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How to Engage Employees: The Complete Guide for Managers.





Employee engagement plays a large part in a company's long-term success, regardless of industry. A highly engaged workforce has been shown to improve productivity, profitability, and retention rates. Businesses with high employee engagement levels also boast higher customer satisfaction, lower absentee rates and enjoy a boost in sales.

What Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement is defined as the extent to which employees feel passionate about their jobs, are committed to the organization, and put discretionary effort into their work.

Why is Employee Engagement Important?

Engaging employees is critical for retaining valuable talent and is an important piece of the employee satisfaction puzzle. For engaged employees who are happy and completely committed to their work, it's more than just a paycheck – it's the dedication towards their employers and role that makes them passionate about their work. To put it another way, engaged employees show up and are involved, not just because they're paid to be, but because they're invested emotionally or otherwise.


An organization that supports and encourages employee engagement is going to do better overall. But that's just one reason to nurture engaged employees.

Here are 5 other, equally important, reasons why employee engagement matters.

1. Engaged Employees Boost Productivity

Employees who are invested in their roles are more productive than those who aren't. Employees who are succeeding and feeling good about their contributions are more likely to be proud to work for your company, happy to come to work each day and feel valued.

Finding ways to engage your people, whether that means giving them a challenge or more responsibilities, means you're also finding ways to boost your organization's productivity. In short, it's good for everyone involved.



2. Employee Engagement Increases Customer Satisfaction

People who are passionate about their work are often the best people to interact with your customers. Why? Because that passion is infectious, and your customers are bound to take notice.

The most engaged employees are more inclined to put in the effort that translates to buzzing productivity levels, a happier workforce and a more credible product pitch. In other words, customers are treated to a better experience when dealing with engaged employees.

3. You'll Retain Your Best People

Engaged employees are involved and invested and therefore are less likely to leave their job. Sometimes your best people aren't engaged, and you run the risk of losing them. Keeping them engaged is essential to keeping them at your organization, doing their best work.

If your organization is dealing with low retention rates, it's time to think about why they're not engaged, fast. When the best people at your organization leave, the rest of your people will notice, and what often ensues is a domino effect.

4. Employee Engagement Enhances Company Culture

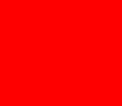
People who are engaged in what they do are, generally speaking, easier to work with. And not because they're happier or cheerier, either. It's because they're living your company's values every day at work and being recognized across the organization for it. Celebrating your most engaged people is one step towards creating a culture of engagement.

5. Engagement is a Symptom of Success

Engaged employees are engaged not because they're productive or easy to work with, but because they feel their work matters. They feel valued. And when their successes are recognized, your people will feel like they've made a meaningful impact at work.

How is Employee Engagement Measured?

It's important to note that there isn't a one-size-fits-all way to measure employee engagement, and you should utilize several of the following methods to get an accurate picture of your team's engagement.



One of the most common methods for gauging workforce engagement is an employee engagement survey. This is a quick and effective way to poll your entire team about their commitment to their work and perception of the company. By using a mix of numerical scale and open-ended questions geared toward various drivers of employee engagement, you can collect data in real time and better assess the situation.

From these surveys, you can gain insight into employees' thoughts and attitudes towards their work and the overall environment. This type of survey is especially helpful in identifying overall engagement trends and creating benchmarks to track nuances over time.

9 Reasons Why You Should Conduct an Employee Engagement Survey

1. They are Confidential

With some employee surveys, it makes sense to gather attributed feedback. But comprehensive employee engagement surveys should protect the identity of individual employees and aggregate data for a full, company-wide view. When these surveys are confidential your employees are more likely to respond openly and honestly—and your response rate will be higher.

2. They Serve as a Learning Tool


It's not always easy to uncover issues within your organization, let alone be able to correct them. Engagement surveys give employers insight into what is engaging (and disengaging) employees so they can make informed decisions about how to move forward.

3. They are Comprehensive

Employee engagement surveys should accurately measure all elements of employee engagement including work, team, and organizational engagement.

4. They Give Employees a Voice

Giving employees a voice is an important part of improving employee engagement. Surveying allows every employee the opportunity to share their opinions and be heard by managers and leaders.



5. They are Unique to Your Organization

When possible, employee engagement surveys should be customized to include questions that fit the unique needs of your organization. An example might be including questions about change management if you're a fast-growing organization. Doing so ensures your data is valuable and relevant.

6. They are Convenient

Surveys are a much easier way to distribute, complete, collect, and analyze employee feedback. Add in a user-friendly survey technology and your feedback efforts will be much easier.

7. They are Actionable

One of the most important parts of surveying employees is taking action on their feedback. Engagement surveys provide the information needed to understand what areas need to be addressed to improve engagement over time.

8. They Encourage Accountability

Employee engagement surveys help hold organizations accountable for their employees' overall engagement and success. Everyone plays an important part in improving engagement and employees at all levels can help you achieve success.

9. They Generate Benchmarks

Creating a point of reference for organizations to measure success can help improve engagement year over year and against competitors in the space.

The most common way to measure engagement is using surveys, but that's not all you should be using. Here are a few other ways you could be measuring employee engagement on a regular basis.

1. Pulse Surveys

Short, frequent surveys are a great way to maintain a consistent pulse on the vibe in your workplace. There's no need to make this process complex. You just want to find a regular way to ask anywhere from 5-10 questions about how people are feeling at work and what (if anything) they would change.

