



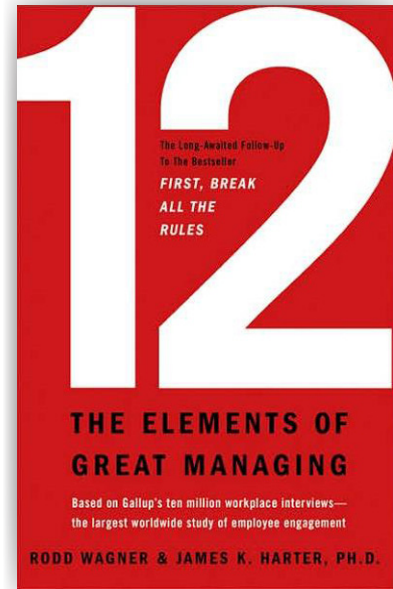
BUSINESS BOOK Summaries

April 12, 2011

12: The Elements of Great Managing

Rodd Wagner and James K. Harter, Ph.D.

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INTRODUCTION

Engaged, talented employees are a company's greatest resource. Yet many managers fail, through both neglect and ignorance, to bring out the best in their workforce. To determine the crucial components of great management, the Gallup Organization examined over one million employee and manager interviews. In 1999, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman's book *First, Break All the Rules* divulged and explored 12 of the critical elements gleaned from Gallup's research. Ten years later, Rodd Wagner and James K. Harter revisit those 12 elements in **12: The Elements of Great Managing**, in which they incorporate the original Gallup findings with current research from 10 million employee and manager interviews spanning a variety of industries in 114 nations.

WHY THE 12 ELEMENTS ARE EFFECTIVE

The 12 elements discussed by the authors are effective

because they tap into primal human needs, particularly the needs to contribute productively to society and to relate to other people. Each of the elements requires that managers invest in their workers on both professional and personal levels. When employees know that their managers value them holistically, they work harder, think more creatively, and cooperate more fully with both their immediate team and entire company. In short, the best managers understand that their employees are human and that they all have strengths, weaknesses, longings and fears.

All 12 elements require that managers invest in their employees both professionally and personally, but six of them (elements 1, 2, 3, 8, 9, and 12) are connected more deeply with the employees' professional development. Most humans strive to do their best by contributing meaningfully and productively; great managers must effectively utilize this desire to bring

out excellence in their employees and to benefit their company. The other six of the 12 (elements 4, 5, 6, 7, 10 and 11) are rooted more deeply in the employees' relational connections in the workplace. Employees need to know that their managers recognize them as people and care about their lives. However, it is not just the manager's one-on-one relationship with the employee that matters, but also the employees' relationships with each other. Great managers foster deep relationships among their workers as well as with their workers.

THE FIRST ELEMENT: KNOWING WHAT'S EXPECTED

This element seems like one that every functioning company must have already mastered. However, only half of the employees in Gallup's international database "strongly agree" that they understand their company's expectations. The complexity of the first element lies in the employees' understanding of not only what is expected of them as individuals, but also how their individual efforts coordinate with their immediate workgroups to benefit the larger company. The trickiest aspect is helping employees understand the expectations well enough to adjust to changing circumstances.

Teams of employees who understand their work expectations are greater than the sum of their parts. One of the best examples of precise work expectations within a group is a U.S. Navy aircraft carrier. Despite the likelihood of injury, accidents are so rare that social scientists regard deck sites as "high reliability organizations," or HROs. These workers achieve this feat by assigning clear roles, wearing specific color-coded shirts to designate their role, and communicating constantly. Similarly, management professors studying teamwork in the NBA demonstrated that teams with the fewest number of new players performed significantly better. Even cardiac surgeons have greater success working within their own hospitals.

