

## WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA? EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

When employee participation was a new concept, it was said that, in the production of bacon and eggs, the chicken is involved, but the pig is committed. So what part of the meal is 'engagement'? It is the enthusiastic pig, one supposes. The breakfast metaphor harkens from the days when labour and management had divided interests. Now we're all in the same boat, firms thankful to have survived are looking to equally thankful employees to pick up their oars and row with spirit wherever the compass points, rather than obsessing over the dwindling rations and uncertain skies. The motivational issue at root here is the nature of the connection between employees and (a) their jobs and (b) the business. The first is a question of person-job fit – always a hazardous affair. The second is one of culture fit and whether a company gives people a sense of meaning, autonomy, and mastery. This requires leadership, which is where the challenge lies, for, too often, the managers are going through the motions and dreaming of their own lost horizons, as well.

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