BEATING THE ENGAGEMENT CRISIS:
The Data Behind Creating a Loyal, Productive, and Happy Workforce

Are employees simply "putting in time" – or committed to excellence in their work? Here's how to build an engaged workplace that's happier, more productive, and loyal:

Employee engagement affects everything your employees do – which means it affects every aspect of the organization.

In this eBook, you'll learn:

- Why **engagement matters** – and why most workers aren't engaged.

- **Which elements** of engagement matter.

- How to **build a culture** of engagement.

- Whom to turn to for **help creating and sustaining** an engaged workforce.

Why Does Engagement Matter?

Employee engagement focuses on how **present and connected** workers are with one another, their work, and their organization.

Engagement has a direct effect on:

▸ The **quality** of work produced.

▸ The **productivity** of workers.

▸ Workers' **willingness** to learn new skills, tackle hard projects, and grow in their careers.

▸ Teams' **resilience** in the face of challenges.

▸ Workers' **desire** to stay on the job.

When engagement has such an outsized effect, it's no wonder that 71% of business executives cite engagement as an essential part of their organization's success.

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Engagement by the Numbers

Engagement has a HUGE impact on U.S. businesses. Businesses with high employee engagement are:

21% more profitable than their peers.

Grew **756%** in net income over 11 years, while their disengaged peers grew only 1%.

85% of employees say they are NOT engaged at work.

63.3% of midsize U.S. businesses say that it's harder to retain existing employees than it is to hire new ones.

Why Your Employees Aren't Engaged

Disengaged employees are a **"zombie workforce."** They're physically present, but their work doesn't receive the care and attention it needs to be done well. Day by day, they build haphazardly on a wobbly foundation – and over time, **the organization pays the price.**

Why are employees not engaged at work? The top causes include:

▶ **Lack of recognition** and real opportunities for career growth.

▶ **Lack of learning** opportunities and skill obsolescence.

▶ **Failures by leadership** to connect day-to-day tasks to larger, more meaningful goals.

▶ **Poor communication** and **lack of transparency**, leading to confusion and frustration.

▶ **Little or no support for work-life balance or health**, which wears down workers and eventually leads to burnout and other chronic health conditions that impede work.

...And What to Do About It

Lack of engagement is expensive for employers. **U.S. businesses spend $2.9 million each day, or $1.1 billion each year, searching for new hires.**

Yet many of these businesses may be searching in vain. If the engagement problem is not addressed, it does not matter how many new hires a company makes – that company will be searching for replacements in short order as its new hires, finding no reason to engage with their work, leave in search of a more meaningful role elsewhere.

In short, to build engagement, HR needs to work with stakeholders throughout the organization to build meaning.

What Do Employees Find Meaningful?

When it comes to engagement, top concerns for today's employees include:

- **Flexibility** and **balance** in work schedules.
- Tools that **encourage** personal **productivity**.
- Effective **communication** and **transparency**.
- Real **support** for employee **health and well-being.**
- Opportunities for **recognition**.
- Career **growth and development**.

Asking employees what they want and need is only the first step. It's the **actions taken** as a result of those questions that tell employees whether they are valued – and whether their engagement is warranted. **A Gallup poll found that employees who "strongly agree" their company acts quickly on survey results are 1.9 times more likely to be engaged at work.**

Providing Flexibility and Work-Life Balance

Pandemic-related remote work did not create a pandemic of slacking off, as was once feared. Rather, the flexibility offered by remote work **boosted engagement and productivity** in many roles.

One Stanford study found that for 16,000 workers, working from home for a nine-month period resulted in 13% more productivity. Workers were able to focus on their work, and they took fewer sick days because they were protected from ambient germs.

Need better engagement? Help teams and departments build schedules and work arrangements that meet employees where they are.

Boosting Workers' Personal Productivity

COVID-19 focused workers on their personal productivity, rather than organizational productivity benchmarked against competitors. As workers focus on their own productivity, they become **more engaged** with tools that help them do their jobs and **advance in their careers.**

Some new ways to look at productivity include:

Boost productivity by encouraging worker engagement with their personal achievements.

- ▸ Allow employees to **schedule their work** during their most productive time.

- ▸ **Minimize meetings** and calls that create distractions, or schedule these for the same times every day and week so employees can plan for them.

