

How To Build Employee Engagement

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How To Build Employee Engagement, Introduction by Thierry Goder, President of IMSA Search Global Partners and CEO of Alentaris Recruitment Limited

The latest data indicates a global decline in employee engagement. According to Statista, the global employee engagement rate, which reached its highest point in 2020 at 69%, has decreased annually to 67% in 2023.

All regions experienced drops, but Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest engagement rate at 68%, while Europe had the lowest at 52%.

In the US, the situation is more alarming, with Gallup reporting 33% engagement among full and part-time employees, the lowest level of engagement since 2013.

The most significant drops in engagement occurred among:

1. Younger workers under 35, especially Gen Z (down 5-6%)
2. Workers who had the option to work remotely but were exclusively in-office (down 6%)
3. Workers who were exclusively remote (down 5%)

Employee Engagement a Priority in Top Performing Companies

According to Gallup's latest meta-analysis of 183K business units across 53 industries and 90 countries, "teams in the top quartile of employee engagement achieve 23% higher profitability than those in the bottom quartile. They are better at retaining top talent, serving customers, achieving higher-quality output and other outcomes that lead to profit." With an intentional focus on employee and manager experiences, some strategies for engagement include prioritizing clear communication and incorporating employee feedback into action planning, promoting wellbeing through Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), and flexible work schedules. Their efforts have resulted in significant measurable business outcomes, such as reductions in absenteeism, safety incidents, and turnover, and increases in profitability, productivity, and customer loyalty.

AI and Employee Engagement Technologies

As HR professionals, we can leverage AI-driven technologies to enhance internal communications and support employee engagement. Some examples of these technologies are: Bonusly and Namely, which enable employees to give and receive public recognition for their work; Udemy and Coursera, which offer online courses for employees to learn new skills or improve existing ones; and Calm and Headspace, which help employees improve their mental and physical wellbeing.

Leadership, Culture, and Purpose

As HR professionals, we know that leaders and managers play a crucial role in fostering a positive culture that drives employee engagement. We should design and implement professional development programs that equip leaders with the skills to inspire and empower their teams and employees. Help leaders to communicate the company's vision and values clearly and consistently, so that employees feel aligned with a common purpose. Additionally, organize and support community service activities that reflect our culture and values.

Active Employee Listening Programs Improve Engagement

Given the pace with which business environments are shifting, annual surveying is no longer enough. Recognizing the need for employee feedback, McKinsey & Company created its own internal "employee listening" program with an online survey mechanism called "Pulse." Surveying occurs throughout the year, with leadership submitting questions to address issues as they arise. It is easy and anonymous, so response rate is high, and comments are honest.

To be effective employees must feel heard. Transparent and authentic sharing of results is important. To achieve this, the company conducts frequent firm-wide readouts and internal community dialogues in person, virtually, and via online discussion boards. Analytics are packaged to help leaders focus. The survey includes a "help" button which puts individual employees in direct communication with trained professionals, so support is available in real time.

Employee Engagement Always Evolving

Engaged employees experience greater well-being, stronger retention, lower absenteeism, and higher productivity, making it a strategic imperative for all organizations. In a rapidly changing world, the work-life demands on employees are constantly shifting. As employee engagement continues to evolve, what companies do to address it must evolve as well.

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