



Essential elements for an engaged workforce *...and greater productivity*

By Kathryn FitzGerald

Many organisations now realise that the key to productivity, retention and the achievement of business goals is to effectively **'engage'** their employees. In this article we look at the benefits of a motivated, engaged workforce and the key elements to achieving this objective.

ONE major benefit of an 'engaged' workforce

Organisations with 'engaged' employees are likely to have much higher levels of productivity and profitability. Engaged employees are committed to quality and customer service and they attack their work with commitment and dedication. Potentially, they demonstrate better safety records and greater employment stability.

Highly engaged employees are:

- excited about their work and focus on accomplishing the task at hand
- not easily distracted and are more willing to work extra hours
- eager to volunteer for difficult assignments
- more stable with a greater record of retention

Productive staff will:

- find ways to work around obstacles and use initiative to achieve goals
- encourage their co-workers to achieve higher levels of performance
- be strong advocates for their company's products and services
- demonstrate better safety records

The top TWO influencers of employee engagement

Although there are many contributing factors, it is widely accepted that the top two influencers of employee engagement are the individual's direct supervisor and the quality of employee communication in an organisation.

1. **The direct supervisor.** Whilst employees need strong relationships with co-workers, their immediate supervisor most often determines the path the employee will take: toward continued engagement or toward the ranks of the "not engaged" or "actively disengaged".

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2. **Communication.** The level of communication within an organisation can also influence employee engagement. People like to be informed and feel respected: to be kept in the loop about what is happening within the organisation and are made aware of changes which may affect their role before they occur.

THREE Tips to prevent your 'engaged' employees from becoming disengaged

1. **Give recognition to your best performers.** One trap is that engaged employees tend to get the least amount of focus and attention from managers. In part this is because they are already performing at the level required and meeting the organisation's expectations.

Some managers mistakenly believe they should leave their best employees alone. *Great managers do just the opposite.* Great managers tell us again and again that they spend most of their time with their most productive and talented employees because they have the most potential. If a manager coaxes an average performance from a below-average employee, they still have an average performer. But if they coach a good employee to greatness, they gain a great performer.

2. **Catch them doing things right.** Recognition is personally fulfilling, but even more, recognition communicates what an organisation values and it reinforces employee behaviours that reflect those values.
3. **Be creative with your communication style.** Organisations are now embracing social media as part of their employee engagement strategy. More and more, the line between internal and external communication is blurring and organisations that communicate effectively through social media are finding that it enhances a positive workplace culture, supports employee engagement and reinforces a favourable reputation.

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Set clear expectations, give employees the right materials, focus on the employee, and recognise your best performers - those are the strategies that drive engagement.



The best people for the best people