

HOW TO RE-ENGAGE THE DISENGAGED

A flurry of national surveys lately said a majority of employees are not engaged in their jobs.

Just about one-fourth of the work force is estimated to be excited, productive and aligned with their organization's mission. The rest are said to be passively or actively disengaged.

At last week's Philanthropy Midwest Conference, an annual continuing education meeting for the Kansas City area's non-profit sector, performance consultant Patrick Geschwind addressed the problem of the disengaged.

DIANE STAFFORD



Management's challenge, he said, is to convert the passively disengaged to engaged and to defuse the "viscerally disengaged" before the contagion spreads.

Whatever the manifestation, Geschwind said, the problem will not go away by ignoring it.

Often, he said, consultants hired to help re-energize workers or do individual counseling find that the problem was a worker who should have been fired long before.

"Don't be afraid of a lawsuit from a properly fired employee," Geschwind said, "The health of the organization comes first."

Proper firing requires that managers be close enough to their workers to spot the problems, document unremedied ones, and go through correct channels for dismissals.

"Only one-on-one interaction with employees will sway or

convert the disengaged. Platitudes and banners won't do it. Only active listening and communication will," Geschwind said.

"You must confront the problem, talk about it, and reach a compromise or plan of action."

"Many of the disengaged actually think they're doing you a favor by working for you. Make sure they have clear expectations, an accurate appraisal, and are held accountable."

To reach Diane Stafford, call 816-234-4359 or send e-mail to stafford@kcstar.com. Read her recent columns at workspacekc.typepad.com.