

## The Top 15 Ways to Engage Your Workforce

Employee engagement can present itself in a variety of policies and practices within an organisation.

Experts in the field offer 15 ways to engage workers:

- 1. Onboarding experience.** As the saying goes, you only get one chance to make a good first impression. "You never have higher engagement than when the employee starts," says Alice Snell of Snell Research in Raleigh, North Carolina. The onboarding "process signals to the employee that this is an organisation that cares about you and that you are going to be taken care of during your career here. It's not good to start a new job and you don't have a computer or a desk and you're filling out forms for the fifth time."
- 2. Offer clear lines of sight or alignment.** Make sure an employee understands the goals of the company and where they fit into the plan.
- 3. Feedback/communication.** This engagement tool often is rated in surveys as the best reward for doing a job well. Positive feedback can be as important, if not more so, than salaries and bonuses.
- 4. Feeling of community.** This can be shown through social media, company bowling leagues or a team project that blends the talents of groups of people.
- 5. Opportunities for job advancement.** "What kind of strategies does an organisation have for people to move freely within the business and within your company?" says David Wilkins, vice president of research for Taleo in Dublin, California. "What are you doing to actively develop your employees?"
- 6. Commitment to developing the employee.** "There have been great improvements [since the recession] in that employees feel good about their future at a company, that the right people are being retained," says Ilene Gochman, national director of Towers Watson & Co. in Chicago. "Companies have to pay attention to the people who are still here. You can't assume that [after] all those cutbacks that people will think they have a future."
- 7. Treating professionals like professionals.** Autonomy and self-direction have proven to be terrific motivators, Wilkins says. Companies such as Mountain View, California-based Google Inc. and Sydney, Australia-based software developer Atlassian, which also has an office in San Francisco, offer employees 20 percent of their workweek to spend on individual projects. "At Google, one of the outcomes was Gmail and Google Reader," he says. "Atlassian had zero percent turnover of engineers the last couple of years. It's amazing what can happen when you unleash people's creativity, their passion."
- 8. Compensation.** This goes well beyond pay, particularly for work that involves cognitive skills. "After a certain point, pay doesn't work," Wilkins says. "Companies need to work on nonmonetary rewards like giving employees more decision-making, more challenging work assignments and higher levels of influence and recognition in the company."
- 9. Genuine investment in people.** "When a supervisor or executive shows an interest in you and your future, you tend to be more open and receptive to that person," Wilkins says. "When people leave an organisation, survey after survey shows that one of the top five reasons is the lack of career growth and mobility. People want to get better at their job and develop a mastery of it. Employers need to get out of the way and give employees a chance to invest in themselves."
- 10. Shared purpose.** "Fulfilling someone else's goal is a job," Wilkins says. "Fulfilling your own goal is a reward. When you get directives from the top down and you are not bought into that process, it is somebody else's goal. You want employees to be connected to a goal and be part of a shared vision."
- 11. Relationship with peers.** This goes beyond colleagues at your level to include managers. Wilkins says one of the main reasons employees leave a job is a poor relationship with the boss or co-workers.
- 12. Leadership.** "The most important element is having strong managers and strong leaders," says Judy Whitcomb, assistant vice president of learning and organisational development for Chicago-based Vi, which owns and operates senior-living facilities. "You have to have managers who are engaged. Without competent managers, everything else falls apart."
- 13. Career development.** "There has been great improvement in employees feeling good about their future at a company and a sense that the right people are being retained," Gochman says.
- 14. Empowerment.** An employee, Gochman says, must have "the feeling that you can speak up, that you have input in changes that can affect your job."
- 15. Company image.** A good reputation can permeate throughout an organisation. "If you feel the company has a good image," Gochman says, "you are more likely to keep [or stay on] your job."\*  
\*Workforce.com

### Be Brave – Take Action

1. Review The Top 15 Ways to Engage Your Workforce
2. Which of these strategies is currently in place in your organisation ?
3. Implement the three strategies that would make the most difference to your organisation.

“ I found that the work that we did was invaluable and led me to what I believe are the greatest decisions I have made in my entire life. ”

Joanne Thompson  
Business Owner