

WILEY

Six Drivers of Employee Engagement



Six Drivers of Employee Engagement

Despite its importance, few organizations understand what employee engagement is and how it can drive business outcomes. Engaged employees are more likely to stay longer in their jobs and bring resilience to their organizations. Without an engaged staff, managers have a tough time accomplishing anything, let alone the best work possible. To reach and surpass business goals, managers and executives must make sure their employees are active, inspired, and feel good about their work.



Here are six drivers of employee engagement to consider:

1 **EMPLOYEE FIT: ALIGNMENT OF EMPLOYEE'S GOALS WITH ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS**

The number one factor impacting employee performance and engagement is how well an individual employee's performance (and personal) goals align with the overall organizational goals, mission, and core values. This factor is so crucial, in fact, that it might be hard

for you to gain support for engagement initiatives unless they are directly tied to performance goals that drive the organization's success and profitability. Therefore, as a manager, you have to act as a liaison to connect the organization's strategic mission with individual values and behaviors of employees.

Having a process in place by which employees and managers agree on performance goals helps drive significant organizational performance. Top-performing companies even support managers with tools and technologies to help initiate performance and goal-setting conversations that better result in this link between individual efforts and organizational goals.

Moving toward a more engaged, accountable workforce doesn't happen overnight. It requires continual effort to change ingrained beliefs and behaviors about the role of employees and leaders in an organization so that employees eventually can say — and truly believe — the following:

"I play a vital role in this organization and am responsible for what happens here."

"If I see a problem, it is my duty to fix it."

"My job is justified only if I make a valuable contribution."

2 EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION

Communication is the lubricant of any well-run organization, and it's especially vital for successful employee engagement. Research shows that communication ranks the highest (95 percent) of all motivational factors that employees most want in their jobs today. Communication needs to be consistent, bidirectional, involve all levels of the organization, and cover all lengths of time (here-and-now, upcoming, and long term).

Of course, managers and executives must be willing to receive and truly listen to honest and open feedback from employees regarding what they, the employees, most need to be engaged. All staff members should be informed about things critical to the company's success and how they each can contribute to that

success. Through strong communication, employees feel a sense of responsibility for the success of the organization and can better champion the organization's mission and values, as well as its products and services.

3 EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS

"What do you expect from me in my job?" is the starting point for all performance and engagement. Therefore, setting clear goals and expectations is vital. These expectations typically come from one's manager. Research shows us that the best goals have these characteristics:

They are few in number and specific in purpose: After all, any of us can only focus on one thing at a time.

They are "stretch" goals: That is, they are not too easy and are not too difficult. Instead, they have a good chance (some studies suggest about 70 percent) of being achieved with a dedicated focus by the employee.

They are collaborative: They involve one or more discussions between the employee and his or her manager.

The days of just telling employees what to do and expecting it to be done as expected are pretty much over. To motivate employees to do their best work, you need to explain to them the



“why” of their work — its significance and relation to the organizational goals and customers — and engage them by asking them what they expect of themselves (and of you, their manager!). The process of collaboratively setting clear employee expectations creates a strong bond and motivation between managers and employees.

4 EMPLOYEE SUPPORT

Studies have shown that the most important relationship for an employee at work is the relationship between the employee and his or her direct manager. “If you have a good boss, you have a good job” rings true around the world. If employees don’t have support from their managers to be fully engaged, they won’t fully engage. Therefore, as a manager, your primary responsibility

is to support your employees. This could mean modeling engagement and recognition, being there when they want or need to communicate, being available to discuss problems, finding ways for your employees to get extra training and development, and so on.

As a manager, you are also the primary communication link between your employees and the rest of the organization and, as such, can help employees develop so that, over time, they can take on new roles and responsibilities in the organization.

5 EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT

Although all development is self-development — that is, employees have to have the ambition, motivation, and skills to want to learn new things in their jobs — your employee engagement strategies should incorporate development opportunities for employees. In most organizations, the role of employee development increasingly falls to one’s manager, with the human resources and training and development departments providing guidance as needed.

Employees are more likely to invest in an organization that invests time, energy, training, and so on in them. Career development is the way individuals manage their career paths. It requires

the involvement of their managers and others in the organization to help structure opportunities for their learning and growth. Career development is, thus, a collaborative effort between the organization and the employee that ultimately creates greater engagement.

6 EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

Employee recognition is fundamental to ongoing support and motivation of any individual employee or group. The key to driving an engagement culture is to systematically recognize employees based on their performance. Although money and other forms of compensation are important to employees, what tends to motivate them to perform at their highest levels are the thoughtful, timely, personal kinds of recognition that signify true appreciation for a job well done. Yet, managers and organizations struggle to create an organizational culture that systematically recognizes employee performance when it happens.

Employee recognition programs are quickly becoming one of the fastest growing areas of talent management and a key driver of business success. As the global economy continues to improve, and as current employees seek new job opportunities, holding on to talent is critical, and doing so can have a major impact on an organization's

success. It's more important than ever that an organization makes employee engagement a priority. Those that do will see increased organizational productivity, flexibility, and employee retention.

Learn more with
Recognizing and Engaging Employees For Dummies
by Bob Nelson, PhD

