

## **Are your employees PASSIONATE@WORK?**

*Martin Luther King Jr. (January 15, 1929 - April 4, 1968) once said, "If a man is called to be a street-sweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, 'Here lived a great street-sweeper who did his job well.'"*

Senior organization leaders often people ask me, "How can we create passion amongst our employees at work"? I think that this question is very relevant in today's dynamic work environment as it can easily be one of the important factors that can define an organization's competitive advantage!

So, what is "passion@work"?

In my opinion, passion at work is generated by an interplay of several personal and organizational factors and it is definitely not an isolated characteristic/ personality trait. It is the "stretch" or 'discretionary" energy, involvement and commitment that employees display in their roles at the workplace.

So how do we "ignite" this passion at the workplace and let it "engulf" employees at all levels of the organization?

In my perspective, the responsibility for "igniting passion" at work rests squarely on the organization in terms of creating a facilitative work environment which brings out the best in terms of the employees' performance and potential. Therefore, though passion is an 'individual' experience, it's the senior leadership team of an organization that has to be the 'catalyst' in generating and nurturing passion at work! We are all sitting on an enormous "potential" of dormant passion in organizations. We just need to turn the right key to unlock the potential and release the huge energy of "passion@work". You can't really win a car race with your parking brakes on .... Can you?

New research by **The Ken Blanchard Companies®**, **Employee Passion: The New Rules of Engagement** has identified eight needs that employers must address if they want their employees to perform at their best. Failure to meet even one of these needs will tend to "keep the brakes on" in your organization.

**1. Meaningful Work:** People need to know that their work is worthwhile and is connected to both the organization and a larger purpose. People need to understand where they are going in relation to the vision, to buy into the culture, and to know what the company stands for.

**2. Collaboration:** People need to work in an environment that is motivating and inspiring, and where people work together to help one another succeed.

**3. Fairness:** People expect to work for an employer where pay, benefits, and workloads are fair and balanced, and in which people treat each other with respect. Employees need to perceive that leadership and the organization as a whole are treating both them and the customer fairly and justly. In fact, the research showed that the number one reason that employees leave an organization is when they perceive that justness and fairness are not present.

**4. Autonomy:** People want to have input and influence over how their tasks are performed and they need to feel that they have the ability and information necessary to make decisions about their work.

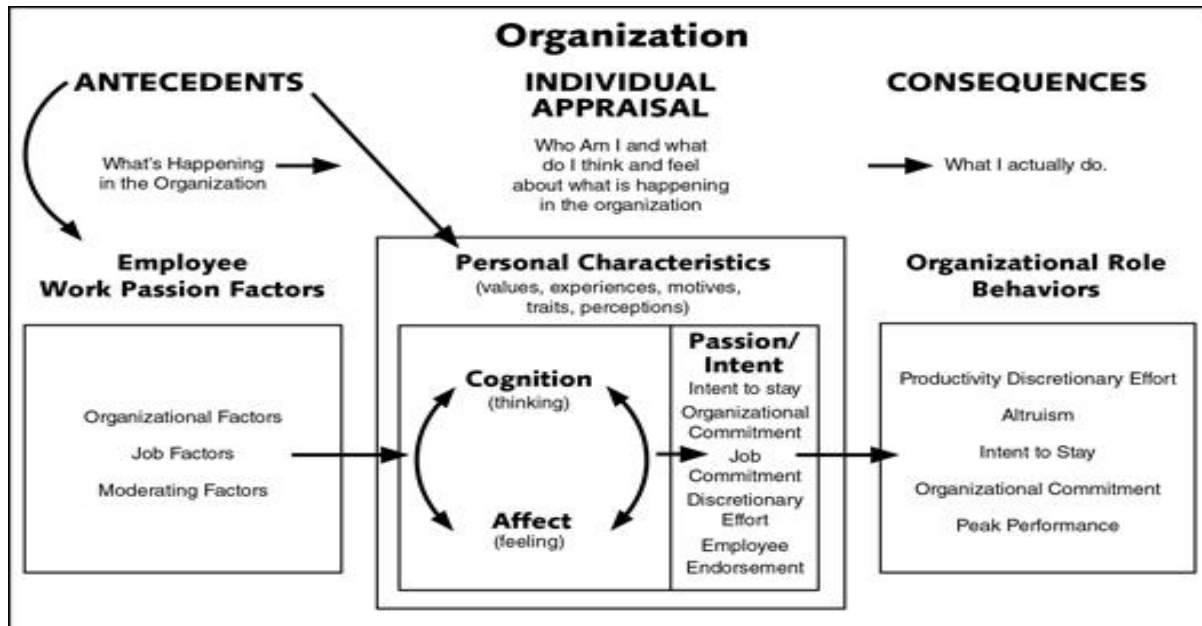
**5. Recognition:** People need to be praised and appreciated, or otherwise recognized for their achievements.

**6. Growth:** Having opportunities to learn, grow, and develop skills that lead to advancement in one's career is also a core need. In addition, individuals need to feel that they are a part of the career planning process.

**7. Connectedness with Leader:** People need leaders who share information and make an effort to build rapport with them. Having a solid relationship that is based on integrity and trust is a key component in creating an environment where people are willing to go the extra mile.

**8. Connectedness with Colleagues:** Just as a solid relationship with their leader impacts an employee's willingness to apply discretionary effort, so too does a strong relationship with colleagues and coworkers.

The Ken Blanchard Companies' **Employee Work Passion model** below shows some of this complexity.



The question, therefore before us is, how can the senior leadership team in an organization ignite passion within the workforce by shifting the focus of the employees at work from “**something that they have to do**” to “**something that you want to do**”?

*To me, it is imperative to redefine the organization culture to engage employees at the emotional level to ignite their passion at work. Motivational levers have to be revisited and the concept of leadership has to be reconsidered for “catalyst” leadership to emerge.*

Passion@work is no rocket science and is entirely in your hands. I recommend that you start the “ignition” NOW!

*(We at People Performance Practitioners are working with several organizations on the issue of passion@work. We’ll be delighted to explore ways to partner you in this regard)*