EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT MANAGER ACTION GUIDE

Suggested Actions for Improving the Employee Experience

Suggested Actions by Survey Topic

This best practice guide is organized by engagement survey topic. Review survey results to identify 1-3 key areas of focus and reference this guide for suggestions on how to take action. Suggestions in this guide are tailored to what managers can do to improve the employee experience.

Tips for Successful Survey Follow-up

Action planning cannot be an afterthought and employees who believe their organization listens and acts on their feedback are notably more engaged and likely to stay than those who do not. Before we provide topic specific actions, here are a few best practices to ensure that your approach to taking action is successful.

- Improving engagement and organizational effectiveness is not the responsibility of management alone. Involve employees in identifying solutions. Doing so will demonstrate that you value their ideas.

- Incorporate updates and action taken from your survey into regular operational reviews and goal setting. For example, share progress on the action plan during regular update meetings or include it as a goal on a performance review. By treating engagement as you would any other goal, you will increase the likelihood that action will be taken.

- Connect the dots. Continuously remind employees that you heard their feedback and what actions were taken as a result.

- Seek best practices. Talk to other leaders to understand what they have done to successfully act on your engagement drivers.

- Share success stories. Let employees and other leaders know what action was taken and the results. Doing so can be a source of recognition for your team and provide other leaders with ideas for improvement.

- Create one-on-one dialogue. Engagement happens at the individual level. Talk to employees about what they personally need to feel valued and effective.

- Focus on your top performers. Talk to your top performers about their level of engagement and ask for their ideas to make improvements.

- Link employee engagement results to other business metrics such as turnover, productivity, or customer/patient ratings. Doing so will allow you to see what engagement drivers have the biggest impact on business outcomes.

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ACCESS TO JOB-CRITICAL INFORMATION

As hard as we try to provide information, people aren't going to consume it if it isn't easy, accessible, or to the point. If you feel like communication at your organization or within your team is good, but employees are telling you otherwise, it may be time to consider new methods for sharing key information. It's important to find ways of communicating that really work for your people and your environment.

People in today's world are flooded with information, so it may be less about having enough information, and more about having enough of the right information. Especially when your plan is to cascade information down the organization, it is important to confirm who will be sharing the information and how to ensure it gets to all intended people.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I have enough information to effectively do my job.

MANAGERS CAN:

Understand people may have different preferences for methods of communication. Consider using more than one form of communication (e.g., email, newsletter, town hall meetings, shift/team meetings, video communication, social media).

Remember that employees can handle "bad" news but struggle with no news. In the absence of information, we fill in the missing pieces, which can lead to inaccurate messages or rumors. Consider this when crafting communications. If you don't know the answer, be honest and say so but try to follow up when possible.

Provide rationale for decisions. Often, communicating the process and reasoning that led to a particular decision is as important as conveying the decision itself. These details foster employee buy-in and understanding of what to expect next. Let your team in on your thinking so people can ask questions, feel in-the-know, and can even help anticipate challenges you didn't identify. Because processing and decision-making happens in our own heads, and because we're often in a hurry, it's easy to forget to let people in on our thinking.

Clarify information sources. Clearly identify and communicate where employees can find key resources, such as project documentation, policies, and data. Create a centralized hub, like an intranet or shared drive, where important information is easily accessible.

ADEQUATE RESOURCES

The demands of our jobs (e.g., deadlines, emotional labor, workload, role conflict) are often what lead to burnout. Having resources, on the other hand, is essential for feeling motivated and engaged, and even helps combat burnout during the most demanding and stressful times at work. When people have the resources they need to feel supported and perform at their best, the difficult parts of their jobs don't seem so taxing.

When asked about resources, everyone may think of something slightly different and may have differing needs. For example, when you think resources, are you thinking equipment, staff, money, time, support, or something else altogether? Ensure that what comes to mind for you is aligned with your team's perspective. Don't overlook something important that may seem small to you but can make a large difference in someone else's work.

SURVEY ITEMS

Items measuring this topic include:

> I am given the resources I need to do my best work.

MANAGERS CAN:

Encourage employees to ask for resources. Ensure employees know that it is acceptable to speak up when adequate resources are not available and provide the proper channels to do so. Reserve time during team meetings to ask employees what resources they need to do their jobs well. Encourage employees to be as specific as possible so you can determine the best course of action. There may be challenges you can troubleshoot without escalation or investing in additional resources.

Communicate decisions around resources. When you must make tough decisions or are unable to meet all employees' requests, get your team involved in conversations, set expectations for when needs can be met, and talk others through your decision process. Explain the rationale behind decisions and emphasize how allocated resources support team goals and priorities.

Review current resources and materials. There may be tools or resources that your organization has available that your team is not currently leveraging. As you identify the specific tools your team needs, check against the organization-wide resources to see if there is an existing tool that can be used immediately.

