

# Building Strong Workplaces

*By Barry Austin*

1. What determines how long a talented staff person stays with YWAM and
2. What determines how productive he or she is while in YWAM?
3. What makes a [YWAM team](#) or community a great group to work with?
4. What do the most talented staff need from their work place?
5. How should YWAM leaders find, focus, and keep talented staff?

The answers to these questions can be found in a book with some challenging ideas produced by a couple of leaders of The Gallup Organisation: "First, Break all the Rules". As we'd expect from Gallup, their ideas are based on a huge amount of research. [ISBN 978-0684852867](#)

Perhaps their most important finding for missions like YWAM is that... "a talented person may join an organisation because of its [charismatic leaders](#), and its world class training programmes, but how long that staff person stays and how productive he is while he is there is determined by his relationship with his immediate supervisor."

## Leaders and Managers

Their definition of the difference between [leaders and managers](#) is an important one... "The most important difference between a great manager and a great leader is one of focus. Great managers look inward. They look inside the company, into each individual, into the differences in style, goals, needs, and motivation of each person. These subtle differences guide them toward the right way to release each person's unique talents into performance. They define the right outcomes for this performance and let each person get there by using their unique talents."

Great leaders, by contrast, look outward. They must be visionaries, strategic thinkers, and activators.

The Gallup research shows that although visionary leaders are vital to an organisation for direction and growth, the role of the manager is the most important for finding, focusing, and keeping talented staff.

I would suggest that in YWAM we would have very few people who fulfil the role defined by Gallup as the manager. We tend to lump everyone who holds any responsibility under the title of 'leader' and expect them to be visionaries, strategic thinkers, and activators. But if we want to attract, focus, and keep the most talented staff we need to make some changes.

For our purposes because the term 'manager' has had such bad press [within YWAM](#) we probably need to use a different one; perhaps 'developmental leader' or 'people manager' would be better.

Gallup research shows that having a strong workplace led by effective managers produces positive answers to the questions we started with. They have identified 12 questions that measure the strength of a workplace. These questions measure the core elements needed to attract, focus,

and keep the most talented staff. We need 'developmental leaders' or 'people managers' who can create a workplace that will produce a positive response to these questions.

### **Questions to employees**

1. Do I know what is expected of me?
2. Do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
3. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
4. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
5. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
6. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last 6 months, has someone talked with me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

Employees from over 2,500 business units were asked to respond to each of the 12 questions on a scale of 1 to 5.

### **Results:**

Two important results were found:

1. Those employees who responded most positively to the 12 questions also worked in business units with higher levels of productivity, profit, retention, and customer satisfaction.
2. The analysis revealed that employees rated the questions differently depending on the business unit they worked for rather than which company. This meant that, for the most part, these 12 opinions were being formed by the employees' immediate manager rather than by the policies or procedures of the overall company. They discovered that the manager -- not pay, benefits, perks, or a charismatic corporate leader -- was the critical player in building a strong workplace. The manager was the key!

But let's look again at their definition of a manager...

"Great managers look inward. They look inside the company, into each individual, into the differences in style, goals, needs, and motivation of each person. These subtle differences guide them toward the right way to YWAM each person's unique talents into performance. They define the right outcomes for this performance and let each person get there by using their unique talents."

Who do you have on your team, office or base that functions in this role?

I suggest that if we included in the job description of every base leader, school leader and department head in YWAM the values implied in the twelve questions we would be much more effective in producing long-term committed people who would be fruitful in world missions.

I hope I've stirred your interest sufficiently to read the book. [ISBN 978-0684852867](https://www.amazon.com/dp/9780684852867)

I also put to you a challenge! Take the risk and give the survey below to your staff. Then evaluate the results using the guidelines following.

## **Staff Survey**

This survey has been produced to help us build a workplace that is more effective for the Kingdom of God.

Please respond to each of the 12 statements on a scale of 1 to 5: "1" = strongly disagree, "5" = strongly agree. Put a circle around the appropriate number.

1. In my place of work, I know what is expected of me?

1 2 3 4 5

2. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?

1 2 3 4 5

3. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for good work?

1 2 3 4 5

4. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person?

1 2 3 4 5

5. There is someone at work who encourages my development?

1 2 3 4 5

6. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?

1 2 3 4 5

7. At work, my opinions seem to count?

1 2 3 4 5

8. The mission of my company makes me feel my job is important?

1 2 3 4 5

9. My co-workers are committed to doing quality work?

1 2 3 4 5

10. I have a best friend at work?

1 2 3 4 5

11. In the last 6 months, someone has talked with me about my progress?

1 2 3 4 5

12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

1 2 3 4 5

Name: .....

Department: .....

### Evaluating the Survey:

1. Collect the papers and total the numbers circled by each person.
2. Total the scores of people in the same department or workplace. This would include school leaders and their staff. Calculate the average score.
3. If the average score is **48 - 60** in any department or workplace you have an excellent department head or supervisor. As a result there will be good morale amongst the team, and your staff are focused, productive and probably committed long-term.
4. If the average score is **below 36** in any department or workplace you have a serious problem. The problem is either with the department head or supervisor, or with the job description by which he or she was selected. Their job description needs to be adapted to include the more people-oriented responsibilities outlined above for "great managers".
  - If the job description already has these responsibilities, then obviously they are not exercising them, and need serious mentoring by senior leaders. Alternatively, they need to be "promoted" to other responsibilities that fit their gifts -- but not supervising people.
  - The staff in this department will probably have low morale and be producing far below their potential. This department will almost certainly lack long-term committed staff.
  - The senior leaders would also benefit from reading the book "First, Break all the Rules". They probably need to develop some skills for leading people!
5. If the average score is **37 - 47** you get a pass, but only just! Your base, team or school would benefit by your asking each leader or supervisor to read the book "First, Break all the Rules". You could then mentor them by discussing each chapter with them and consider how they could apply the principles to their work situation.

It would be helpful to look at the individual papers of each person in this department and pinpoint the questions that scored lowest. Use this as a starting point for mentoring the department head or leader. The book identifies the issues related to each question.

Together with your department head / leader develop a [job description](#) based on the twelve questions.