



# THE STATE OF ENGAGEMENT

2020

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## KEY FINDINGS

### **2019 Engagement is consistent with 2018**

- Although engagement overall was consistent, feeling valued decreased.
- Employees plan to stay when they find meaning in their work and value their coworkers.
- While not key drivers of engagement, pay and workload were the most often selected reasons to leave.

### **2019 Key Drivers of Engagement**

- Consistent with 2018, the top drivers of engagement were career and skill development and confidence in and communication from Senior Leadership.
- Feeling a sense of belonging was new to the top drivers list in 2019.

### **Engagement by Region**

- Engagement was strongest in the APAC and Latin America Regions and weakest in the EMEA region.

### **Engagement by Industry**

- Consistent with 2018, Construction & Engineering had the highest levels of engagement.
- The Hospitality, Values-based, Healthcare, and Higher Education industries also had strong engagement.
- Mental Health and Retail organizations had the lowest levels of engagement.

### **Engagement by Job Function**

- Engagement was strongest for Executive Leadership and lowest for Production/Manufacturing roles.

### **Engagement by Age, Tenure, and Gender**

- Engagement varied only slightly by age for those 20 years old and older, and was lowest for those with 3-5 years of tenure.
- Men and women had similar engagement levels, but varying work experiences especially related to perceptions of two-way communication.

# LISTENING: THE KEY TO BELONGING

Like 2018, 2019 was characterized by rapid technological change, political divisiveness and social movements, competition for talent and innovation, market uncertainty (e.g., tariffs, trade, Brexit) and increased recognition of the need for diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace. One of our key findings from 2019 is consistent with 2018 and relates to all of these trends; the critical importance of having a deliberate organizational strategy for listening to employees.

Communication is often the root of organizational challenges – Newmeasures research suggests only 50% of employees feel they receive timely communication and only 58% feel leadership does a good job communicating change. Considering 2019 unemployment rates were below 4%, and there were more job openings than available workers, communication was and will likely continue to be critical to engagement and retention. Transparent communication and an avenue to provide upward feedback can help create a sense of community and belonging as opposed to an “us” vs. “them” mentality between leadership and employees. Our research reveals a sense of belonging is a key driver of engagement, and those who perceived a sense of belonging were 15 times more likely to be engaged and 27 times more likely to intend to stay with their current organization.

Further, organizations now have the tools to understand how employees are feeling at every phase of the employee life cycle – from onboarding to exit. Newmeasures is here to help organizations identify appropriate listening approaches to find the right mix of content and frequency for collecting feedback that is aligned with organizational goals. When done right, employees will feel like a partner in the business and more receptive to change.

## OUR METHODOLOGY

Each year, Newmeasures collects data from hundreds of thousands of employees across a wide variety of industries and locations. Newmeasures’ norms are calculated using data collected over the past five years (i.e., data from 2014-2019) so they reflect a comprehensive and current benchmark. The findings in this report are based on the employee feedback from 2,400 organizations and nearly 1.4 million survey responses.

This report summarizes differences in engagement across regions, industries, age, tenure, gender, and ethnicity, as well as key drivers of engagement. We focus on our findings from listening to hundreds of thousands of employees over the last year. Our goal is to share key insights that may benefit your organization.

# ENGAGEMENT SURVEY DIMENSIONS

Newmeasures defines engagement as a feeling of commitment and enthusiasm for one's work that leads to a willingness to exert discretionary effort. We measure engagement using our validated Employee Engagement Index.



## ACTIVE COMMITMENT

Employees plan to stay and recommend the organization to others.



## PERSONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Employees feel valued and are enthusiastic about their work.



## CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE

Employees believe in the future of the organization.

The index measures the extent to which employees; 1) feel valued, 2) are excited about their work, 3) perceive their organization is on the right track, 4) intend to stay with the organization, and 5) would recommend their organization as a good place to work.

While knowing the engagement level of employees is important, the goal of a survey is to support continuous improvement. Therefore, the Newmeasures engagement survey also measures key drivers of engagement. Over 20 years of Newmeasures research indicates there are 5 key dimensions that contribute to an engaged workforce. These factors are where organizations can focus to drive improvement. The data in this report represent the percentage of "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" responses to Engagement Index and driver questions based on a 5-point Likert-type scale that ranges from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.

## NEWMEASURES DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT



### CONDITIONS TO DO BEST WORK

Employees have the tools, resources, and priorities to do their best work.



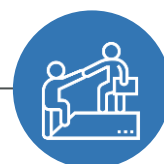
### SUPPORTIVE SUPERVISOR

Direct supervisors are fair, provide feedback and recognition, explain changes, and listen to and act upon ideas.



### TRUST & COLLABORATION

Aligned goals, trust in teammates communication and collaboration.



### GROWTH & AUTONOMY

Employees have input into their work, are encouraged to come up with new ideas, and see opportunities to develop their skills/advance their career.



### VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

Leaders create a compelling vision for the future, inspire confidence, and communicate openly and consistently.

# ENGAGEMENT WAS CONSISTENT WITH 2018

2019 engagement levels remained consistent since 2018. While overall engagement was steady, it is notable that employees' perceptions of feeling valued as an employee declined, as did their intention to stay. This underscores the importance of focusing on culture and the employee experience.

Figure 1: Engagement Index 2017 -2019

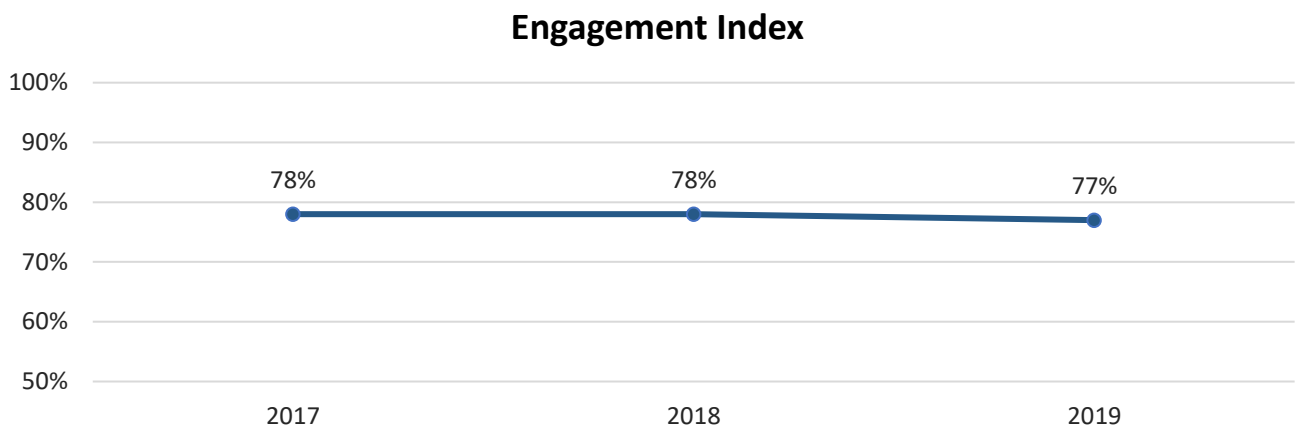
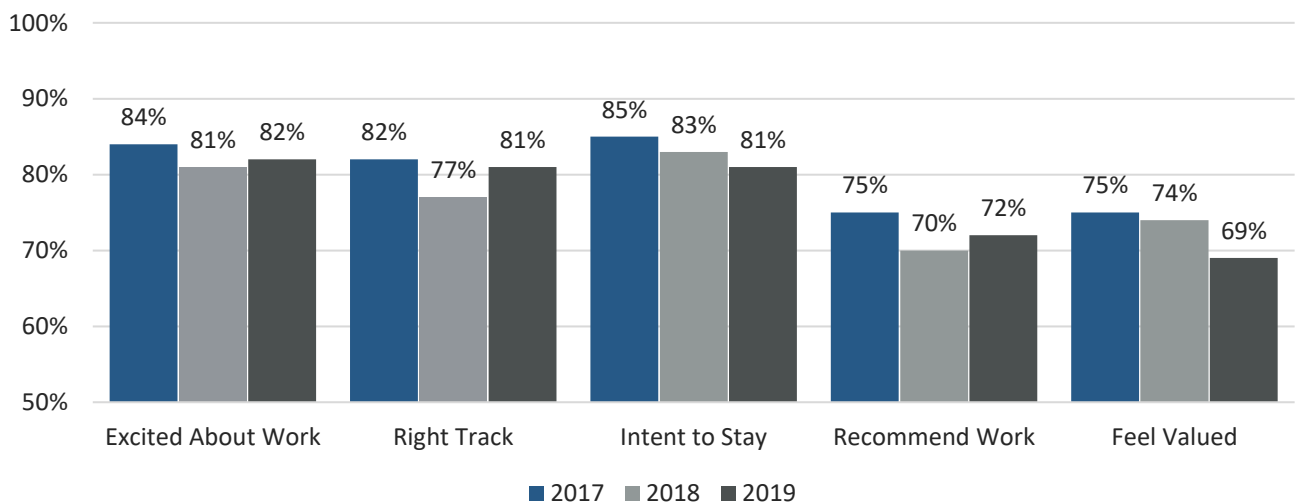