AUTONOMY

Having autonomy is a fundamental human need, so it is no surprise that it is a key factor to being engaged at work. People are more likely to be motivated when they have discretion in how they do their work, ownership in what they do, involvement in decisions, and opportunities to voice suggestions or feedback.

Only solicit input for decisions for which you are willing and able to incorporate the feedback. Your employees are smart; they know when you have created a false sense of input. Rather than create the illusion of opportunity for "voice" when you know the input will not be considered, find genuine ways to give employees autonomy and control over their work.

SURVEY ITEMS

Items measuring this topic include:

> I have input in making decisions that affect my work.

MANAGERS CAN:

Provide guidelines, then step back. Create a culture of empowerment by setting parameters for performance. Then, get out of the way and let employees accomplish their work how they best see fit.

Review decisions that are made on a regular basis. Who makes those decisions? Is there an opportunity to shift the decision-making as close as possible to where the work happens?

Find opportunities to increase autonomy. Identify who needs to be involved in what kind of decisions and then give as much autonomy to employees for all other topics.

Provide quick training opportunities for decision-making. Begin building decision-making skills by presenting scenarios to employees and asking them how they would respond. What factors would the employee consider? Use the dialog as an opportunity to provide coaching.

Ask employees to suggest tasks where they need more or less support from you. Openly discuss requests for support with your employees, considering their readiness for increased autonomy. In cases where an employee wants decreased support and they aren't yet ready for autonomy, give them the rationale for your decision and actionable feedback on what the behaviors they need to exhibit to be given more authority or responsibility.

BELONGING

Feeling connected to others at work is one of the most powerful predictors of employee engagement. Those who feel isolated physically, emotionally, and/or professionally are much more likely to leave than those who feel included. Research also suggests that those who feel a sense of belonging also have higher performance, develop and advance their careers more quickly, and even take fewer sick days.

Many instances of workplace exclusion are not intentional, but that does not make them any less painful or difficult for employees. Consider your own interactions with employees. Do you pay attention to the "little things" and make time to check in on a personal level? Do you address people by name? How do you respond to employee ideas—even if the idea can't be implemented, do you respond with appreciation for their contribution?

SURVEY ITEMS

> I feel a sense of community and belonging at work.

MANAGERS CAN:

Lead by example: Model inclusive behavior. Treat everyone with respect, listen to diverse perspectives, and demonstrate openness in your actions.

Foster open communication. Encourage team members to share their ideas, concerns, and feedback without fear of judgment. Actively listen, and validate their input, showing that their voices matter.

Celebrate diversity. Recognize and celebrate the unique strengths, backgrounds, and experiences of each team member. This could be through cultural celebrations, highlighting different work styles, or acknowledging personal achievements.

Build trust. Be transparent in your decisions and actions. Show consistency between what you say and do. Trust is the foundation for team members to feel comfortable bringing their full selves to work.

Avoid favoritism. It can be easy to provide growth opportunities to high performing employees or employees who share things in common with you. Be intentional about providing every employee on your team with opportunities to gain experience and thrive.

CLEAR EXPECTATIONS

Setting expectations is straightforward, but also easily overlooked. We make assumptions. Others make assumptions. And before you know it, expectations are misaligned and conflict or poor performance bubbles to the surface. This item is an easy one to cross off the list, so take the time, make it a priority, and create a norm where others help you establish good expectations too.

Setting clear expectations is not a one-time deal. Because change is ongoing, revisit expectations on a regular basis. Every time the team grows or shrinks, individuals alter their goals, systems and processes shift, or organizational priorities change, be sure to check in to reestablish and/or align expectations.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I know what is expected of me on the job.

MANAGERS CAN:

Check for employees' understanding. After discussing an employee's roles or responsibilities (i.e., with new hires or for ongoing work tasks), try asking, "Based on what we've talked about, what's your understanding of what you'll be taking care of, and what you can count on me to do?". Ask about timing, resources, etc. Having someone verbalize expectations back to you ensures you're all on the same page.

Document rules, policies, and norms that span across your team, department, or company. Ensure employees are aware of and know how to access that document. Revisit these documents periodically so people remember where to find them and keep them updated.

Initiate a conversation to identify gaps in understanding of expectations. When an employee fails to meet your expectations, give them the benefit of the doubt and explore whether your expectations matched theirs. Maybe there was a misunderstanding about the task, timing, or roles. Use the situation as a learning opportunity to clarify expectations going forward and encourage the employee to solicit feedback.

Check-in as priorities shift to make sure expectations are clear. Answer any questions employees may have. Be upfront about what you know and what you do not yet know.

COACHING

If people don't understand their blind spots, it is difficult for them to improve. By providing personalized guidance, managers can help employees achieve their full potential for success. Effective coaching fosters growth, builds confidence, and strengthens team dynamics. Additionally, feeling like a manager is actively invested in their growth and performance is highly motivating for employees.

SURVEY ITEMS

> My manager effectively coaches me to improve my performance.

