

## Strategies for Sustaining Employee Engagement

Imagine a business where the turnstile at the employee entrance seems to spin non-stop, with new faces coming in as quickly as the old ones leave. Now picture the opposite: A place where familiar faces are engaged, grow in expertise, and (over time), deepen their commitment to the mission of the business. This story is not just about the employee experience; it is about the clear economic sense it makes for a company to retain its employees rather than habitually seeking new ones. The costs of advertising, interviewing, and training new hires, not to mention the lost productivity as newcomers get up to speed, add up and can have a net negative impact on the bottom line of a business very quickly.

Aside from the cost savings associated with recruiting and training new hires, retaining employees helps preserve institutional knowledge. Experienced staff contribute to productivity and maintain customer relationships, thus enhancing overall satisfaction. A stable workforce supports a strong company culture, fostering an environment where employees feel valued and motivated. This not only benefits internal morale but also bolsters the company's external reputation, making it more attractive to prospective employees and providing a competitive edge in the market. Thus, investing in employee engagement is a strategic priority to sustaining business growth and sustained success.

[Gallup's Q12](#) stands out as one of the most reliable tools for assessing and addressing employee engagement. This framework consists of twelve carefully crafted questions that delve into the critical aspects of an employee's workplace experience, from their sense of purpose to their day-to-day interactions and professional growth opportunities. The strength of the Q12 lies in its ability to provide actionable insights with a straightforward approach, making it accessible for organizations of any size and resource. The Q12 framework has become an invaluable asset for companies seeking to understand and improve employee engagement levels without the need for extensive internal research capabilities because it is grounded in rigorous research and proven to correlate strongly with key business outcomes.

Despite ample evidence that prioritizing employee engagement is good for business and with tools like Gallup's Q12 simplifying engagement assessment within any company at any time, U.S. worker engagement levels have remained stagnant at around 30% for the past decade. Since the early 2000's, for example, [Gallup has been tracking employee engagement in the U.S.](#) and while there have been slight fluctuations over the years, the percentage of fully engaged workers has generally remained low, often cited in the range of 30% to 35%.

This raises a critical question: If U.S. companies are aware of the methods to engage and retain employees, and if doing so significantly benefits their bottom lines, why do they struggle to effectively boost engagement?

One of the biggest reasons is **generational shifts in the workforce**. *As Baby Boomers retire and Millennials and Gen Z become more prevalent, the dynamics of workplace engagement are evolving. Younger generations tend to prioritize meaningful work that aligns with their personal values and seek employers that offer flexibility, such as remote work options and adaptable schedules. This quest for purpose and work-life balance marks a departure from previous norms where long-term tenure and loyalty to a single company were more common. Consequently, organizations are facing a shift in loyalty norms, with employees, particularly from younger generations, more inclined to change jobs frequently in pursuit of their ideal work environment and career goals. This trend necessitates a reevaluation of engagement strategies by businesses, focusing on creating a more dynamic, inclusive, and flexible work culture that meets the diverse needs and expectations of a multi-generational workforce.*

Another key factor suppressing employee engagement is **poor managerial skills**. Because managers directly supervise employees, they play a significant role in shaping the employee experience, which by extension, impacts employee engagement and retention. Managers who are unable to effectively develop and recognize their direct reports create an environment where employees feel undervalued and overlooked, leading to decreased engagement levels. And leaders who cannot inspire their employees by sharing a compelling vision that strengthens mutual purpose fail to tap into the employee's need to feel self-actualized as a whole person at work. *Fostering a motivated and committed workforce requires effective managers and leaders because employees are more likely to be engaged and productive when they feel supported by their managers and believe in the leaders of the organization they work for. Addressing this factor may include assessing manager's and leader's skills in effective employee development and recognition and providing them with resources to help them bolster employee engagement if necessary.*

Moreover, **the perception of limited career advancement opportunities within an organization can severely dampen employee morale and engagement**. When employees feel stuck in their current roles with no clear path for progression, their motivation and enthusiasm for their work can wane. This lack of growth prospects can lead to a disengaged workforce, affecting overall productivity and organizational performance. Additionally, *recognition serves as a positive reinforcement that encourages continued effort and aligns individual performance with organizational goals. It helps in building a sense of achievement and belonging among employees.* Consequently, organizations that fail to acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of their employees risk fostering a work environment where disengagement becomes the norm, ultimately affecting productivity and morale. *Therefore, providing opportunities for career development and recognizing and cultivating the talents and skills of employees are essential strategies for enhancing employee engagement and retention.*

Lastly, **today's employees are not just looking for a paycheck but for a role that offers personal growth, meaningful contributions, and a sense of belonging**. This shift reflects a broader societal evolution towards valuing self-actualization and community connection, turning the workplace into a stage for fulfilling these deeper human needs. *A fundamental aspect of this is the alignment between an employee's personal values and the company's values, mission, and purpose. Employees are likely to exhibit higher levels of engagement when they resonate with their organization's ethos and objectives, feeling that their work contributes to a greater purpose.* For example, many employees work in the non-profit sector for less pay because the mission and values of the organization mirror their own. Conversely, a misalignment can lead to a lack of motivation and engagement, as employees may struggle to connect their daily tasks with overarching organizational goals.

In the grand story of employee engagement, the journey is as crucial as the destination. *And, as corporations navigate the complexities of a multi-generational workforce and the evolving landscape of human motivation, the need for dynamic, inclusive, and empathetic leaders who value engagement becomes ever more clear.*

- *This begins with crafting leadership that is not only skilled but empathetic, capable of fostering a culture of trust, recognition, and development.*
- *Organizations must align individual roles with the broader mission, ensuring every employee feels part of something greater than themselves.*
- Communication needs to be threaded throughout the corporate story – clearly, consistently, and transparently. Investment in personal and professional growth must be a cornerstone of the organizational ethos, providing pathways for employees to ascend and evolve.
- And, importantly, the narrative must prioritize well-being, ensuring that the workplace is a source of vitality rather than exhaustion.

Only then can the tale of employee engagement unfold with a theme of connection and fulfillment, transforming the workplace into a setting where every character, regardless of their role or generation, can find engagement as a renewable resource in their organization.

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