

Employees Engagement: Ensuring Employee's Reasonable Opportunity of Being Heard

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Abstract

Organizations increasingly recognize that a workforce which feels heard, valued, and connected performs better and stays longer. This paper looks at employee engagement as a relationship built on trust rather than a transaction of pay and perks, tracing how different research bodies frame the concept and why those framings converge on a single idea: engagement is the depth of an employee's emotional and mental investment in the success of their organization. Building on this foundation, the study surveys practical levers that shape day-to-day engagement, including closeness among colleagues in hybrid settings, undivided attention from leaders, well-designed performance expectations, communal experiences such as shared meals, and a clearly communicated sense of purpose. It then organizes these levers into a five-part leadership framework covering care for employee wellbeing, connection among teams, coaching and growth, avenues for employees to contribute ideas, and recognition of achievements. The discussion highlights supporting evidence linking each lever to measurable outcomes such as productivity, retention, and job satisfaction, while emphasizing that engagement initiatives succeed only when paired with transparent internal communication. The paper concludes that an inclusive culture, one where employees can freely voice their backgrounds, ideas, and concerns, is central to sustaining a resilient and motivated workforce, and it offers organizations a practical roadmap for embedding these principles into everyday leadership practice.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Organizational Communication, Workplace Culture, Employee Wellbeing, Employee Retention, Leadership Practices, Employee Voice, Recognition and Feedback, Work-Life Balance, Inclusive Culture, Purpose-Driven Work, Human Resource Management

1. INTRODUCTION

Feeling heard is an important part of any successful relationship, whether it's professional or personal. So when it comes to your organization, listening and responding to employees has tremendous upside. Allowing your employees to have an active voice is critical. Not only does their daily work experience give you unique insights into how the organization can improve, but employees who feel they have been heard are also more likely to be committed to their employer, improving retention rates.

Not all experts and research companies have the same definition of employee engagement. For example: – **Quantum Workplace** defines employee engagement as “the strength of the mental and emotional connection employees feel toward their places of work”.

- According to **Gallup**, engaged employees are “those who are involved in, enthusiastic about, and committed to their work and workplace”.
- According to **Willis Towers Watson**, employee engagement is “employees’ willingness and ability to contribute to company success”.
- **Aon Hewitt** defines employee engagement as “the level of an employee’s psychological investment in their organization.”

So, what is employee engagement?

In essence, employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization. When employees feel engaged, they care about the company and they do their best work to achieve the company’s goals. When employees are engaged, their #1 objective is to contribute to the company’s success. Employee engagement is not about employee benefits or bonuses, it’s about being part of a successful business.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

As explained earlier, engaged employees do their best work to achieve the business’s goals and they are willing to go the extra mile to contribute to the business’s success. Employee engagement has become one of the top priorities for most businesses and here’s why:

- Employee engagement increases productivity in the workplace.
- Employee engagement improves morale in the workplace.
- Engaged employees provide a better customer service.
- Low employee engagement is a costly problem.

Engaged employees are **more efficient and productive**. But the majority of the workplace around the world isn’t engaged, and this has serious repercussions for business success! Therefore, understanding the numbers behind employee engagement is crucial for improving employee engagement initiatives and tactics.

3. HOW TO INCREASE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AT WORK

For leaders and organisations, employee engagement is correlated with greater productivity, retention, customer service, safety, quality of work and profitability. But engagement is also linked with better experiences for people. When employees are engaged, they tend to be healthier and have higher levels of esteem, fulfillment and happiness. Engagement is good for business, but it’s also good for people.

In addition to the classical ways to affect engagement, from creating the conditions for learning and growth to meaningful relationships, there are some new rules for engagement as well.

1. Proximity

Proximity is a key way to drive greater engagement and it is especially important today, with hybrid and remote work. Proximity is when people feel close, known and familiar. And proximity can be both literal and figurative. You have proximity to the person you sit next to regularly when you’re in the office, but you can also have a sense of proximity with the colleague you’re on video calls with regularly or with whom you’re in close email contact.

We have a cognitive bias toward familiarity and tend to be more accepting of people (and art, music and food) that are more familiar. We also have a cognitive bias toward recency—in which we tend to keep people (and things and events) more top of mind when they happen more frequently or recently.

In addition, we tend to follow through on work and be more responsive to people we know and feel close to (either literally or figuratively).

All of this affects engagement. When we're connected with colleagues, get to know them and understand how our work connects with theirs—and how they're relying on us—we will be more engaged.

You can enhance people's senses of proximity by setting clear guidelines about when they should be in the office and—even more importantly—communicate why. Facilitate the process of coordinating when people will be in, based on whom they work most closely with. For example, certain departments may want to agree on core hours for office work.