MANAGERS CAN:

Provide quick training opportunities. Begin building decision-making skills by presenting scenarios to employees and ask them how they would respond. What factors would the employee consider? Use the dialog as an opportunity to provide coaching.

Provide constructive feedback. Give timely, specific, and actionable feedback. Frame feedback around behaviors rather than personal traits, and make it a regular part of conversations, not just during formal reviews.

Ask open-ended questions. Encourage self-reflection by asking questions that prompt employees to think critically about their performance. For example, "What do you think you could have done differently?" or "How do you think you can improve this process?"

Tailor coaching to the individual. Understand each employee's strengths, learning style, and development needs. Adapt your coaching approach accordingly, as what works for one person may not work for another.

Foster a growth mindset. Encourage employees to view challenges as opportunities for growth. Celebrate progress and effort, even if the results aren't perfect yet. This helps employees stay motivated and resilient.

Remember to coach behaviors, not people. Constructive feedback should reinforce or correct specific behaviors employees display, not their personality traits.

COMMUNICATING CHANGE

It is no secret that dealing with change is difficult. But, by thoughtfully managing change initiatives your chances of success improve tremendously. To help employees navigate change be sure to: 1) help people understand the reason for the change – what is in it for them? 2) involve people in decision making to earn their buy-in 3) communicate, communicate, communicate, and 4) ensure processes and procedures support the change so it sticks.

Just because a message is communicated does not mean it has been heard. Managers are often employees' best link to understanding what is going on in the organization. When there is a breakdown in communication from manager to employee, it can rapidly produce feelings of uncertainty, skepticism, and confusion for employees. It is critical that managers build trust, communicate frequently, draw connections between change and employees' specific work, and address any outstanding questions weighing on people's minds.

SURVEY ITEMS

> My manager takes time to explain how changes at this organization will affect me.

MANAGERS CAN:

Understand the change first. Before communicating with your team, make sure you have a clear understanding of the change yourself. Ask senior leaders for clarification if needed so you can confidently answer questions.

Provide broader rationale for changes. Help employees understand that changes are happening not because the way things were done before was inferior, but because the business is evolving, and changes are necessary to keep up with the new environment.

Encourage collaboration. Fostering a collaborative climate with open communication is especially important when going through change. Set aside extra time to answer questions or concerns.

Be honest. If you don't know the answer or a decision has not been made, say so. Communicate when you expect to know more and then be sure to follow up.

COMMUNICATING AN INSPIRING VISION

When people feel a sense of purpose, belonging, and part of something greater than themselves, they derive a sense of meaning from work. Meaningfulness is related to a host of positive outcomes, like motivation, commitment, helping behaviors on the job, lower turnover intentions, and personal well-being. Having an inspiring vision helps people create meaningfulness in their work.

Having a vision or mission statement isn't enough. To be inspired, people need to know what the vision is and hear about it on a regular basis. Beyond knowing the vision, people at all levels need opportunities to live values in their daily work. They also need to see managers and senior leaders acting in ways that uphold and embody the values. Inconsistent policies, systems, and actions deteriorate commitment to the organization's purpose. Communicating an inspiring vision is through not only words but more importantly, through action.

SURVEY ITEMS

> Senior Leaders have communicated a motivating and inspiring vision for the future.

MANAGERS CAN:

Connect the vision to day-to-day work. Help employees understand how their individual roles contribute to the larger vision. Break it down into concrete examples that show how their work drives progress toward the company's goals, making the vision feel relevant and attainable.

Simplify and clarify the message. Senior leadership's vision can sometimes feel abstract or high-level. Translate it into clear, simple terms that your team can easily grasp. Focus on the core message and avoid jargon, making it relatable to everyone.

Show enthusiasm and belief in the vision. Your attitude will shape how your team responds. Demonstrate genuine excitement and belief in the vision's potential to inspire your team. If you're positive and confident, your team is more likely to get behind the vision.

Create opportunities for dialogue. Encourage your team to ask questions and discuss the vision. Listen to their thoughts, address concerns, and foster open conversations. This helps employees feel more engaged and invested in the company's direction.

CONFIDENCE IN CAREER

Employees won't achieve their career goals unless 1) employees know what their goals are, and 2) managers are aware of employees' goals. Everyone wants something different — some want to climb the ladder, some are focused on learning, some want stability, others are relationship-focused – it's a matter of knowing an individual, creating the right environment and opportunities, and empowering them to do the hard work to progress.

Employees don't always draw connections between learning or growth opportunities and career progression. Career advancement is driven not only by formal promotions, pay increases, or title changes, but also by gaining new skills, taking on larger responsibilities, and collaborating with different functions. You may need to help employees see how experiences like these are critical for their career progression and achieving personal career goals.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I am confident I can achieve my career goals at this organization.

MANAGERS CAN:

Identify and communicate clear career paths and open positions. If an employee applies for a position within your team but does not get the role, provide feedback as to why and what to work on to be ready for the next opportunity.

