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The
INVISIBLE
EMPLOYEE

Using Carrots to See the Hidden Potential in Everyone

Adrian Gostick
and Chester Elton

International Bestselling Authors of
The Carrot Principle



“There is magic in this book.”

—Stephen C. Lundin, bestselling author of *Fish!*

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*The Invisible Employee***

“A gem of a book . . . finding that workers who are recognized are more productive, have fewer on-the-job accidents, and translate their satisfaction into customer satisfaction.”

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—Scott Northcutt,
Global Executive Vice President, DHL Express

The
INVISIBLE
EMPLOYEE

**Other Books by
Adrian Gostick
and Chester Elton**

The Carrot Principle
A Carrot a Day
The 24-Carrot Manager

Books by Adrian Gostick

The Levity Effect
The Integrity Advantage

The
INVISIBLE
EMPLOYEE

**Using Carrots to See the Hidden
Potential in Everyone**

Second Edition

Adrian Gostick
and Chester Elton



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INTRODUCTION

You can imagine how happy we were when *The Invisible Employee: Realizing the Hidden Potential in Everyone* was first published in 2006 and became a *New York Times* bestseller. We knew we had an important message to share about the potential of underappreciated employees. We were eager to show organizations how to transform themselves by engaging these assets into a juggernaut of accomplishment. We were thrilled that the book has been such a success. We continue to be pleased that several years later it was still being read.

Even more gratifying have been the conversations we've had with tens of thousands of managers around the globe. *The Invisible Employee* is helping them to discover the treasures hiding in their own offices: their employees. Showing appreciation is a simple concept and a powerful one. It is easy to implement and gets bottom-line results fast. That is what has made the book so successful.

But times, they are a-changin'. As we write this, the global economy is in such a precarious

state that any reasonable person has to wonder whether it will all implode. Layoffs, bankruptcies, bail-outs, foreclosures and going-out-of-business signs have become the new landscape of business.

At your office, we can imagine the talk around the water cooler. The former hangout for sports pools, politics, and office gossip has now become a meeting place for misery: “Have you heard who’s getting the axe next?”

Not a lot of work is getting done, is it?

The result is a team of employees running around like chickens with their heads cut off. Every one of them thinks that he could very well be next. Panic breeds panic. Everyone wonders, *How long will the craziness last?* The Guinness World Record for a headless chicken’s survival—in case you’re wondering—is 18 months, roughly the same length as an average economic recession.

Those in your office might not think they have anyone to rescue them, however. They see management as the enemy. So what is their strategy, these headless chickens? They hide and hope to wait it out, doing just enough to get by. They become invisible.

Funny thing, though, this psychological frenzy can go on and on, even after the crisis is over. The behavior of playing it safe to avoid being singled out becomes ingrained. Even the people with the most potential, those who would normally become leaders of a team, stop taking risks. They don’t want to fail. They imagine that

the consequences of failure are too great in this economy.

If ever there was a time for a manager to discover and nurture his employees, to encourage innovation, to keep the best and brightest, it's now. In fact, given the urgency of current events, it's now or never.

Lately, the media has repeatedly compared the global crisis of 2009 to the catastrophe of 1929, and it has made us think of our parents who grew up in the wake of the Great Depression. How did they do it? And even after the Depression was over, how did it affect the way people work? Their values?

One of my (Adrian's) favorite photographs of my parents was taken in the 1950s. In the photo, my dad is on a ramshackle Norton 500 motorbike, and my mother is seated next to him in a sidecar. On her lap is their border collie, Puccini. On the pillion behind my father is strapped a bulky canvas tent and a suitcase.



They were taking a vacation—before the kids arrived—camping on the English coast. A quick escape from my dad's job at Rolls-Royce. Riding in their first, rather modest "car."

When I saw the photo a few years ago, I smiled and teased my dad, "They didn't pay you very well at Rolls, did they?"