An example from Gallup's research exhibiting this first element is manager Nancy Sorrells' work with Marriot hotels. When Sorrells first arrived at the Marriott outside of the Dallas/Fort Worth airport, it was \$1.5 million behind budget and in 25th place for employee engagement. Sorrells soon realized that the employees were aimlessly performing set processes

KEY CONCEPTS

In **12: The Elements of Great Managing**, authors Rodd Wagner and James K. Harter discuss the most important characteristics of a successful manager. The authors include advice such as:

- Managers, not top-level executives, are the most critical for motivating and guiding employees.
- Managers should harness the power of fundamental human needs, not attempt to fight or change them.
- To fulfill their employees' need to contribute meaningfully, managers must ensure that their employees understand their roles, have the right materials, and are given opportunities to develop.
- To make their employees feel as though they belong, managers must demonstrate holistic care and cultivate a work environment of camaraderie and cooperation.



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without understanding how they contributed to the ultimate goals of the hotel. She began placing all job requirements within the framework of clear hotel goals, and then expanded her employees' roles. For example, the guest representative at the front desk's job was not merely just to give room keys and charge credit cards but also to ensure that the needs of guests were met fully and satisfactorily. Nancy also recognized that part of her job was to take care of her employees, which she did by working diligently to improve employee designated areas. Eventually, Sorrells brought her hotel to sixth place for employee engagement and \$500,000 ahead of budget.

THE SECOND ELEMENT:

MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

Humans are creatures of habit, and a major aspect of the second element is that employees need to have a reliable and familiar personal work space. Despite the rise of paperless, wireless technologies, humans still exhibit a desire for tangible tools and personal space. Many of these tools are crucial for performing jobs well, but just as important is the emotional security that comes with having one's own items. Employees who are given the right tools to do their jobs are more productive and feel that the company is supportive of them and their work. The

In the battle between company policy and human nature, human nature always wins. The evidence suggests people will fulfill their social needs, regardless of what is legislated. Companies do far better to harness the power of this kind of social capital than to fight against it.

second element is closely related to job stress, both at work and at home. In fact, two-thirds of Americans lacking the proper tools are more likely to bring stress home, while only one-fourth of those who are well-supplied do so.

This element is illustrated by Enio Wetten's experience managing a fiberglass production plant in Rio Claro, Brazil. Wetten's plant was located in potentially dangerous conditions where the right materials and equipment were crucial. His first concern was always with the safety of his employees, placing it even above production. He listened carefully to his employees, and trusted them to know what tools they needed to do their work well. As a result, his employees were so committed to the plant that they frequently gave up personal time in times of crisis. Most impressively, in 1998 they gave up their Christmas Eve to restart the plant after a power outage.

THE THIRD ELEMENT: THE OPPORTUNITY TO DO WHAT I DO BEST

One of the most delicate and tricky aspects of managing is matching the right people to the right assignments. Although there is a pervasive notion in Western culture that anyone can be trained to do anything, research demonstrates that each human has a unique combination of strengths and weakness, and that their vocations should capitalize on these combinations. While humans continue to be capable of learning and growing throughout their lives, they are also molded by their genes and formative experiences. Recognizing individual abilities does not necessarily restrict work paths, as innate talents may be utilized in a variety of vocations. Even employees with the same profession may achieve great results through different talents.

It is the manager's responsibility to uncover and strengthen employee talents. This takes time and personal investment from managers, but pays great

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dividends. Workgroups in the top quartile of the third element have 10 to 15 percent higher profitability than those in the bottom quartile. Putting emphasis on improving strengths rather than fixing weaknesses is crucial as well. Groups led by managers who focus on strengths are nearly twice as likely to produce above-average results than those led by managers oriented toward problem prevention. Companies that focus on strengths improve employee engagement by 33 percent per year, which leads to \$5.4 million in productivity.

Klaus Welte demonstrated the third element when he was assigned to lead a group to design a complex hip replacement navigation system. He set out to assemble a team whose members' technical knowledge and innate talents complemented each other. In addition to their vocational excellence, Welte's team included individual teammates gifted in areas such as structured analysis, social connections and responsibility, organization and factual reality, and innovation. Working together, they crafted a groundbreaking new piece of medical technology.

When employees feel they are learning and growing, they work harder and more efficiently.