Figure 2: Indicators of Engagement 2017-2019



# WHAT MAKES EMPLOYEES FEEL VALUED

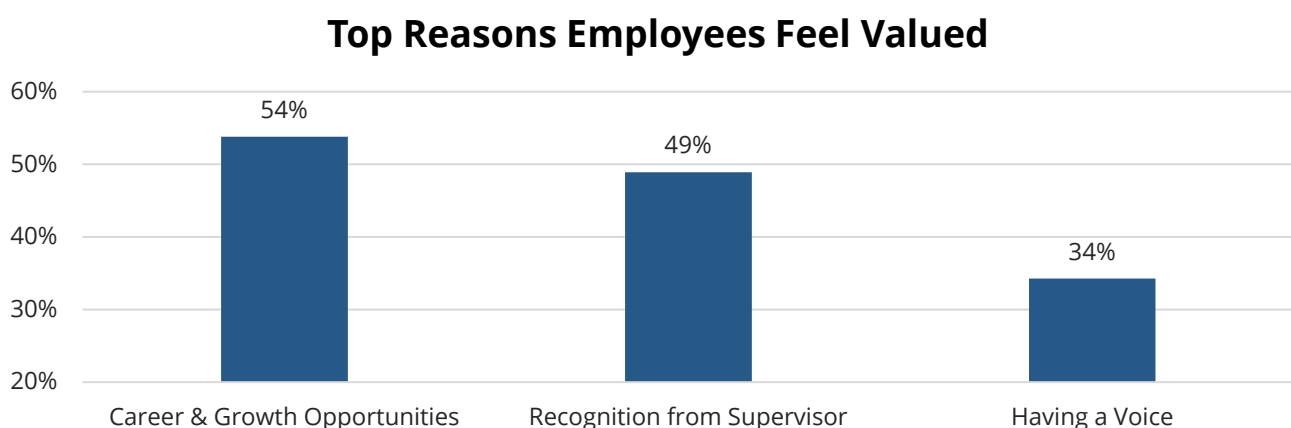
Feeling valued is an important component of engagement and has decreased since 2018. Considering the decrease and the fact that 29% of employees cited not feeling valued as a top reason they planned to leave their organization in the next 12 months, we explored what factors contributed most to employees feeling valued.

As can be seen in Figure 3, career and growth opportunities were far and away the top reason employees felt valued (perceptions of career and growth opportunities were also a main reason employees told us they planned to stay/leave an organization and were a key driver of employee engagement).

Recognition from one's supervisor was another top factor that contributed to employees feeling valued – as such, managers can make an impact on engagement by asking their direct reports how they like to be recognized and align acts of appreciation accordingly.

Additionally, employees felt valued when they had a voice, so managers are wise to be on the lookout for opportunities to encourage and leverage employee input. Having a voice also means that employees feel their ideas were genuinely considered, therefore managers should work to let employees know what happens with their suggestions and explain the reasoning behind those decisions.

Figure 3: Key Reasons Employees Feel Valued (n= 21,517)



\*Note. As a follow-up question to “I feel valued as an employee of this organization,” employees were asked “what makes them feel most valued as an employee” or what would make them feel more valued as an employee.” Survey respondents were able to select up to 3 responses. The chart summarizes the most frequently selected reasons employees feel valued (across a variety of organizations).

# INTENT TO STAY

A strong indicator of employee engagement is intent to stay with an organization – we asked over 40,000 employees to tell us what motivates them to stay and why they might leave.

EMPLOYEES STAY WHEN THEY FIND PURPOSE IN THEIR WORK AND HAVE STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

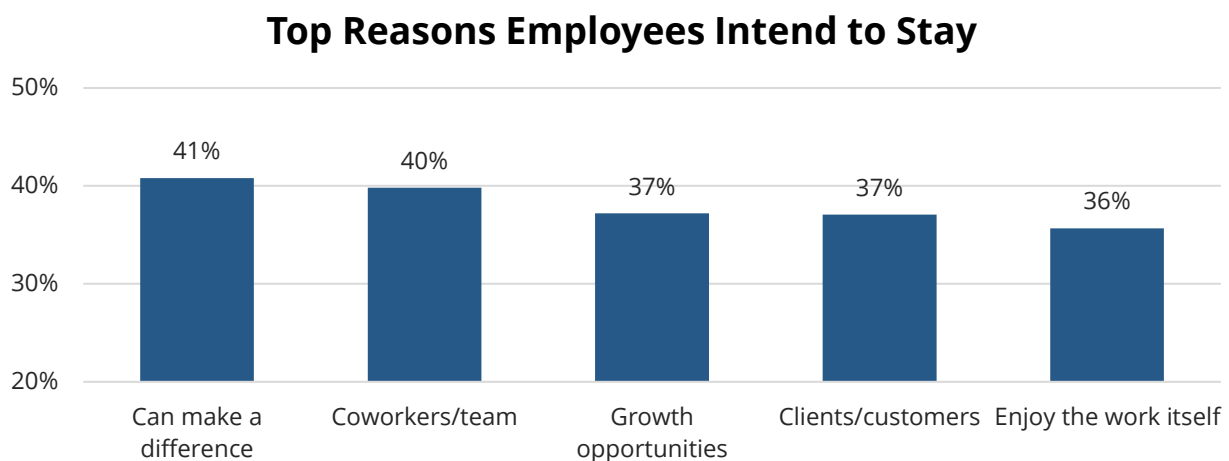
## Why Employees Stay

Making a difference through meaningful work tops the list of reasons people are loyal to their employers (and it's no coincidence that when executives communicate an inspiring vision, engagement levels are stronger). No matter the job, it is important for employees to see how their work contributes to the greater good.

Work relationships also have a positive impact on retention – employees told us their coworkers and clients/customers are key reasons they stay. As such, it's no surprise that a sense of community and belonging emerged as a key driver of engagement in 2019.

As noted earlier, not only was career growth and development cited as a top reason to stay, it was also a top reason employees felt valued and key driver of overall engagement.

Figure 4: Key Reasons Employees Intend to Stay (n=41,225)



\*Note. Employees who reported that they plan to stay with the organization were asked to indicate up to three top reasons why. The chart summarizes the most frequently selected reasons employees plan to stay (across a variety of organizations).

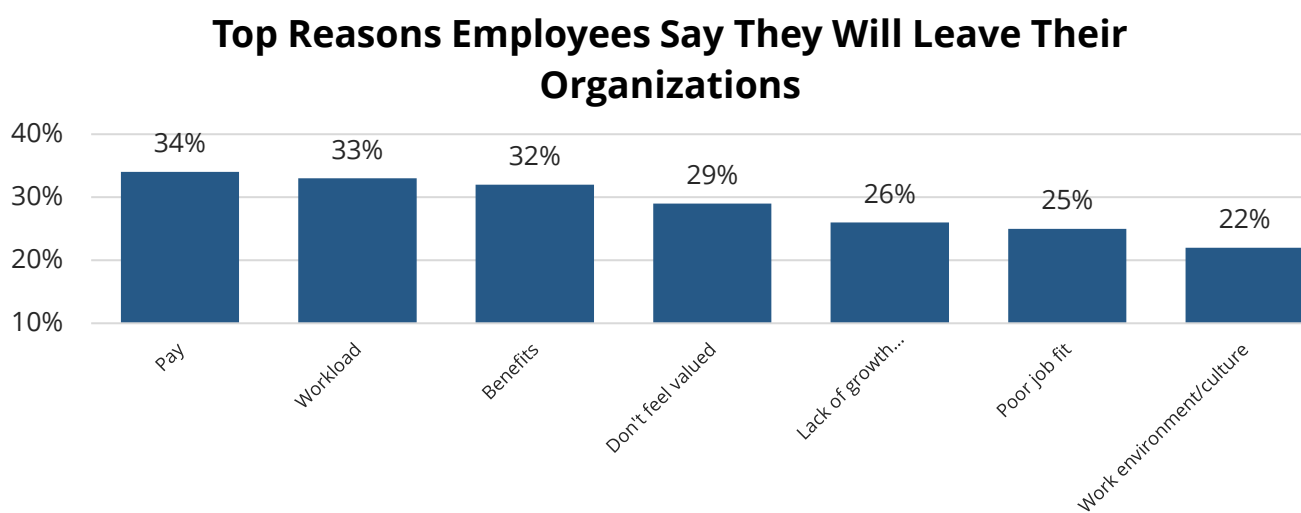
## Why Employees Leave

Employees who indicated they may leave in the next year frequently attributed compensation as the top reason for leaving. Perceived inequities in compensation can often be credited to lack of understanding regarding the external market and/or internal pay philosophy. Helping employees understand their total compensation package and how it compares to market rates is critical.

In addition to compensation, burnout often contributes to turnover when the workload is perceived as demanding and unsustainable. Employers may consider how to reign in the “always on” work culture and recognize that the most engaged employees can often be your most exhausted – it is critical to ensure resources are available and employees receive support to cope with the pressures of the job. In particular, leaders should consider the tone and example they set for employees. When leaders work while on vacation or respond to email at all hours of the day, they send a signal to employees that it is not ok to truly unplug.