Initiate career-based conversations with employees. Meet with employees one-on-one to discuss career goals/interests, developmental opportunities, and opportunities for growth within the organization. Understand the ways in which each of your employees wants to grow and actively support their growth.

Be proactive in providing learning opportunities, especially for high potential employees. Expose them to next level tasks and projects. Invite them to shadow you or other leaders when possible.

Offer informal opportunities that contribute to career growth. Encourage employees to seize these less formal chances for career growth, like expanding responsibilities, increasing variety in one's work, or having the opportunity to teach others.

CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

Remember that you're giving feedback to a person and the message that is heard is more important than the message that is given. People are more likely to hear feedback when it is specific, focused on behaviors rather than the person, a combination of positive and constructive, and when there is an opportunity to voice their own observations as part of the process. When feedback is actually heard, you're more likely to elicit the behaviors you're looking for.

"Sandwiching" feedback — where you sandwich negative feedback between two pieces of positive feedback — is not as effective as some may claim. When feedback feels insincere people are less receptive and may overlook the constructive information you're sharing. Rather than hide critical feedback, be upfront with employees and set the expectation that all feedback conversations should include discussion around positive performance and potential growth opportunities.

SURVEY ITEMS

> My manager regularly provides me with constructive feedback to improve my job performance.

MANAGERS CAN:

Consider short, yet frequent check-ins with each direct report. Try to lead quick check-in meetings to focus on: 1) what's going well? 2) where are you having challenges? 3) how can I best support you?

Provide real-time feedback and use questions to help employees process their own performance. Ask questions like: how do you think that went? What do you think you could do differently next time?

Focus on the behavior rather than the person. For example, rather than saying, "You are confrontational," consider describing a specific behavior such as, "Yesterday, when you raised your voice...".

Be timely, don't wait for a performance review to provide feedback. We often avoid providing feedback because we don't want to upset others. However, it is important to remember that being direct and honest is the kind thing to do. Feeling frustrated and not saying anything can lead to resentment, conflict, and confusion.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE MISSION

It is essential for employees to recognize how their work connects to the broader goals of the organization, as this awareness fosters a sense of purpose and motivation. When employees see how their individual contributions impact the organization's success, they are more likely to feel valued and invested in their roles. This connection helps align their efforts with the company's objectives, leading to improved collaboration, innovation, and overall performance.

Some leaders hesitate to discuss organizational goals, vision, or mission because it feels too lofty or intangible. Find a way to communicate an inspiring vision that feels right given your culture and leadership style. Having a purpose and feeling part of something greater than yourself has shown to be incredibly motivating and fulfilling, so don't deprive your employees of knowing how they fit into the big picture.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I understand how the work I do contributes to the goals of this organization.

MANAGERS CAN:

Clarify the bigger picture. Regularly communicate the organization's overarching goals and strategic objectives. Make sure employees understand the company's mission and vision, so they see how their work fits into the broader context.

Set team and individual goals aligned with organizational priorities. Break down company goals into team-level objectives and individual performance targets. Clearly explain how achieving these goals directly contributes to the success of the organization.

Use real-life examples. Share specific examples of how employees' work has impacted key business outcomes. Whether it's improving customer satisfaction, driving revenue, or enhancing operational efficiency, show how their contributions matter.

Celebrate milestones and progress. Recognize and celebrate achievements that align with organizational goals. When employees see that their work is valued and contributing to broader success, it reinforces their connection to the company's goals.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION

The culture and tone set for collaboration by managers is critically important. Managers are responsible for creating an environment that is conducive to cross-departmental collaboration, open communication, and cohesion.

We are wired to believe that the work we do is unique – our work is more challenging and difficult compared to the work of other groups. When we become aware of this bias and realize we all have challenges and obstacles to overcome, we can become better collaborators. Take the time to ask other groups about the challenges they face and how you can help.

A SURVEY ITEMS

> People in our company support one another and collaborate across the organization to meet our goals.

MANAGERS CAN:

Encourage leaders to discuss their goals/priorities and seek alignment. Leaders should focus their approach to leadership from an "organizational" view vs. a "department or team" view.

Encourage open communication. Foster an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing ideas, challenges, and feedback. Use tools like collaborative platforms or regular team meetings to facilitate ongoing dialogue and information sharing.

Encourage shared ownership and a commitment to success on collaborative projects. Begin collaborative projects by asking team members to agree to the objectives (or better yet, help define the objectives) and discuss the benefits to the organization.

Provide clarity around roles and responsibilities. It is important for members of the collaboration to understand the expectations at each stage of the collaboration. This minimizes confusion, ensures accountability over all tasks, and empowers each team member to own their role.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COMMUNICATION

In our busy, technology-driven, and dispersed work world, it is difficult to find regular opportunities to interact and communicate with other groups. Get creative. It is critical to stay informed about other groups' work, their challenges, successes, and opportunities to make life easier on one another.

