

All In and the Culture Work Process

Kristina Olsen

All In: How the Best Managers Create a Culture of Belief and Drive Big Results. Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton. New York: Free Press, 2012. 242 pp.

In *All In: How the Best Managers Create a Culture of Belief and Drive Big Results*, authors Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton partnered with Towers Watson, a global research consulting firm, to define the results of a twenty-five company, 303,000-person study. This study sought to determine how the managers of these highly profitable companies achieved far better productivity than their peers. The study revealed that success comes from cultures of belief where employees are engaged, enabled, and energized. The authors use these results to answer two questions: “Why is it that some work cultures get their people to buy in wholeheartedly and others don’t? And what can managers of any level do to build and sustain profitable vibrant cultures of their own?” (p. 14). Therefore, the purpose of this book is to help current managers see how a positive culture can increase performance as well as suggest a framework of how to build a trustworthy culture.

Cultures are able to get their people to buy in wholeheartedly if they are engaged, enabled, and energized. Gostick and Elton name this trio of elements E + E + E and emphasize that each component on its own is not enough for the culture to fully buy in. The authors define engagement “as a quality of employees who are willing to give discretionary effort, who care about the mission and values of the organization, and who

show a willingness to recommend the company's products and services" (p. 49). An example is given of how the manager, Carlos Aguilera, at Avis Budget Group checks in on new, third shift employees to show he cares illustrates how engagement is one factor in developing a culture of belief. Second, the authors state: "for employees to be enabled, an organization must provide the right tools and equipment, but also clear daily direction from leadership, flexibility in how the job gets done, and help in meeting work obstacles and challenges" (p. 52). Aguilera asks his employees for input and encourages them to keep trying when mistakes are made. Employees are enabled when there is support and they are involved with the going-ons of the company. Lastly, people are energized when they "feel a greater sense of well-being and drive at work" (p. 12). The example given in the book is the management philosophy of Chick-fil-A. The managers instill the belief of a higher purpose of work among its employees. Once an organization's employees are engaged, enabled and energized, a culture of belief can exist.

After explaining the key elements of a culture of belief, Gostick and Elton create a seven-step framework for managers of any level to apply to their organizations. The authors call this the Culture Works Process. The first step is to "define your burning platform". This is, to create a sense of urgency so "your employees believe in you and your vision and strategy" (p.87). The second step is to "create a customer focus". The authors describe this as "a culture of customer focus provides channels for employees to report upward issues they see on the front lines, rewards them when they spot something important, encourages them to find challenges invigorating, and empowers people at all levels to respond to those challenges with alacrity and creativity" (p. 104). The third step is develop agility. Gostick and Elton state: "Agility is helping a team or an entire

company evolve to meet the future in new and innovative ways” (p. 110). This is about change management. The fourth step, share everything, is about forming a character-based trust. “This is created over time by consistent behavior, adherence to principles, openness, honesty and dependability” (p. 130). The fifth and sixth steps are “partner with your talent” and “root for each other”. Managers need to make their employees feel like they are partners in the organization and by acknowledging their successes and correct behaviors, shows that they are of value to the organization. The final step is to “establish clear accountability.” The authors are quick to mention how accountability is misunderstood. It is typically seen as punitive, but “it is about assigning responsibility with realistic goals, evaluating progress, and making positive course corrections at milestones, removing obstacles, and then closing the loop by celebrating successes or honestly and openly evaluating misses” (p. 161). After Gostick and Elton describe the steps of the Culture Works Process, the authors conclude by supplying fifty-two ways to help continue the development of a culture of belief.

The Culture Works Process model and its application can work for any organization. Establishing an engaging, enabling, and energizing culture seems more pertinent to libraries because it is not profit-driven where some cultures may thrive on this type of financial motivation. Some steps, such as creating a customer focus, should be inherent in the profession, but acknowledgment and support are still an important aspect. Another step that is relevant to LIS professionals is to establish clear accountability. Librarians should see accountability as an opportunity and it is the leader’s role to establish this view.

The authors, Adrian Gostick and Chester Elton, are founders of the organization The Culture Works. This is a consulting organization that offers training, consulting, and speaking services. This book is a summary of their years of experience in researching profitable and sustainable cultures. Adrian Gostick has been featured in the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Economist*, and *Fortune* to name a few. Along with similar news sources, Chester Elton has been featured on *MSNBC*, *60 minutes*, and *NBC Today Show*. The two authors have also co-written several other best-selling, management books such as *The Carrot Principle* and *The Orange Revolution*.

Similar content to *All In: How the Best Managers Create a Culture of Belief and Drive Big Results* can be found in other titles such as *Help Them Grow or Watch Them Go: Career Conversations Employees want* by Beverly Kaye and Julie Winkle Giulioni and *Employee Engagement 2.0: How to Motivate Your Team for High Performance* by Kevin Kruse. Both of these works focus on fostering employee engagement to claim high performance results. Like Carlos Aguilera, the manager at Avis Budget Group, Kaye and Giulioni suggest regular brief conversations about career goals with fellow employees.

Overall, the style of writing is clear and understandable. Gostick and Elton use an expository writing style where many examples are given in detail that support their claims by establishing credibility in their work. However, redundancy was located throughout the book and the ideas were nothing new. Nevertheless, the proposed Cultural Works Process model is applicable to any organization, big or small, profit or nonprofit, and fits well into the library and information profession.

Bibliography

Gostick, Adrian and Chester Elton. *All In: How the Best Managers Create a Culture of Belief and Drive Big Results*. New York: Free Press, 2012. 242 pp.

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