More strongly related to engagement than pay or workload, lack of growth opportunities and not feeling valued were also top reasons employees intended to seek other opportunities. Rounding out the list, a negative or toxic work environment and lack of fit with the job were also reported as top reasons employees leave.

Figure 5: Key Reasons Employees Intend to Leave (n= 14,327)



\*Note. Employees who reported they may leave the organization were asked to indicate up to three top reasons why. The chart summarizes the most frequently selected reasons employees may leave (across a variety of organizations).

# KEY DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

Engaged employees have a positive impact on organizational outcomes such as turnover, performance, and customer experiences. The goal of any engagement survey is actionable insight that leads to enhanced employee commitment and motivation.

To identify critical drivers of engagement and inform action taking, organizations leverage Newmeasures' Key Driver Analysis® algorithm, which identifies the survey items with the most opportunity for improvement (low percent favorable scores) AND the largest correlation with engagement. The 2019 top five engagement drivers for Newmeasures' clients are listed below. Data suggest focusing on these topics to have the greatest positive influence on employee engagement. Organizations' unique set of drivers or specific business functions' drivers can differ based on the nature of their work and other contextual factors, but these topics come up again and again, and are often effective ways to improve employees' engagement.

Figure 6: Top Five Drivers of Employee Engagement in 2019

## 2019 MOST COMMON DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT



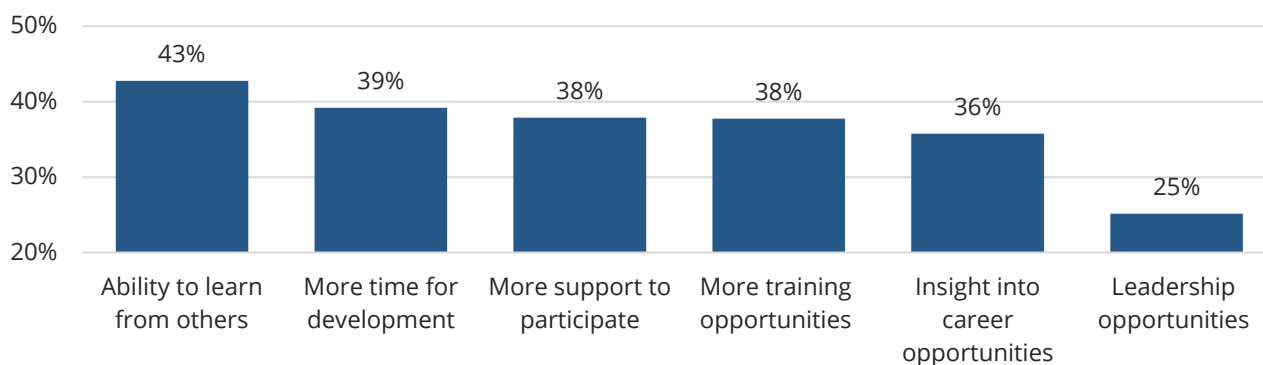
When it comes to building a highly engaged workforce, the figure above emphasizes the importance of: 1) growth and development opportunities, 2) leadership behavior, especially communication and 3) sense of community and belonging at work. Given the importance of these topics, we'll explore them more in the next few sections.

## PROFESSIONAL & CAREER DEVELOPMENT

We consistently find employees who feel they have opportunities for learning and growth are more highly engaged than employees who do not or who do not take advantage of those opportunities. As such, many Newmeasures clients have used their engagement survey as a chance to ask employees how they can best support employee development in a way that is valued and meaningful. Below are the results from nearly 12,000 employees.

Figure 7: Top Ways to Support Employee Development (n = 11,826)

### Top Ways in Which Employees Would Like to Be Supported in Their Professional Development



Interestingly, one of the top ways employees want to be supported in their development is via opportunities to learn from others. Unfortunately, we commonly hear from people leaders that they just don't have the time they would like to invest in developing their employees. But there are other options to consider, one being peer-to-peer learning. According to Palmer and Blake (2018), peer-to-peer learning can be especially powerful because it is well-suited to the ways in which most adults learn best: gain just-in-time knowledge, practice through application, get feedback, and adjust. Further, peer-to-peer learning can create a safe environment for employees to try something new or risky without the pressure to perform in front of a boss, a client or meet the demands of a deadline.

The second way in which employees seek support in their professional development is via making the time and space to pursue learning opportunities. Unfortunately, we often hear stories in which organizations do the hard work to provide rich training and development opportunities at the request of employees, and then no one uses them. And while this can feel like a waste of time and money, our research finds that employees often will not take advantage of such offerings if they feel like their workload is too high to take time to pursue development goals. While the intentions of rolling out strong learning and development programs are good, organizations can focus on ensuring their success by examining the cultural norms that surround them.

For example, do managers truly support taking time out from day-to-day work for learning activities? Do leaders role model doing so themselves? With thoughtful planning between an employee and manager, can time be set aside to allow for learning? Prioritizing such time for learning is likely to go a long way to support employee engagement.

Our 2019 research also reveals the key role managers play in supporting career growth and development. Nearly 40% of those who were asked how to best support their development indicated they would like more time and support to participate development activities. Employers should encourage and incentivize managers to understand and care about their subordinates' career goals and equip them to build the skills and experiences their employees need.

Figure 8: Impact of Development Conversations & Training on Engagement (n ≈ 17,000 and 12 companies diverse in size and industry).



\*Note. Employees were asked to indicate the top three ways they would like to be supported in their professional development. The tables summarize the most frequently selected answers (across a variety of organizations).

We often think about career growth in terms of formal advancement and monetary raises. However, career growth is much more than a new title and fatter wallet. Because it's unrealistic to give everyone a raise and/or promotion, managers should focus on learning opportunities and celebrate all employee development. Great managers coach employees – they understand their abilities and career interests and align them with organizational needs. Opportunities are not limited to formal training - on-the-job learning, cross-functional or interdepartmental projects, new or challenging assignments, committee participation, and informal mentoring are often great opportunities to develop employees.

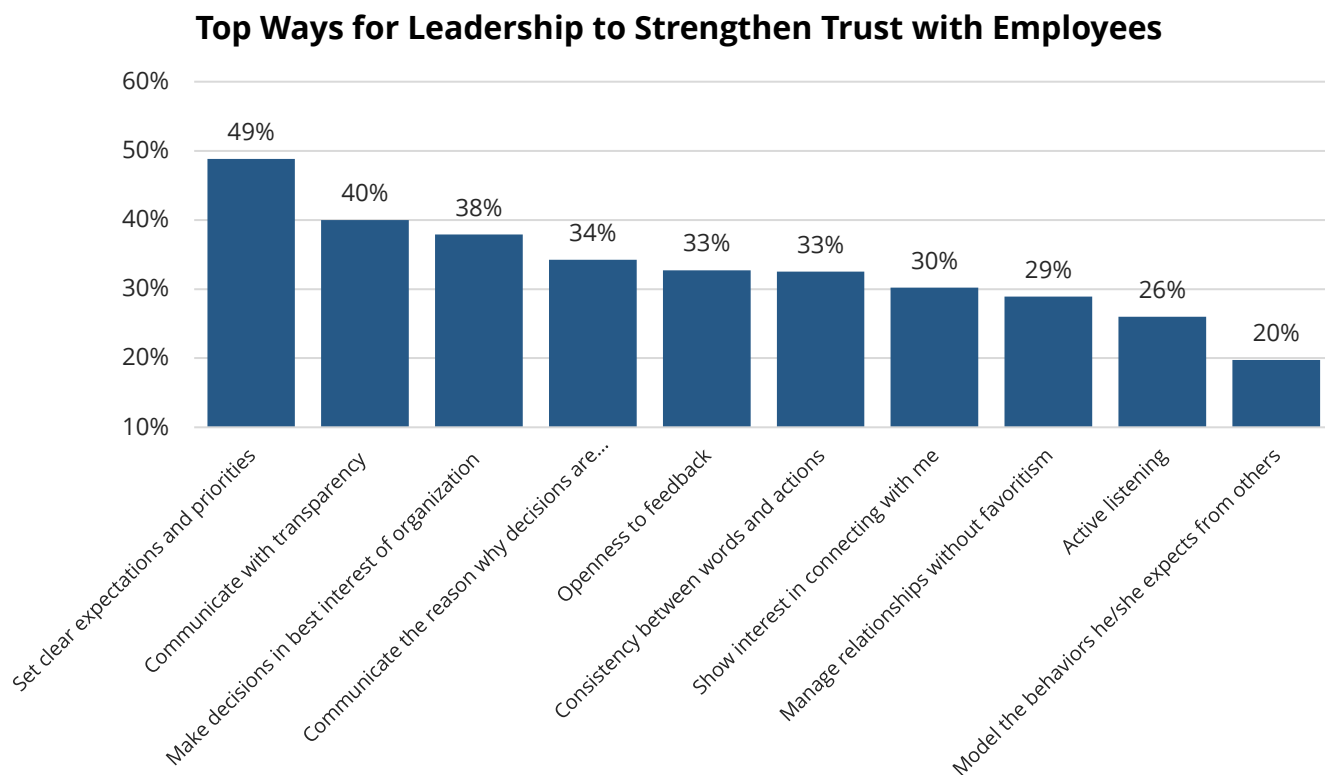
When employees see clear links between their development activities and their long-term career goals, they take ownership for their own development. It is the role of the manager to inform employees about opportunities, encourage them to participate, and afford them time to participate.