- ▸ **Work with teams** to set realistic deadlines.

- ▸ **Give workers the space** to regulate their own breaks, so they can focus deeply while working.

Communicating for Better Engagement

One of the top reasons employees have changed jobs by the millions is **lack of communication** from management.

An effective communication strategy:

▶ **Keeps employees on the same page** about projects and processes,

▶ Makes it **easy for employees to respond** with questions and suggestions,

▶ Consolidates information for **easy reference** instead of spreading it across multiple platforms,

▶ **Continually re-examines for effectiveness**, incorporates feedback, and updates when necessary to meet the team's needs.

Addressing Health and Well-Being

Are engaged employees healthier and happier? The statistics point to yes.

Workplaces with high engagement have 41% less absenteeism than workplaces with low engagement, and 33% of workers say they're bored on the job. Whether due to sickness, stress, or sheer boredom, workers who don't feel engaged on the job have worse health and well-being outcomes – and these outcomes affect their work.

To build health and well-being into a culture of engagement:

▸ Provide the **flexibility** workers need to attend routine **health appointments**, get **regular exercise** and **sleep**, and organize their lives to **reduce stress**.

▸ **Address stress on the job** by allowing workers to manage when they're focused and when they **take breaks**.

▸ Encourage managers and leaders throughout the organization to be great **health and well-being role models.** Workers **"do as I do, not as I say"** when it comes to taking self-care time. Make sure higher-ups take **vacation, sick days, rest breaks, and other time** they encourage their teams to take.

41%⬇

Highly engaged workplaces have 41% less absenteeism.

Recognizing a Job Well Done

Few things are more demoralizing than working hard to reach a meaningful goal, only to hear...crickets.

No wonder **69% of employees say they'd work harder if they were better appreciated**. That's 69% of the workforce that isn't currently giving its best – **because these workers see no reason to do so.**

Meanwhile, **84% of highly engaged employees received recognition** the last time they went above and beyond at work. Only **25% of disengaged workers could say the same.**

Rewards don't have to be financial, but recognition must be consistent and sincere. In fact, they don't even have to be public – one study found that **43% of workers would prefer to receive recognition privately**, in the form of a manager acknowledging their success.

Engagement as a Process, Not an Event

Many companies treat engagement as a one-time or sporadic activity. Yet employees subjected to these bursts of **"engagement attention"** may end up less engaged in the long run. Engagement starts to feel **like a gimmick,** rather than a core quality of their work.

Career growth is one of the biggest ways employees find reasons to engage with their work. While **41% of employees** in one SHRM study said **career advancement was a "very important"** part of their work, only **29% were "very satisfied" with their own opportunities.**

To gain the benefits of employee engagement, think of it as part of how work is done. Make **ongoing purpose** and **development** part of everything your team and organization do. Employees want engagement as a **foundation of their careers**, and they want to work in a place that sees engagement as a similar ongoing value.

Empower Managers to Engage Their Teams

When it comes to engagement, managers are on the front line. A Gallup poll found that **managers account for 70% of the variance in team engagement.** In short, employees cannot be engaged if managers and leadership aren't building a culture of engagement.

Enlist managers' help in boosting engagement:

- **Help managers build relationships over time.** The answer to "how are you engaging your team?" shouldn't be as simple as treats or rewards. Rather, each manager should be able to point to a **consistent pattern** of **relationship-building**, as well as what this pattern has allowed them to learn about each team member as a person.

- **Know which comments apply to managers** – and which don't. For instance, if employees say their manager doesn't challenge them to improve, do they mean their direct supervisor, or are they responding to a broader lack of clear career paths within the company? **Probe deeper** with employees to determine the root cause of frustrations and discontent, so you can make meaningful improvements.

Building Your Engagement Team

Connecting with employees and supporting managers/leaders are critical ways to improve engagement. Building a team of reliable experts is a must as well.

When building your engagement team, don't hesitate to add a recruiting and staffing partner.

Your recruiter can help you boost engagement by:

▸ **Finding candidates** driven by the values and goals your company promotes.

▸ **Providing temporary support** so your core team can find work/life balance and fight burnout.

▸ **Connecting you to contract staff** to take on routine tasks or specialized projects, so your core team can focus on the work they do best.