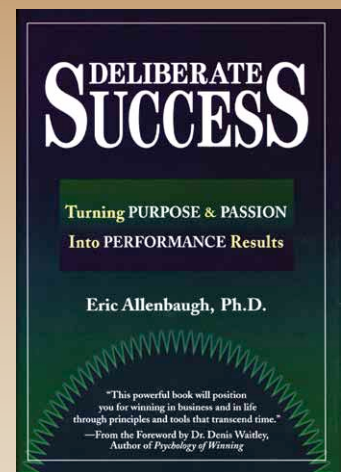# The 6 Strategies for Cultivating "Bright-Eye" Employees!©

Written by G. Eric Allenbaugh, Ph.D.

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ADAPTED FROM

DELIBERATE SUCCESS:
Turning PURPOSE and PASSION
Into PERFORMANCE Results©

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Turning PURPOSE & PASSION
Into PERFORMANCE Results

Eric Allenbaugh, Ph.D.

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Author of Psychology of Winning

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The 6 Strategies for Cultivating "Bright-Eye" Employees!©

Which of the following actual employee quotes best represent your corporate culture?

"It stopped being fun here sixteen years ago," claimed a forty-two year old manager I interviewed in a new client organization. His **glazed eyes** and numb spirit said it all.

"This place is the pits, and I can hardly wait to get out of here," stated a bright, yet disenchanted, three-year employee. Her **beady eyes** communicated a strong message of discontent.

"I just love my job and the people who work here," claimed a first line supervisor working for Southwest Airlines. Her **bright eyes** and positive spirit communicated a strong sense of engagement and commitment.

The Gallup Organization published the results of its 2007 study of US workers: 30% of employees were "engaged" in their work, 50% were "not engaged," and 30% of workers were "actively disengaged!" When 70% of employees are either "not engaged" or "actively disengaged," leaders need to pay careful attention to this corporate Wake-Up Call! Ignoring The Human Element — the "soft factors" — has a profoundly negative impact on The Bottom Line. And, it doesn't have to be that way.

> *"The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that it is too low and we reach it."*
> Michelangelo

Corporate Culture: *The Invisible Driving Force*

Corporate culture is that invisible driving force that reflects the collective values and behaviors of those associated with the organization. Culture greatly influences job fulfillment, productivity, quality, customer service, creativity, and even profitability. Shaping corporate culture, then, becomes a core strategy of enlightened leaders. Leaders do not leave formation of culture to chance – they deliberately create a compelling purpose, engage the passion of employees, and experience performance results. Those who do not shape the culture will ultimately be shaped by it.

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In over 30 years of practice as a leadership consultant, I have observed three company cultures that generally emerge in Corporate America — and you can often identify the presence of a particular culture by looking into the eyes of employees. While all three employee groups typically exist within a given company, a dominant group generally defines the overall culture. Here is what you will likely see — and experience:

The Glazed Eye Group:

About 50% of employees fall into this category – and you can see it in their glazed eyes. This disengaged group is characterized by their lack of spirit and vitality. They are quick to explain why something cannot be done and frequently offer excuses. They look to other people to "fix" the situation and seldom share creative ideas. They feel discounted, unappreciated, and insignificant. You are likely to hear such statements as *"Nobody listens to me," "It's not my job," "They don't care," "Nothing gets done around here – the same problems keep coming up over and over again."*
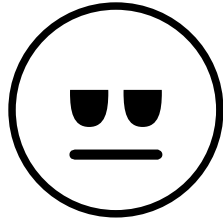
This group avoids risk taking at almost all cost, does the absolute minimum they can get by with, and tends to watch the clock very closely. They are neutral to mildly negative about the company, yet do not feel motivated to do anything to improve the situation. If they become a dominating force, this group will slowly drain the vitality out of an organization. In spite of their low productivity, they tend to leave work exhausted. Interestingly enough, individuals within this group usually started off their employment as "Bright Eyed" employees – something worth noting.

"Somebody is going to do you in.
The only question: Who will it be?
A competitor — or you?"
Tom Peters

The Beady Eye Group:

This actively disengaged group represents about 20% of the corporate workforce, yet often consumes a disproportionate amount of time, talent, and treasure to deal with their negative energy. These people work against the organization and go out of their way to seek out and find the flaws – and they do find them. They focus on problems and even resist attempts to deal with solutions. They feel angry, frustrated, and highly disconnected. Blaming, moaning, and whining – "BMW" behaviors – become their mantra. You will likely hear them say things like *"My boss is a jerk," "This place is the pits," "The pay and benefits are lousy," "This is hopeless."*

The Beady Eye Group, even though they do not like working in this environment, tend to resist efforts to improve working relationships, trust, and communications — they get caught in their own negative spiral. Many within the Beady Eye group get their power through open resistance and cynicism. Even though they may be relatively small in number, their relentless negative energy drags others down. Their high stress levels contribute to the stress of others. In some respects, they take some degree of pleasure when a leader fails or even when the organization fails. They tend to shoot themselves in the foot and admire their aim in the process. Interestingly enough,

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individuals within this group usually started off their employment as "Bright Eyed" employees — something also worth noting.

The Bright Eye Group:

This "Dream Team" represents about 30% of the employee population in Corporate America. Bright Eye employees are highly engaged and committed to the mission, vision, and values of the organization. A "can do" attitude characterizes their behavior, they go the extra mile in giving and doing their best, and they function in a spirit of partnership with other employees and with their customers. These people have a clear understanding of personal accountability and tend to look to themselves first for resources and solutions. Instead of fixing blame, they fix the problems.

