



Ambassify

**THE ULTIMATE
GUIDE
TO EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT**



Table of contents:

The Curious Case of Employee Engagement.....	5
· Best Buy - 1-Point Increase That Resulted in Millions in Revenue.....	7
What EXACTLY is Employee Engagement?.....	10
· Why Are Engaged Employees - Engaged?.....	13
Employee Engagement Statistics That Matter.....	14
7 Pillars of Employee Engagement (& What You Can Do to Build Them Up).....	15
· Company-Employee Value Alignment.....	16
· Professional & Personal Growth Opportunities.....	17
· Employee Health & Wellbeing.....	19
· Employee Advocacy.....	20
· Relationship With Managers.....	22
· Recognition and Rewards.....	24
· Workplace Relationships & Friendships.....	26
Connection Between Internal Comms & Employee Engagement.....	29
How to Measure Employee Engagement.....	32
Start Working On Employee Engagement Today.....	35



The Curious Case of Employee Engagement

Working on employee engagement inside any organization is a lot like working on a really big jigsaw puzzle. Imagine it now:

- a. **hundreds of interlocking pieces that need to fit together**
- b. **but they change shape depending on the angle you're looking at them from**
- c. **and it's difficult to start because the edges of the picture are cut out.**

If you've ever worked on any jigsaw puzzle, you know exactly what we're talking about. Just when you think you've nailed it, you realize that all the pieces that make up the sky are blue and virtually the same!

Employee engagement is a lot like that - there's a lot that goes into it, and it's an ongoing process and not an event. So your work is never done.

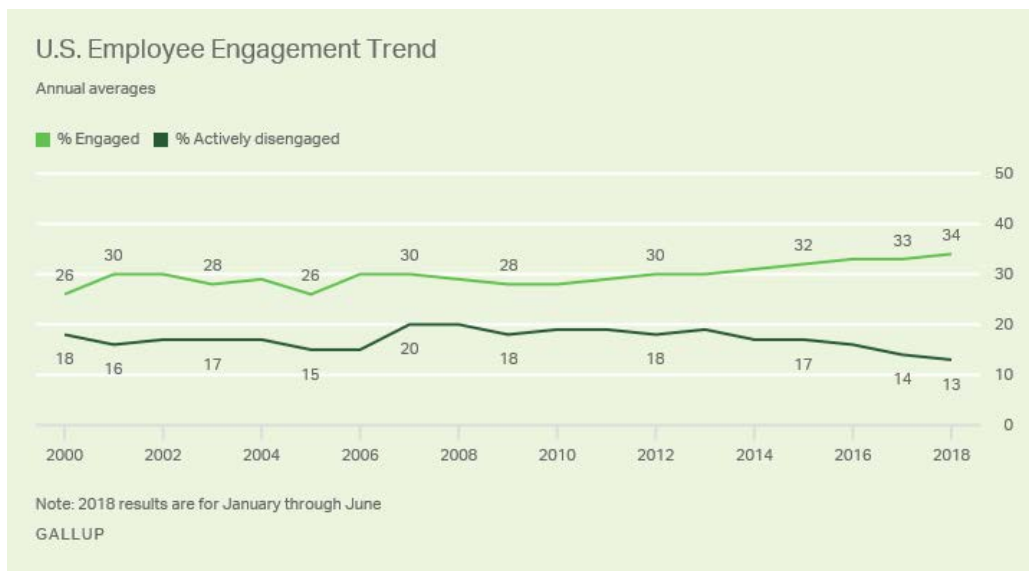
Which brings us to the question: **"If it's so complicated, why bother with engagement at all?"**

A good question that deserves a good answer:

High employee engagement is what separates great companies from those that are merely good at what they do. It's the one area that you can work on that will show immediate results when looked through the lens of employee performance, cost-cutting, and revenue increase.

Also, most of your competitors are not doing it so the sooner you start, the faster you will surpass them.

[According to Gallup](#), just one-third (34%) of US employees are actively engaged. The two-thirds (76%) are either apathetic or, worse, actively disengaged.