# VISIONARY LEADERSHIP

In addition to growth and development, engagement is impacted by perceptions of communication from senior leadership. Leaders who communicate a clear and compelling vision, instill confidence about the organization’s future and inspire higher levels of performance. Employees feel included and connect to the meaning and impact of their work when they understand how it aligns with the greater vision. Leaders create safety, trust, and confidence when employees know where the organization is headed, what’s on the horizon, and **why** decisions are made. In our experience, this level of communication can be challenging - it’s hard to reach everyone with a consistent and inspiring message, and it requires a constant two-way conversation between leaders and employees. The most successful leaders keep the vision alive by overcommunicating, remaining accessible and approachable, and checking for understanding.

Because this is a critical component of engagement, Newmeasures’ clients often use their engagement survey to better understand how senior leadership can build confidence in their direction and decisions. When asked what would strengthen confidence in senior leadership, communication topics rise to the top. Specifically, when employees were asked to pick the top three ways leaders can build trust and confidence, setting clear expectations, communicating transparently, making decisions in the best interest of the organization, and communicating the reasons why decisions are made were most frequently selected. Below are the results from nearly 15,000 employees.

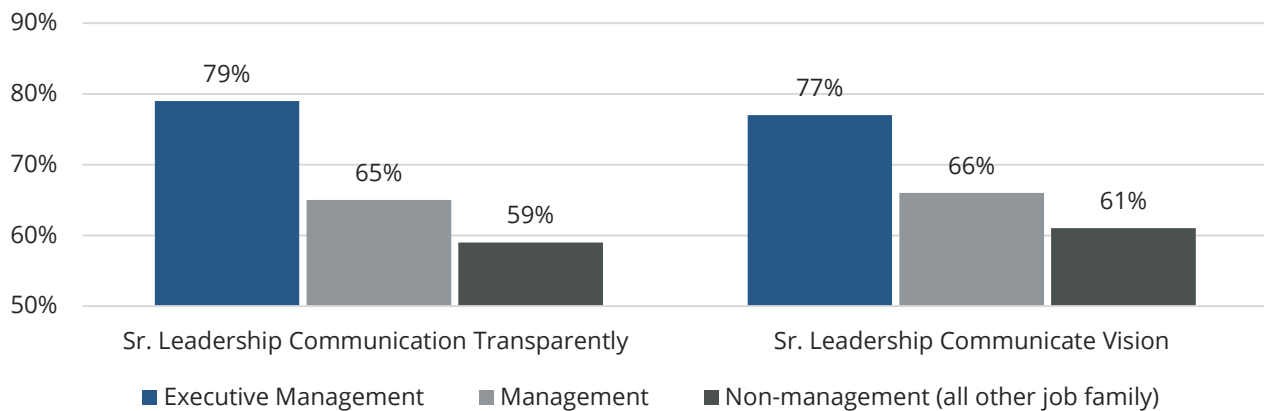
Figure 9: Top Ways Leadership Can Build Trust (n = 14,998)



\*Note. Employees were asked to indicate the top three ways leadership could gain their trust. The tables summarize the most frequently selected reasons (across a variety of organizations).

An additional challenge to communication is the common disconnect between senior leaders' perceptions about communication and the perceptions of mid-level management and other employees. Specifically, executive leadership tends to believe they communicate with consistency and transparency and communicate a clear vision. Regrettably, management and other employees tend to perceive opportunities in these areas.

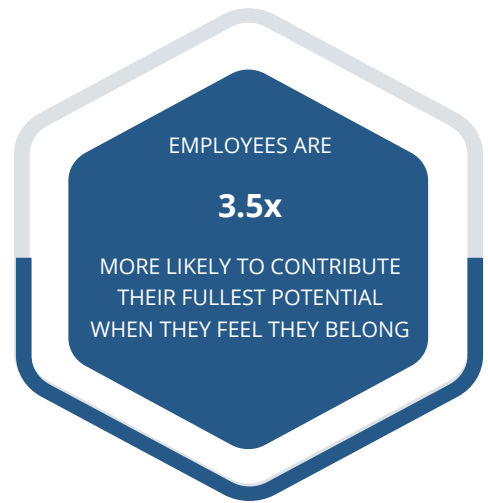
Figure 10: Perceptions about Communication and Direction from Senior Leaders by Level



Perhaps this pattern of perceptions of communication is not surprising in that we often find leaders mistake sharing information as the same as employees' ability to understand and internalize the message. As Patrick Lencioni recommends in [The Advantage](#), employees will only embrace a message if they hear it repeated over time, in a variety of contexts and consistently from different people. As Lencioni describes, great leaders view themselves as "Chief Reminding Officers," who focus on setting the direction of the organization and make sure it remains top-of-mind for employees.

# BELONGING

Our current social and political climate – collective movements, deep divisions, and uncertainty – underscores the need for sense of community and belonging at work. As such, it is no surprise that belonging emerged as a key driver of engagement in 2019. Social belonging is a basic, “hardwired” human need and feelings of isolation can cause serious emotional and physical pain. Many individuals spend most of their time at work and employees are [3.5 times more likely to contribute their fullest potential when they feel like they belong](#).



Considering the importance of belonging to engagement and well-being, it is perhaps no surprise that connections with coworkers and customers were among the top five reasons employees intend to stay. Look for ways to bring more “humanness” into work by encouraging relationship building and social connections across all levels in the workplace. Isolation is a potential implication of remote employment and flexible work schedules; thus, it is critical to check-in often to ask how employees they are doing. Setting aside time specifically devoted to relationship building can also go a long way to create connection. At Newmeasures, our virtual workforce has a monthly meeting called “The Cooler” (named after the proverbial water cooler) where we make time for team building through activities like Pictionary, discussing the last book we read or a virtual happy hour.

Belonging should be an essential objective of any diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) program. To inform your program initiatives, it can be useful to explore survey results (especially feelings of belonging and perceptions of DE&I efforts) by demographic groups. While our research suggests engagement levels were overall consistent across gender and ethnicity/race groups, experiences with DE&I at work varied. Males and white respondents are generally more favorable toward DE&I topics.

