

CPA Practice Advisor | Why CPAs May No Longer Feel Energized at Work and What to Do About it

BY TABITHA SCOTT, CEO, COLE SCOTT GROUP ON OCT 26, 2018



As 2018 draws to an end, the top concern for the accounting and financial services sector is securing and retaining talent. It is the most widely reported business challenge according to a recent [study](#) about CPA firms' branding and reputation. Leading companies in the Information Age is like driving 100 miles per hour. Impacts on the financial sector like AI, automation, and e-currencies are moving at an accelerated pace that can leave employees exhausted.

What if you could determine the types of energy needed most by CPAs and those in the financial sector? New cybernetic based tools, like the [AEM-Cube](#), can provide a snapshot of untapped energy potential within firms. When employees are able to align personal strengths with firm strategy, they are 15% less likely to leave their jobs. The engine that drives engagement can be explained with four types of energy: innovation, optimization, social and elemental.

Every employee has a natural predisposition towards either exploration (innovation) or optimization (efficiency). They also prefer to interact socially (with people) or elementally (with things or systems). Employers need energy in the right place to maximize their current strategy, and employees want to be in roles where they deploy their natural preferences most powerfully. When strategy and strengths are aligned, talent retention improves, and

potential is actualized.

Innovation Energy results from employees who prefer frequent change and exploration. They are great at creating new ideas and adapt easily to the unknown. Activating this potential comes by providing job opportunities that allow risk taking and are in the early stages of the business growth cycle, such as the inception and startup of something new.

Optimization Energy comes from people who prefer structure and stability. These employees enjoy standardizing processes, expanding existing ideas, and scaling up the business. *The vast majority of CPAs will be motivated by this type of energy!* Amplifying this type of energy potential is done by positioning these employees in an area where they can refine or improve existing products or services. Their skills are maximized in the later stages of the growth cycle, like maturity and decline.

Social Energy happens when individuals are energized by working with others. They naturally develop relationships and work in teams. Tapping into this potential can be done by allowing work in teams, internal and external networking, and in-person training.

Elemental Energy is unleashed when employees prefer interacting with things, systems or content. They work great with research and hands-on activities with products or designs. This energy is powered up by providing the opportunity to work with technologies, data, systems or ideas. Consider allowing training on-line and work from home options.

Here are a few ideas to attract and retain top talent in the financial services sector:

1. **Reduce risk for new employees.** Most CPAs, engineers, and attorneys are energized by “optimization”. That means they prefer proven, robust processes, and valid reasons for change. Help new employees understand that although AI and other technologies may be

changing the face of the industry, let them know your firm will work with them to tackle those changes together.

- 2. Understand what energizes your current employees.** Traditional psychometric instruments focus on engaging employees through improving communications and mutual understanding (Myers-Briggs, StrengthsFinder, DISC, Predictive Index etc.) In recent history, psychometric models expanded to incorporate more modern ethological and cybernetic considerations. These more complex models adapt as technology improves and society evolves. That means that with new tools like the [AEM-Cube](#), leaders may easily identify “heat maps” of what naturally motivates energy individuals, teams, and entire organizations. Identifying preferences, and igniting their potential, leads to engaging employees most powerfully and ultimately, increases talent attraction and retention.
- 3. Provide opportunities to “recharge”.** Encouraging employees to take a few minutes of quiet time during stressful periods can have a significant impact. For example, research shows our positive beliefs alone can recreate the [effects of drugs](#), reduce pain, improve relationships, and boost overall well-being. It also shows that regular spiritual practices, like meditation, can reduce stress and improve health.

Boosting the energy levels in the financial sector isn't a mystery, it's just a matter of finding and deploying the right motivation. Once any organization understands what energizes its employees, it can tap into their potential to achieve success.

=====