Bright Eye employees feel energized, recognized, appreciated, and encouraged to be and do their best. They embrace change and look to ways in which they can reinvent themselves while continuing to provide high value. They work hard, yet seem to be energized by the quality and significance of their work. They take great pride in their accomplishments and speak well of their company. You will likely hear such statements coming from them as *"I love my job," "This is a great place to work," "This feels like home to me,"* and *"I am proud to work here."* You will see large groups of Bright Eye employees at places like Southwest Airlines, Les Schwab Tire Service, Disneyland, the Ritz Hotels, and other organizations with enlightened, aware leadership.

> *"I believe the real difference between success and failure in a corporation can very often be traced to the question of how well the organization brings out the great energies and talents of its people."*
> Thomas J. Watson, Jr.
> Former IBM Chief Executive

Creating a "Bright Eyed" Culture: The 6 Success Strategies

Consider the attitude of employees whose talents are underutilized and those who are "actively disengaged" from their work. How do you suppose they feel about themselves, about the work they produce, and about their employer? Disengaged, underutilized employees produce work that reflects these conditions. Employees don't like these kinds of working environments, and business cannot afford this ineffective use of human capital. The only beneficiaries for failing to engage your employees are your competitors!

So, how do you go about creating and sustaining a "Bright Eye" culture? It's not rocket scientist kind of work – it's sticking to the basics and doing those basics exceptionally well. In my work with peak performing organizations, they put into action the following "6 Strategies For Taking Talent To The Top:"

1. **Hire winners.** Brian Tracy once said: *"Hire in haste and repent in leisure!"* Take the time to hire well – this is often one of your most important decisions. Southwest Airlines *"hires for attitude and trains for skill,"* and their long-term results reflect this commitment. When hiring, consider the "3As" to assure long-term success: Attitude: Do they have the right *spirit* for this job? Aptitude: Do they have the right *talent*

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for this job? <u>Alignment</u>: Are they the right *fit* with our mission and values?

2. **Engage their spirit.** To motivate others: 1) Find out what turns people on about their job and do more of that; and 2) find out what turns people off about their job and do less of that! It sounds so simple, yet this powerful tool brings out their best while serving the company interests at a higher level. It's amazing what happens when you actually talk with and listen to your employees about what's important to them — and follow through with assignments that engage their spirit.

3. **Coach for success.** Coaching is an ongoing, collaborative process intended to clarify performance targets, reinforce strengths, and encourage individuals to "stretch" to even higher levels of performance. Every professional athlete has a coach, and every high performing individual likewise benefits from an encouraging coach who is tough on issues, yet tender on the person. Building ongoing coaching into the culture produces a high return on the investment while engaging people in their own success and effectiveness.

4. **Focus on deliverables.** A meaningful mission and challenging goals tend to bring out the creative best in others. People want to do a good job, they want to contribute, they want to make a difference, and they want to have pride in their work. Your job is to make sure people are aligned with and enthusiastic about a meaningful purpose — and to engage their spirit in exceeding expected results. Celebrate successes — and look for the learning when mistakes are made.

5. **Clear their path.** Like the conductor of an orchestra, your job is to "bring out their music" by encouraging their individual and synergistic best. You don't play their instruments —

you engage their spirit to release the music within. As a leader, a coach, and a facilitator, your primary job is to provide them with the resources they need, remove the barriers, make the connections, and encourage their individual and collective best. In short, create the environment for them to excel – and get out of their way!

6. **Commit to renewal.** Maintaining the status quo in a competitive environment is not a viable option. Dinosaurs tried this tactic — and it didn't work. Similarly, if your team merely stayed at their current state of development for the next several years, they might become an "endangered species." Ask yourself: *"Are we lagging behind in our field, are we just keeping up, or are we one of the progressive leaders?"* Even if your team is moving ahead, the speed they are moving must be faster than the speed global business advances – otherwise, your team will still trail behind! Since most employees want to learn and grow on the job, consider the "3Rs of Renewal: Release, Reaffirm, and Reinvent." To stay at the cutting edge: 1) What must the team <u>release</u> or let go of to provide room and resources to support growth? 2) What existing strengths and resources does the team need to <u>reaffirm</u> and intensify to support its next growth steps? 3) How might the team <u>reinvent</u> itself to assure that is remains at the cutting edge in its field?

> *"Even if you're on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there."*
> Will Rogers

Creating and sustaining a "Bright Eye" culture of excellence requires deliberate and sustained efforts by leaders to take talent to the top. Take a look

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around your own organization. Do you experience Glazed Eyes, Beady Eyes, or Bright Eyes? What are the results or consequences? How well are you doing in implementing the "6 Strategies for Taking Talent To The Top?" You know what you need to do — so make the decision and take action. As you act with this positive intent, you will notice something significant in your own mirror — Bright Eyes!

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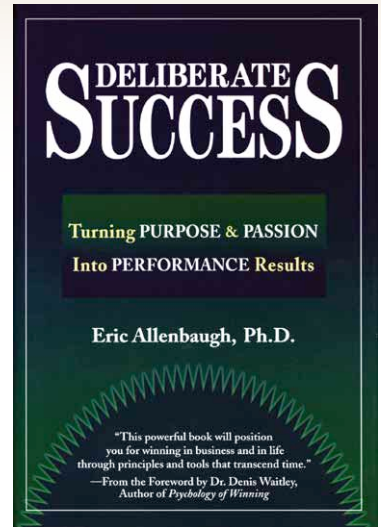
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