

***Contented Cows Still Give Better Milk:
The Pain Truth about Employee Engagement and Your Bottom Line***
Bill Catlette and Richard Hadden

SYNOPSIS

The original *Contented Cows Give Better Milk*, published in 1998, was one of the first books to establish clear, measurable linkages between organizations' people practices and their financial performance. The updated and revised version acknowledges that while the world has changed significantly since the book's first edition, the notion that contented employees give better performance remains as true as ever.

Contented Cows Still Give Better Milk is quick to implore readers not to confuse employee "contentment" with "complacency," defining the former similarly to employee engagement, with people committed to the company and willing to provide discretionary effort. As Catlette and Hadden write, "The fact that a cow is contented in no way interferes with its inclination or ability to 'jump over the moon.'"

The book identifies and shares detailed examples from a group of "Contented Cow Companies"—those whose leadership and practices put people first, resulting in superior business performance. While these companies are unique in many ways, they all share important commonalities. The authors found that each does an exceptional job of:

- Getting (and keeping) their people solidly lined up behind the organization's core purpose and objectives. In short, they're **Committed**.
- Letting people know through a myriad of ways, some large (but mostly small), that they're important. They're more than just a number or body; they are **Cared about**.
- Removing the obstacles from the path of their workforce (through personal as well as systemic means). In short, they **Enable** their people to do their very best work.

Contented Cows explores each of these three characteristics of contented employees—"Committed," "Cared about" and "Enabled"—outlining how to recognize it, how to replicate it through employee engagement and operational practices, and what the employee's responsibility is in the process.

Like the earlier edition, this book provides many case studies to bring clarity and dimension to the ideas that govern each chapter. The authors highlight successes from a broad range of organizations (both within and outside their designated "Contented Cow Companies" list). *Contented Cows Still Give More Milk* is indeed still relevant, making a strong, research-backed case that "organizations that treat people right also make more money."

Review by Keith Cucuzza, Bridge Consulting

SAMPLE LEARNINGS

According to the book, leaders of Contented Cow companies understand that although their people have individual preferences, there is a common list of things they want (and deserve). These are things that are necessary to for employees to fully engage with the enterprise:

- **Meaningful Work:** To be proud of their work, with suitable challenges and the freedom to pursue them.
- **High Standards:** To be associated with a "winner." We all tend to moan about high standards, but deep down, we all realize that they're necessary to winning.
- **A Clear Sense of Purpose and Direction:** Timely, relevant, and meaningful (i.e., truthful) information. Where the organization is going, why, and how the individual's role fits in.
- **Balanced "Worth-its":** Internal systems that support rather than impede efforts and give the freedom to pursue some things that are important to the individual.
- **A Level Playing Field:** Reciprocal caring, coupled with some sense of justice and an assurance of fair treatment.
- **To Be and Feel Competent:** Sufficient opportunities to build, demonstrate and be recognized for delivering good work.