Worried About Disengaged Employees? Make These 7 Changes.



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Successful employee engagement does not just happen. It is a conscious strategy that demands a significant investment in energy, time, and resources. In a competitive market, an engaged workforce is an organization’s most significant advantage. Return on investment in engagement strategies can generate financial uplift and create economic opportunities for employers. On the flip side, poor engagement contributes to low morale, turnover, poor customer service and impacts the company bottom line.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, people engagement has hit a new

high. Gallup reported that in May 2020 the percentage of “engaged” workers reached 38%, the highest since tracking this metric. “Not engaged” staff represented 49% of people who put in the time but lacked energy and passion to their work, and 13% were “actively disengaged” through their horrible work experiences and permeating their unhappiness throughout the workplace.

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Covid-19 has disrupted people’s lives, from provoking fears about health and finances to large populations working from home. How organizations respond to the crisis impacts engagement. Some factors are outside an organization’s control, and there are many that leaders can influence to ensure their people feel heard, respected, and cared for. Here is how to get started.

Engage the manager first

For all the tools and resources that organizations equip managers to foster employee engagement, workplaces need to engage managers first. Gallup’s State of the American Manager report expressed how a manager influences an employee’s level of engagement and performance. Organizations need to select the right talent for a managerial role that matches the needs of the business. Assessment tools gather information on thinking styles, behavioral traits, and people’s abilities to lead through stressful times.

Managers are the conduit to connection

With increases in worry, stress, and burnout, coupled with rising loneliness, the workplace has a critical function in sustaining wellbeing ever so more. With parents homeschooling, juggling household, and personal responsibilities, while

participating in videoconferences, employees have found themselves suddenly and unexpectedly working and parenting simultaneously.

Leaders must adjust workplace policies, virtual events, and development programs to a new normal. Workplaces must equip managers to individualize to each person’s situation. When the crisis passes, people will remember how their leaders responded at a time when they needed you the most.

Transition mindset from boss to coach

Tapping into the full potential of your people demands a shift from traditional authority, reward, and punishment approaches to building partnerships. Instilling a constant state of fear, especially during a crisis, does not inspire loyalty or support quality work. Workplaces that promote managers as coaches lead by building trusting and respectful relationships of mutual benefit.

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Coaching your team to success involves leveraging people’s strengths to allow them to shine, create opportunities for people to progress their career, and align individual work with business goals. Leaders must articulate expectations that require focus and cultivate an environment that provides employees autonomy, space, and flexibility to respond to responsibilities and priorities inside and outside of work.

Talk but listen more

In times of crisis, communication can drop off; however, to move the needle towards engagement, employees rely on you for direction, instruction, and expectations. Leaders need to take to time to listen, engage in one-on-one conversations, ask

them what is working and what is not. By observing the dynamics in a team meeting, leaders can see if there are any underlying tensions.

Atlassian recently announced that they are supporting their employees to choose where they work, whether it be at home, in the office or a hybrid model. Atlassian labeled this new way of working ‘Team Anywhere’ which works on the premise that ‘talent everywhere, work flexibly and reimagine teamwork’.

Encourage growth and development

According to Achievers’ 2020 Engagement & Retention Report, “43% of employees are looking for or would consider leaving their company because of career advancement”. Offering growth prospects to your remote employees will help drive employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Opportunities do not necessarily have to be a promotion, raise or title change. It can be as simple as offering ‘lunch and learns’, acknowledging and rewarding participation in virtual conferences, and allocating 30 minutes to map out employees’ career paths either within or external to the company. Other mechanisms include weekly performance check-ins, career development, or cross-functional training.

The First USA bank created a culture of development by leading monthly career development workshops to identify capability gaps and begin development planning. As a result, employee satisfaction scores increased by 25% and staff retention increased by 39% leading to replacement cost savings of $1.5 million.

Lead with authentic recognition

People feel appreciated and celebrated when publicly given kudos for their effort. A simple “thank-you” note or

recognizing them through the intranet can go a long way. As companies try a variety of methods to keep employees connected amid a crisis, managers need to double their recognition efforts.

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Gartner supports authentic recognition as it can serve as a strong signal for behaviors to be emulated. Public acknowledgments, tokens of appreciation and development opportunities are vital perks. When employees receive recognition for their commitment, focus, hard work, they are more likely to continue to remain engaged and satisfied in their role.

Embrace a whole-person approach

At the Workplace Wellness Festival, Atlassian Global Leader Scott Hazard shared how the Wellbeing Central program, which was implemented pre-COVID focused predominantly on physical wellbeing. Now the program encapsulates a whole employee approach as what happens in one part of an employee's life impacts on all others. To fully support employees, Atlassian expanded engagement services to incorporate mental, financial, and social to consider life outside of work and how employees can decompress from long days.

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