

IT'S TIME MANAGERS STARTED THINKING ABOUT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT:

A To-Do List for Getting the Most Out of Your Employees

BY: MARIAH CORBITT, ALISSA GEBBEN, AND MADELINE TAYLOR
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

WANT TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR WORKERS?

ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES



ONLY 13% OF EMPLOYEES WORLDWIDE ARE ENGAGED AT WORK.

IN THE UNITED STATES, ONLY 30% OF ALL EMPLOYEES FEEL ENGAGED



EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT

When employees are engaged, they see their own goals reflected in the company's goals, so they feel more commitment toward the company.

ESTABLISH A STRONG CULTURE

Facilitate social connections, establish ownership of work, and include employees in decisions.

GET THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Avoid unnecessary turnover by making sure you get the right people in the right positions.

HAVE OPEN COMMUNICATION

Open and honest communication enhances employee performance and gets them engaged in their work.

Imagine having employees that can't wait to speak up in meetings about their projects. They speak positively about their experiences working for the company, and talk about themselves as part of a team. They don't view their job as a means to get a paycheck, but as means of fulfillment.

When you walk by their offices in the morning, they hop right into work and don't waste any time surfing the internet, taking frequent breaks, or gossiping around the watercooler before getting started each day.

These are the employees that are likely to put forth more effort than required, as well. They may be more creative and innovative in their work, or they may seek out ways to be challenged. They are efficient in their work to the extent that they are able to pick up extra tasks or additional responsibilities. They also feel ownership over their work more so than disengaged employees. These types of employees consider all aspects of their work to be under their control. This sense of responsibility motivates their enduring productivity. This is how employees at highly engaging

companies feel about their organization, which leads to an easier job for managers.

Companies like Google, Facebook, and Southwest Airlines are consistently praised for engaging their employees. This, in turn, leads to lasting effects on employee satisfaction, employee wellness, and productivity. They do this while also mitigating factors that can add undue stress on employees, like burnout, dissatisfaction, and turnover. Detail on how some of these companies are able to get the most out of their employees will follow.

Unfortunately, according to a Gallup study, only 13% of employees worldwide are engaged at work. In the United States, 30% of all employees feel engaged at work. As discussed, employee engagement is vital to an organization's health. In order to reap the benefits of employee engagement, we must first understand what it is.



What Is Employee Engagement?

We often hear the term “Employee Engagement” used interchangeably with “Employee Satisfaction” or “Employee Happiness” - but satisfaction and happiness are just a small part of employee engagement. Rather, employee engagement encompasses the sense of emotional commitment that employees feel for their organization. When employees are engaged in their work, they see the organization's goals more akin to their own goals, and this encourages employees to be more deliberate and mindful in their work. As employee engagement increases, it leads to higher quality of service, and increased productivity. This is reflected in employee interactions with customers and clients - which will result in higher customer and client satisfaction, increased sales, and ultimately a higher level of profit and larger stakeholder returns.

It costs \$63 per accident for engaged employees and \$392 per accident for disengaged employees

Furthermore, safety accidents involving engaged employees are less costly and less severe compared to accidents involving disengaged employees (\$63 per accident for engaged employees, as opposed to \$392 per accident for disengaged employees), according to the Society

for Human Resource Management. Overall, engaged employees are five times less likely to be involved in safety accidents in general.

As the former CEO of Campbell's soup, Douglas R. Conant, said, "To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace." This is because highly successful businesses have engaged, highly performing employees.



So What Can We Do?

Employee Engagement can't be achieved through artificial, mechanistic methods. Neither office freebies (i.e., flashy tech perks offered to excite employees) nor casual Fridays will keep your workers energized or motivate them to commit to your organization. However, there are many ways to improve your company's employee engagement to see lasting results. Herein, we list a few strategies for increasing employee engagement, along with examples of companies already using these practices.



Focus On Establishing a Culture That Facilitates Engagement

It's universally agreed that organizations have a culture, and that it plays a huge role in shaping employee behavior. But what exactly is culture? And how does it contribute to having an engaged workforce?

Definitions of culture can range from "the way things work around here", to "the sum of values and rituals that glue together the members of the organization". In this way, strong company cultures can create a sense of identity and commitment for organizational members. This can result in a decreased need for written formalization of rules, because the culture of the workplace establishes the expectations of employees. When a culture clearly communicates the core values of a company, employee behavior can be shaped due to shared beliefs; companies that have a strong culture also have a cohesive workforce. Strong cultures can also define an organization and separate it from competition. This places a lot of pressure on a company to make sure that it has the right culture.

Google is frequently rated as a “best place to work”. Part of the reason is because leaders at Google focus heavily on culture. More than providing gourmet cafeterias, massage rooms, nap pods, and haircuts, Google’s emphasis on the contributions of employees helps to facilitate a culture where employees feel that their suggestions can have lasting impact. This is achieved by a company-wide charting tool that gauges the popularity of employee suggestions. Google also gives attention to the notion of collaborative spaces; as Google is an innovative organization, their physical space had to facilitate impromptu information sharing, while also allowing employees to concentrate on work without distractions. In doing this, they perpetuated a culture rich in openness and collaborative spirit, which gives employees at Google a reason to be actively engaged in, and care about, their work.



