Eight Steps to Building a Comprehensive Culture of Engagement

A practical checklist for HR leaders and managers.

You've read the theory. You've heard all kinds of hypotheticals about what drives engagement. Now it's time to take some real action.

If you're ready to start building a culture of sustainable long-term engagement for every employee at every level of your business, this checklist will give you the practical direction you need to kick-start your journey.

1. Make the most of digital experiences throughout the employee lifecycle.

Digital experiences can influence your employees' engagement in a huge number of ways at any stage in their career, so it's vital that you start as you mean to go on.

If you're not doing so already, focus your onboarding process around a holistic, digital experience, providing new hires with interactive training that they can complete at their own pace. Connect them to their new colleagues, introduce them to the systems that they will use every day, and teach them what they need to know to succeed, all through a self-driven digital process.

But remember, digital experiences aren't just for your new employees; technology can enable everyone to work more flexibly and collaborate more effectively.

2. Create a strong workplace culture, and keep it consistent.

It's simple: you need to deliver on the promise of your culture.

Culture is a product of your people, but you do have the power to shape and influence it yourself. Every employee has an expectation of your culture. Those at the top set the tone, so it's up to you to make sure that what they're experiencing is both consistent with those expectations, and consistent across every department in the business.

In practice, that means helping people to work towards goals that are aligned with the values of the business (and hopefully aligned to their own values too), and ensuring that workplace experiences are meeting the expectations set by your employer brand.
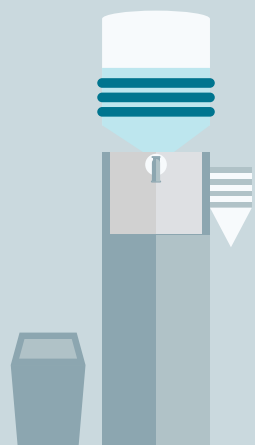
3. Keep development goal-focused, for your company and your employees.

Remember to listen to what your employees want. Giving them opportunities to develop their skills in ways that interest them is a great way to keep them engaged, but it's also important to keep the requirements of the business in mind. Identify the gaps in your company's skills, and prioritize development to fill them.

A lot of your employees' development is going to be geared toward their career progression, so ensure you have the right opportunities to allow them to develop the skills they need to move upwards. Use analytics to match employees to opportunities to learn, and create guided learning paths with these factors in mind to keep development on track.

4. Link performance with rewards.

If employees feel like they're being compensated fairly for their effort, they're going to be more engaged—so it's important to create firm links between performance and reward.

Those rewards don't just have to be financial though. Consider other kinds of rewards that might surprise and delight your employees: anything from a free lunch, to opportunities to volunteer for charitable causes, or just some extra time off—after all, it's the little things that go a long way!

5. Keep everyone in contact with their managers and leaders.

Employees are most engaged when they're in close contact with those who work around them, and this must include their managers. Your employees shouldn't only be communicating with their managers at annual review time; they should have frequent opportunities to give feedback about their experiences.

Regular conversations about performance can help you keep an eye on progress and know when to shift an employee's focus if necessary. These days, communication doesn't have to be face-to-face to be effective. Why not get creative and use social-media tools—such as instant messaging and videoconferencing—or open up a continuous stream of informal feedback and conversation?

6. Keep your roles business-focused.

The needs of your business are going to change, so don't be afraid to shift your employees' focus to fit the changing climate. Duties need to be flexible, but make sure your employees understand what they're expected to do in their newly defined role.

Everything your employees do should be purposeful—they'll be more engaged if they can clearly see how it contributes to the success of the company.

7. Give everyone the same development opportunities.

Everyone in your company should have the same opportunities to develop their skills, regardless of their plans for the future. You want everyone to feel that they can grow and progress in their role, and if they want to move up in the company, that's great.

Although some employees may seem happy with where they are, instinctively they'll always look to better themselves and the way they work. So if you want their roles to be flexible, you need to make sure they can develop the skills needed to adapt to their changing duties, because even if their job title never changes, the tasks they perform within that job will still naturally evolve over time.

8. Make employee wellbeing a top priority.

Take an active interest in how your employees are feeling in their roles, and give them a platform where they feel comfortable enough to give honest feedback about their job experience.

Their wellbeing is key to keeping them engaged and productive, and if an employee feels valued and that they're contributing meaningfully to the business, they're more likely to stay committed to both you and their role for longer.

Discover a practical new way of visualizing engagement.

If you're as tired of empty, hypothetical theories about employee engagement as we are, it's time for you to discover what it's really made up of.

We recently asked nearly 5,000 real employees from across the globe to discover what it takes to keep them engaged in their jobs—and where their businesses are currently falling short.

See what we learned in our global employee engagement report, and get a practical look at what true engagement really looks like today—and get actionable advice to help you deliver it for every employee in your business.

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