Figure 11: Largest Gender Differences with Based on Newmeasures’ DE&I Index

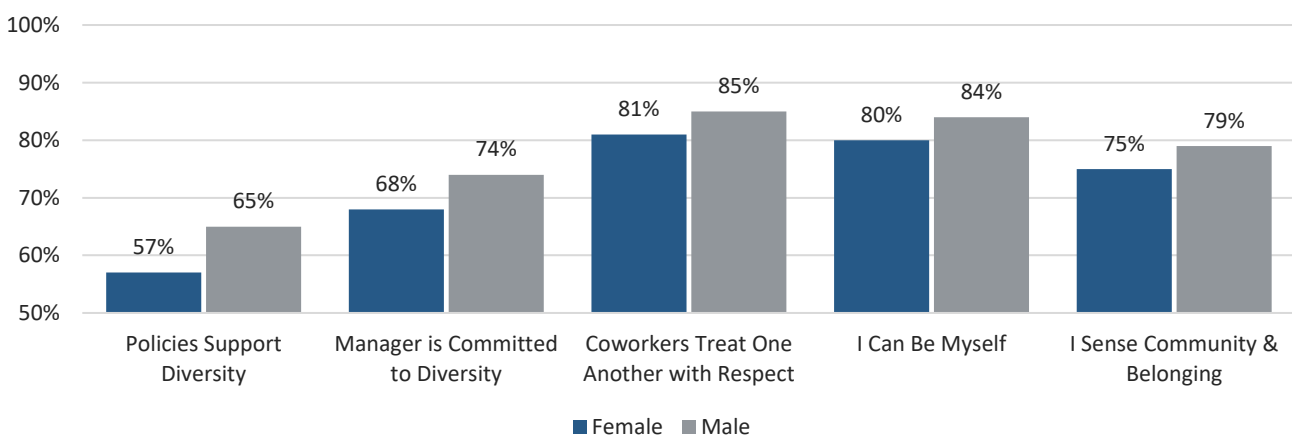
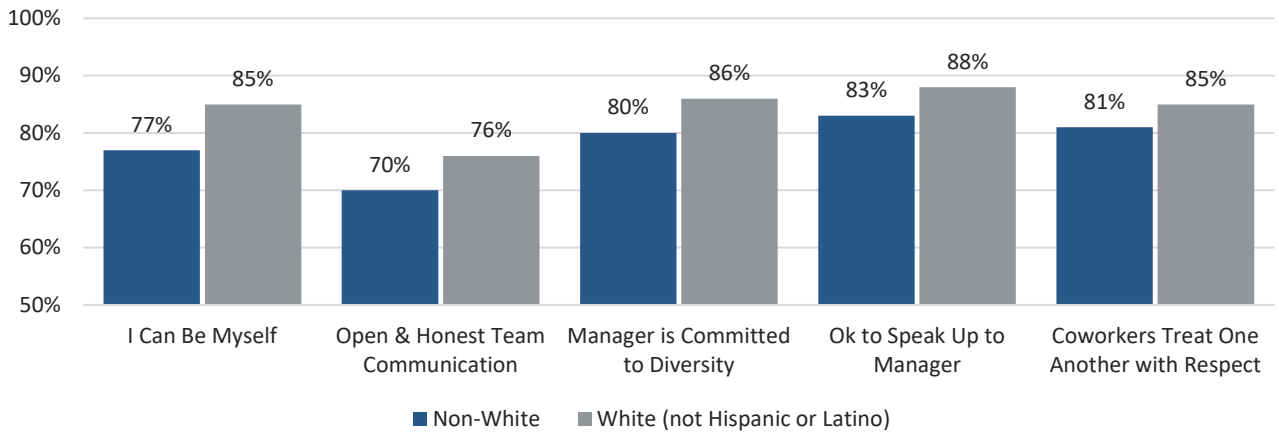
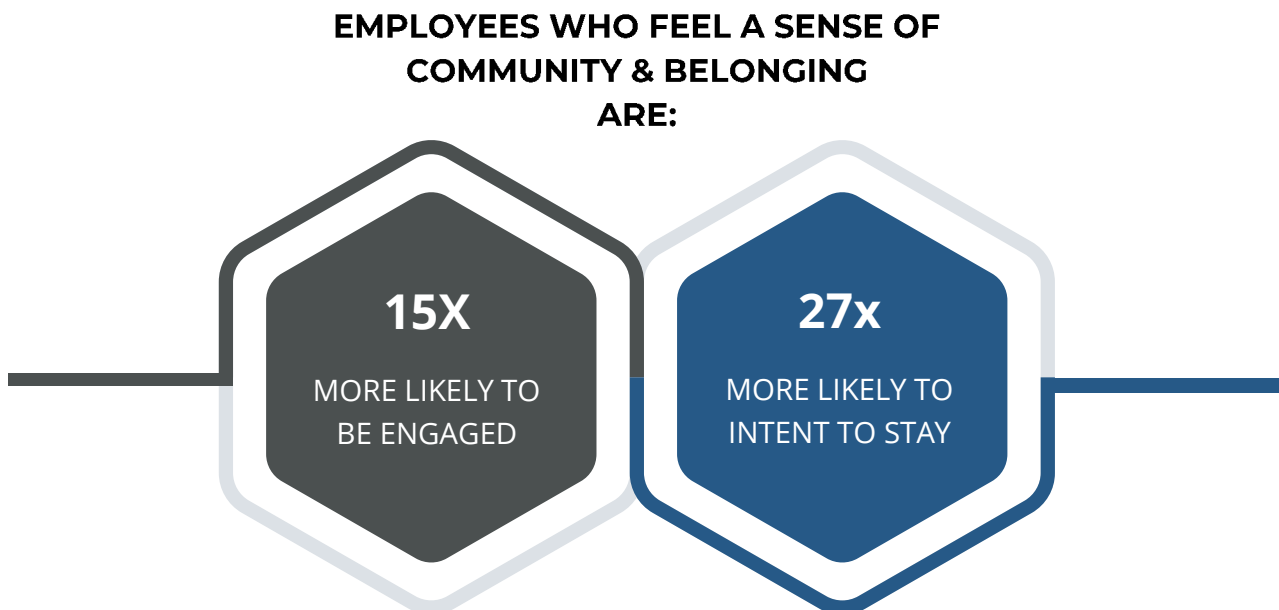


Figure 12: Largest Ethnicity/Race Differences Based on Newmeasures' DE&I Index



\*Note. Data are displayed as Non-White vs. White to represent the majority vs. non-majority groups and ensure meaningful sample size.

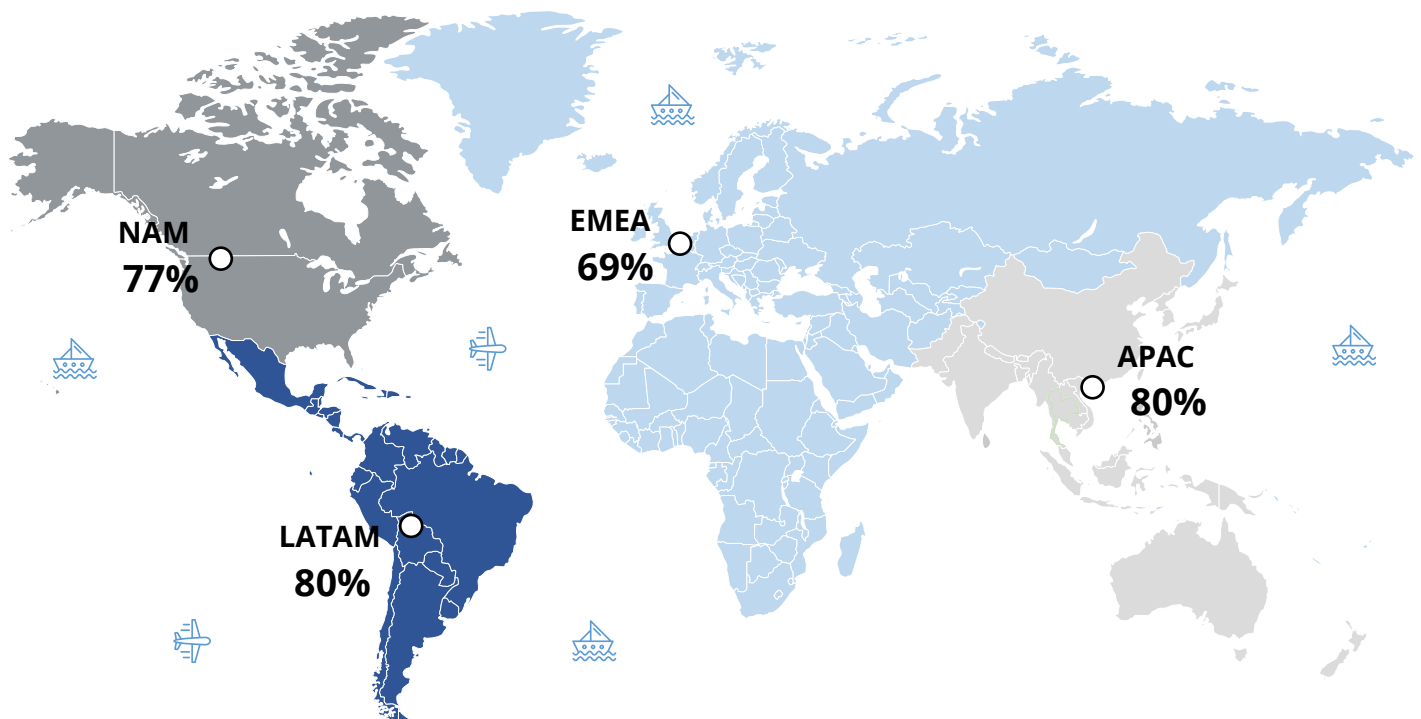
Figure 13: Impact of belonging on engagement and intent to stay. Data from over 50,000 employees at 38 organizations.



## ENGAGEMENT BY REGION

Engagement varies by geographic region; engagement is highest among employees in the Latin American (LATAM) and Asia Pacific (APAC) regions, relatively lower in the North American (NAM) region, and lowest in the Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) region. Cultural, economic, and political factors all influence engagement levels.

