instead of assuming that you know what they are.
- ◆ Involve employees in solutions—actively seek their ideas, their suggestions, and their knowledge.

¹ From: http://www.arniedahlke.com/110115_Engage_Your_People_With_A_Book_Of_Zapp.pdf

Managers provide support, encouragement, and help to their employees without micro-managing them.

Based on these concepts, I create a notebook called **The Book of Zapp** in a three-ring binder. The



first page of the notebook describes what is meant by the term *Zapp*. I tell employees that whenever a person goes beyond the call of duty to help out a customer or a fellow employee, he or she is *Zapped* with a positive, team energy. I have them look for *Zapped* fellow-employees and then write them up on one of the blank pages of the book. I place several copies of the book around the company so that people are aware of it.

Every month, the management team looks through the copies of the book and identifies the five or six best examples of people who have been *Zapped*. They then award them gifts, such as a free dinner for two at a nice restaurant.

I have found this most effective in companies that hold all-employee meetings. In those meetings, the winners are asked to come up front to

receive their award. What has been recorded about them is read aloud to everyone by the person who wrote it, amid applause and even cheers. I remember working with one automobile dealership in which the Dealer cleared the showroom floor for a 7 A.M. meeting with all employees once every quarter.



I have found that people enjoy seeing themselves written up in the *Book of Zapp*. Many managers use it playfully to spur them on. I've seen a manager ask an employee with twinkle in his eye, "Have you been written up in the *Book of Zapp*?" As an additional benefit, when it is used in all-employee meetings, the *Book of Zapp* has the effect of reinforcing the notion of an organization-wide team.

Managers hold the key to using the *Book of Zapp* as a successful employee-engagement strategy. They encourage a culture of ownership and self-responsibility by:

- ◆ Providing people with clear direction and concrete, measurable objectives.²
- ◆ Ensuring that employees are knowledgeable. This means providing the necessary training to help them develop their job skills.
- ◆ Making sure that they have the proper resources to do their jobs, such as tools, materials, facilities, and money.
- ◆ Mentoring, coaching, and encouraging them, and giving them constant, constructive feedback.³

ENGAGE YOUR PEOPLE WITH THE BOOK OF ZAPP!



² See my September timely tip from 2010: [100915_Breathe_Life_Into_Your_Mission_Statement.pdf](http://www.arniedahlke.com/090815_Little_Attaboy%27s_Mean_A_Lot.pdf)

³ See my August Timely Tip from 2009: http://www.arniedahlke.com/090815_Little_Attaboy%27s_Mean_A_Lot.pdf