

Employee Engagement Strategies Checklist

Are you worried about employees mentally checking out? Workplace trends like quiet quitting and “bare minimum Mondays” make it increasingly challenging to operate a high-performance workplace. The popularity of social media movements like these indicates that employees, especially employees who are not engaged, are inclined to withdraw from their work and simply collect a paycheck.



44%

of employees worldwide say they are stressed



In some ways, the inclination to withdraw makes perfect sense. Employees everywhere are feeling stressed:

➔ According to Gallup's latest research, 41% of employees worldwide say they are stressed, slightly improving from a record high set in 2021. Employee stress levels have risen over the past decade.

➔ Gallup's research shows that engaged employees are less likely than their less engaged coworkers to report feeling stress, meaning there is something that leaders and organizations can do to help reduce stress levels: Focus on engagement.

So, what can you do to beat the social media trends, heal the stress and create employee enthusiasm?

Use the advice below to increase employee engagement and make this year your organization's year of mission, purpose and quality.

○ Check in on your managers.

Managers are more likely to be burned out and disengaged than their teams. Make sure your managers are in a good place by doing the following:

- **Begin with listening.** Gallup has found that identifying key listening posts for managers makes their needs known and helps establish ways to support them as effective team leaders.
- **Improve leadership communication.** About three in 10 managers strongly agree their supervisor keeps them informed about what is going on within their organization. By providing straightforward, regular communication about organizational goals and policies, managers can reinforce and communicate priorities more effectively to their teams.
- **Train and develop managers.** Only 48% of managers strongly agree that they currently have the skills needed to be exceptional at their job. Organizations must teach managers to have meaningful conversations at the right frequency with their teams. They need more training on best practices in employee engagement and performance development. And they need more support when it comes to identifying their team's strengths and coaching them with those strengths in mind.
- **Establish coaching support to prevent burnout.** Gallup recommends having a meaningful weekly conversation with each team member — this applies to coaching managers too. If you want to truly support your managers, spend more time with them. Managers need to feel that their leaders care and that they're receiving continuous development in their careers while balancing their personal wellbeing.
- **Create a community of shared accountability.** The most rewarding parts of being a manager often come from strong partnerships and friendships. But busy schedules and remote work can hinder these supportive, informal interactions. Leaders must intentionally build a community of managers that nurtures peer relationships and mentorship.

○ Prepare managers to have meaningful conversations with their employees.

Gallup researchers studied the most common characteristics of extremely meaningful and less meaningful conversations. These are the top five characteristics of meaningful conversations, in order of importance:

- 1) Recognition or appreciation for recent work.
- 2) Collaboration and relationships.
- 3) Current goals and priorities at work.
- 4) The length of the conversation: Between 15 and 30 minutes is enough time for a meaningful conversation, but only if it happens frequently.
- 5) Employee strengths or the things they do well: Managers can have much more meaningful discussions about how each person gets their work done if those conversations are based on what they do best.

80%

of employees who say they have received meaningful feedback in the past week are fully engaged — regardless of how many days they worked in the office.

The takeaway is that feedback is meaningful to employees when their manager focuses on recognition, collaboration, goals and priorities, and strengths. And if these conversations happen every week, they can be brief. Naturally, problems and challenges will arise — and managers and employees should discuss them — but to improve engagement, managers must have conversations that *inspire* each individual.

○ Prioritize promoting mission and purpose — especially among remote workers.

Employees who can do their work remotely have an eroding connection to their organization's mission or purpose. The drop is more pronounced recently for exclusively remote employees: 31% strongly agree they feel connected to their organization's mission and purpose.

This does not mean that remote work cannot work — but it requires exceptional managers. Managers must clearly communicate the organization's mission and purpose while tying them to each team member's daily work.

○ Measure engagement.

Measuring engagement signals to employees you care about their feedback and want to know how they are doing. Whether you already have a tried-and-true method or need to develop a way of gauging your employee's enthusiasm, measuring engagement is essential to having a baseline understanding of your workforce and its needs.

The goal is to start a conversation between managers and each of their employees. An engagement survey will do just that by helping employees communicate their needs and managers know which needs they should prioritize.

When should you measure engagement?

The best time to send a survey is when employees have time to complete it (avoid peak vacation times and holidays) and when there's time to report, discuss and act on the goals from survey results.

○ Take action on survey results.

An engagement survey is the starting point, not the ending point, of motivating employees. You must act on the results you gather, or you could cause more harm than good.

If you just do a survey and nothing more, employee engagement will likely decrease, and turnover will increase. If you ask an employee for feedback about their workplace or engagement and then do nothing about it, resentment quickly rises.

However, nothing builds positive momentum for an engagement initiative more than asking for feedback, doing something about it, and then sharing and celebrating positive results. Here are some steps you can take in response to a survey:

- 1) **Build grassroots accountability.** After collecting data through a survey or other means, managers must lead action planning sessions at all team levels. Managers should use these sessions to foster employee engagement at a local level where every person in the organization takes accountability for making their workplace great. Effectively creating a culture of engagement means that every person in your organization is part of your business' success. When there is personal and organizational alignment on a common goal, it accelerates job meaning and engagement.
- 2) **Have effective action planning sessions.** The environment a manager creates for action planning is vital. Such sessions must establish a safe place and provide ample time for employees to discuss and share their true thoughts and opinions about what will make their workplace better, more productive and successful. The action planning meeting should always include the question, “What can we do individually and as a team to make things better for our organization and ourselves?” Most importantly, making a progress on your action plans and achieving your objectives is a top predictor of how engaged your team will be in the future.
- 3) **Assign action item leaders.** Once the team has discussed and agreed on at least one key SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timely) action to take, an action item leader from the team should be assigned.

An action item leader is a team member who takes accountability to ensure a single team action item is completed as expected and when promised. If a team has more than one identified action, assign a separate action item leader to each goal.

How Gallup Can Help

We've studied employee engagement for decades and can help you strengthen engagement — whether you're just starting out and need a trustworthy survey or ready to incorporate engagement principles into your organizational culture.

Explore Gallup's Q12®.

Our science-backed employee engagement survey.

Want to go further and build an employee engagement strategy?

We have courses, consulting and technology to aid the process.