

**THE NEW  
TALENT  
PLAYBOOK**  
*Podcast*

**Action Kit**

**What Gallup's  
Workplace Report  
Means for Business  
Owners Right Now**

Featuring Rob Levin

**Episode 8 - Season 5**

By Rob Levin, Creator of [Thenewtalentplaybookpodcast.com](https://thenewtalentplaybookpodcast.com)

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You just heard Rob Levin break down Gallup's 2026 State of the Global Workplace report and explain why the trends should matter to every small and mid-size business owner. Employee engagement is declining, managers are burning out, and companies are investing heavily in AI but failing to see results. The good news? Rob reveals that these are largely large-company problems—and with the right strategies, smaller businesses can not only avoid these pitfalls but gain a competitive advantage. This playbook will help you apply Rob's key strategies to strengthen your culture, support your managers, and leverage AI to compete smarter, not harder.

## 1. Diagnose Your Engagement Health

Rob emphasizes that while only 31% of US workers are engaged (20% globally), small businesses can't afford this level of disengagement because "every seat counts." The first step is understanding where you stand.

### Your Engagement Audit:

Rate your company on each engagement driver below (1 = Poor, 5 = Excellent):

Engagement Driver	Score (1-5)
Employees know what's expected of them	
Employees feel their opinions count	
Employees have opportunities to learn and grow	
Someone at work cares about employees as people	
Employees feel recognized for good work	

What is your lowest-scoring area? What's one action you can take this week to improve it?

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## 2. Create Your AI Adoption Roadmap

Rob warns: "Companies that are not leveraging AI and automation in the next few years are gonna have trouble competing." But the Gallup report shows most companies are spending big on AI without seeing results. Rob's advice? Stop obsessing over which AI tool to use and start with a human-intensive process that needs help.

### Your AI Implementation Plan:

Use this framework to get started with AI the right way:

#### Step 1: Identify Your Target Process

Which process in your company is most human-intensive and repetitive?

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#### Step 2: Pick Your AI Champions

List 2-3 employees who are already curious about AI and eager to learn:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### Step 3: Commit to Experimentation

What's one small AI experiment you can run in the next 30 days?

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#### Step 4: Set Boundaries

What data should NOT be shared with AI tools? (e.g., PII, confidential client info)

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**Rob's Warning:** "Don't obsess over which LLM to use. It's really not about the LLMs—it's about the interfaces and how you integrate AI into your workflows."

### 3. Support Your Managers (Before They Burn Out)

Gallup's report reveals a "manager crisis"—managers are stressed, angry, and burned out. Rob points out that when employee engagement is low, managers carry the burden. They're covering for underperformers, managing A-players who are frustrated, and trying to execute unclear directives. It's a recipe for exhaustion.

#### Manager Stress Assessment:

Answer honestly: Which of these manager stressors exist in your company? (Check all that apply)

- Managers are spending significant time covering for poor performers
- Top performers are being asked to pick up slack from C-players
- Leadership directives are unclear or unrealistic
- Managers don't have a clear path for dealing with underperformers
- Managers lack the authority to make necessary decisions
- We don't have a culture of replacing poor performers quickly

What's your biggest manager stressor? How can you address it this month?

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**Rob's Two-Part Solution:** (1) Hire better people, and (2) Build a culture of replacing poor performers quickly.

*"If only one out of every three people on your team were engaged in your business, in a smaller mid-size business, you'd probably be out of business, because every seat counts in a smaller, mid-size business."*

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