

5 ways to improve employee engagement

By Mark Fisher

By engaged, I'm not asking if your employees have got down on one knee and popped the question (though if they have you could say, without a doubt, that you are obviously doing a great job as an employer!). By engaged, I mean are your staff acting like they're part of a team? Are they focused on their work, giving it their all, performing to their best ability every day? Do they understand where you want to head as a company and do they share your vision? Do they turn up every day with passion and purpose?

Engaged employees are so vital for a company to accomplish their goals and succeed. Companies with engaged employees have less turnover and remarkably higher customer loyalty, profitability and revenues. Sounds good, right? Here are 5 things you can do to improve employee engagement:

1. Know your employees. I'm not saying you need to be best friends or spend your weekends together, but you should try to learn what excites or depresses them. Learn what's important to them, what their goals are, what makes them happy and what makes them feel appreciated. Use this knowledge to provide opportunities and an environment that they want to come to work for. It's easy and you'll find that it's the small things that make a huge difference to motivating your staff.

2. Clearly communicate what's expected of employees. Make sure they understand what the company values and vision are, and how the company defines success. Employees can't perform well or be productive if they don't clearly know what it is they're there to do and the part they play in the overall success of the company. Be sure to communicate your expectations – and do it often.

3. Reward and recognize employees in ways that are meaningful to them. This is another reason why getting to know your employees is so important. Remember to celebrate the small wins, the big wins and the ongoing effort and milestones that people reach with ongoing projects. It may surprise you what reward means the most to an employee – for some it will be a cash bonus or movie tickets, while a public thank you in front of the team will mean the world to others. Just make sure no good work goes unnoticed.

4. Make sure your staff have everything they need to do their job. Would a builder turn up to site with only a saw? Unless you wanted your house in pieces, he needs more one tool in his arsenal to get started on the job and improve your home. Same goes for other professions. Why not ask your staff if they have everything they need to be as efficient and competent as possible? Often it's something really minor that makes their worklife that much easier and more enjoyable, like a printer in their office rather than down the hall.

5. Feedback, feedback and more feedback. I cannot stress enough how much feedback matters to employees. Don't bury your grumbles and just accept the way someone is operating – grab a coffee, call a meeting and get it off your chest. You'll be amazed how quick things will improve once you've talked about it – but someone has to make it happen! And it goes both ways – as a company owner or manager, you should be regularly requesting feedback on how you're doing with providing your staff with what they need.

If your staff are not engaged in your business and your big picture plan, it's only a matter of time before you'll go through a messy or surprising breakup, possibly losing them to the competition. The key to any good relationship, be it at home or at work, is outstanding communication. Constantly talk to your team, listen to them and share feedback – that way you'll keep the engagement alive!



Mark Fisher is a straight-shooting career coach and founder of Eighty4 Recruitment, which specialises in recruitment and HR consulting for the engineering, construction, transport and planning sectors. www.eighty4recruitment.com