THE FOURTH ELEMENT: RECOGNITION AND PRAISE

Giving recognition and praise is easy and free, yet most employees feel that their work goes unrecognized and unappreciated. Employee dissatisfaction in this area is hurting companies across industries and cultures. Gallup data demonstrates that utilizing the fourth element can lead to 10 to 20 percent differences in productivity and revenue, which could mean thousands of customers to large companies. Even the difference from one-third to one-half of employees feeling recognized leads to six and a half percent improved employee productivity and two percent improved customer engagement. These results are the same regardless of industry or culture.

Recent brain research helps to explain why recognition and praise are so crucial. Positive verbal feedback has been shown to activate the brain regions that are excited by reward. The increase of dopamine that

stems from praise received not only pleases employees but trains them to repeat the behavior that earned them the praise. Quick-moving dopamine levels are also the reason that recognition and praise must come so frequently, or at least every seven days, for continued results.

Elzbieta Gorska entered a daunting situation when she became the manager at a Polish warehouse of International Paper. Working in the basement of the facility, Gorska's employees felt that the rest of the facility looked down on them, both literally and figuratively, which created a sense of dissatisfaction and melancholy. In response, Gorska praised her workers in a team meeting, only to discover that her unexpected recognition and praise caused envy and began allegations of favoritism. Surprised and saddened, she determined to uncover more meaningful ways to recognize and praise her employees.

Gorska greatly exemplified the fourth element when she held individual meetings with her workers to solicit their feedback, which enabled her to praise her workers in a private way that did not evoke jealousy. She learned to offer praise for specific examples of good work, and she recognized important days, such as birthdays. Her employees slowly began to respond to her encouragement, and Gorska's team moved from the most disengaged quartile in Gallup to the top quartile.

THE FIFTH ELEMENT: SOMEONE AT WORK CARES ABOUT ME AS A PERSON

Humans are relational creatures with an intrinsic need to matter to those around them. Religious leaders and anthropologists alike testify to the human need for fellowship. In the past, humans worked together in the same close-knit communities for their entire lives to simply survive. Since everyone was interdependent, lack of cooperation was unimaginable. In the technological and mobile era, individuals' communities may change frequently, allowing them to inhabit several distinct communities at once in different aspects of their lives. Still, the desire to matter to both supervisors and co-workers remains.

Numerous social experiments demonstrate that when

people know each other as people, they invest more in mutual work. Companies reap the benefits of this investment through increased employee enthusiasm, trustworthiness, and retention. One of the most significant predictors of employee honesty is whether they feel personally cared about at work. In high-turnover companies, workgroups in the lowest quartile of the fifth element average 22 percent higher turnover than top-quartile counterparts. In low-turnover companies, the difference is 37 percent.

When Larry Walters took leadership of a poorly ranking Qwest call center in Idaho, the employees were apathetic and planning to quit. However, in less than one year, Walters' team shot to first place due to the fifth element: his sincere care for his employees as people. Walters demonstrated deep interest in their personal lives, encouraged pride in the group effort by posting their daily work results, and entertained his employees with silly costumes and surprise meals. Along with leading sales, Walters helped change his employees attitudes from indifferent to scoring their workplace above Gallup's 70th percentile.

THE SIXTH ELEMENT: SOMEONE AT WORK ENCOURAGES MY DEVELOPMENT

People learn most effectively from mentors. As the old saying goes, "Monkey see, monkey do." In the early 1990s, scientists were baffled by what they observed in monkeys. A scientist would perform a simple action for a monkey to watch and imitate, yet the monkeys' brains registered as if they themselves had performed the action. Further research revealed that humans have much more complex "mirror neurons" that function in similar ways, causing humans to "do" in their brains what they observe others doing physically.

The sixth element depends upon deep personal investment by managers and is crucial for employee engagement. For managers to effectively encourage their employees' development, they must understand their employees' backgrounds, personalities, and skills. Without this, managers have a hard time implementing the other eleven elements effectively; even with the other elements in place, only one percent of

employees who lack mentors have real engagement with their employer.

One of the greatest difficulties with the sixth element is that the pairings must be organic in order for them to be effective. Programmatized pairings often do not work, especially if the two people involved have different vocations, . The mentor/mentee relationship is important not only because of the sharing of skills and knowledge, but because through counseling, validation, and friendship, the mentees also feel that they matter and belong at work. While there is no data that indicates that the need for a mentor lessens with time and experience, most companies put most of their efforts into young and/or new employees.

