

# Rethinking team engagement



Every organization understands that an engaged workforce is more innovative, creative, efficient and productive. Research suggests that organizations with high levels of engagement post higher shareholder returns even in turbulent times. For example, in 2010, companies with high engagement posted total shareholder returns that were 22 percent higher than average. On the other hand, companies with low engagement levels had total shareholder returns that were 28 percent *lower* than the average.

Creating a high performing organization is becoming more challenging. Today's culturally and generationally diverse workplace where more and more people work remotely means traditional, one-size fits all approaches are less effective. As a result, organizations around the world are rethinking their engagement strategies.

## Satisfaction versus engagement

Employee satisfaction is different from employee engagement. People who are satisfied are not necessarily working hard on behalf of the organization. Those who are engaged do. They care about their work and willingly go the extra mile to help an organization reach its goals.

Traditional employee engagement strategies involve several factors including:

- Effective communications that inform employees of corporate mission, values, strategies and goals.
- Attractive salaries and benefits.
- Opportunities for professional development.
- Rewards and recognition programs.
- Inclusive, safe and fair workplaces.

These elements still apply, but with a new generation now beginning to dominate the workforce and new technologies transforming the way we work and communicate, creative employee strategies are required.

## A new millennium

The biggest change to the global workforce is the enormous Millennial generation (those born between 1980 and 1999) that will make up 50 percent of the global workforce by 2020 and 75 percent by 2025. They not only have a different way of communicating and attitude about work, they have different demands for employers. They look for:

- Companies they'd feel proud to work for.
- Transformative leaders who demonstrate integrity and empathy.
- Corporate social responsibility. This is a generation that wants to change the world for the better and they expect businesses to do the same.
- An inclusive, fair corporate culture in which they can enjoy their work and co-workers.
- Managers who provide constant feedback, recognition and mentorship. Millennials tend to disengage quickly if they feel they're unappreciated or going nowhere.
- Work-life balance. Family, community, faith and personal pursuits are important and flexibility about how work is done has become an engagement necessity.

## New trends in employee engagement

Engaging employees in many locations and from different generations, cultures and backgrounds, all with their own individual needs, wants and preferences sounds daunting but it is possible. As more and more organizations change their focus, new engagement trends are emerging. Some of these are:

1. **Pulse surveys.** A rapidly changing global workforce means that annual surveys are not enough. Pulse surveys are short and conducted frequently, providing snapshots of how employees are feeling and changes to engagement levels.
2. **Employee “sensing” applications.** These allow employees to indicate how they’re feeling in real time and help manager’s flag potential problems.
3. **Intranets and social networks.** They are an effective way to communicate and gather information but also great tools to help employees collaborate, socialize and support each other. However, organizations need to keep up with new social platforms and trends.
4. **Flattening structures.** Millennials thrive in a more casual and flat work environment and organizations in many countries agree. A Deloitte study found that 92 percent of companies don’t think that they’re organized correctly. Hierarchy and bureaucracy are being replaced by flexible and responsive teams.

## Evaluating your current engagement strategy

Adjusting or recreating engagement strategies can be complex processes but the first step is to evaluate if your company’s strategies are working. That involves asking a few key questions that include:

1. Has your employee demographic changed? Has our workforce become younger? More culturally diverse? How many employees work in remote locations or virtually?
2. What is our turnover rate? Absenteeism rate?
3. Has our productivity increased or decreased?
4. Are our customers satisfied with our products and services?
5. Are we asking the right questions in our engagement surveys? Gallup, a global performance-management consulting firm uses the following survey questions:
  - I know what is expected of me at work.
  - At work, my opinions seem to count.
  - I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
  - The mission or purpose of my company makes me that feel my job is important.
  - At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
  - My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
  - In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
  - I have a best friend at work.
  - My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.
  - In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
  - There is someone at work who encourages my development.
  - This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.
6. Are we using technology effectively?

For more information on evaluating, developing and maintaining an employee engagement strategy that reaches your company’s unique workforce, contact your Employee and Family Assistance Program.