Build team relationships and perceived proximity by organizing social time together, but also creating affinity groups where people have common interests and can support each other. Give people meaningful work that demands they collaborate. Protect time at the beginning or end of meetings to check in or check out with personal moments to connect and get to know each other beyond the project plan.

2. Presence and Attention

In inspiring engagement, presence and attention are also primary strategies. With everything coming at us and our always-on environments, attention is the most scarce resource. When you're undistracted during an interaction, it drives positive relationships, motivation and engagement.

In addition, when leaders are present and accessible, they build trust. And when people are present together, they are likely to pick up on each other's energy and be more productive, according to research published in the *Journal of Labor Economics*.

In addition, productivity tends to positively affect engagement and satisfaction, according to research published by the Association for Psychological Science. And engagement in turn drives greater satisfaction and productivity. The three experiences—productivity, satisfaction and engagement—reinforce each other.

Tune into employees and pay attention to how they're showing up. Check in, ask questions and listen to how they're doing. When employees reach out, respond quickly and thoroughly. And connect them with resources when they need support beyond what you can provide.

3. Performance

Another way to drive engagement is to create the conditions for great performance. People will engage when they are energized by what they do, and when they have clear expectations. In addition, employees will experience more engagement when work is aligned with their current skills, but also with challenges which stretch their capabilities.

Interestingly, in the Gallup study, there were some top-performing companies that had an average of 70% of their employees who were engaged—more than seven times the average across the U.S. One of their strategies was to combine flexibility with accountability, and give people coaching to support their performance.

In fact, when organizations offer more flexibility, they perform better, and when they offer greater choice and control they do as well. But this must be combined with accountability, because people want to know their skills matter and that companies are counting on their deliverables and contribution.

4. Eating together

Academic research has proven that when people eat together, they build community, increase trust, enhance feelings that life is worthwhile and expand happiness and satisfaction—and all of this fosters

engagement. People feel trusting toward their colleagues and positively obligated to them. And they feel motivated to give their best.

People tend to behave based on reciprocity. When we receive, our instinct is to return. As a result, when organizations provide for experiences and wellbeing, they energize people to provide their best efforts, in turn. Of course, organizations should offer the best for people because it's just the right thing to do—but it's also related to engagement and performance because of our human preference for reciprocity.

Create the conditions for wellbeing by providing food and offering places with daylight, views and natural elements as well as places for privacy, collaboration, learning, socializing and rejuvenating. Provide benefits which offer all kinds of choices for a variety of needs and priorities. And consider wellness programs—from mediation to financial planning.

5. Purpose

Purpose is a gold standard for engagement—so perhaps it's the least novel strategy here—but it is significant. When people feel a sense of purpose, it translates into all kinds of payoffs from productivity to wellbeing.

The benefits of purpose are striking.

- With greater purpose, people engage more deeply and companies who articulate their purpose more clearly, see greater growth, global expansion, successful product launches and successful transformation efforts, according to research published in *Harvard Business Review*.
- In addition, when leaders behave with purpose—sharing a vision, committing to stakeholders and demonstrating strong morals—employees are able to engage and they are happier and more productive, according to research conducted by the University of Sussex.
- In addition, with a greater sense of purpose, people have lower levels of cardiovascular disease and greater longevity, according to a study published in *Psychosomatic Medicine*.
- In addition, people experience less loneliness and make healthier lifestyle choices, according to research at the University of Pennsylvania. When people have higher levels of physical, cognitive and emotional wellbeing, they can engage and contribute for their own benefit (esteem, fulfillment) and the organization's benefit.

Create purpose by reinforcing a bigger picture and clarifying how each employee's contribution is making a unique contribution to it. And be sure purpose is about people. Beyond committing to financial targets, what will get people out of bed in the morning is knowing how their efforts make a real difference for others.

4. THE 5 CS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is a crucial element for the success of any organisation. Engaged employees are more productive, satisfied and loyal to their company. They are the driving force behind innovation, efficiency and a positive workplace culture. To foster this level of engagement, leaders can focus on the 5 Cs: Care, Connect, Coach, Contribute and Congratulate. This article delves into each of these pillars and explores how they contribute to creating an engaged and motivated workforce.

1. Care: Show Employees You Care About Their Wellbeing

The first step in employee engagement is demonstrating genuine care for your employees' wellbeing. This goes beyond offering competitive salaries and benefits. It involves understanding and addressing their physical, emotional and mental health needs.

