

How to improve employee engagement: Strategies for a thriving workplace



The success of a business today is undeniably linked to its workforce, and it's no surprise that organizations with engaged employees stand at the [forefront of innovation](#), productivity, and success. But when it comes to exactly *how* to improve employee engagement—that's where many organizations get stuck.

Considering the many challenges organizations face, including lack of accountability, misalignment, inefficiencies, and low morale, each organization's workforce requires continuous effort and an ongoing commitment to building and maintaining a workplace that prioritizes [employee engagement](#). [Gallup](#) defines employee engagement as the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace. Employee engagement helps measure and manage how your employees' perceive key elements of your organization's culture.

Addressing these issues requires a nuanced understanding of what differentiates an engaged employee from a disengaged one. Recognizing these differences is the first step toward developing a robust strategy for enhancing engagement and fostering a thriving work environment.

Identifying engaged and disengaged employees

Engaged employees typically exhibit as enthusiastic, proactive problem-solvers who consistently deliver high productivity. On the other hand, disengaged employees lack motivation, often prefer to work alone, and may avoid their responsibilities. While on the surface, disengaged employees may simply appear to be “difficult” or performing poorly, there may be a deeper issue at play. Recognizing disengagement is critical to developing strategies to improve it.

Every employer wants to have engaged employees who model effective collaboration, are dedicated to the organization’s goals, and possess the ability to generate innovative solutions. Engaged employees boost efficiency and infuse the [company culture](#) with energy, aiding in achieving strategic objectives. But the reality is some factors can impact even the best employees’ engagement levels. These [can include](#) things like:

- Limited career advancement opportunities
- Poor leadership
- Excessive workloads
- Lack of connection to the organization’s purpose
- Lack of recognition
- Poor communication
- Toxic culture
- Lack of purpose or meaning at work

When you understand what the signs of employee disengagement looks like, it becomes easier to understand how to improve employee engagement.

Disengaged employee

Runs from responsibility

Easily loses focus

Avoids working with others

Complains often (or not at all)

Underperforming

Lack of motivation to complete tasks or goals

Isolates themselves from social events

vs.

Engaged employee

Takes on responsibilities

Goal-oriented and focused

Collaborative and helpful

Provides creative solutions

Produces high-quality work

Motivates themselves and others to achieve goals

Connects with teammates

Below are a few examples of employee engagement in day-to-day work life.

An engaged employee is more likely to:

- Share their ideas openly during a team meeting
- Proactively anticipate issues and take initiative to find solutions
- Actively seek out opportunities to learn new skills
- Go above and beyond to deliver great customer service
- Approach work with a can-do attitude

A disengaged employee may:

- Display a decline in work quality, with increased errors

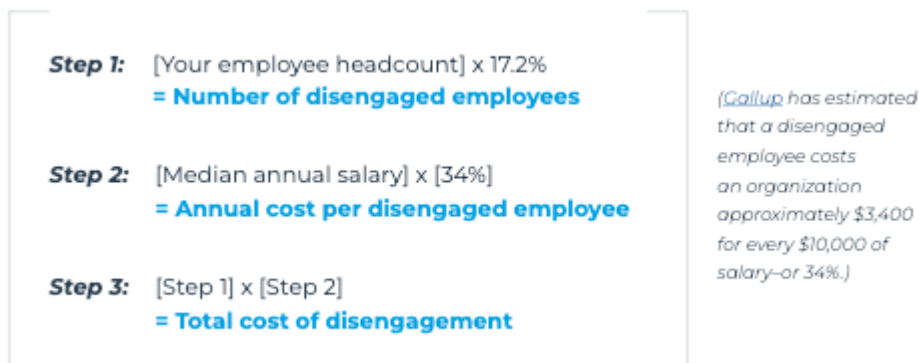
or missed deadlines

- Have a cynical outlook and resist change or new ideas
- Show a lack of initiative or enthusiasm for new projects
- Put minimal effort into building relationships at work
- Seem withdrawn and disinterested in team activities or meetings

The cost of disengagement

According to [recent data collected by Arbinger](#), employees who say they are satisfied at their organization are 3x more likely than others to work for companies that experienced significant revenue increases in the last year. Happy and engaged employees are signs of a successful organization, which ultimately means increased revenue.