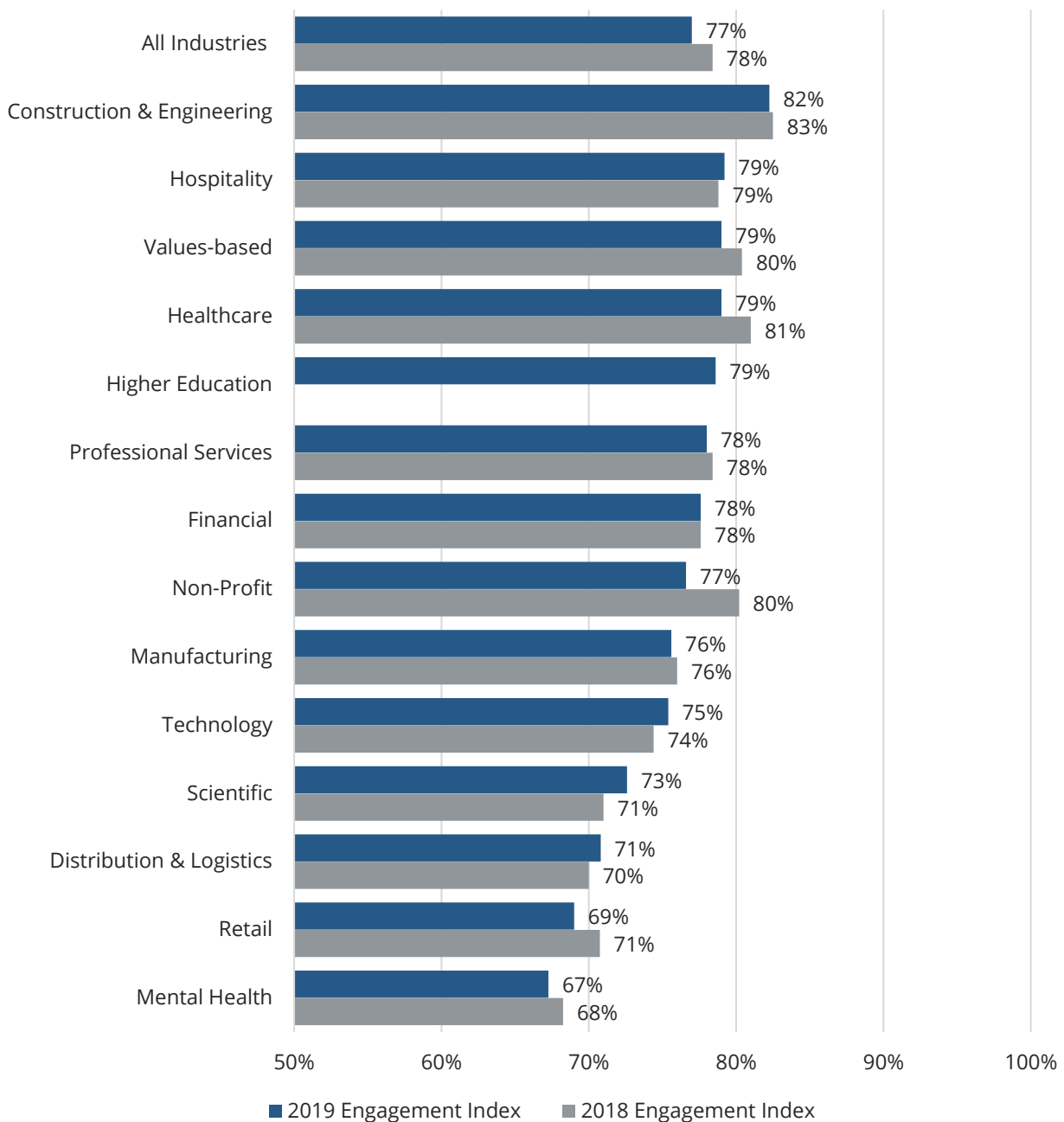
Figure 14: Engagement Index by Region



# ENGAGEMENT BY INDUSTRY

Engagement differs by industry. Engagement scores were highest in the Construction & Engineering industry. The Hospitality, Values-based (organizations that emphasize a strong commitment to their culture and values), Healthcare, and Higher Education industries also exhibited higher engagement levels. Mental Health and Retail organizations had the lowest engagement scores. There may be many reasons for these differences; the nature of work, budget for pay and benefits, industry norms, pace of change, and external market pressures can all influence engagement. Not all organizations fall in line with these trends but understanding the general patterns can shed light on how engagement may differ across industries.

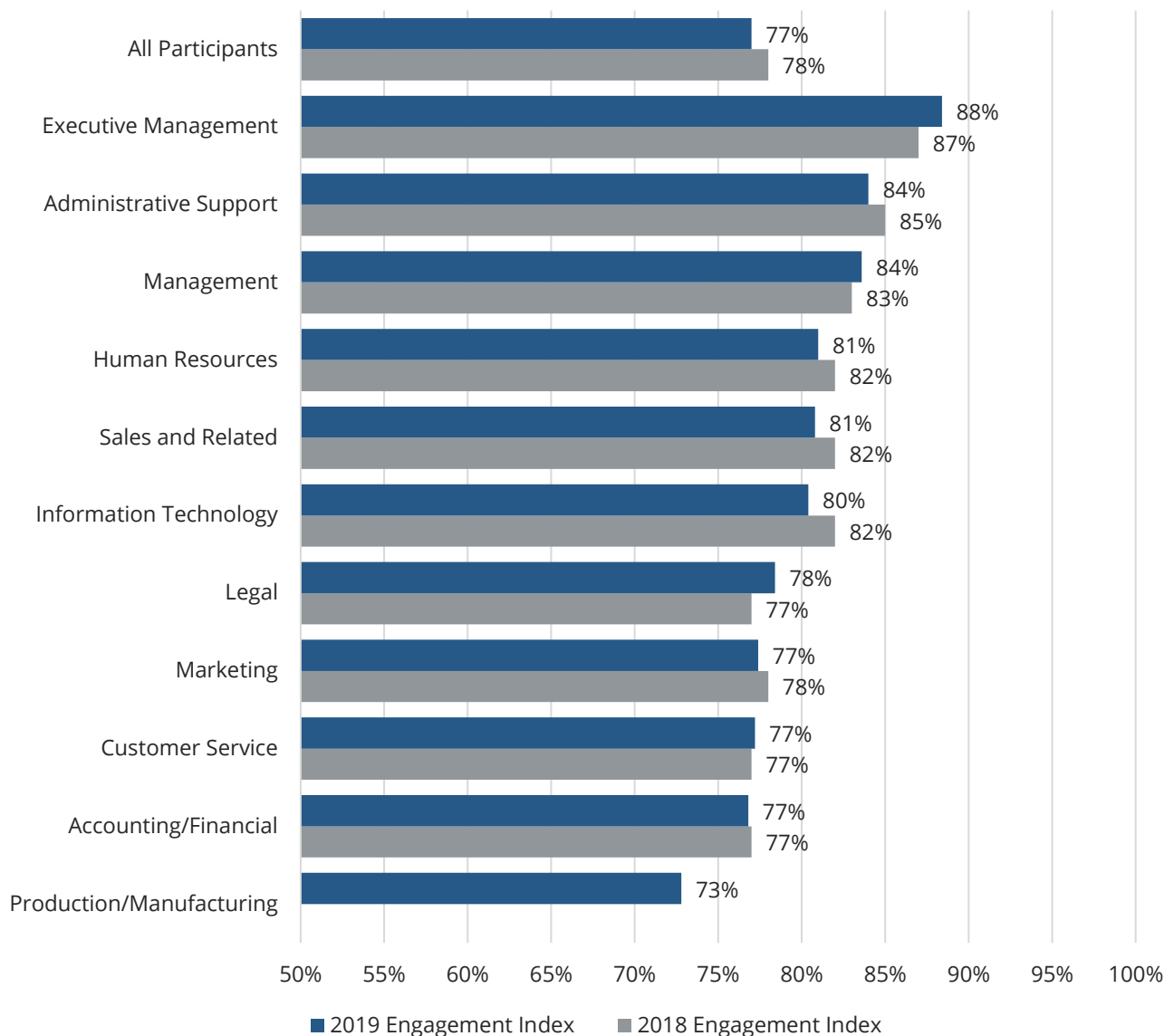
Figure 15: Engagement Index by Industry



# ENGAGEMENT BY JOB FUNCTION

As expected, engagement varied by job function. Based on roles and duties, employees work in different contexts, experience unique pressures and challenges, and have various degrees of control and influence. Executive Management is commonly the most engaged group, which we view as a positive thing; leadership sets the upper limit on engagement for other employees. Professional workers generally report higher engagement than manufacturing and production employees. The often-repetitive nature and sometimes difficult working conditions of those in manufacturing roles can pose extra challenges to keeping employees engaged.

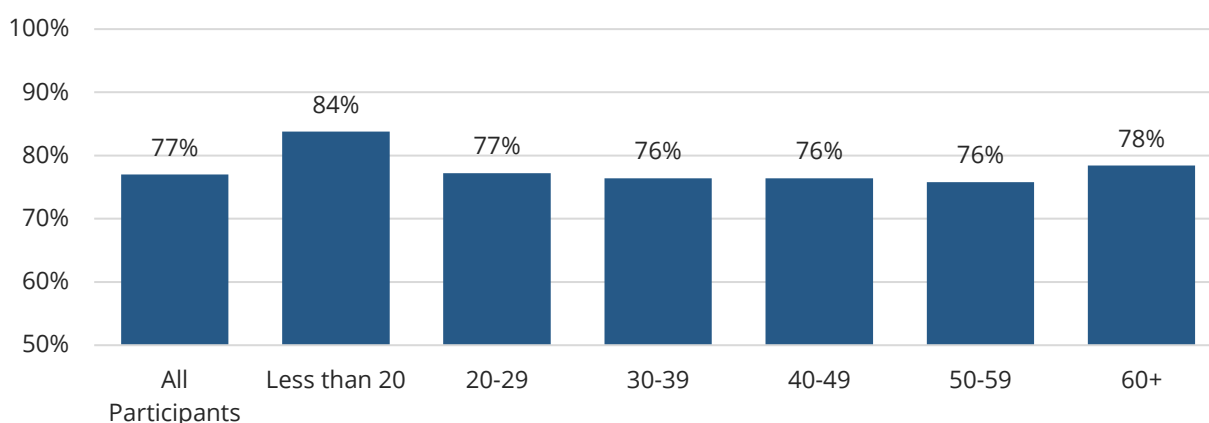
Figure 16: Engagement Index by Job Function



## ENGAGEMENT BY AGE

Younger generations may have a poor reputation regarding work ethic and loyalty, however, Newmeasures research indicates engagement levels were generally consistent across age groups. While enthusiasm for and commitment to work were comparable regardless of age, expectations or preferences about how work gets done may vary by generation. For example, research by [Zapier](#) found that over 90% of younger generations are willing to automate parts of their jobs to improve productivity and 7 in 10 Millennial and Gen Z employees confess to habitually checking work communication tools outside of work. This seemingly defies the Millennial and Gen Z myth regarding inferior work ethic. In fact, employers should institute policy and embrace a culture that encourages “unplugging” to help employees realize better work-life balance and avoid burnout.