- **Mental Health Support:** Implement programmes that support mental health, such as access to counselling services, stress management workshops and mental health days. A study by the World Health Organization found that for every \$1 invested in mental health treatment, there is a return of \$4 in improved health and productivity.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Encourage a healthy work-life balance by offering flexible working hours, remote work options and adequate vacation time. According to a survey by FlexJobs, 72% of employees say that work-life balance is a crucial factor when considering job opportunities. In fact, 63% of the 4,000 respondents stated they would choose better work-life balance over better pay—only 31% would choose better pay over work-life balance.
- **Physical Health Initiatives:** Promote physical wellbeing through health programmes, gym memberships and regular health check-ups. Companies like Google and Apple are known for their comprehensive health and wellness programmes, which contribute to high levels of employee satisfaction and productivity.

2. Connect: Build Relationships and Foster a Sense of Togetherness

Creating a sense of connection within the workplace is vital for fostering teamwork and collaboration. Employees who feel connected to their colleagues and leaders are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work.

- **Team Building Activities:** Organise regular team-building activities, both virtual and in-person, to strengthen bonds among team members. Activities such as workshops, retreats and social events can enhance interpersonal relationships.
- **Open Communication Channels:** Encourage open and honest communication between employees and management. Regular town hall meetings, feedback sessions and an open-door policy can help bridge the gap between different levels of the organisation.
- **Inclusive Culture:** Promote an inclusive culture where diversity is celebrated. Ensure that all employees feel valued and included, regardless of their background or position. Diversity drives innovation and creativity, leading to better decision-making and problem-solving.

3. Coach: Guide Your Employees to Be the Best They Can Be

Coaching and development are essential for employee growth and engagement. Employees who receive regular coaching are more likely to feel valued and motivated.

- **Personal Development Plans:** Create personalised development plans for each employee, focusing on their strengths, weaknesses and career aspirations. This shows that the organisation is invested in their growth and success.
- **Regular Feedback:** Provide regular, constructive feedback to help employees improve their performance. According to Gallup, employees who receive regular feedback are 3.6 times more likely to be engaged at work.
- **Training and Development Programmes:** Offer continuous learning opportunities through training programmes, workshops and seminars. Encourage employees to pursue further education and certifications related to their field.

4. Contribute: Encourage Employees to Contribute Their Thoughts and Ideas

Empowering employees to contribute their ideas and suggestions fosters a sense of ownership and accountability. When employees feel that their input is valued, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work.

- **Idea Platforms:** Create platforms where employees can share their ideas and feedback. This could be through suggestion boxes, online forums or regular brainstorming sessions.
- **Participative Decision Making:** Involve employees in decision-making processes, especially those that affect their work. This can lead to more innovative solutions and a greater sense of ownership.
- **Recognition of Contributions:** Acknowledge and implement valuable employee suggestions. Publicly recognise individuals who contribute positively to the organisation. This not only motivates the individual but also encourages others to share their ideas.

5. Congratulate: Celebrate Employees for the Great Work They Do

Recognition and appreciation are powerful motivators. Celebrating employees' achievements and milestones fosters a positive work environment and reinforces desired behaviours.

- **Recognition Programmes:** Implement recognition programmes that highlight employees' achievements. This could include Employee of the Month awards, peer recognition programmes and annual awards ceremonies.
- **Timely Acknowledgement:** Ensure that recognition is timely and specific. Recognise employees as soon as possible after their achievement to reinforce the behaviour. Be specific about what they did well and how it contributed to the organisation.
- **Celebrate Milestones:** Celebrate both professional and personal milestones of employees, such as work anniversaries, project completions and personal achievements. This helps to build a supportive and celebratory work culture.

Employee engagement is a multifaceted concept that requires a strategic and ongoing effort from leadership. By focusing on the 5 Cs—Care, Connect, Coach, Contribute and Congratulate—organisations can create an environment where employees feel valued, motivated and engaged. This not only enhances individual performance but also drives organisational success. Investing in these five pillars of engagement is not just a best practice; it is essential for building a thriving, dynamic and resilient workforce.

5. CONCLUSION

When a company has a great internal communications strategy in place, employees feel more informed, secure and motivated to achieve the company's goals. What's more, effective internal communications lower frustration in the workplace, which is strongly connected with employee engagement. When key information is missing, employees need to look for it by themselves. They end up browsing their Intranets and G-Drives for hours and calling their colleagues for help. At the end of the end, poor internal communication leads to employee frustration and lower productivity in the workplace. So, before you start planning your next employee engagement strategy, start with your internal communication!

One of the most important ways to show employees that you respect their backgrounds and traditions is to invite them to share those characteristics of their cultures in the workplace...it is the inclusion that connects people to the business, and we believe it's one of the core reasons they stay-because they have been able to find their place where they belong.

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