If you're curious about the cost of employee disengagement at your organization, use this formula to get an idea of what disengaged employees are costing you:



This figure helps underscore the tangible costs of disengagement, including lost productivity, increased absenteeism, diminished profitability, and the expenses tied to replacing staff. Beyond the bottom line, disengagement undermines organizational cohesion, dampens innovation, and accelerates turnover. Therefore, fostering an engaged workforce is not merely about enhancing profitability but about creating a cohesive, innovative, and enduring organizational culture.

How to boost employee engagement

1. **Acknowledge your team's humanity:** Recognize employees as individuals with lives outside work. Offering flexibility, empathy, and genuine concern can significantly boost engagement.
2. **Express appreciation:** Cultivating a culture of recognition can motivate employees, increasing their productivity and loyalty. Simple acts of acknowledgment can significantly uplift morale.
3. **Value feedback:** Soliciting and acting on feedback shows respect for employees' insights, enhancing their sense of value and engagement.
4. **Foster psychological safety:** Creating an environment where employees can voice ideas and concerns without fear fosters innovation and collaboration.
5. **Invest in development:** Offering continuous learning opportunities demonstrates a commitment to employees' growth, driving engagement and loyalty.
6. **Embody your mission and values:** Operations aligned with core values inspire a sense of purpose and belonging among employees.
7. **Equip your team effectively:** Providing the necessary tools and resources is essential for employee success and satisfaction.
8. **Promote social bonds:** Encouraging social interaction among team members can strengthen relationships, enhancing communication and collaboration.
9. **Demonstrate trust:** Empowering employees to take initiative and make decisions can foster a sense of ownership and engagement.
10. **Prioritize transparency:** Open communication about the company's direction and challenges makes employees feel valued and included.

Leadership impact on employee engagement

Employee engagement thrives on a foundation of mutual trust and responsibility. [Impactful leaders](#) who set clear expectations and empower employees to take ownership create an environment where individuals feel valued and motivated. This, in turn, fosters collaboration, as team members who are accountable are more likely to rely on and support their colleagues.

After all, a [culture of accountability](#) breeds proactivity. Employees who take ownership are more likely to anticipate challenges, solve problems independently, and suggest improvements—all contributing to a more engaged and high-performing team. The cycle is cyclical. Engaged employees, taking initiative and collaborating effectively, alleviate some of the leadership burden, allowing leaders to focus on further empowering their team. This, in turn, strengthens accountability and fuels a continuous loop of high performance and engagement.

Pet Food Express' recipe for success

Pet Food Express isn't your average pet store. Founded in 1982, they've grown from 6 to 63 stores by focusing on two things: high-quality pet food and a fantastic team.

They realized their strong company culture was their secret weapon. It's all about teamwork, great customer service, and having fun. Employees are empowered to make decisions and managers encourage open, honest feedback—because happy employees mean happy customers.

This approach has paid off. Amy Vargas, a district manager, says it's led to a culture of trust and helped them stay ahead of the competition.

Key takeaway: By investing in its people, Pet Food Express found the perfect recipe for success.

Watch their story here:

The importance of fostering employee engagement

Happy employees mean a successful business. Here's how:

- **Value everyone's ideas.** Recognize what each person brings to the table.
- **Make everyone feel welcome.** Build a team environment where everyone feels included.
- **Help people grow.** Invest in training and development for your employees.

This doesn't just boost short-term profits. It creates a stronger company culture, sparks fresh ideas, and helps you win in the long run. Equipping your employees with the latest skills and knowledge through training and coaching programs further fuels this cycle. By investing in their development, you empower them to be more productive, innovative, and engaged, ultimately driving even greater success for your company.

The bottom line is, invest in your employees, and they'll invest in your company's success.

Check out [Arbinger's latest trends report](#) to see how to bring more humanity to work and further improve employee engagement.

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