SURVEY ITEMS

> There is good communication between groups/departments within this company.

MANAGERS CAN:

Facilitate conversations with other departments. Ask relevant questions such as: 1) How is our customer service? 2) How do we make your lives easier/more difficult? 3) What would you like our department to know about how we work together?

Provide necessary information when requesting support. When asking for help/support from another department, be sure to communicate the reason for the request and the impact it will have. When people understand how their contribution will have an impact, they are more often more likely to be open to help.

Cater your method of communication to best serve your purpose. This is particularly important when it involves multiple people and groups. For example, email is often our go-to communication method in offices. Email is great for many purposes, especially sharing information and giving updates to many people. Email is not as effective, however, for brainstorming ideas or problem-solving. When in doubt, pick up the phone or talk in-person.

DECISION-MAKING

Most employees likely do not have personal relationships with leaders of your organization, but it's still important that they trust their leaders to make the right decisions for the company. As a manager, you are often the first line of communication for messages from senior leadership. It is important for managers to explain the rationale behind decisions made by senior leaders, highlighting its relationship to the work of their team.

SURVEY ITEMS

Items measuring this topic include:

> I have confidence in the decisions made by the leaders of my organization.

MANAGERS CAN:

Ask your team how often and through which channels they would like to hear from senior leaders. Leverage their preferred communication channels and pass this information upward for broader adoption and/or channels that are not managed by you.

Explain the reason behind decisions and why certain people were involved in the decision-making process. Be sure to help each employee understand how the decision will impact their work and how it supports your team's goal achievement and the broader organization's goals.

Invite senior leaders to a team meeting for a Q&A session. This provides employees with an opportunity to build rapport with senior leaders and ask questions to receive direct answers. You can gather and share employee questions in advance so that the leader can prepare.

DEMONSTRATING RESPECT

Respect is the foundation of a healthy organizational culture, and most organizations have expectations around respectful treatment in their employee policies.

Respect isn't just about being nice and courteous. It's also about valuing people enough to tell them what they need to hear to thrive and be successful. We often avoid difficult conversations because we don't want to hurt feelings, yet the respectful thing to do would be to communicate honestly, directly, and with kindness.

SURVEY ITEMS

> My manager treats me with respect.

MANAGERS CAN:

Go back to basics. Simple behaviors make all the difference when it comes to ensuring others feel respected. Take time for simple greetings, ask how people are doing and use common courtesy.

Demonstrate positive communication. Utilizing effective listening skills, thinking through how words and actions will impact others, and being aware of body language, tone of voice, and demeanor in all interactions will promote healthier communication practices, and ultimately respectful treatment within the organization.

Seek input from all group members. Look for ways to have diversity in meetings and committees, especially when important decisions are made that impact the larger group. If some voices dominate the conversation, intentionally seek out the opinion of quieter members so all perspectives are heard. Use some of these ideas and be sure to recognize the employee who shared them.

Implement policies and procedures consistently so employees feel they are being treated fairly. Provide equal opportunities for employees to participate in professional development, committees, and task forces.

Remember respect for each other is required by organizational policies and non-negotiable for all employees. Everyone should feel respected at work, and those who act disrespectfully need to know when boundaries are crossed. It is up to managers and employees alike to ensure a culture of respect is built and maintained.

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Tackling difficult conversations head on is key to staying on top of problems and building a learning culture. Team members should feel safe to bring up any topic of conversation without negative consequences - regardless of the difficulty. When issues are swept under the rug, they can become bigger problems later. Tough talks are difficult, but necessary for a strong business and successful team.

Take time to reflect: Do you role model strong communication by bringing up difficult topics or do you wait until the last minute? Do you champion others speaking up by thanking them for their contribution? Do you create a space that is psychologically safe for others to speak? Do you develop a plan to have a difficult conversation before you have it?

SURVEY ITEMS

> People on my team are willing to have difficult conversations.

MANAGERS CAN:

Ensure difficult conversations receive follow-up. People will hesitate to bring up difficult conversations when they feel nothing will be done about it. Closing the loop will help your team feel like their voice matters and they were heard.

Schedule time to discuss hard topics. If people need the space and time to voice concerns or other difficult topics, it can be useful to add it to the agenda in team meetings. Do you have a weekly or monthly team meeting? Add time for employees to bring up these points of conversation.

Consider barriers to psychological safety for your team. Is there a particular individual who shoots down ideas? Are people punished for bringing up uncomfortable topics? Do people make jokes when someone speaks up about a hard topic? Work to create an environment where these barriers are removed for people to give feedback or provide a system to report concerns so they can make it to the team agenda with anonymity.

ENCOURAGING NEW IDEAS

Employees who are closest to the work are often the ones who have the best ideas for changes, improvements and problem-solving. Asking employees for their input on a regular basis is empowering and sends the message that employee expertise is valued and leveraged.