He chuckled and told me the story of joining Rolls-Royce in Derby, England, as a very young draftsman of jet airplane components. Now, he agreed that the company never did pay exorbitant wages. In fact, twenty-five years later, he would finally leave England for Canada and triple his salary. And while he did receive numerous promotions along the way, I'm also afraid Rolls couldn't offer Gordon Gostick growth into senior leadership—since there was a bottleneck of older talent ahead of him. Still, he did stay there more than two decades. Why?

My dad explained, “You know, I enjoyed every day. You weren't just a number going to work at Royce's. Managers actually talked to you and listened to what you had to say. When we identified a problem coming up in taking an engine concept to manufacturing, those above you in your department—and in other departments—would accept the knowledge you'd built up in your certain area, and they'd modify the design to improve the final engine. Everybody had their input.”

When asked what happened when an improvement idea came from him, he said simply, “My name was on the drawing.”

What a simple formula. When he spoke, someone listened. When he did something remarkable that furthered the company's progress, his name was on the drawing that went up to management. And that meant that, every day, he enjoyed going into work, which is a big deal.

Is it a big deal for you? For your employees?

Here's a question for you: Does anybody actually enjoy going to work today?

Wouldn't it be great if your company were filled with employees like Gordon Gostick—people who were excited to go in to work? Not full of employees who mumble a sad prayer on the train, “Dear Lord, please strike me down before I get there,” “Please don't let me get a pink slip today,” or worse yet, “Please bless that my boss died over the weekend in a freak gardening accident.”

In good economic times as well as bad, the formula for business management success is constant: innovate, improve, and compete. The best companies take advantage of every opportunity, and that includes risks and rewards. They keep their best employees, they reward them and motivate them. They take the long view. In difficult times, especially, productivity is key. Managers often have to do more with less. But how?

Unfortunately, most of us work for organizations like those cited in a study published by the *New York Times*, where:

- 25 percent of employees reported being driven to tears in the workplace.
- 50 percent call their place of work a place of verbal abuse and yelling.
- 30 percent are regularly given unrealistic deadlines.
- 52 percent must work 12-hour days to get the work done.

The sad thing is most leaders of people have no idea about the unhealthy state of their workplaces. They're headless chickens, too. They have a pretty clear idea of what their bosses want. They know quite a bit about their customers and their needs. They can recite by heart their product lists. But what do they really know about the needs of the people who actually get the work done for them? Hmmm . . . not so much.

And why is that important? Because, quite simply, employees work harder for people who care about them as individuals—don't you? Think about it for a moment. Whom do *you* work harder to please: the boss who is aloof and inattentive, focused on furthering his career, or the leader who is actively interested in your work achievements and asks about your kids and your weekend fishing passion? The old adage "I don't care if they like me as long as they respect me," is not only wrong; it's dangerous in the modern workplace. Honestly, would you ever say, "Everyone hates her guts, but you've got to respect her leadership?"

This leadership attitude is causing more than a few problems with our workforce. One problem is called presenteeism. Now absenteeism is easy to spot, but presenteeism describes workers who show up every day, but who really aren't there. They are present, but are limited by physical or mental issues, obsessed with problems at home, or, most often, overly concerned with on-the-job worries. Too many of these folks are burned

out, stressed, underutilized, or simply ignored by their leaders. The *Harvard Business Review* estimates presenteeism costs American businesses \$150 billion annually in direct and indirect costs. And, even though most studies report that absenteeism accounts for an average of 4 lost days of productivity per employee annually, some studies report that presenteeism accounts for anywhere between 16 and 31 days of lost productivity per employee annually. A full month lost?

Here's more sobering news about our managerial effectiveness. According to several recent studies, as many as 30 percent of the average workforce is "actively disengaged." That means up to 3 out of 10 people in your workplace are not only uncaring about their jobs, the quality of their work, or giving you their best ideas and energy, but are actively recruiting others in their dissent.

And the word on the street is that it's not going to get better any time soon. According to one survey, 90 percent of workers say they want their leaders to notice their efforts and improve their recognition and rewards before they will feel committed to their organizations.

In short, we could write a book about the epidemic of Invisible Employees and the chaos they leave in their wake. And, actually we did.

We began this book a few years ago as part of our "Carrot" series of business books. Many of those who read the books asked us to speak in their organizations, and we found ourselves