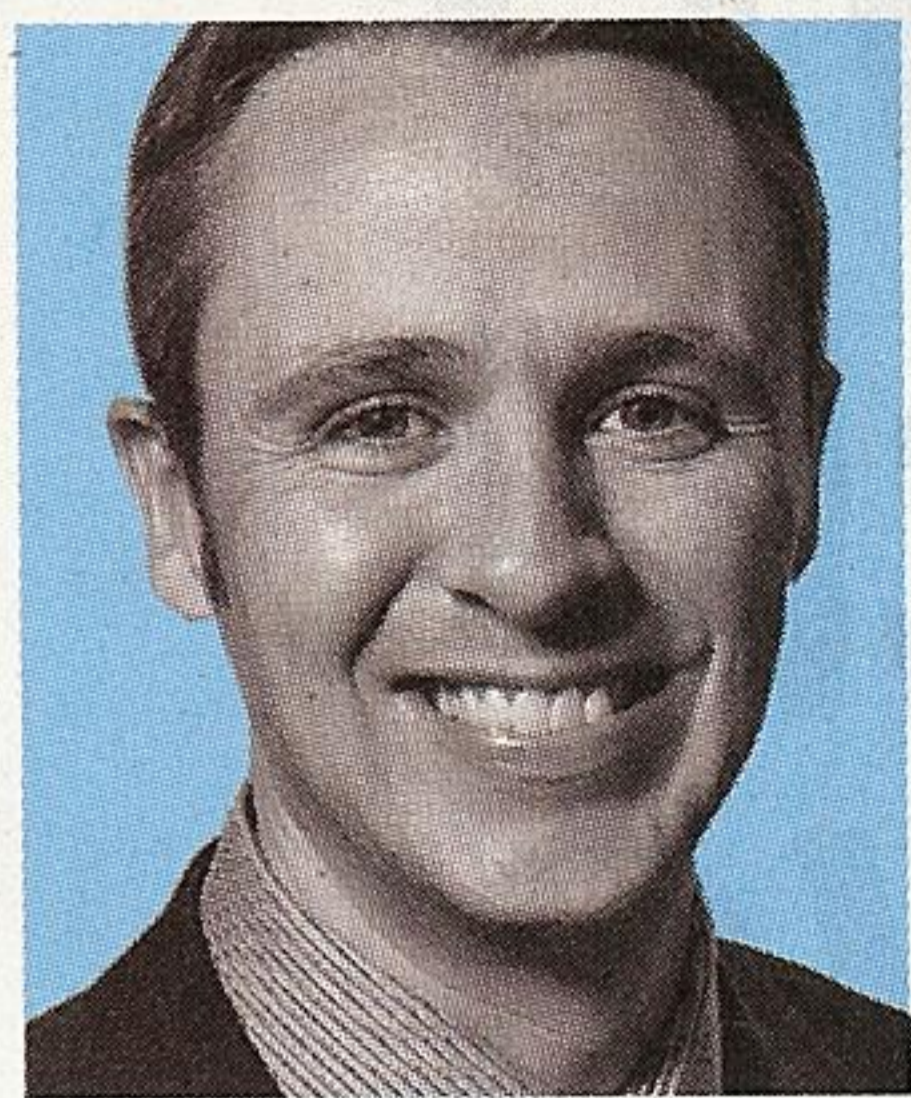


Share the insomnia



If you feel your employees don't care enough about the success of your business and the problems within it, then maybe you haven't given them a reason to

BRAD HAMS SAYS HE'S "ON A MISSION to eradicate 'employee entitlement.'" The Colorado-based consultant and author has seen its disturbing effects in thousands of businesses across North America. Afflicting millions of workers, this debilitating disease prompts people to expect praise and a paycheque just for showing up; they greet any pressure to improve or innovate with disinterest, if not disdain. Those addled with employee entitlement are unhappy underperformers who often infect those around them and always drag down the profits of the businesses they work for.

Chances are you've seen entitlement thinking among your employees; certainly, you've suspected it within companies you've engaged as a customer.

Hams believes he has the cure, which is encouraging news for all those entrepreneurs out there who wish their employees would simply give a damn. But, too often, it's the employer who allows entitlement thinking to incubate.

Hams developed his remedy in the early '90s at the helm of the struggling Mexican branch of Mrs. Fields Cookies, which he'd been hired to turn around. He noticed that Mexican workers were highly motivated and entrepreneurial—traits required to survive in a country where 90% of people are poor. But he also noticed that management tended to be hypercentralized; all meaningful decisions were made by a tiny group of bosses who never shared an iota of information with employees. Front-line Mrs. Fields workers—whose hourly wage was less than the retail price of one cookie—weren't helping to fix the business because they'd never been told it was broken.

With this, says Hams, a light went on. The result was a management system called Ownership Thinking, which Hams applied successfully at Mrs. Fields and now teaches through his company and book of the same name.

Hams outlined "OT" to a group of entrepreneurs at the recent PROFIT Growth Summit in Toronto. Its foundation principle is this: achievement breeds happiness. Put those three words in big letters on your office wall, because they should be every manager's touchstone.

Think about it: who goes home from work at night thinking, "I'm glad I sucked at my job today?" Rather, people love to feel they've achieved something, and achievement is addictive. Tie that addiction to activities that drive your company's financial performance, and suddenly you'll employ an army jonesing for chances to boost the bottom line.

OT employs broad-based profit-sharing and "rapid improvement plans" that focus employee activity. Hams' system might not be right for your company, but the underlying point is simply to *have* a system. A business owner can complain all he wants about disengaged employees who put in the minimum of effort, but he's the one who'll suffer most in the end. Give staff an incentive to care about the same things that keep you awake at night—from defect rates to days sales outstanding—and you'll both be better off. As Hams puts it: "You want to share the insomnia."

(Want a free copy of *Ownership Thinking*? Be one of the first five readers to email me your best tip for making employees care, and I'll send you one.)

Ian Portsmouth
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I invite your feedback on anything you see in PROFIT. Please send your comments to me at Ian.Portsmouth@PROFIT.rogers.com.

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