

6 STEPS TO IMPROVED EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



“Engagement.” It’s quite a buzzword when it comes to employees these days. But what does it really mean?

At CAEL, we speak with employers frequently about the concept of engagement, and in most cases, we’re referring to employee enthusiasm and performance and, by extension, employee productivity. The bottom line: Engaged employees are employees who feel valued. Because of that, they are more productive and more likely to stick with the company.

According to research by Aon Hewitt, the best employers are better at engaging employees, with roughly 20 percent more engaged workers than the average company. That means that those companies have 20 percent more team members who are passionate about their work, their company’s future and their future with the company.

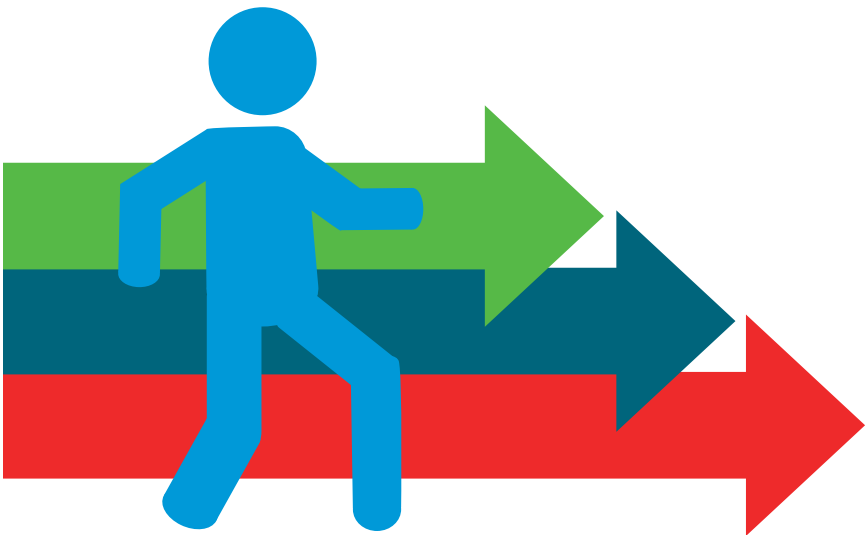
And yet, we’re in the midst of an employee engagement crisis. According to a 2015 Gallup poll, only 31.5 percent of workers reported in 2014 that they were actually engaged in their work. According to a 2014 LinkedIn survey, one in four employees are actively searching for new jobs. And according to the Human Capital Institute, 70 percent of companies report that they have weak talent pipelines. You don’t have to be a mathematician to know that all of the above numbers add up to a frightening equation for the future of most businesses, translating to enormous costs in lost productivity, hiring and training.

It doesn’t have to be that way.

Employees want to be engaged just as much as employers want engaged employees. To make strides on both sides, a company needs to focus on listening, leading and opening the lines of communication with employees. It’s actually quite simple, if you follow these steps.

1 UNDERSTAND WHAT MOTIVATES YOUR WORKFORCE

The No. 1 move a company can make to improve employee engagement is to listen and get to the heart of what drives their employees. You can do this with employee surveys, lunchroom meetings or one-on-ones. Ask them honest questions and welcome honest answers: What do you love about the company? About your job? What do you dislike about the company? About your job? What do you want to change about your job? Too often, employers don't ask these questions until it's too late. Recent research shows that employee engagement isn't just about a particular job, but about the company's culture, values and opportunities for growth.



BE CLEAR ON WHAT SKILLS AND COMPETENCIES ARE VALUED BY THE COMPANY

Employees want to be engaged. They want to continue working with their employers. They want to feel as though they matter. To encourage those natural inclinations, company leaders must provide employees with insights into their position within the company and also clearly communicate how to advance that position. Are there skills and competencies the employee can acquire that can help him or her move up or over? Create clear visuals/maps on how to move from A to B, B to C and beyond to help that employee have direction and feel a sense of control over his or her future.



3 OFFER TRAINING AND LEARNING THAT SUPPORTS A VARIETY OF PATHS TO ADVANCEMENT

Now that you've informed employees of the type of training and learning they need in order to advance, it's up to company leaders to support that learning. That can take the form of tuition assistance programs, internal training offerings, certificate and certification reimbursement, MOOCs and so many other options. In offering these types of things, you're not just helping to engage your employees, you're also bolstering your talent pipeline and strengthening the future of your company.



4 HONE IN ON THE EMPLOYEES THAT TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE TRAINING

Not everyone will be interested in a tuition reimbursement program or spending a day or two at a workshop. Your best employees may well be the ones who opt to take advantage of your training/education programs. They're the ones that will pay attention to the maps that say, "If you develop A, then you can move on to B." By offering these opportunities, you can identify those employees who are willing to donate their own time and energy to develop their skills, while also expanding their value to the company. By making your company "sticky" for motivated employees, they won't want to leave.



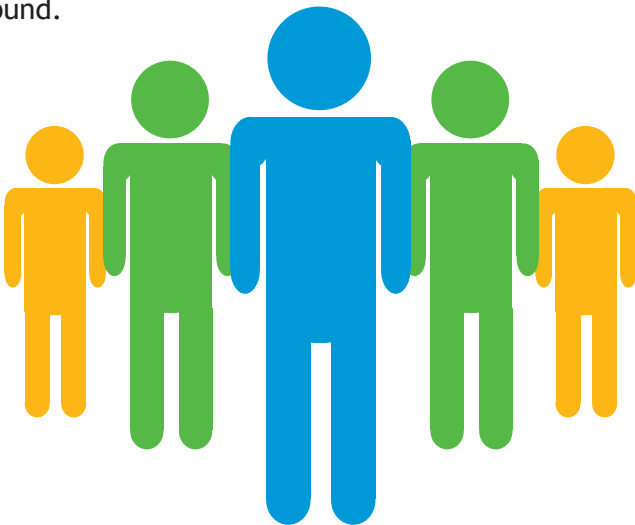
5 BRING IN AN OUTSIDE ADVISOR TO TALK WITH EMPLOYEES ABOUT ADVANCEMENT OR, PERHAPS, LATERAL MOVES TO ANOTHER DEPARTMENT

Too often, employees are unhappy with their current position but afraid to talk to their supervisors about moving to another part of the company. It's helpful to bring in an unbiased career advisor who understands the company's growth goals and can talk with the employee about the skills he or she needs to move vertically or horizontally to a new position. Otherwise, the business risks losing the employee, altogether. Research from Sinclair Community College shows that students who received a learning plan were 3.4 times more likely to stay in college and twice as likely to earn a college degree.



6 DEVELOP STRONG LEADERS FROM THE GROUND UP

Employees are more likely to be engaged if they have leadership they look up to. Developing your entry and mid-level workforce is just as important as developing your high potentials. Your team wants to feel as though the company is going somewhere. They want to feel confident that their workplace is an environment where they can build their career which is why developing your entry-level and mid-level workforce is just as important as developing your high potentials. Employees want smart leaders who understand the business, have a vision about how the company can grow, and show support and compassion for their employees. If that's not there, good employees won't stick around.



If you support a learning endeavor, provide visibility into the skills and competencies that are valued by your company now and into the future, and open the lines of communication with employees, you're on your way to having a more engaged workforce and a stronger future for your business.

CAEL CAN HELP

The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) is widely recognized as the national best practices leader in connecting learning to work through consulting, employee advising, career mapping, research, dissemination and more.

CAEL is a 501(c) non-profit, international organization with 40 years of experience in workforce learning, including 30 years of experience working directly with employers to create and deliver effective talent management solutions.

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