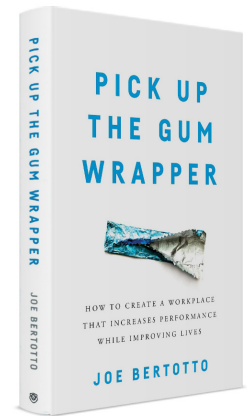


Pick Up the Gum Wrapper

How to Create a Workplace That Increases Performance While Improving Lives

by **Joe Bertotto**



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THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

So many employees in organizations today get anxious every Sunday night about having to report to unfulfilling jobs on Monday morning. But imagine working in a place where you're doing more of the work you're good at and enjoy, and a place where you're not only accepted for who you are but also encouraged and supported as you grow.

Pick Up the Gum Wrapper: How to Create a Workplace That Increases Performance While Improving Lives identifies three ways leaders can create such a workplace and propel their companies forward: leverage each employee's uniqueness using Gallup's CliftonStrengths; identify Behavioral Expectations for their organizations; and design leadership practices that will foster a workplace culture rooted in high care, high performance, and high accountability. Not only will your employees look forward to coming to work on Monday morning, but the business results of this workplace improvement will energize you like the thrust of a rocket booster!

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to promote a highly engaged workforce.
- How to create agreed-upon Behavioral Expectations that foster mutual respect and predictability among the workforce.
- How to implement leadership practices that provide a springboard for employees' performance to soar and to live better lives.
- How to achieve "Worvana": Nirvana at work!

Introduction

The author overheard a group of young people talk with great enthusiasm about the day when they could leave their jobs to live the good life: twenty and thirty-somethings talking about retiring? What a shame to dislike your work so much that you would wish your day, week, year – well, basically, wish your life away!

But your work can provide the opposite experience. A place where your contributions are valued and celebrated. A place where you have a strong sense of affiliation with your colleagues as you strive to accomplish great things for customers and one another. A sense of purpose. A place where you are not only accepted for who you are but also encouraged and supported as you grow. A place where you're doing more of the work you're good at and enjoy.

What companies need are leaders who want that same supportive environment and are courageous enough to do what it takes to install the right elements.

Why Make the Effort?

There are three kinds of employees at organizations today:

- (a) Some pick up discarded gum wrappers that they see on the floor at the office. These employees continuously give their best effort on projects, volunteer within the company and community, and take initiative. Gallup reports that 34 percent of employees fall into this category.
- (b) Others see the gum wrappers but walk by without picking them up. They will show up on time and do a good job within their role, but initiative is not something they prioritize. 53 percent of employees see themselves in this category.
- (c) A few contribute to the negative work environment by throwing the gum wrappers down in the first place. They'll say, "I can't stand it here. I'm here because I have to be." 13 percent of employees fall into this category. They poison the well and drag everyone's morale and performance down.

There are three components to building a productive culture and propelling your company forward:

- (a) Learning, appreciating, and leveraging each employee's uniqueness using Gallup's CliftonStrengths: People want to be accepted and appreciated for who they are. CliftonStrengths shows us how we're unique, what we're both good at and enjoy, as well as where we might be undermining our own success.

- (b) Identifying Behavioral Expectations: Behavioral Expectations are the kinds of commitments you make about how you're going to work as a community of people.

- (c) Defining leadership practices that are designed to build a workplace culture rooted in high care, high performance, and high accountability.

Overarching Principles for Creating Culture

If the company is performing well on the outside, does it really matter what's happening inside? According to Gallup, companies with highly engaged workforces outperformed their peers by 147 percent in earnings per share. It matters. And it matters to the people who come to work every day.

When initially setting out to create and build a new culture, start with the leadership team. People who manage others set the tone when it comes to culture. Leaders should follow the advice of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who said, "What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

Component 1: Learn about Employee Uniqueness with CliftonStrengths

We're All Unique

Each person has gifts they bring to the team. As leaders, our goal is to understand, appreciate, and leverage those natural talents. The process begins by using the CliftonStrengths Assessment, at three different levels. First, it leads to greater self-awareness. Second, it helps everyone effectively manage their relationships productively. Third, it gives us insight into the work we do that we're good at and enjoy.

Once you've taken the assessment, the Gallup website provides you access to a variety of reports and videos that define your talents. As you begin to recognize the capacity of your talent themes, you start to understand how they benefit you and how they can benefit the performance of your team and your organization.

Have the members of your team take the assessment. Once members become familiar with their results, have each person highlight the words, phrases, and sentences that resonate in their Strengths Insight Report and share it with the rest of the team.

Playing to strengths is the number one action we as leaders can take to increase everyone's commitment to pick up

the gum wrappers. We can't let roles and job descriptions determine how to put people's strengths to work. Those can be too limiting and inhibit performance.

Component 2: Identify Company Behavioral Expectations

What Similarities Drive Your Organization?

In a company with firmly established Behavioral Expectations, employees with entirely different work styles and methods of communicating can still feel confident they'll be treated consistently and fairly in every interaction. Behavioral Expectations are a set of agreed upon codes of conduct that bring together a group of unique individuals and create predictability in how they interact with one another. Behavioral Expectations serve as a North Star for unity, allowing team members to be who they are while honoring how they work with one another.

Crafting Solid Behavioral Expectations Behavioral Expectations should be easily remembered statements for how you expect those in your organization to act and communicate. Two examples are, "Blamers are Drainers," and "Everyone Deserves Your Best."

