

The Dream Manager will increase your productivity, reduce stress, and improve your sleep. You'll be able to focus on your most important tasks, and you'll be able to enjoy your life more. This book is a must-read for anyone who wants to get more out of their life.

The dream manager



MATTHEW KELLY

Author of *The Dream Manager* and *The Dream Manager 2*

"The Dream Manager will forever change the landscape. Not about how
entrepreneurs and how managers define what it means to do their job."
-Patrick Lencioni, author of The Five Dysfunctions of a Team

the dream manager



MATTHEW KELLY

With a Foreword by Patrick Lencioni

The DREAM MANAGER



*To my brother Simon—
my first Dream Manager!
Thanks for encouraging me
to dream the big dreams
when I was so young...*

*Go confidently in the direction of your dreams.
Live the life you have imagined!*
—THOREAU

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Foreword

THE MOST POWERFUL ideas are almost always the simple ones. And so often, they come from unlikely sources. Matthew Kelly's *The Dream Manager* is a testament to both of these axioms.

As long as organizations have existed, leaders have been looking for ways to inspire workers and keep them from leaving for imagined greener pastures. But during the past thirty years, as fewer and fewer people cling to the notion of staying with the same company for their entire careers, concerns about inspiring and retaining employees have grown rapidly. Today, with the increasing shortage of skilled labor in the job market—and the unprecedented leverage that it has given employees—the search for an effective solution to the retention problem in the corporate world has become nothing short of an obsession. And for good reason.

Executives today realize that the cost of losing good people is no longer limited to high recruiting and retraining expenses; it is a recipe for failure. Even the most cynical manager will admit that one of the most important competitive advantages a company can have is the ability to keep and motivate the human capital that is in such short supply.

Unfortunately, managers and human resources professionals have traditionally focused most of their attention on levers like compensation and benefits. They've raised salaries, increased bonuses, awarded stock options, increased vacation time, and let people bring their pets to work—with limited success, at best. In those cases where a company has been able to successfully use one of these tools to coax an unfulfilled employee into staying, they usually find that the solution is only a temporary—and costly—one.

The truth is, few people—if any—work for money alone. Sure, we all need money, and we certainly factor it into our decisions about a given job. But when it comes to inspiring people and creating the kind of environment where employees laugh at the notion of leaving their company, there is something far more powerful—and less expensive—that companies have largely overlooked.

Until now.

As you read this book, you'll probably have the same reaction I did. "Why hasn't someone already figured this out? It's so obvious in hindsight!" And that is the sign of a truly ingenious idea.

And the real beauty of Matthew Kelly's breakthrough idea is that it is one of those rare discoveries that is as beneficial for employees as it is for a company's bottom line. It's like discovering a cheap and powerful new source of fuel that is also good for the environment!

The one sad thing about Matthew's idea—although I suppose from a competitive standpoint it might be a good thing—is that some managers will probably dismiss his theory. They might say, "Give me a break. That's the simplest idea I've ever heard." Or they'll think, "Who is this Matthe

Kelly guy, anyway? He's not a business or management expert I've ever heard of."

My response to both of those objections is, "Exactly!"

—PATRICK LENCIO
author of *The Five Dysfunctions of a Team*

THE DREAM MANAGER

THE FUTURE OF your organization and the potential of your employees are intertwined; their destinies are linked.

An organization can only become the-best-version-of-itself to the extent that the people who drive that organization are striving to become better-versions-of-themselves. This is universally true, whether the organization is a business, a school, a government, a nonprofit, or a sports team. To the extent that a CEO, an executive team, and a group of managers and employees explore their potential as individuals, so too will an organization explore its potential.

The problem is, the great majority of people in the workplace today are *actively disengaged*. This is the dilemma that modern managers face. To varying extents, people don't feel connected to the work, the organizations they work in, or the people they work with. No single factor is affecting morale, efficiency, productivity, sustainable growth, customer intimacy, and profitability more than this *disengagement*.