The beauty of actively working on drawing in your employees and making them invested in the future of your company is in this - when you do it right, every other metric you look at will show movement. Your sales and revenue will shoot up, your costs will go down, and your profit margin will soar.

Here's what Best Buy's management learned in 2013, after turning their attention to declining employee engagement of line employees and implementing measures to address the problem.

Best Buy - 1-Point Increase That Resulted in Millions in Revenue

With its 4,3000 square meters, vast inventories, and a young workforce fresh out of school, a typical Best Buy location is a challenge to manage and run.

In 2013, a regional manager in Connecticut, Eric Taverna, saw the truth of that when sales in his region slipped. A diligent number-cruncher, Taverna looked at the data and saw that foot traffic was steady but that one thing did decline - the overall happiness of employees in one of his stores.

According to the data from [Gallup's Q12](#) Process system that the company was using, employee engagement was at an all-time low at Best Buy. Employees at this particular store that Taverna managed cited several reasons for that - problems with managers, uncooperative colleagues, and rigid company policies.

Guided by Gallup's recommendations and his own research into employee engagement, Taverna started implementing changes at the store. These changes were not drastic:

- Slackers were reprimanded and re-trained - those who did not improve were laid off.
- Employees were consulted about company policies they objected to the most - where possible, their suggestions were implemented.
- Managers received additional training on how to listen to and address employee grievances.
- A "team store-close" policy was instituted - every employee on the shift would stay a bit longer to help colleagues prepare the store for the next day (so that a handful of employees didn't have to stay past midnight to do it).

The store bounced back miraculously. By the end of the year, its engagement score jumped from good to great -- to the top 10% of the workgroups in the Gallup database. That was enough for other Best Buy stores to take notice, and implement similar changes to boost engagement and grow revenues.

In the end, the overall engagement score for that store rose by 1 point (on Gallup's Q12 scale from 0 to 10) but that was enough for it to close out the year with \$100,000 in extra revenue. Applied to 1000+ Best Buy stores around the world, the effect of these few changes is staggering - millions of dollars added to the bottom line every single year!



In today's business world, where everything is automated and we work with prediction models that leave very little to chance, there's really only one variable that companies can easily influence. That variable is the people who work for them. That's why employee engagement matters, and why you should make it a top priority if you want to grow your business.

There are only three measurements that tell you nearly everything you need to know about your organisation's overall performance: employee engagement, customer satisfaction, cash flow.

It goes without saying that company, small or large can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it.

Jack Welch, former CEO General Electric



What EXACTLY is Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement is not an age-old concept but it's not exactly new, either.

The term first appears in a 1990 article by William A. Khan, titled: "[Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work](#)". In it, Khan defines employee engagement as:

"(Employee engagement is) the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances."

A mouthful, right? Let's take a look at another definition, this one from Gareth Jones:

"Employee engagement is a collection of emotional and psychological forces that determine the direction of a person's behavior in an organization and their level of effort and persistence".

And here's how we define employee engagement here at Ambassify:

"Employee engagement is defined by the emotional connection employees have to their company. It's the willingness to continually go that extra mile because company success is a matter of personal pride".

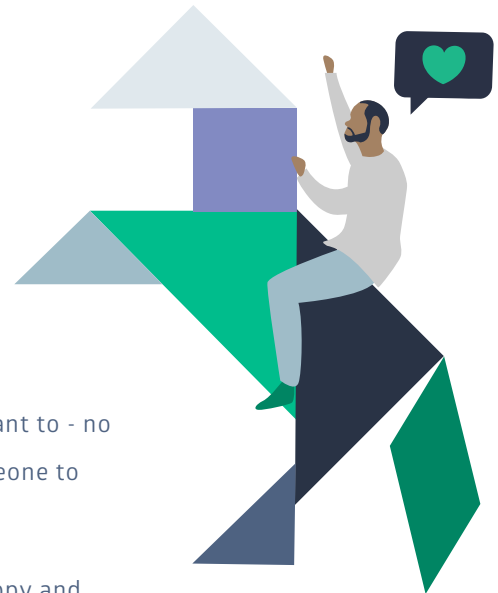
Notice the operative two words in all of those definitions?