Change is necessary, but reinventing the wheel isn't. Before jumping into a big change or deciding to move forward with a new idea, challenge yourself and others to think through the pros and cons. Consider the anticipated and unanticipated impact. Identify who else the change may affect and invite them into the conversation. Welcome and encourage all new ideas and be thoughtful about taking action.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I feel encouraged to come up with new and better ways of doing things.

MANAGERS CAN:

Prioritize asking employees to contribute their ideas. It is important to create an environment where new ideas are welcome, personal risk taking is encouraged, and creativity is valued. Stress the importance of creativity and set aside time for brainstorming in meetings.

Use the "yes, and..." technique. When new ideas are generated, practice giving the additive feedback of "yes, and..." in response to an idea rather than "no, but..." This can unleash positive energy that builds a collaborative climate.

Brainstorm. Having fun with colleagues and trying new activities together can help us to look at things in a new way. One great way to spur new ideas is to create a competition for the most innovative approach to solve a particular problem.

Provide resources & recognition. Provide the resources needed to implement the ideas worth acting upon and publicly recognize those responsible for generating the idea.

EXPRESSING OPINIONS

As a manager it is critical to encourage and foster an environment where employees feel safe to voice their ideas and opinions. Clear and thoughtful expression of opinions helps align team efforts, address budding issues in a timely manner, and supports informed decision-making to ultimately contribute to a more cohesive and effective workplace. Teams where employees feel comfortable voicing opinions are likely to experience increased creativity, productivity, and performance.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I am comfortable expressing my opinions on issues important to me.

MANAGERS CAN:

Give specific feedback on how to progress employee ideas. Start reinforcing your employees to share their ideas with you. Each time they bring an idea, provide them with actionable feedback on how they can further develop those ideas.

Make it as easy as possible for employees to share ideas. Think about your employees and solicit thoughts through multiple platforms that accommodate different styles. Different ways to share ideas could be through team or one-on-one meetings, email, or shared documents.

Lead by example. Use your own actions to show your employees the types of open, transparent communication you want to implement. How supportive are your current team interactions in supporting employees to speak freely? How often do you recognize honest dialogue?

Acknowledge employee contributions. Recognize and appreciate contributions from your team to indicate value for differing perspectives. Validating employees' opinions fosters confidence and encourages continued participation.

LEADERSHIP ACTS ON FEEDBACK

Employees take the time to share their open and honest feedback. When they feel they are met with inaction or inadequate communication from senior leaders, this can be demoralizing. Although this is often out of the control of management, there are things managers can do to facilitate positive perceptions here. Often senior leaders are taking action and the message doesn't make it to employees. Managers can play a role as translators to ensure this information makes it down the chain.

SURVEY ITEMS

> Senior Leaders at this organization act on employee feedback.

MANAGERS CAN:

Communicate feedback outcomes. After collecting feedback from employees, share the results with the team, highlighting key themes and insights. Clearly communicate how senior leadership plans to address these issues or implement suggestions, ensuring that employees see their voices are heard.

Provide updates on actions taken. Regularly update employees on the progress made regarding their feedback. Whether it's through team meetings, newsletters, or emails, keeping employees informed about changes demonstrates accountability and responsiveness from senior leadership.

Encourage two-way communication. Create opportunities for employees to engage in discussions with senior leadership, such as town hall meetings or Q&A sessions. This direct interaction can help employees feel more connected and see how their input is valued in decision-making processes.

Recognize and celebrate improvements. When changes are made based on employee feedback, acknowledge and celebrate these improvements publicly. Recognizing the impact of employee suggestions reinforces the idea that their input leads to positive change and encourages ongoing participation in providing feedback.

MANAGER CARES

The manager relationship is one of the most important relationships we have at work. Caring for employees as individuals is essential for creating a truly supportive work environment. Managers who take the time to understand their team members' personal needs, aspirations, and challenges will be able to foster deeper connections and demonstrate genuine empathy. When employees feel that they are seen as people and not just a cog in the machine, they are much more likely to show up with confidence, authenticity, and commitment at work.

Do you treat all employees with courtesy and politeness? Do you check in about their personal lives while maintaining professionalism? How do you respond to employees who share struggles, difficulties, or crises they may be dealing with, both at and outside of work?

SURVEY ITEMS

> My manager cares about me as a person, not just as an employee.

MANAGERS CAN:

Explore personal connections with employees. Over the next month or two, spend quality time with each of your employees. Understand what makes each employee unique. Be genuinely curious about getting to know your employees personally and professionally. You may uncover traits or behaviors that are very valuable to your team, but underutilized.

Consider doing a personality or strengths assessment with your team and celebrate and explore differences. Leverage individual strengths and differences to improve team dynamics and tailor your management style to your team's needs individually and collectively.

Check in on their personal lives while maintaining professionalism. Offer to help employees when they share struggles, difficulties, or crises they may be dealing with, both at and outside of work. If you aren't sure how to best support an employee through a particular situation, ask them what you can do to help.