Disengagement. Is an employee 85 percent engaged? 60 percent engaged? 50 percent engaged? Or worst of all, have they decided to "quit and stay"? You do the math. What does your payroll amount to? If on average your employees are 75 percent engaged, disengagement is costing you 25 percent of your payroll every month in productivity alone. The real cost to your business is of course much higher when you take into account how disengaged employees negatively affect your customers and every aspect of your business.

It has been almost forty years since Peter Drucker observed the single greatest error and deception of our accounting system: people are placed in the liability column on the balance sheet. Machinery and computers are categorized as assets and people as liabilities. The reality, of course, is that *the right people* are an organization's greatest asset. We may have acknowledged this truth in theory, but we have not allowed it to sufficiently penetrate the way we manage our organizations, and indeed, the way we manage the people who drive them.

It's not that we don't want to engage the people who work with us and for us. In most cases it seems that we simply have not found a practical, efficient, and affordable way to do it.

The Dream Manager concept provides a revolutionary way of reversing this crippling trend toward disengagement and demonstrates how organizations large and small can *actively engage* the people once again, thus creating a competitive advantage of monumental proportions.

In the past, companies have battled over price, quality, quantity, customer service, operational excellence, and product leadership. In the coming decades, we will witness the next great corporate battle—the war for talent. The battle may seem to be raging already to some, but in truth it is only just beginning.

BusinessWeek reports that, over the next ten years, 21 percent of top management and 24 percent of all management jobs across all functions, regions, and industries will become vacant. Add to this trend an aging population, a shrinking workforce, and a growing intolerance for the illegal immigrant population that provides much of the unskilled labor in the United States today, and you have a talent and labor crisis of enormous consequence across all disciplines—from the highly skilled to the completely unskilled.

But it is not enough simply to hire the right people. The ability to attract, engage, and retain talent will be the number one strategic objective of every successful modern leader and organization.

A football coach's number one priority is to attract, develop, nurture, organize, and motivate the franchise's talent. Coaches and team owners are intimately aware that the future success of the organization depends on the talent they attract, engage, and retain. Finding and nurturing talent is the number one priority. Why should the priorities of a CEO or manager be any different?

A company's purpose is to become the-best-version-of-itself.

The next question is: What is an employee's purpose? Most would say, "to help the company achieve its purpose," but they would be wrong. That is certainly part of an employee's role, but an employee's primary purpose is to become the-best-version-of-himself or herself. Contrary to unwritten management theory and popular practice, people do not exist for the company. The company exists for people. When a company forgets that it exists to serve its customers, it quickly goes out of business. Our employees are our first customers, and our most influential customers.

A person's purpose is to become the-best-version-of-himself or herself.

Finding a way to create an environment that helps employees become the-best-version-of-themselves, while at the same time moving the company toward the-best-version-of-itself, may seem impossible to many; to others, these purposes may seem diametrically opposed; but in reality, they are astoundingly complementary.

This is the story of how one leader and his executive team set out to transform a business by *actively engaging a disengaged workforce*.

The secret revealed within this story unveils the very core of what drives us as human beings, not only at work, but in every arena of our lives. So whether you are the CEO of a large corporation or the leader of a small department, the principal of a school or a football coach, a parent grappling with the dynamics of teamwork within your family or an employee just looking to make sense of the work you do every day...you are about to discover something that will change your life forever.

PART ONE

DESPERATION

Just Another Day

Something was wrong and Simon Roberts knew it. Meandering slowly through traffic on another cloudy morning, he started wondering where his life was going, and his thoughts quickly wandered to his job. It seemed so transactional now, and that left him feeling flat and unmotivated. Simon wasn't a lazy person; he loved a good challenge. But lately he'd found himself disengaging from his work, and that bothered him. Something needed to change—he just wasn't sure what it was, or where to start.

He had joined Admiral Janitorial Services four years earlier because solving problems and working with people were the two things Simon was passionate about.