Emotional connection.

Engaged employees feel their company in their bones. They understand its purpose and its mission, and they understand the role that they have to play in order to facilitate company success.

When the push comes to shove, they'll stay late, come in early, and take a paycheck cut because they know that their organization (and the people in it) would do the same for them. They do this because they want to - no manager in the world commands so much respect that they can order someone to behave this way.

When it's achieved, elusive as it is, true employee engagement leads to happy and fulfilled employees, satisfied customers, streamlined operations, stronger employer brand, and better business results.



In Case You're Wondering:

Yes, there's a link between high employee engagement and a strong employer brand.

According to research conducted by Human Resources Today, an HR website that looked at over [6,000 companies and more than 2 million employee reviews on Glassdoor website](#), the biggest indicator of whether or not an employee will recommend the company they work for is that company's culture.

How an employee rates “culture and values” is 4.9 times more predictive of a company’s recommendation than “salary and benefits”.

“Career opportunities” follow closely, being 4.5 times more predictive than “salary and benefits”, with the third place going to “confidence in senior management” - 4 times more predictive”.

Josh Bersin, Global HR Industry Analyst



It is evident from this that companies that score high on culture, high on career opportunities, and high on overall satisfaction with leadership and values can count on a recommendation from their employees. Of course, when companies score high on these things, it's almost certain that their employees are highly engaged.

To learn more about employer branding, what it is, and how it can help you hire top talent and save money in the long run, make sure to download our Ultimate Guide to Employer Branding - it's full of actionable stuff that you can start implementing today!



Download Employer Branding Guide (PDF)

Why Are Engaged Employees - Engaged?

- **They are self-guided** - they are trained and encouraged to do what's expected of them with minimal guidance from superiors.
- **Their role 'fits'** - the role they work in is clearly defined, and they know what's expected of them.
- **Their contribution is celebrated** - they know their worth, and they know their company knows it, too. Their hard work is noticed, appreciated, and rewarded.
- **They are encouraged to grow** - the company they work for sets aside considerable resources for them to invest in both personal and professional growth.
- **Work relationships matter to them** - at work, their coworkers are also their friends or, at least, people with whom they don't mind spending a lot of time.



Employee Engagement Statistics That Matter

If you're still not convinced that employee engagement matters all that much, here are some statistics that will change your mind. Keep in mind that we've pulled these numbers from companies on the [Gallup's Top Quartile on Engagement](#) (meaning the companies that score among the best in the world when it comes to employee engagement) just to give you an idea of what you're missing out on if choose not to focus your employees.

- Teams that score top marks on engagement report a **41%** reduction in absenteeism
- Additionally, their turnover is **59%** lower than that of teams with low engagement
- Engaged employees are also **21%** more profitable than disengaged ones
- They bring in **43%** more revenue in total than their disengaged counterparts
- **87%** of engaged employees are more likely to stay with their company
- Great company culture can result in a **4X** long-term increase in revenue
- On average, highly engaged employees get **10%** better customer ratings
- Disengaged employees cost the economy between **450** and **500 BILLION**, yearly

7 Pillars of Employee Engagement (& What You Can Do to Build Them Up)

Once in a blue moon, an engaged employee - someone who delivers more in every aspect of their job, and does so consistently - just....happens.

Something clicks - in the hiring process, during onboarding, or in the first few weeks on the job - and that employee starts really **feeling** the company. With a bit of effort (and a lot of luck), the company now has a top-performing champion who is worth their weight in gold.

For most companies, however, creating an engaged workforce is a conscious effort.

It requires planning and resources, and it takes time.

One great employee is an outlier - a company full of great employees only happens when the management is dedicated and committed; when everyone, regardless of their position, lifts everyone else up, and when attention is paid to even the tiniest details of day-to-day culture and operations.

To get there, you will need to focus on **7 pillars of employee engagement**. Let's explore them together, and see what you can do to strengthen them and build a team of truly engaged employees!