Peter Wamstecker of Cargill was celebrated for his mentoring skills and his influential utilization of the sixth element. He credited his success to training and finding the right niche for his employees by learning every detail he could about them, particularly "what makes [them] tick." His team's Gallup results put them into the top ten percent for the sixth element, and the top 20 percent overall. Wamstecker in turn gave recognition back to his own mentor from his first high school job since he both challenged and encouraged Wamstecker to achieve success.

The notion of a personal guide is an ancient idea that perpetually reemerges in forms such as the relationships between master craftsman and apprentice, doctoral candidate and thesis supervisor, or resident physician and intern.

THE SEVENTH ELEMENT: MY OPINIONS SEEM TO COUNT

The seventh element explicitly requires managers to treat their employees as people, not machines. Managers that listen to the opinions of their employees do a great service for their companies. Sadly, this has not been customary in most workplaces. In fact, Frederick Winslow Taylor was made famous for creating "Taylorism," an approach denigrating the abilities of employees, particularly their ability to think, and regarding them as machines.

Incorporating the opinions of employees offers numerous benefits to employers. Employees are the most familiar with their own jobs, and often have excellent

ideas. Moreover, they are more likely to commit to their own plans than those handed out with an iron fist. In manufacturing plants, teams in the top quartile on the seventh element had half as many accidents as those in the bottom quartile. Improving the seventh element for one in three employees rather than one in five employees had such an impact on productivity and customer satisfaction that the workgroups averaged a six percent gain in profitability.

Anthropologists see people today as descendants of the most cooperative humans living across time. In the rugged past, people who didn't work together didn't just have a bad day at work—they died.

Susan Jewell turned around the Diagnostic Imaging center at the Hospital for Sick Children by taking the seventh element to heart and listening to her employees. There was great friction between the technicians and the nurses, exacerbated by the intensity of caring for ill children. However, by bringing both groups together and forcing everyone to listen to each other's concerns, Jewell and her team streamlined their processes. They eventually succeeded in dropping MRI wait times from 41 weeks to four weeks and CT waits from 27 weeks to three days, and in addition developed a genuine team of friends.

THE EIGHTH ELEMENT: A CONNECTION WITH THE MISSION OF THE COMPANY

The power of the eighth element rests in the innate need for humans to know that their contributions are meaningful. The desire to find meaning in work, and the frustration that comes with its lacking, affects everyone from entry-level newcomers to high-level executives. Top executives can influence how employees feel about the eighth element more than any other. While the greater meaning of some fields is more apparent, a sense of job purpose often has more to do with the work environment than the industry. Although there is some natural decrease, the sense of meaning from executives at the top trickles down to managers, which then trickles down to employees. This is not enough to convince employees that the general business is worthwhile; managers must also persuade their teams that their particular work meaningfully contributes to the general worthiness of the

larger company.

One of the best ways to understand vocational meaning is to divide worker perspectives into three categories. The least engaged employees view their work as merely a job, a way to pay the bills and to facilitate their personal lives. The middle group sees their job as part of a career, where they will steadily climb the ladder to success. The most engaged workers regard their work as a "calling," where the work is not only an end in itself, but it also acquires an almost sacred nature. While not every employee needs to have grand meaning attached to their work, companies with more employees in the second and third groups fare much better than with those in mostly the first group.

Due to their deep belief in the meaning of their work, Mike Boldrick and his team greatly exemplify the eighth element. They worked through bad weather, faulty technology, 100 hour weeks, late product deliveries, an impromptu presidential visit and even dead fish to open the outdoor retailer Cabela's tenth store in Wheeling, West Virginia. The employees were hired and grouped based on their passions: hunters were assigned to the hunting section, fishers to the fishing section, and so on. For many of the Cabela employees, their fervor for the outdoors was tied to significant relationships and cherished memories, and they were eager for others to appreciate the outdoors the way they did. Cabela employees were ranked in the top ten percent of workgroups in Gallup's eighth element.