His business card read “General Manager,” but as Simon reflected on the past four years, it seemed he had spent most of his time dealing with recruiting issues. “Lead Recruiter” seemed more accurate since, truth be told, 75 percent of his time was spent dealing with issues directly related to the “T” word.

“Turnover,” that is. But at Admiral, you didn't speak that word.

Sure, plenty of companies have turnover problems nowadays, and building a team has perhaps never been more difficult. But if you think *your* company has a turnover problem, try getting people to clean toilets. That's what Simon had spent most of his time working on over the past four years. Admiral Janitorial Services had just over four hundred employees and an annual turnover rate of 40 percent, just above the industry average. Needless to say, team spirit and employee morale were low.

Pulling into his parking space at Admiral's headquarters, Simon felt his energy plummet and wondered how he would face another day. All he could hear was a *Winnie-the-Pooh* tape his son used to listen to as a child playing over and over in his mind, and it was stuck on the line, “If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten.”

How Much Is Turnover Costing Us?

“It's costing me a fortune,” Greg said as he charged through the door. He never had learned to knock, but then again, he owns the company.

Greg founded Admiral when he was just seventeen and, over the past twenty-five years, he had grown the business from a one-man operation to a small army of around four hundred employees.

Today, he is a successful and wealthy businessman, but whenever people ask him what he does, he always replies, "I'm a janitor." From time to time, he will attend a black-tie affair and people will laugh at his answer, thinking he is joking. But discovering he is serious, their laughter quickly diminishes into embarrassment.

Greg is an entrepreneur—he can sell anything to anyone and has an uncanny ability to see trends and opportunities long before anybody else. But he can also be a little scattered and a bit of a hothead, and that's why Simon was hired as general manager four years ago.

"What's costing you a fortune?" Simon volleyed, though he knew exactly what Greg was talking about.

"Turnover!" Greg said, visibly exasperated.

On Friday afternoon, Simon had left the month-end reports on Greg's desk. Among those reports were the quarterly turnover numbers. Over the last three months, Admiral's turnover had been 10 percent. That's right. In the past ninety days, 428 employees had left Admiral.

"It's hard to know how much this is costing us," Simon said. "We are having to hire for some positions three times a quarter. And it's not just recruitment costs. Turnover affects morale, efficiency, and customer relationships. I've been telling you for twelve months that it's a big problem."

Greg nodded. "I know, I know. It's just that now we're starting to lose clients over it. I had a call from Charlie down at P & G today, telling me we're getting a warning letter putting us on a ninety-day probationary period. He says our work has been sloppy and they've noticed a constant flow of new faces, and they feel like things are falling between the cracks."

Simon just sat there, staring at Greg in a bit of a daze.

Greg continued, "So you've got my attention. Give them a pay raise, won't that make them stay?"

"I wish it would, but I'm not sure," Simon replied. "I don't want to just throw money at the problem. Let's find out what's causing the turnover. Let's find out why they're leaving."

"How will we find that out?" Greg asked.

"We'll ask them," said Simon.

"Huh!" grunted Greg. Clearly, this idea had never occurred to him.

Ask Your Employees

The next morning, Simon and Greg met at First Watch to talk more about their turnover problem. It was a relaxed environment, the food and service were great, and that made it Simon's favorite place for breakfast meetings.

"So you're just going to go around and ask them why people are leaving?" inquired Greg, half serious and half sarcastic.

"Let's remember, Greg, they know things about our business that we don't know. I read an article last month about the president of American Airlines. Refueling costs were killing them, especially at airports where they had to contract other airlines to refuel their planes. One day he was pondering the problem after a meeting with his executive team that went nowhere. So he drove out to Fort Worth from his office in downtown Dallas, went down to maintenance, got a couple of crews together, told them the problem, and asked them what they thought the solution was.

"They just looked at each other. Some smiled, some just shook their heads. They all knew the answer. Put enough fuel in the planes while they are in Dallas to fly to and from Los Angeles. The plane will use a little more fuel, and if delayed you may need a top-up in LA, but it will still fly."

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