

Understanding people is key

KEN Wright is the type of person you would want at the other end of an emergency line.

His voice is calm and even and his ear welcoming. He speaks with an assuredness that comes from a life of listening closely to what people have to say and then separating the wheat from the chaff.

The former bank executive turned award-winning author, business consultant and executive coach had just got off a plane in Melbourne when he

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Ken Wright

received the call for this interview.

He had travelled from Buderim, where he recently settled with his wife, internationally renowned motivational speaker Amanda Gore, to watch his beloved Geelong play St Kilda in the AFL grand final.

The author of *The People Pill*, which won gold at the 2008 USA Business Book Awards and is expected to be released in Australia soon, lived in Geelong for about half his life.



Like a good footy coach, he now spends a large part of his life instructing managers on how to get the best out of themselves and, in turn, lift the whole team.

It's all about engagement, according to the founder of Engage 4 Results Pty Ltd – a seemingly simplistic approach that he said most businesses failed miserably at.

A total focus on the bottom line instead of people is one of the biggest mistakes businesses make, said the 60-year-old former chief executive of Westpac Financial Services.

"Really, just too many managers just focus on the scoreboard rather than behaviours," he said.

"If a leader develops their people by 10% in a specific skill or attribute each and every month, they're an above-average leader."

Before relocating to the Coast, where he and his wife found their "dream home", a Queenslander with a sweeping north-easterly view, Mr Wright spent six years imparting his knowledge in the US while living in Dallas and Vermont.

He worked with mainly large companies in the States, but is not deflated by the Coast's smaller scale.

He wants to tell as many business owners and managers as possible to not cut off their nose to spite their face.

"I really feel there is so much that can be done that's not affected by the economy, such as involving the staff," he said. "Too many businesses just decide to downsize and stop operations and things like that, and in a lot of cases they haven't even asked the staff what they think could be done differently to increase revenues or decrease expenses."

"Just asking staff can make a huge difference. Using the wisdom of the masses, I call it."