THE NINTH ELEMENT: COWORKERS COMMITTED TO DOING QUALITY WORK

As relational creatures, humans produce better results when their teammates are also producing good results. Part of this is due to the human herd mentality, and part is due to the human willingness to invest more deeply when others are also investing. While there are some people who are hard-workers and some who are slothful regardless of their peers, most rise or fall to the level of those around them. Companies which are strong on the ninth element have employees who are safer, better with customers, more committed and more productive. At an Australian bank, differences

in the ninth element created a 14 percent difference in profitability amongst its branch offices.

For managers to effectively utilize the ninth element, they must remember four basic principles. First, most people show up wanting and intending to cooperate fully. Second, there will always be some members who will freeload. Third, the human drive for fairness is such that productive teammates will punish the slackers, even at their own, or the group's, expense. Fourth, idlers do improve with punishment, and hard-working coworkers will be encouraged by the fairness.

Eric Taverna and his managerial team at Best Buy were disappointed to receive good, but not great, responses to employee engagement surveys, and were particularly low on the seventh and the ninth elements. One of the especially sore points was that due to the high demands and lack of standardization in closing the store, some of the employees were investing much more time and effort than others. Taverna developed a three-fold system to address the issues; he started by getting all of his managers on the same page, then dismissed slothful employees, and implemented a "team close." The next set of results gathered by Gallup landed the store in the top ten percent and revealed impressive increases for the seventh and ninth elements. Additionally, the store did well against its budget and lowered its turnover rate.

THE TENTH ELEMENT: A BEST FRIEND AT WORK

The tenth element is the most controversial of the 12. The fear of socialization at the expense of quality work is strong, and the definition of "a best friend" can be vague. However, employees who confidently agree that they have a true depth of relational connection and mutual support at work are not necessarily placing work friends above everyone else. Rather, they are asserting that they matter to their colleagues and their colleagues matter to them. Those who disagree with the statement are lonely and isolated, and are often looking for another job.

Although the Gallup Organization considered removing the statement from their research, the ties between "a best friend" and positive performance are far too strong. The natural need for humans to belong trumps

corporate discouragement, and companies are better off tapping into this social energy than fighting it. Research repeatedly demonstrates that friends feel a deeper sense of belonging and commitment and are more dedicated to group goals and working harder to achieve them. Also, disagreements are resolved more easily. Due to their sense of mutual support, workgroups of friends have lower turnover, lower accident rates, and less shrink.

Executing the tenth element is probably the most difficult for managers since they cannot be everyone's friend. The best approach for managers is to create situations in which employees can befriend each other and support employee friendships. For example, when Dr. Suresh Nagesh became the head of the engineering department at Daimler Chrysler in India, he encountered six individuals who seemed to interact with each other as little as possible. Due to subpar performance and unmet deadlines, the center was under inquiry from executives. Dr. Nagesh transformed the group from individuals into a team of friends by improving communication, moving desks together, and taking the group on a white-water rafting trip. As a result, the group frequently put in extended hours together and achieved a 180-degree turnaround in customer satisfaction.

One of the most effective ways of improving recognition of employees is to discover the forms of feedback that mean the most to them.

THE ELEVENTH ELEMENT: TALKING ABOUT PROGRESS

Employees need frequent feedback from their managers. While most companies are committed to formal performance evaluations, they are often unhelpful to the employees. Yet effective evaluations are important to a company's success. Workgroups in the top quartile for the eleventh element have 10 to 15 percent higher productivity and 20 to 40 percent fewer accidents than those in the bottom quartile.

Performance evaluations should be individually tailored to the personality, situation, potential, and needs of each employee. Research repeatedly reveals that no feedback system is one-size-fits-all. Person-

alities of employees vary, and good managers must be sensitive to how each employee will receive and utilize their feedback. The nature of the employee's work matters as well. Employees with "promotion" jobs, which require looking for new opportunities, improve if they receive positive feedback. Employees with "prevention" jobs, which demand stopping negative outcomes, improve if they receive negative feedback. Feedback should also be more frequent than the typical formal evaluations, and may occur informally in the gaps.