Company-Employee Value Alignment

People prefer to work for companies they feel represent them and their particular values.

When that connection exists, going to work becomes something bigger - an adventure in which they:

- a. **do something meaningful that they like, and**
- b. **do it in the company of like-minded people that they feel connected to**

Getting this kind of connection hinges on creating the right company culture. Great companies that manage to do it (such as Google, IKEA, Tesla, and others), do it by focusing on their why. That's the reason behind what the company is selling, doing, or developing - and it's what employees will feel connected to.

Company Culture Alignment Action Steps:

- **Find your WHY** - sit down with the owners (or the management team) and write a concise statement that answers why the company exists in the first place. Dig deep - "making money" is never the right answer.
- **Craft an inspired mission statement** - condense that why into a sentence that underpins your core values.

- **Communicate those values clearly** - everyone in the company should understand the message behind your why. It needs to be reflected in how you communicate, do business, hire people, and everything else.
- **Set an example and be consistent** - no one in the company is exempt from adhering to company values. This applies to top management, and even the owners, as much as it does to line employees.



Professional & Personal Growth Opportunities

Personal growth and development opportunities are a very important part of a company culture that supports and actively encourages employee engagement.

Employees need to feel that their growth is an important company objective, and that they are worthy of such investments. Otherwise, they will check out sooner rather than later.

Gallup found that [87% of millennials place a lot of importance on personal or career growth and development opportunities.](#) In fact, this is one of the top three factors when it comes to retaining millennial employees.

But, it's not just the millennials.

Psychologically, all employees are wired to always strive for betterment. They want to be challenged and learn new things, whether they know it or not. If

you want to keep them, you need to provide them with an environment that recognizes and encourages that need.

Employee Development & Growth Action Steps:

- **Educate managers on the value of learning** - people in key positions should actively encourage employees to take advantage of company resources.
- **Make learning comfortable, easy, and available** - this means having in-house learning materials and programs or subsidizing formal education.
- **Encourage passion projects & cross-departmental collaboration** - allow employees to allocate a percentage of their work time to pet projects, and encourage them to collaborate with colleagues from other departments.
- **Subsidize personal growth & betterment** - help employees learn new skills that are not work-related by subsidizing courses (things like cooking, sailing, woodworking, and other hobby-type things).



Employee Health & Wellbeing

According to Gallup, close to 62% of employees who identify as strongly engaged feel that their [work has a positive effect on their physical wellbeing](#). That's because they work in companies that actually invest in making them feel good.

This means that employee health should not be viewed as a cost, ever. It's an opportunity to save money by increasing productivity, and decreasing sick days and employee churn.

In fact, The Harvard Business Review goes as far as to suggest that [well-thought-out employee wellness programs can result in 3 - 1 financial returns](#) in the long run.

Healthy snack options also play a part in overall employee health. Most employees will eat at least one full meal while on the job. If you can make sure that it's a healthy meal, and offer some variety while at it, your employees will thank you for it.

Employee Health & Wellbeing Action Steps:

- **Build long-term health and wellness programs** - a healthy lifestyle is not about hitting the gym every day. It's about building a culture that values physical activity and makes moving around a part of the daily routine.
- **Gamify the experience through competition and technology** - a bit of

friendly rivalry can go a long way when it comes to employee buy-in. You can organize company-wide challenges and have departments competing with one another

- **Subsidize a gym membership** - employees like to take advantage of job perks. Offer to cover the cost (or part) of their regular gym membership.
- **Provide easy access to healthy snacks** - if you can't go all out and have a fully-equipped kitchen in your offices, at least make sure that your break room is stocked with healthy snacks and organic fruit juices.
- **Promote mental health awareness** - keep employee depression and anxiety at bay by letting people know that it's okay to talk about it.



Employee Advocacy

A well-thought-out advocacy program can also help boost employee engagement. Advocacy does three things that boost employee feeling of ownership and investment into their company, and those three things are:

1. **A feeling of greater involvement** - employees who are involved in creating and sharing company-centric content feel connected to it.