MANAGER LISTENS

Listening to and valuing the ideas and concerns of others is key to demonstrating that you appreciate the thoughts and perspectives of all.

Consider the environment you foster on your team. How often do you ask for the opinion of your employees? How often do you use employee ideas to implement change? In what ways to you demonstrate the employees' ideas are valued? Are you dismissive of employee concerns, or do you practice active listening even if it is not within your direct control to act on those ideas?

SURVEY ITEMS

> My manager listens to and responds to my ideas and concerns.

MANAGERS CAN:

Keep lines of communication open. Provide regular opportunities for individuals to voice frustrations, concerns, needs, and suggestions for improvement. Think through how your behavior, words, and actions will impact others, and be aware of body language, tone of voice, and demeanor in all interactions. Also, focus on listening before responding.

Include appropriate parties in the decision-making process. When making decisions that impact your team, work with those affected to ask for input/recommendations and try to incorporate at least one suggestion. Then, follow up with those who have provided input.

Consider committing to a regular five-minute check-in with each teammate. Consistent check-ins help individuals feel valued and leaders learn more about the organization. This can be a daily call, individual email, or virtual meeting to see how they are doing.

Be timely and transparent in responses. Acknowledge receipt of employees' ideas and concerns promptly and provide updates on how you plan to address them. If you can't act on a suggestion, explain the reasoning behind it to maintain trust and transparency.

Follow up and show impact. After addressing employee feedback, follow up to discuss the outcomes or any changes made as a result. This reinforces the importance of their contributions and encourages continued dialogue in the future.

RECOGNITION

We often associate recognition with monetary rewards, but there are many ways to recognize great work in cost-effective ways. In fact, when we ask employees, they most often tell us they are simply looking for a "thank you" for the small wins that happen daily. Recognizing people in a meaningful way depends on the individual. Rather than trying one-size fits all approach, customize how you recognize employees based on their personal preferences and build it into your daily practice.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I receive recognition when I do excellent work.

ACTION TIPS:

Don't wait for the annual performance review to call out achievements. Offer recognition as soon as possible so the individual knows their contributions are visible and they matter.

Identify ways to facilitate peer-to-peer recognition. Provide the tools for them to do so on an ongoing basis, such as setting aside time during team meetings. If your organization has a peer recognition platform, promote its use within your team.

Never underestimate the value of sharing time and building a relationship with your employees. Make time for the employee to run ideas by you, talk about concerns, and just to get to know each other. Doing so will make it more authentic when you provide recognition and more effective when you need to provide constructive feedback.

Celebrate both big wins and small efforts. Don't wait for major accomplishments to recognize employees. Acknowledge the small, everyday efforts that contribute to team success, as consistent recognition can boost morale and motivation.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Growth and development opportunity is often a main driver of employee engagement. In today's workforce, people tend to stay with an organization longer when there are development opportunities; on the other hand, people are likely to look for employment elsewhere when these opportunities are lacking. Rich development opportunities attract strong talent, keep them motivated and equipped to perform well on the job, and build a culture of continuous improvement.

It is easy to assume that employees know about the full range of training, learning, and development opportunities at your organization and that they feel encouraged to take advantage of them. Unfortunately, this is often not the case. Employees may be unaware of programs. People may be unsure how to apply, get funding, or meet the needed requirements. They may receive mixed messages about being encouraged to "grow as a professional" but job demands do not allow time for doing so. It takes a certain culture to offer and encourage employee growth opportunities.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I am given a real opportunity to develop my skills at this organization.

MANAGERS:

Emphasize informal development opportunities. Don't underestimate less formal chances for development — encourage employees to work on innovative projects, engage in peer-to-peer teaching/mentoring, increase variety of their work, and provide opportunities to share ideas.

Provide a clear avenue for employees to share their developmental needs. Go out of your way to explore ways in which this additional training can be provided. Determine whether this is an individual need or training that could be provided at the group level.

Have regular one-on-one conversations with employees. Ask your team members: 1) What is going well? 2) Where are you having challenges? 3) What help/support can I provide at this time?

Share personal resources/materials. When you come across something that peaks your own interest – a blog, a podcast, a good book – share it with your team. And encourage that they do the same.

Ensure that everyone on your team has at least one goal they are actively working towards. Additionally, empower your employees to select a formal or informal development activity that will help move them closer to meeting their goals.

TEAM TRUST

Trust doesn't just feel good or make people like each other, it is foundational to the way team members show up for each other. When someone trusts us, we don't want to let them down. Trust allows people to assume the best in others rather than the worst. With trust, team members are more helpful and supportive, higher performing, and more likely to take risks. Teams with high trust are less likely to tolerate poor performance and they naturally build a culture of collaboration.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I trust the members of my work group to complete their work on time and to quality standards.

MANAGERS CAN:

Review whether roles and responsibilities are clear within the team. Coordination can break down if employees are not clear on where responsibility sits for certain tasks. If responsibilities do lack clarity, create a job sheet of common tasks carried out during a typical project/workflow and allocate tasks to a job role.

