What We Can Learn About Employee Engagement From Indonesia

I just returned from a trip to Bali and Lombok, Indonesia with an ankle broken in three places. The good news is that it's a good story: I did it hiking down the volcano Rinjani.

The other good news is that I actually made it to the top after a trek up the worst trail I've ever been on in my Colorado native life! Seven miles straight up (they don't seem to know about switchbacks) over roots that stick up 6-12 inches in a trail tangle and then a summit to the crater and lake that's a crawl-on-your-hands-and-knees mess of sand and scree.

After my fall, it took us 11 hours to descend, with me hobbling on sticks. As darkness fell, our guides insisted that they carry me the rest of the way. I had argued with them about
this for hours, insisting that they couldn't do it and not wanting to put them through lugging me down, even though they had all carried 50-60 pounds of our gear, food and water up the mountain the day before.

With a big smile, the smallest guy slung me over his back as if I were a two-year old and started running down the mountain, in flip flops, in the dark! I’m sure they think all the tourists who do this trek are nothing but wimps. Throughout the two-day adventure, the guides and porters could not have been more gracious, cheerful or helpful. (Although they all seemed to chatter on their cell phones constantly. I’m sure they were expressing their disdain for our lack of athletic ability to their wives, girlfriends or mothers.)

We experienced the same kind of graciousness everywhere we went in Indonesia. People fell all over us providing service with a smile and rarely did I see a boss or a manager telling them what to do. They all seemed to have a mantra of doing whatever it took to help us navigate our plane rides, airports, guest houses, trails and underwater adventures.

**How do you create the kind of culture where someone goes to any length - even slinging a hapless tourist over their back - in order to get the job done?**

It starts with finding the right people for each job, then inculcating living values - not just words that someone writes on a flip chart -- into every level of the organization, and finally, making sure that your leaders walk the talk.

If you're up for the journey, we can help you create great cultures through our workshops, consulting and books.

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