2. **Personal branding opportunities** - work hits closer to home if employees feel that it's helping them build their name in the industry.
3. **Gamification boosts the feelings of happiness and satisfaction** - employees often compete with one another in advocacy activities. This element of gamification adds a bit of excitement to work which, in turn, promotes overall engagement.

Employee Advocacy Action Steps:

- **Select an enthusiastic advocacy team** - choose those employees that are excited about advocacy, and make sure that there's at least one senior (management) member in the team.
- **Choose your advocacy platform wisely** - Ambassify makes employee advocacy a breeze - it's intuitive, easy to set up and use, and has all the features you need to gamify the experience.
- **Get employees hooked with low-hanging fruit** - before moving onto big asks, create challenges that are easy to do - social media shares, likes, and similar.
- **Make rewards achievable and attractive** - rewards should be unique to your company, as well as realistically achievable.

- **Share the impact results with your employees** - every few months, share a couple of business wins that would not have been possible without the employees active in the advocacy program.

Here at Ambassify, we have helped dozens of businesses step up their advocacy game. Read our [Ultimate Guide to Employee Advocacy](#) and learn how to turn your employees into your best salespeople!



[Download Ultimate Guide to Employee Advocacy\(PDF\)](#)



Relationship With Managers

People don't quit bad jobs - they quit bad managers.

This adage might be old but new research says that it still holds true.

In a [study published in the Harvard Business Review](#), 58% of employees interviewed said that they trust complete strangers more than their boss.

Another survey, this one [published by Michelle McQuaid](#), a renowned workplace psychologist, found that 65% of employees would choose a better boss over a pay raise.

Middle management is especially important in this context. These are the managers who are in direct contact with most of the rank and file employees. They are in the trenches, executing strategies, running meetings, giving pep

talks and feedback, and dealing with the everyday office activities. [According to Gallup](#), how they are perceived accounts for 70% of the variance in employee engagement across business units.

In short, if the middle management is not doing a good job, it's felt by your whole organization!

Growing a Better Management Team - Action Steps:

- **Hire and promote the right people** - look for a mix of performance, culture fit, and empathy. Managers who can't put themselves in the shoes of their employees can't really understand and inspire them and are rarely successful.
- **Train them to do the right thing from the start** - managers should not be left to guess what's expected of them. Make sure you have written managerial guidelines that cover most (if not all) manager-employee scenarios.
- **Invest in their growth** - while not everyone can be a good manager, people with the aptitude for it might also need some training. Grow and nurture your managers by investing in their continued education.
- **Hold managers accountable** - make engagement levels of direct reports one of the KPIs for your managers.



Recognition and Rewards

Money and benefits are important considerations for people applying for a position at your company.

They are, however, not why people choose to stay - or to leave.

With everything else remaining the same, employees choose to stick with their companies because they fulfill more than just their basic needs. Some of the strongest of those needs have to do with respect, recognition, and self-fulfillment.

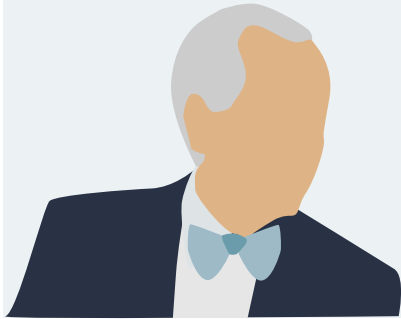
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow's hierarchy of needs illustrates this quite nicely. Money buys the bottom two tiers. Once those needs are satisfied, throwing more money at your employees comes with diminishing returns.

[According to a Gallup poll from 2009](#), employee engagement can fluctuate widely, depending on how good your managers are at giving your employees what they need in terms of recognition and rewards:

1. When a manager focuses on someone's strengths, the chances of that employee becoming disengaged drop to about 1%.
2. When they focus on someone's weaknesses, that employee has a higher chance of becoming disengaged (around 22%).
3. On the other hand, if a manager completely ignores an employee (by having no feedback and no kudos to give them), that employee's chances of becoming disengaged soar to a whopping 40%!



