

**ESSAY #1**  
**None of Us Is As Smart As All of Us**  
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**FINAL**  
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If you've ever started or owned your own business, you know that great feeling of pride you have for your organization and its people and customers. Most entrepreneurs work long, hard hours to ensure that the business they have built becomes successful—in the process creating growing companies that inject economic prosperity into their communities. They are fully connected to their business, committed to its success, and dedicated to its employees, its customers, and other stakeholders (this sentence repeats the point made in the first sentence.). These same businesspeople are dumbfounded, however, when they eventually come to the realization that some number (often the majority) of their employees don't share this same feeling of connectedness, commitment, and dedication. In short, their employees aren't as engaged in their work as they are.

Of course, perhaps these entrepreneurs and owners shouldn't be so surprised by this outcome. Why not? Because they haven't given their employees two critical motivations that—when added together—can unleash the high levels of engagement that they themselves feel.

During the course of my many years as chairman and CEO of Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC), we discovered that there were two things we could do to encourage the full participation of our employees. First, we offered them the opportunity to become owners of the company through a variety of stock purchase programs. Second, we encouraged our employees to participate fully in making decisions

that would impact the company's future. In short, we empowered them to make a difference. It is on this point that I would like to focus.

While SAIC had a formal organizational structure—with the usual hierarchy of board of directors, executives, managers, supervisors, and workers—this formal structure was balanced with widespread decision making at all levels of the organization. We never believed that only managers had the best ideas and solutions, and that only managers were uniquely qualified to make decisions that impacted the company and its customers. Encouragement of innovation and creativity originated at all levels of the organization, and ideas were more often pushed from the bottom of the organization to the top, rather than from the top to the bottom. As a result, SAIC evolved into a diversified and decentralized company where employees believed their opinion was important. And they were right—their opinions *were* important.

Numerous studies show that companies that empower their employees by allowing them to participate in the decision-making process can expect a variety of benefits. Along with a heightened sense of responsibility, employees report that they are more committed and more motivated—leading to a direct and positive impact on their performance and on the performance of their companies. Furthermore, the greater the degree of influence granted to employees, the greater the results. More influence and more participation results in increased performance.

It's no accident that a particular poster—given to me by my wife, Betty—hung over my desk throughout my tenure at the helm of SAIC. This poster read, “None of us is as smart as all of us.” For me, those words ring just as true today as they did when I founded the company more than three decades ago. For those businesspeople brave

enough to embrace this philosophy of employee participation in decision making, the results will be immediate, and lasting.

And for those businesspeople willing to take one more step, combining participation in decision making with employee ownership, the impact will be a revelation. In their report entitled *Employee Ownership and Corporate Performance*, business researchers Michael Quarrey and Corey Rosen concluded, “When employee ownership is combined with extensive opportunities for employees to participate in decisions affecting their jobs, there is a substantial and positive impact on performance.” It worked for SAIC, and it has worked for companies as diverse as furniture manufacturer Herman Miller, Inc., supermarket chain Publix Super Markets, package delivery company United Parcel Service (UPS), and engineering and construction contractor CH2M HILL. It can work for your business, too.

Dr. J. Robert Beyster is the retired Chairman and CEO of SAIC. His new book is entitled *The SAIC Solution: How We Built An \$8 Billion Employee-Owned Technology Company*, published by John Wiley & Sons.