Philippe Lescornez, who won Masterfood's Line Manager Excellence award for Europe, has proven the success of the eleventh element by tailoring feedback and suitable progress opportunities to his workers. One of his salesmen lived a nation away from Lescornez and the rest of the team, so Lescornez fostered that distance and freedom by encouraging that salesman to become the expert on his region. Another employee was in danger of stagnation in a job she knew well, so Lescornez asked her to create a manual for new workers. Since he praised his employees often, Lescornez was able to give awkward counsel as well, including suggesting to one sales promoter that she become more friendly and approachable and to another that she back up her relational connections with clients with preparation and concrete facts. Over the course of his 18 years at Masterfoods, 60 percent of his sales team had been promoted.

It is very clear that great managers have an instinctive awareness that what they are doing is contributing more than profit. Great managers achieve sustained profitability because they make a connection to something beyond profit.

THE TWELFTH ELEMENT: OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND GROW

As Dr. Seuss famously captured in his book *Oh, the Places You'll Go!*, humans have a strong desire to learn and develop. Allowing employees to stagnate has repercussions for companies; workgroups in the top quartile of the twelfth element show nine percent better customer engagement and ten percent better profitability than those in the bottom quartile. It is much easier for children to continually progress than it is for adults, particularly when they remain in the

same job.

Managers who are committed to helping their employees learn and grow must understand their employees' aspirations and strengths, a feat that requires that managers check in with their workers frequently. In addition, managers must know the larger company well enough to make helpful recommendations for their workers. If the managers excel in helping their employees shine, they must be prepared to promote or hire others when their employees are promoted themselves.

Practically speaking, one of the most effective ways to challenge employees is to set out quantifiable "stretch goals." Rather than providing abstract encouragement such as "do your best," setting numerical objectives for both intellectual and physical tasks allows undisputed achievement, which is more motivational.

The employees of B&Q in Bangor Wales ranked in Gallup's top one percent of workgroups for the twelfth element and employee engagement, due especially to their manager Simon Gaier's devotion to helping them learn and grow. Colleen Saul, who was thrust into heading a new department without training, began her career with a rocky start. Yet with Gaier's help, Saul overcame the initial doubts of herself and others to land her dream job at the head office in buying. To fill her vacant position at the store, Gaier encouraged the shy Adam Williams and watched him

blossom into a remarkable supervisor. Much of Gaier's success stemmed from his own personal investments; in fact, Williams assessed that Gaier personally viewed his employees' failures as his own.

AN ELEMENT UNTO ITSELF: THE PROBLEM OF PAY

Interestingly, financial compensation, particularly in societies where most employees can afford basic sustenance, does not factor into any of the 12 elements. Payment seems to have little impact on employee engagement since it can be divisive and can interfere with professional teamwork and relational connections. Generous compensation in conjunction with the 12 elements demonstrates appreciation, but the num-

bers are less important than the recognition. The 12 elements are rooted much more deeply in the human needs to contribute and to belong.

THE HEART OF GREAT MANAGING

Like their employees, great managers also need great managers. The 12 elements are not just applicable to the needs of employees, but also what their managers need from their own supervisors. Managers must be engaged and feel that their company values them on both professional and personal levels.

The essence of great managing is regarding employees as people. Great managers recognize that they have power over human lives, yet they view their employees more as family or friends than as money generators. The delightful irony is that managers who are most invested in their employees also perform best financially, thus creating an environment in which everyone wins.



FEATURES OF THE BOOK

Reading Time: 4 hours, 203 pages

In **12: The Elements of Great Managing**, authors Rodd Wagner and James K. Harter re-examine the Gallup Organization's 12 elements of great management in light of vast new data, numerous examples of the elements in practice, and current research. The core of great management relies on engaging employees at the level of their human needs, thus allowing them to contribute meaningfully and to belong. While such deep investment takes time and dedication on the part of the managers, it offers great benefits to the company.

Managers and those responsible for leadership of employees in all industries would benefit most from reading this book. For each of the 12 elements, there is a real-life example of a manager who exemplifies that element. It then delves into the theory, current research, and practical advice for each manager.

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