2. 1-On-1s

Another great way to measure engagement is through one-on-one meetings with employees. Having regularly scheduled, hour-long meetings where you can have an informal chat with each member of your team is a great way to get a real sense of what's going on with them.

3. Stay/Exit Interviews

Using structured interviews for employees is a great way to collect feedback and find out what makes them engaged or what holds them back from being engaged.

Exit interviews are fairly common in most organizations, but one great idea that should be done more often are stay interviews, where you ask employees that are clearly happy at work what makes them want to stay. Exit interviews can be great, but the only issue with them is that it might be too late by the time you get to that process.

Be warned, if you measure, you need to be ready to act. Many organizations review the results of a survey but often don't act on it. There's nothing worse than asking your employees for their opinion and not doing anything with their feedback. If you want to conduct an engagement survey, you need to be ready to act.

5. What Do You Do After You Measure Employee Engagement?

The best way to think about what to do after you measure employee engagement is to be as transparent as possible. You just finished asking employees for their opinions on how they can change one of the most important aspects of their lives, they'll want to be kept in the loop. Here is what to do after you measure.

1. Communicate the Results

If you sent out a survey, send employees a thank you note for completing it, communicate what the results are from a high-level, and potentially hold a town hall meeting to tell everyone what the next steps are.

Team leaders should be communicating with their teams about what the results were, and everyone should work together to come up with a few items to improve.

2. Pick a Couple of Things to Improve

There might be many things that you could possibly improve, but don't overwhelm yourself or your team with that. Instead, pick one or two things to improve and focus on those. Start small, and brainstorm with your team on things like:

- How you can improve each item?
- Who will be held accountable?
- How you'll be able to measure its effectiveness (set a goal)

3. Follow Up and Repeat

Continuously follow up with members of your team to see how things are going, and if there's anything you need to do to readjust and realign on the goal. In the end, you want employees to be happy, so keep checking in with them to see if they are.

Repeat the process over and over. This isn't a one-shot deal, engagement takes time and will always evolve, so it's really important to stay agile.

When Should an Organization Measure Employee Engagement?

The primary purpose of measuring employee engagement is to discover the truth about what's helping or hurting your employees' engagement in order to do more or less of those things.

And when you assess employee engagement during tough times (like during a high-stress pandemic), you will discover all the deep issues helping or hindering employees' engagement.

But if your organization is timing its employee engagement initiative to ensure high scores (like avoiding conducting a survey during a pandemic or conducting your survey right after annual bonuses are distributed), you're really just sabotaging your ability to discover the truth.

If your company has a track record of investing in employees, of listening to honest feedback with an open mind and acting on that feedback, now is as good a time as any to survey your employees.

How to Improve Employee Engagement

If employee engagement has taken a hit in your workplace, don't panic — every organization is susceptible to changes in their team's engagement levels, which is usually a result of a shift in their company culture.

There are, however, several low-lift employee engagement initiatives you can enact now to yield real results. Below, we'll explore 7 employee engagement strategies that you can implement as quick fixes and long-term tactics to boost employee engagement.

Model Your Core Values

Employees are more engaged when there's a goal they can get behind and a purpose to inspire them. Your core values and mission statement are the foundation of your company culture, which plays a large role in how engaged your employees are. Start by creating a concise list of company core values, then train each employee in these values. Doing so will guarantee employees understand the importance of the company's values, how they positively impact the business and what's expected of each individual. Lead by example and hold every member of your team accountable.

Focus on Engaging Management

Your managers' levels of engagement has a direct effect on their teams. While your workforce engagement strategy should account for the individual needs of every employee, focusing on middle management is an effective way to quickly increase employee engagement across the board.

Prioritize Physical and Mental Health

It's easy for individuals to engage with their work when the organization makes an effort to enhance their overall wellbeing. A company-wide wellness initiative is a great way to improve employee engagement.

Recognize and Reward Achievements

Engaged employees will go out of their way to go the extra mile. However, they still want to know that leadership sees and appreciates their efforts. Take time to acknowledge your employees and allow them to do the same for their peers.



Conduct Employee Engagement Surveys Frequently

Not only will regular employee engagement surveys help you understand what's working in your organization, it'll make your employees feel valued. Giving each individual the opportunity to voice their opinions encourages honest, open communication. Employee feedback is essential to successfully engaging your workforce.

Offer Opportunities for Professional Development

Outlining a path for growth will keep employees engaged and help you retain top talent. Contributing financially or otherwise — to your employees' individual growth shows that you value them, in addition to their work. Knowing that their talents are appreciated by the company is a motivating factor for employees.

Train Your Managers on Employee Engagement Best Practices

In addition to their individual responsibilities, a manager should act as a coach for their reports, offering encouragement, constructive criticism and paths for growth. Proper training ensures that managers know how to effectively engage their team, but it doesn't replace the vital step of talking to employees. Having a conversation about how they enjoy receiving feedback and being recognized will enable managers to engage employees in a way that's meaningful to them.

Be thoughtful with your approach to increase employee engagement, and you'll reap the rewards of an engaged workforce for years to come. Remember that employee engagement isn't a temporary project — engaging and keeping employees engaged is a serious endeavor that requires your constant consideration.

Need Help Measuring Employee Engagement?

Great Place to Work® makes it easy to survey your employees, uncover actionable insights and get recognized for your great company culture. Clients apply our insights, advice and tools to fuel the vision, decisions and actions that drive business performance. Contact us today to learn more.