“People often say that motivation doesn’t last.

*Well, neither does bathing - that’s why we
recomend it daily.”*

Zig Ziglar

Building a Recognition-based Company Culture Action Steps:

- **Talk about the importance of workplace recognition** - connect the dots for your managers, and teach them how vital recognition is to employee engagement. Incorporate it into managerial training sessions.
- **Have weekly recognition activities** - consider starting off the week with a quick kudos session. This can be a short departmental all-hands-on-deck session where employees can thank a colleague for help during the previous week.
- **Create formal recognition programs** - monthly or quarterly awards provide employees with a goal they can strive toward.

- **Attach emotion to money and rewards** - allow employees to feel proud when they receive a bonus. Make the remuneration more about their contribution to the company goals than about the money itself.
- **Encourage employees to give kudos generously** - create a culture in which employees are encouraged to congratulate one another.



Workplace Relationships & Friendships

Although we are all often cautioned to keep our personal and professional lives separate, most studies on employee engagement have a bone to pick with that piece of advice. A [Gallup study](#) found that employees who say that they have a best friend at work can be up to 50% more engaged than those who don't.

The time when we went to work just to earn a paycheck is long gone. Today, employees expect more from their work - they expect adventure, friendships, and a sense of purpose. Considering that we all spend more time at work than at home, those expectations are not so unreasonable.

While it's true that you can't really force people to be friends, you can create an environment that encourages the formation of such bonds. It's a delicate

15%

of employees worldwide are engaged at work

1/5

employees say they have a best friend at work

x2

more likely for employees to be engaged if they have a best friend at work

line to walk, for sure, but failing to do so can result in low overall workplace engagement.

Facilitating Workplace Friendships - Action Steps:

- **Encourage employees to get to know one another** - explore the idea of cross-departmental teams to help employees build relationships across the organization.
- **Promote open communication and collaboration** - employees shouldn't be afraid of speaking up. Quite the opposite - they should feel that they can voice their opinions on matters, and even propose ideas and initiatives.
- **Organize social activities** - things like company sports teams, after work parties, and retreats and team-building outings all allow employees to get to know each other better outside of work.

If you don't know where to start with employee engagement activities, don't despair! We created a detailed 8-Week Action Plan that you can download and print out. Simply follow the steps and watch the overall engagement levels in your organization soar!

 [Download Employee Engagement 8-Week Action Plan](#)



Connection Between Internal Comms & Employee Engagement

As you can tell, a lot of factors go into creating a truly engaged workforce.

However, there's one key element that ties all of these factors together and that's communication.

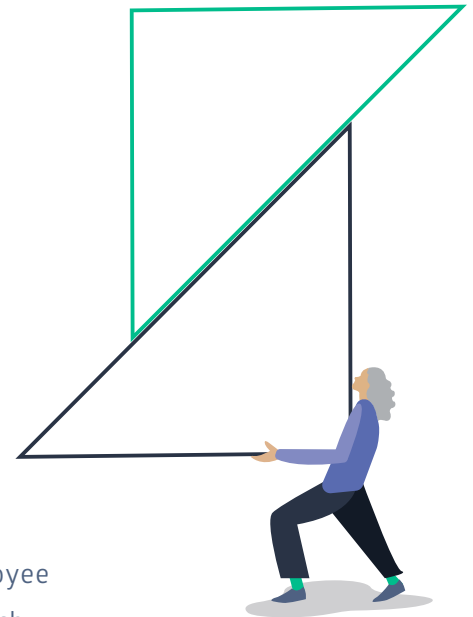
More specifically, your internal communications strategy.

Think about it:

- Company culture and employee-company values fit
- Relationships with managers
- Recognition mindset and rewards systems
- Employee advocacy activities
- Workplace connections and friendships

Five out of seven pillars that you need to build up in order to boost employee engagement are connected, to one degree or another, to how you approach internal and external communication within your organization.