Southwest Airlines is another company that is consistently praised for its practices in employee engagement. Southwest has a team full of committed and enthusiastic workers that strive for the company’s success. By allowing employees to have ownership over certain parts of their work (e.g., designing their own uniform), Southwest’s workers are inspired to remain innovative and keep things fun and unique. As a result, the airline is able to cultivate a great company image.

Of course, what Google or Southwest Airlines do to perpetuate a culture that encourages employee engagement may not work for every organization. What impacts engagement in organizations may differ by industry, location, company size, region, or even individual preference. However, there are overarching commonalities in organizations that boast high engagement and a strong culture, in that they aim to facilitate social connections, establish ownership of work, and try to get the best fit regarding employee needs and organizational needs.

Get The Right People

As a hiring manager, we all have experienced time where we were ‘on the fence’ about a candidate, and wanted to simply say ‘no’. While our legal departments would advise against employment decisions based on inklings, it might be justified. Be sure to delve deeper into why you are having a feeling for or against candidates. In order to be maximize employee engagement, recruiting and hiring efforts should focus on person-job fit, or the candidate’s individual knowledge, skills, and abilities align with the requirements for the position for which they

have applied. If an employee feels that they personally fit with their job, they will have higher performance, increased satisfaction, while reducing the likelihood of turnover.

How do you do this? When hiring, make sure that you clearly document the necessary tasks, and skills required of the job by conducting a thorough [job analysis](#) beforehand. Job analyses are important because it not only documents the criteria for legal purposes, but it

clearly shows you what competencies and skills to look for in your candidates. Once you understand what it is that you are looking for, you can find the right candidates.

In Jim Collin's book *Good to Great*, he famously stated, "If we get the right people on the bus, the right people in the right seats, and the wrong people off the bus, then we'll figure out how to take it someplace great." Getting the right people in the right seats...



this is where staffing practices come into play. You might notice a lack in engagement from your current employees try analyzing the person-job fit for the role they currently hold. If they are not a good fit, they might be suitable for other positions in your company. Don't waste time hiring new candidates, or waiting for your

existing employees to suddenly love the job they have - mix it up! People want to feel well-utilized and to feel that they can be successful in their role, and you have the ability to set the stage for them.

One of the most crucial and costly aspects of an organization is their labor costs. Make sure to focus on person-job fit in your recruiting and staffing initiatives. It saves a great deal of time, resources, and cost to hire the right person the first time.

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- Jim Collins

Open Routes of Communication

One of the most simple ways to maintain engagement is through open and honest communication. Not only is communication an essential element for the organization, but it is also a key motivational factor for your employees. Communication has been repeatedly found to be

associated with employee engagement and a critical part of enhancing employee performance. However, in order for communication to truly make an impact, it can't just be a one-way street. Your employees want to hear from you, but even more so they want to be heard too. It's important to instill communication as a fluid, frequent, and multidimensional component in your organization. As a manager, you need to guarantee that you can be accessible to your employees; make yourself available to them not only for questions, but encouragement and support as well. Its up to the managers to give the communication efforts a boost; set the example so others can follow suit.



In order to maintain effective communication with your employees overall, keep it systematic and predictive. Facilitate this by focusing on specific areas such as company goals, failures, and accomplishments. Keep your employees completely in the loop with regards to your organization because not only may they want to know, but they also will need to know. Rob Waldron, CEO of

"Guarantee that you
can be accessible
to your employees"

Curriculum Associates, takes the time each month to write a letter to the entire organization, simply to share how things are going for the company. His letters help develop and maintain a company culture that values trust and support overall. Even simpler communication activities can go a long

way in fostering employee engagement. Take the time to walk around and start up a genuine conversation with your employees. Consider starting a monthly coffee-break and invite 3-4 employees along. The options for communicating are truly endless.



Now What?

The business world is increasingly becoming more aware of just how important employee engagement truly is on both the employee and organizational level. We encourage you to dig deeper into your own organizations and seek out those employee engagement areas that need improvement. Reevaluate the company culture your organization is maintaining. How can you

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improve upon this culture in a way that puts more emphasis on employee engagement? It will pay off in the long-run to have a company culture oriented towards employee engagement. Put more time and consideration into those hiring procedures. Are you really pulling in the right people for the job? As Jim Collins would say, are you placing them in the right seat on the bus? It's entirely possible that it's time you initiated a shake-up; move some people around and try to find that perfect seat for them on your company bus. Finally, use continuous communication as the glue for your employee engagement efforts. Make sure your employees know you're listening. Keep those communication lines open, honest, predictive, and available.

MANAGERS:

Put employee engagement at the very top of your to-do list. Make sure you dedicate some time to getting your employees engaged. You won't regret it!