Gather together those you've selected to craft the Behavioral Expectations and instruct each person to write down what they believe are the two most critical Behavioral Expectations for the organization. Then sort the cards, remove the givens, and combine the cards that have matching patterns. Then take a maximum of five and draft a memorable phrase for each one. Have each participant personally try to live them over the next month. Meet again and discuss, recrafting as necessary. Then introduce them to the whole company.

Make Behavioral Expectations a Priority. Most companies unveil their Behavioral Expectations with elaborate fanfare, but after a few months, the gusto is gone and it's back to business as usual. Embedding Behavioral Expectations is difficult because we may be asking people to change their behavior, and they may not see any need to do that. For Behavioral Expectations to matter, you must make them of equal importance to performance expectations. That means if a person is on pace to exceed her performance goals but is doing it in a way that violates the Behavioral Expectations, that can't be ok.

Here's how to keep Behavioral Expectations in the forefront of everyone's mind: Review them at every all-team meeting; Start each meeting with a story that illustrates someone living a Behavioral Expectation; Begin every week with a

company-wide voicemail that further clarifies and explains a Behavioral Expectation; Put the Behavioral Expectations on a placard that is placed on everyone's desk; Put the Behavioral Expectations on a screen saver on everyone's computer.

Exemplary conduct is driven by devotion to the Behavioral Expectations.

Component 3: Build Defined Leadership Practices

Got Purpose?

One of the author's formative career-related experiences was working for a manager who went out of her way to spot his strengths, aligned them with his work, and gave him consistent feedback and coaching. When a manager is focused on her employees, sees the potential in them, invests in them, and believes in them, it provides a springboard for the employees' performance to soar and to live better lives. Managers should ask questions like, "Why do you come to work every morning in this job?" "What legacy do you want to leave?" "How do you want to feel about the contribution you make to your colleagues?"

Manage to Outcomes

Give Your Team the Freedom to Be Themselves: It's more effective to work with people as they are than to try to change them to suit our needs. Performance will be better when we allow people to work in their own way to achieve their goals. Setting achievable goals can be difficult. Use the acronym ASK to help set achievable, measurable goals: ASK: Agreed-upon, Strengths-based, and Known. Agreed-upon means setting goals that are mutually determined. Involvement is critical to goal achievement. Performance goals should be Strengths-based. When each of us is working from our talents and strengths, our results will be exponentially better than if we are working from a deficit position or a weakness. Give people work that will feed their minds and inspire their hearts. It's always more enjoyable to spend time on the work you're good at and enjoy than on the work you're good at but don't care about, or worse, the work that drains you of energy or you're uncomfortable with your performance.

All the performance goals in the world are meaningless if people lose sight of them as competing demands and changing priorities descend upon them, which is where the "Known" part of the ASK acronym comes into play. Make your goals measurable and deadline-driven. Each goal must be crystal clear. In addition to communicating regularly on goals, offer positive and constructive feedback to help team members improve individually and collectively.

Act with Benevolence

Benevolence means having a disposition to do good. We demonstrate our care for people when we give them our time and attention in a customized way. A law of human dynamics that's close to universal is: you get what you give. As people recognize that you're serving their desires, they'll respond in kind. Think of what you can accomplish when every member of your team is playing to their strengths and giving every ounce of discretionary effort. You'll achieve the most sought-after state in the workplace: "Worvana." Nirvana at work!

Celebrate the Individual

No one ever left a job for feeling over appreciated. Meaningful recognition is a key element in creating engaged employees who pick up the gum wrappers. One District Manager asks each of his team members the following question: "When you do outstanding work, who do you want to know about it, both inside the company and out?" One of the team members, David, said his 2-year-old daughter. The manager waited until David's wife and daughter came to visit, got down on one knee, and told the daughter David was one of his best employees. Tears streamed down David's face. That's what it means to Celebrate the Individual: being intentional about building a level of intimacy in the relationship and taking actions that make each person who reports to us feel not only appreciated but celebrated.

Celebrate Development Invest in people to help them become better today than they were yesterday. When it comes to development, don't forget about long-tenured employees. Don't confuse experience with not having a need to develop.

Working for the Greater Good

Create the company you want to work for by building bridges with your peers. That's really at the heart of working for the greater good.

Support Is Invaluable "I am my colleague's keeper." When people work for the greater good, politics, manipulation, and self-serving motives are decreased, and everyone is free to do their jobs with less concern. You want to build a company where no one has to have your back, not because it isn't supportive but because no one's trying to stab you.

Conclusion

In a workplace that leverages the CliftonStrengths Assessment, lives Behavioral Expectations, and cultivates leaders who serve others, there are no gum wrappers on the floor. Discretionary effort is given freely. Employees don't dread Mondays. Work energizes teams, not drains them.

But remember, great vision requires great effort. Stay the course and try not to get discouraged. Sometimes, trying something new can be met with resistance. However, as your team sees the benefits of an organization transformed, that resistance will melt away.

Create the kind of legacy where people think about your leadership long after they've left, where they're inspired to make their organization gum-wrapper free. That's the best kind of leader to be—remembered for the difference you made in people's lives.



Joe Bertotto has more than three decades of experience helping leaders improve their workplace environments and increase team productivity in a way that helps people live better lives. Joe works internally as the chief culture officer at Vizo Financial Corporate Credit Union and consults externally with numerous organizations successfully using this approach. Joe was one of the first Gallup Certified-Strengths Performance Coaches, and he and his wife, Judy, are the first married couple in the world to be Gallup Certified-Strengths Coaches.

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