Figure 17: Engagement Index by Age Group

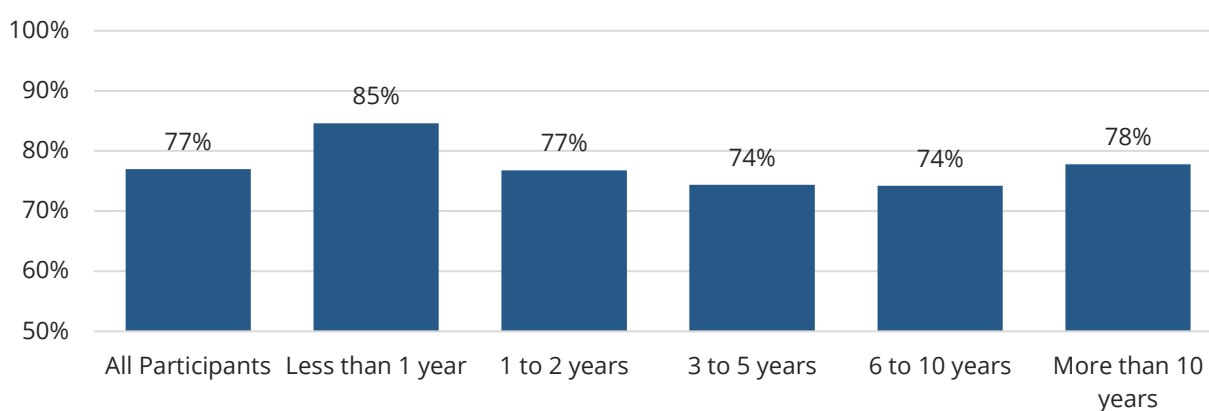


Despite the myth that Millennials and Gen Zers are disloyal to employers, our research revealed that 78% intended to stay with their employer for at least 12 months following the survey. Correspondingly, research from [Zapier](#) indicates Millennials and Gen Zers plan to stay in their jobs 10 years and 6 years, respectively. On the other end of the age range, our data indicate 86% of employees 50 or more years old intend to stay. People are working longer and therefore multiple generations will continue to coexist in the workplace. With each new generation entering the workforce, companies must be prepared to manage new expectations and viewpoints around things like learning and knowledge sharing and leverage opportunities for cross-generational partnerships. Such partnerships include [reverse mentoring relationships](#). Reverse mentoring can bridge gaps between generations and build community in the workplace while providing an invaluable transfer of knowledge between younger and older employees.

## ENGAGEMENT BY TENURE

While engagement was consistent across age groups, it varied based on an employee's tenure. The pattern displayed in the graph below represents the "tenure curve" – engagement is typically highest for employees with less than one year at an organization. After the excitement and newness of starting a new job wears off, engagement drops dramatically. Often, fewer learning opportunities are presented after the first year and employees receive less attention from their manager.

Figure 18: Engagement Index by Tenure



Engagement is lowest for employees with 3-10 years of tenure, often because they hit a ceiling in terms of development or advancement. Additionally, employees in this tenure range often have more responsibilities and may feel overloaded. While formal advancement opportunities may not always be available, employers can work with this group to provide informal opportunities for learning and growth. Managers should hold regular career conversations to understand employee's career goals and be on the look-out to connect employees to development opportunities such as stretch goals, job rotation, mentoring, or the ability to participate in a taskforce. Sometimes opportunities to work with a new manager or team can further learning as well.

Engagement increases for those with more than 10 years of tenure as they may feel more connected to the organization because they have been through highs and lows with their employer and working for the organization is part of their identity. They likely hold more senior roles and have influence and decision-making authority. As such, they may feel greater loyalty and a sense of ownership.

# ENGAGEMENT BY GENDER

In most organizations, our research finds that engagement levels are consistent between males and females; however, experiences often differ between men and women. Gender differences are often more prominent when: 1) one gender comprises a smaller proportion of the workforce than the other, 2) leadership positions are dominated by one gender within an organization, and 3) within industries that were traditionally dominated by one gender.

Figure 19: Engagement Index for Females and Males

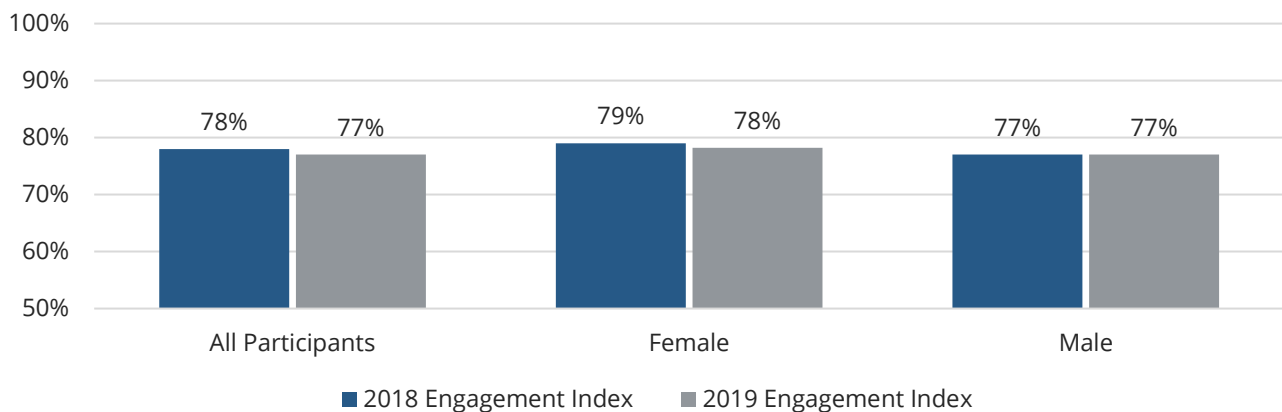
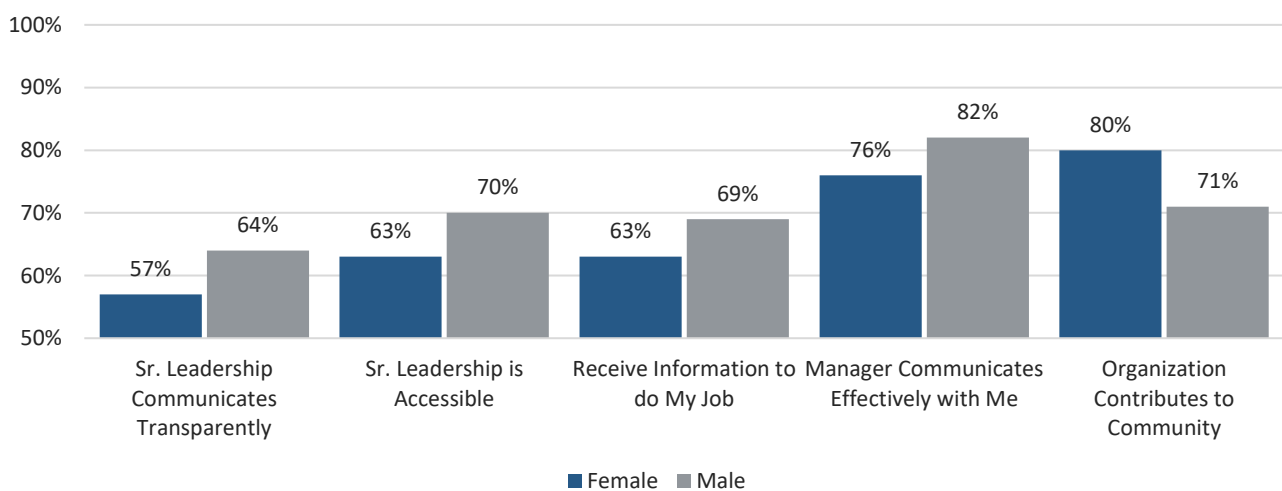


Figure 20: Largest Differences in Perceptions Between Females and Males



Considering most employees tell us they want to work for diverse, equitable, and inclusive employers, senior leaders would be wise to examine culture and policies in light of how well they support inclusivity by gender (as well as a host of other factors). While compared to males, females were less likely to feel policies support diversity and managers are committed to diversity (see Figure 11), we have yet to come across an executive team who *intentionally* treats employees differently based on gender, and yet inequity in pay and leadership opportunities persist. Thus, organizations need to examine the unconscious practices that perpetuate unfair and biased treatment. For example, [Tinsley and Ely \(2018\)](#) cite findings from meta-analyses to dispel the myth that men and women are different when it comes to attributes such as confidence, risk taking, and negotiating skills. Instead, their research suggests that organizational conditions (beliefs, norms, and practices) are the real drivers of these differences.

