

HOW TO ENHANCE
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
AND GAIN A
Competitive Advantage



As human capital consultants, it's quite common to have CEOs ask us if we can help with their employee engagement. And we, of course, love working with our clients to identify ways to get their employees wanting to come to work every day and thinking of retention strategies for the long term. It's important to note though that employee engagement can have several different interpretations depending on who you are talking to, so let's address the first question.

WHAT IS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?



Employee engagement is the willingness of employees to exceed responsibilities and expectations and remain committed to an organization. Engaged employees can be involved in the business and actively seek out new opportunities to improve themselves and their company. They can also be happier and therefore motivated to push beyond the status quo and succeed.

A high performer may already appear to be engaged. They complete their work on time and within budget. The employee appears positive and upbeat and is always willing to go the extra mile. The trick with the high performers is to figure out how to keep them engaged and how to create an environment where their commitment and level of hard work is sustainable.

We realize that everyone may have a different understanding of engaged employees, regardless, engagement does not occur on its own. Therefore, just thinking about the topic and how you can make improvements, shows signs of enlightenment as a leader.

Organizations with a stronger dedication to employee engagement than their counterparts reap the rewards of:

- increased productivity,
- innovation,
- social goodwill, and
- ultimately, a competitive advantage.

After working with hundreds of companies across industries for multiple decades, Helios HR has identified four main areas of focus to enhance employee engagement and make the biggest business impact.

PRO TIP #1:
Develop Onboarding & Assimilation Programs to Create Connectedness

An employee will remember their first day of work at a new job. They will remember if their new manager and team were eagerly awaiting their arrival with warm smiles. They will remember if their workspace was ready with an internet connection and ready phone line and even more so a welcome package on their desk; not just with typical HR paperwork, but maybe a company logo t-shirt, set of pens or coffee mug.

It is about finding the intrinsic motivation that makes an employee not only want to come to work, but want to continue to work for the company who has already recognized their potential and now wants to invest in their future.

The first day will set the tone for their new job. And the level of effort put forth by the employer to welcome their newest hire over the months to follow could possibly determine the length of their stay and their level of productivity. Key elements include enthusiasm and support while educating employees on roles, organizational objectives, capabilities, and other aspects impacting the mission, vision, and bottom line.

The area's top employers recognize the trends associated with new hire orientation and employee engagement and are adopting robust assimilation programs. These programs are targeted toward:

- Decreasing time for employees to become productive.
- Promoting behaviors aligned with organizational goals, values, and culture.
- Building loyalty by demonstrating commitment, which sets the foundation for employee retention.
- Help to further the impression that the new hire chose the right organization.

The first day and the following 90 days should be the beginning of employee engagement initiatives in helping the employee to develop a sense of belonging.

PRO TIP #2:
Cultivate Employee Strengths and Provide Opportunity

Employees that believe their skills and contributions are valued are more satisfied in their roles and connected to their company. Developing employee skills leads to greater opportunities for job growth and promotion which enhances engagement and employee retention.

If a company is growing, employees will naturally be engaged as it's exciting to be in a growing company, especially in times where the economy has taken a toll on many companies and their workforces. From growth comes opportunity for employees to take on new roles, learn new skills, and experience job security in an otherwise unstable job market.

Employees who feel connected to their company and co-workers are more likely to take a risk by accepting a task that pushes their skill set beyond their comfort zone. The employee may just need the extra push to recognize that this risk may result in a newfound talent and sense of confidence.

Employees that see their job as a “dead-end” leave for other opportunities or worse, they stay and are disengaged many times contributing to morale problems in other employees. In times when growth is slow, spend the opportunity to develop your employees and prepare them for future growth.

PRO TIP #3:
Foster Knowledge Sharing and Mutually Beneficial Relationships

Employee engagement is about teamwork. It is about the employee feeling as though they are valued as a team member, thereby making the employee want to be part of the team themselves.



Organizations are placing an increased focus on structured, progressive activities for employee career development. They are adopting and executing succession planning strategies and creative mentoring programs to engage employees in knowledge transfer and sustainability.

In order to sustain a competitive advantage, addressing the skills gap caused by departing Baby Boomers is one of the top challenges that

organizations must face. This talent gap will have a significant strategic impact on organizations. Many organizations are identifying and developing internal talent to succeed leaders exiting the workforce. This assures business continuity and defines clear career growth paths to keep the existing workforce engaged.

PRO TIP #4:
Connect Employees to the Community to Create a Sense of Purpose

Recognizing the additional value created by engaging employees in the community, organizations are weaving Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into all aspects of their strategy and operations. This creates a competitive advantage by organically attracting and engaging talent, especially Millennials.

Organizations are creating unity through outreach programs that are important to employees. Research shows there is a positive correlation between a sense of wellbeing and various outreach initiatives like volunteering time or making donations to help others. In order for programs to be successful they have to be executed with commitment.

Human Resources professionals have long recommended involving the employee in the design process of the solution if you want the employee to improve upon a behavior. Employee engagement is very similar. Employees who feel involved in the company and have an opportunity to share their ideas are more likely to participate in team activities and answer the call of duty when a last minute project needs to be completed.

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703-860-3882 | www.helioshr.com | info@helioshr.com

