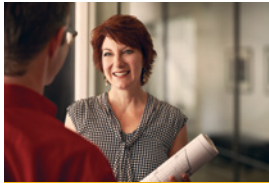




five ways to make employee engagement more than a buzzword

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The importance of employee engagement

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– Corporate Leadership Council

Engaged employees are five times less likely to have safety issues and seven times less likely to have lost work time due to a safety incident.

– Society for Human Resource Management

Gallup reports that 71 percent of U.S. and Canadian workers are not engaged with their work.

– Gallup 2013

Employee engagement is a buzzword discussed around the country. Employers large and small have become fixated with the concept of engagement because business growth and success depend on employee performance. This makes recruiting and retaining the best workers a high priority.

Several employee studies underscore the importance of employee engagement:

- Employees not engaged with their work are four times more likely to leave their jobs than those who are highly engaged. (*Corporate Leadership Council*)
- Engaged employees are five times less likely to have safety issues and seven times less likely to have lost work time due to a safety incident. (*Society for Human Resource Management*)
- Gallup reports that 71 percent of U.S. and Canadian workers are not engaged with their work. (*Gallup 2013*)

Keeping employees invested, or engaged, in their work is critical to employers' success. Consider these five ways to make engagement more than a buzzword:

1 Develop an open culture

Many businesses have a closed culture, where employee opinions and ideas rarely are solicited. While older employers may have learned to endure this environment, younger workers are not as willing to tolerate it just to get a paycheck. Employees today are quick to vote with their feet and transfer their talents to employers that demonstrate an open, supportive and flexible culture where they feel appreciated. They want to know that they're making a difference.

Developing an open culture requires turning words into actions, by empowering employees to be contributors and leaders within the organization.

2 Approachable leaders

Employees want to invest in their work by contributing ideas for new products and services or solutions to problems. To encourage employee engagement, team leaders must be passionate listeners, willing to entertain different perspectives. This fosters a supportive team environment in which employees truly are valued, encouraging higher levels of employee performance and productivity.



3 Clear, frequent communications

Frequently, employees complain that communication is disseminated top down. While management sends a lot of messages, meaningful communication occurs sporadically. The information shared doesn't inspire employees to get involved in the business. And many employers rely on communication tools that no longer reach employees.

Employers need to invest time in understanding employees' expectations and the best ways to reach them. Then communicate information that matters.

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Employers recognize the difference a great workforce makes to their business. Since competition for excellent employees is fierce, employers must develop an open, supportive and welcoming culture. Celebrate employees and encourage them to invest their time, talent and ideas with the business. With this approach, employee engagement is more than a buzzword. It's a caring and supportive attitude embraced throughout the organization.

4

Genuine interest in employees

According to Fast Company magazine, employees who feel a personal connection to their work are more engaged. (April 1, 2014) Many employers offer a variety of activities and programs to express interest in employees, but often these actions miss the target. The incentives are not meaningful to employees. Instead of talking with employees to find out what interests them, employers often turn to surveys to gather information.



Stimulate real conversation by asking one or two open-ended questions of employees in small group situations. Tell employees how the feedback will be used and then share results. This type of communication is vital to developing a warm, open culture where employees know that team leaders are sincerely interested in employees.

5

Right mix of benefits and programs

National research reinforces the importance of offering benefits packages with the right mix of medical, dental, vision and other plans to attract and retain employees. Things like cosmetic dental coverage and eyewear discounts offer added value and help employees feel good about their overall health and appearance.

Most employees want to control their health care choices and customize coverage options to fit their needs. However, they don't understand their benefit plans. Employers should be proactive in explaining coverage features, costs and questions employees should ask when evaluating plans. Look for insurance carriers who offer help in effectively communicating benefit plans and their added value.

Find out more about [how health benefits and wellness can improve employee engagement](#).

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