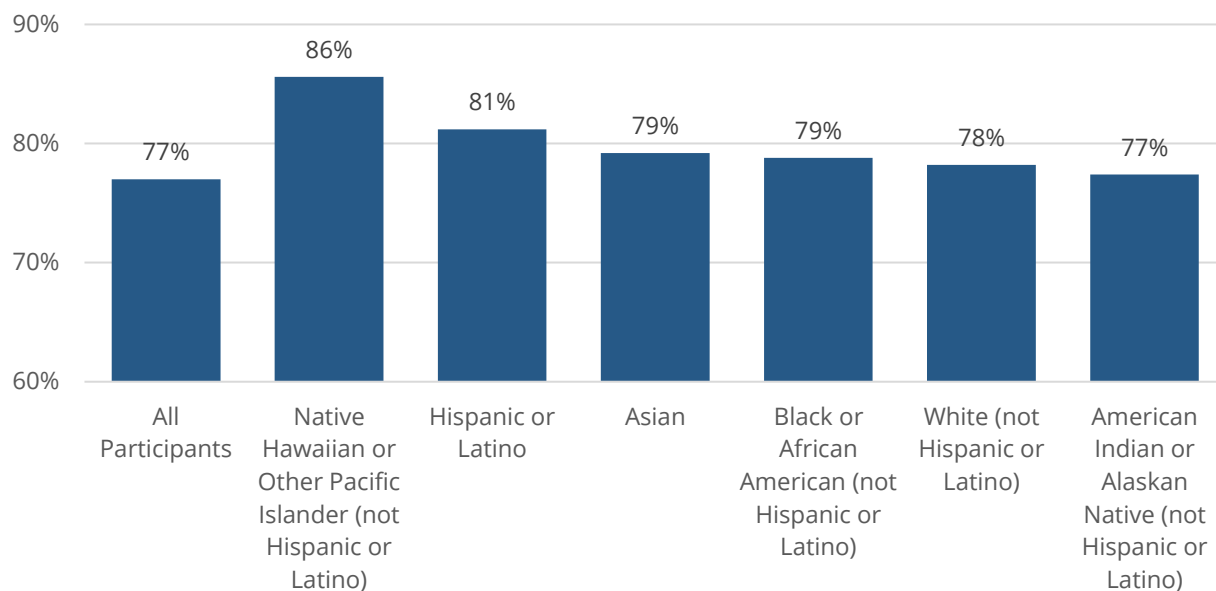
Consider, for example, the differences in how organizations tend to treat new parents. Organizations often expect and even encourage (with the best of intentions) women to take time off to care for their newborns, but signal to men to take minimal time off and get back to work. When men do ask for more leeway in their work demands, supervisors may accommodate with the expectation that it is to be short-lived. For men, opportunities for development and advancement remain, whereas women may not be presented with the next career opportunity under the assumption that the woman needs space to care for her family. While these practices may be well-intended, these differences in policy and practice ultimately put women at an unfair disadvantage.

## ENGAGEMENT BY ETHNICITY

While across our entire norm database engagement levels were similar between ethnicities (with the exception of Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander), we have seen stark differences within organizations. When these differences appear, perceptions toward diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts emerge as drivers of engagement. Even when organizations do not find meaningful between group differences in engagement levels, it is important to pay attention to how different ethnic groups perceive the key drivers of employee engagement identified by our research and identify “hot spots” within the organization. Such differences can help distinguish where your organizational practices, policies, and cultural norms are deficient with respect to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Diversity, equity and inclusion practices should be integrated with all talent management practices and managers must learn how to leverage the diversity of their teams. Companies with more diverse teams are [more innovative](#) and engaged in their work, are [35% more likely to outperform their peers](#), and earn nearly [15 times more sales revenue](#) than those with the lowest levels of ethnic diversity. Considering by 2050 there may be no racial or ethnic majority in the United States, strategic diversity, equity, and inclusion practices will be key to organizational success. Organizations can benefit by assessing and measuring the impact of their D,E,&I programs.

Figure 21. Engagement Index by Ethnicity



## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

While 2019 capped 10 years of steady job and economic growth, 2020 is poised to be marked by uncertainty over the economy and job outlook. Necessary actions such as travel bans, school closings, and social distancing will have profound impact on the economy. Rocketing unemployment rates, plummeting stock markets, and uneasy investors pose uncertainty for many sectors of our economy. We have already experienced major losses in the accommodations, travel, food service, retail, and entertainment industries. Further, the healthcare industry will be strained, and some healthcare providers may suffer from mental health issues such as PTSD.

For those able to continue working, the current environment has forced many to plunge into remote work and this change will require a dramatic cultural shift. Employers will be required to find new ways to promote resiliency and connection. After the frenzied rush to get new processes and technology up to speed, we will settle into a new reality – a reality full of new management challenges and employee stressors. Once everyone is able to cope with staying connected technically, we will have to learn how to stay connected on a human level and safeguard employee well-being, inspire workforce confidence, and sharpen our skills to manage the changes to what and how work gets done.

Sense of community and belonging, leadership behavior (especially communication), and opportunities for growth and development, factors that emerged as key drivers of engagement in 2019, may be even more critical in 2020. Considering the importance of a felt sense of belonging on engagement and motivation, not to mention emotional and physical well-being, employers will have to find ways to build and maintain relationships in newly formed remote work environments. Aside from setting employees up with effective tools and technology to communicate with coworkers, managers must check in often to see how employees are doing, make sure they feel supported, and schedule time for team building. Because remote work can blur boundaries between work and other life domains, it is also important that managers curb the “always on mentality” by setting clear expectations and modelling acceptable work-life balance. Time away from work can help employees “recharge” and reduce burnout.

Uncertainty causes anxiety and the human brain makes up stories when information is sparse or inconsistent. As people often assume the worst, leaders must overcommunicate and be more transparent and accessible than ever. Even in times of uncertainty, leaders who consistently model organizational values and communicate a clear and inspiring vision can cultivate employee trust and confidence in the organization’s future and stimulate higher levels of engagement and productivity.

While professional and career development will likely still be important drivers of engagement, investment in such opportunities may become less feasible as employers shift priorities to keep organizations afloat amid an impending recession. Consequently, it will be even more important for managers to continue regular discussions with employees regarding their career goals and where possible provide opportunities for employees to learn from peers, participate in less formal developmental opportunities, and challenge themselves with new assignments.

Yes, 2020 will be different – but sense of community, strong communication, and employee growth will remain important. Find opportunity in the difficulty to listen to, recognize, and celebrate employees now more than ever.



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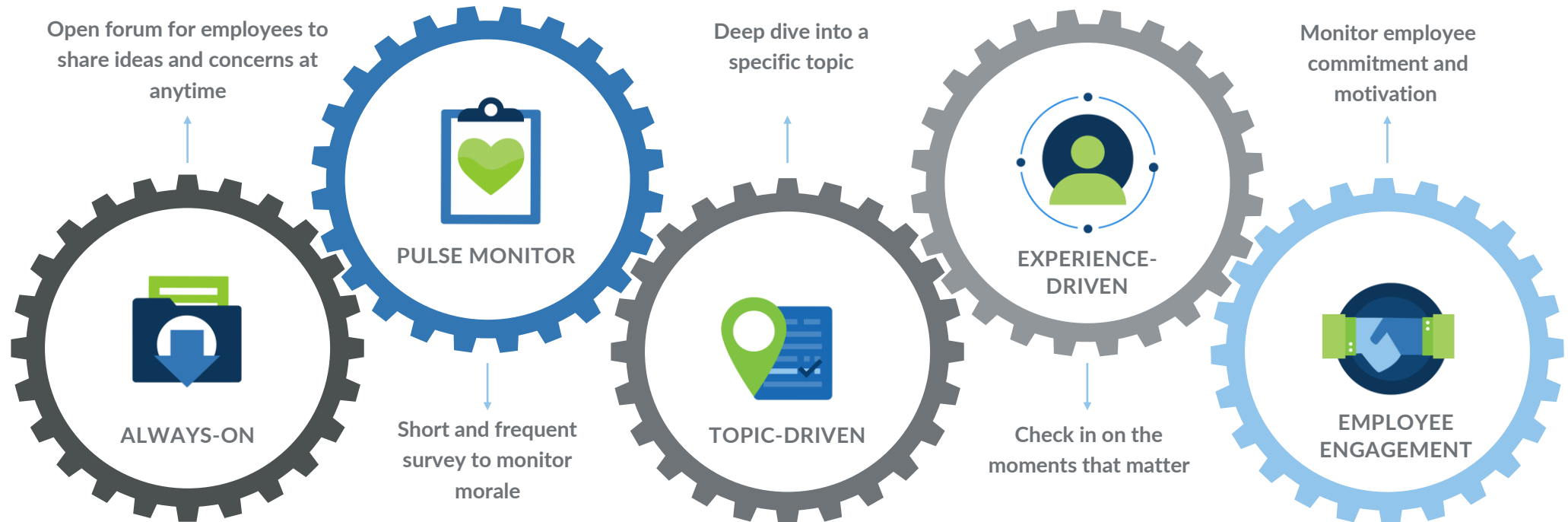
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