Set clear "norms" for behavior that are agreed upon by the team. For example, how do we communicate critical information? What is our response time? How do we address conflict? How do we share feedback? Set expectations for how work will get done and call on the team to hold one another accountable.

Establish psychological safety. Create an environment that fosters relationships and makes it ok to speak up and hold each other accountable. As the leader, demonstrate this value by openly admitting mistakes, sharing that you don't know something or acknowledging that results are better when you work together.

Recognize accountability and follow-through. Publicly acknowledge team members who consistently meet deadlines and deliver quality work. Recognizing reliability reinforces positive behavior and motivates others to be dependable as well, fostering a culture of trust and mutual respect.

TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

Communication from Senior Leadership is more than just the information shared directly from those at the top of the organization — people can easily attribute poor communication from their managers as lack of communication from the top. Be sure that all levels of leadership understand their role in communicating key messages, what information needs to be conveyed and a time frame for doing so.

Employees can handle bad news but struggle with no news. In the absence of information, we fill in the gaps with assumptions and stories. Proactive communication keeps the rumor mill at bay.

SURVEY ITEMS

> Communication from Senior Leaders is consistent and transparent.

MANAGERS CAN:

Be honest about what you don't know. If there are areas where information is still being worked out, be upfront with your team. Acknowledge uncertainties and commit to providing updates as soon as more details become available. This honesty fosters a culture of trust and transparency.

Remember to provide rationale for decisions when possible. Communicating the process that led to a decision is as important as conveying the decision itself. These details foster employee buy-in and understanding for what to expect next. Let employees in on Senior Leaders' thinking so people can ask questions, feel in-the-know, and help anticipate challenges.

Be realistic about possibilities for implementing suggestions. Be upfront with employees that while they may be raising a great idea, it's just not possible to tackle everything at once. Help the employee understand how ideas are prioritized and responded to.

Pay attention to employees' questions and frustrations around communication. Clear up rumors or misconceptions early. Commit to soliciting more information when you can and deliver on this promise by sharing current events, updates from Senior Leaders, or anticipated timing for more information.

WELL-BEING

Managers should prioritize the physical, emotional, and mental health of their team by fostering a supportive atmosphere, promoting work-life balance, and providing resources for stress management. Employees with positive well-being enjoy positive emotional states and consider themselves more engaged, productive, and more able to face challenges. Investing in employee well-being not only enhances individual satisfaction but also drives overall organizational success.

SURVEY ITEMS

> This company cares about the personal well-being of its employees.

MANAGERS CAN:

Lead by example: Model the best practice of taking care of yourself first. Be in tune with what helps you feel "centered" and prioritize those things even during busy times. For example, regular physical activity, eating well, family time or a hobby can help us be our best selves at work and set the example for others.

Invest in your own development. Having conversations with employees about well-being, mental health, conflict, and work struggles can be tough. Give yourself the resources to navigate these conversations by working on skills in communication, interpersonal effectiveness, and conflict management.

Remember well-being does not subscribe to a one-size-fits-all approach. Take the time to discover ways that promote personal wellness for each of your employees. Encourage your team to reflect on their individual definitions of well-being and ask about ways you can facilitate improvement in this area.

Mind your message. Well-being is both globally applicable and deeply personal. Because of this, it is important for managers and leaders to be mindful that their intentions translate positively. What may come from a place of problem solving and caring, could come across as judgmental. For example, message like "Maybe you should get up earlier before work" or "have you tried working out more?" are unlikely to be perceived with kindness. In comparison, "Tell me about 'what taking care of yourself' looks like for you" invites your employee to take agency in their well-being and drive the conversation.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

It is very common for employees to feel like there is more work to be done than can be accomplished in a day. However, if work-life balance is an engagement driver for your team, it could be a sign that your employees are approaching burnout.

It can be tempting to conclude that more head count is needed to improve work-life balance, and sometimes that is the answer, however often the solution lies in areas like clearly defining priorities, ensuring people have the resources they need to do their best work, or proactively managing change. Check in with employees to understand pain points that get in the way of efficiency.

SURVEY ITEMS

> I am able to maintain a healthy balance between my work life and my home life.

MANAGERS CAN:

Assume the best intentions of employees and offer flexibility when possible. Generally, when leaders offer flexibility to their employees, they are more likely to reciprocate when work is needed outside of typical hours.

Model the best practice of taking care of yourself first. Be in tune with what helps you feel "centered" and prioritize those things even during busy times. For example, regular exercise, eating well, family time or a hobby can help us be our best selves at work and set a positive example for others.

Review workloads/projects with employees regularly. Identify the most important tasks and be open to putting lower priority projects on the back burner or eliminating them altogether. Ensure employees know it is ok to say, "yes, at a later time" or "yes, and that means something else needs to come off my priority list" in reference to requests.

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