If your employees are not communicating effectively, they are creating unnecessary work for themselves. From trivial matters, such as getting contact information from someone in another department to big-ticket things, such as not closing an important deal on time because the paperwork got tangled in company red tape.



When internal comms is not streamlined and when company processes are unnecessarily complex, employees get frustrated. And, frustrated employees are not engaged employees - they are employees that punch in, do the minimum that's expected of them, and then punch out.

In order to improve employee engagement, first focus on improving your internal comms policies and strategy:

- **Set clear communications guidelines** - have your internal comms officer codify key aspects of internal communications. Things like acceptable tone and voice of written communications, response times, how to give feedback to employees and peers, guidelines on sharing information between departments, how to share content and opinions on social media sites, and similar. Encourage the management team to lead by example, and emphasize the fact that the organization trusts employees to act professionally.
- **Use technology around a strategy** - once you have these guidelines in place, invest in software that declutters and simplifies internal communication. Ambassify should be your #1 choice - not only does it streamline internal comms, but it also has features built-in that help you expand social media reach and grow your base of employee advocates.
- **Work on activating internal comms** - the 'set it and forget it' approach won't help you get your new internal comms strategy off the ground. Encourage

employees to comment on and discuss posts internally, and provide encouragement for openly communicating their needs to their managers and other superiors.

If you want to learn more about internal comms and its role in employee engagement and advocacy, take a quick peek at our explainer video, and book a quick session with one of our engagement specialists.



Take the Ambassify Tour Today!



How to Measure Employee Engagement

There is no point in working on any of the employee engagement-boosting activities described above if you don't know how they are affecting your workforce.

To know that, you need to have a system in place that allows you to periodically measure employee engagement levels, preferably after implementing some engagement-building activities or procedures.

The metrics system that you come up with will be a combination of different things:

- **pulse surveys,**
- **employee net promoter score,**
- **exit and stay interviews, and**
- **one-on-one interviews.**

How much you focus on each of these is going to depend on your organization.

We recommend starting off with employee pulse surveys. Establish a baseline for your company by asking your employees a set of questions designed to gauge how satisfied they are within each of the 7 supporting elements of employee engagement.

For example, to check for a cultural fit between an employee and the company values, you might ask:

- **On a scale from 1 to 10, how strongly do your personal core values align with those of the company?**

This will give you a number that will tell you whether the employee-company alignment is something that you need to focus on in the future. Do this for each of the 7 elements of employee engagement, and you will soon be able to assess the health bar of each of them. Armed with that information, you can work on getting the numbers up.

Once you have the data you need, it's time to act on it. This is what separates the companies that truly care about employee engagement from those that just pay lip service to it.

Here's what we suggest:

- **Share the results of the surveys** - and thank your employees for participating
- **Hold an all-hands-on-deck meeting** - take a moment to discuss the results with as many employees as you can
- **Make time for one-on-one meetings** - have your managers organize one-on-one meetings where they will ask employees questions about each of

the metrics in order to learn what actions need to be taken to address the issues

- **Pick a sub-metric to work on for a set period of time** - focus on one thing at a time, and try going for the low-hanging fruit first
- **Rinse and repeat** - keep collecting the data and discussing and implementing the next steps with your team



Start Working On Employee Engagement Today

If you decide to tackle engagement levels in your company today, we have one final piece of advice for you - don't overwhelm yourself.

Working on employee engagement seems like a monumental task after reading this, but you need to remember that it's a process, not an event.

Before implementing any changes, sit down with your team and discuss the benefits of investing in increasing employee engagement. Ask your employees for their take on things, talk budgets and timelines, and test the waters with small changes.

Remember - even a small incremental increase in employee engagement can result in massive bottom-line gains for your company. The more people you employ, the greater the return. Investing in engagement is never a cost - it's an investment that pays off well into the future!

The Ambassify platform is an easy, convenient way to get the ball rolling on employee engagement. Contact us today and let's discuss the best time to hook you up with one of our advocacy experts so you can talk business!



Request a Ambassify Demo Today!





www.ambassify.com