

Should Engagement Be a Goal?

HCI Engaging and Developing Managers Conference

Mark Allen, Ph.D.

September 22, 2021

mark.allen@pepperdine.edu

Should Engagement Be a Goal?

- * What is engagement
- * Why engagement
- * Should it be a goal?
- * The role of managers in engagement
- * The role of HR in engagement
- * How to engage/re-engage a workforce that is remote/hybrid/returning to the workplace

Poll: Is Engagement a Goal for Your Organization?

- * YES
- * NO
- * What's engagement?



Slightly Different Poll: Do you think engagement **should** be a goal?

- * YES
- * NO
- * Forget engagement, we should be polling to determine the new host of Jeopardy



Some Definitions of Engagement

- * Gallup defines engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace
- * The Unofficial Mark Allen Definition™ of an Engaged Employee: an engaged worker is one who gives a damn
- * Engagement is the emotional precursors to performance at work. It's what happens before performance happens. (The Marcus Buckingham Company).

Why Do We Want Engagement?

- * It is a precursor or leading indicator of performance
- * It is also a predictor of turnover (or retention)

So Should Engagement Be Viewed As a Goal?

- * Not exactly...
- * Since engagement has been proven to drive productivity and retention, it is not the goal, it is the means to the end
- * The goals are productivity and retention, engagement is the essential method of achieving the goal

So What Does This Mean?

- * Focus on engagement solutions that are designed to specifically drive retention or productivity
- * Avoid “empty” engagement plans



Engaged With What?

- * We never finish the sentence...
- * We want our workers to be engaged with...
 - * The organization (its mission, vision, values, culture, etc.)
 - * Each other
 - * Their work
 - * Their **boss**—the leading driver of engagement—and turnover!

The Role of the Manager in Engagement

- * 15 of the top 20 drivers of engagement relate to an employee's immediate supervisor (HCI)
- * Managers affect employee engagement far more than HR

Where Does HR Fit In?

- * HR can educate managers about their role in engagement
- * HR can help give managers knowledge and skills on engagement techniques
- * HR can assist senior management on the selection of people managers
- * HR can help guide accountabilities for managers

Holding Managers Accountable

- * The job of people managers is to hire, develop, engage and retain good people—that's what they should be held accountable for
- * Note: the accountabilities should be for engagement, not just engagement scores

A Note on Measuring Engagement

- * Engagement scores can be useful, but should not necessarily be the only measurement
- * Don't forget the eyeball test
- * And measure the effects of engagement—productivity and retention

Some Paths To High Engagement

1. Stay interviews
2. Frequent touchpoints
3. Strengths-based management
4. Onboarding
5. Reboarding

Stay Interviews

- * Great driver of engagement, the single best driver of retention
- * Questions can be similar to exit interviews, but present tense instead of past
- * Should be a regular part of a manager's job (and their accountabilities)

Frequent Touchpoints

- * Can be work-related or social
- * Engagement happens one employee at a time
- * Work-related touchpoints should happen frequently
- * Simple weekly check-ins work great
- * Three simple questions:
 1. How have you progressed toward your goals?
 2. What have you learned?
 3. What can I do to help?

Strengths-Based Management

- * Focus on developing employee strengths, not fixing weaknesses
- * Greater ROI and ROE
- * The single greatest statistic on employee engagement:
If a manager focuses on strengths, there is only a **1% chance** that the employee will be disengaged!
(Gallup)

Onboarding

- * 20% of turnover occurs within the first 45 days (Harvard Business Review).
- * 69% of employees are more likely to stay with a company for three years if they experienced great onboarding.
- * Onboarding is more than orientation—it is an ongoing program (not an event) that should last as long as a year
- * It should be **designed** to accelerate productivity and drive new hire retention

Designing Onboarding Programs

- * Begin with the end in mind
- * If you design with the goal of providing information, you get one kind of onboarding program
- * If you design with the goals of accelerated productivity and increased first-year retention, it looks very different

Reboarding

- * If onboarding drives engagement and retention and speeds the path to productivity, then reboarding is just as important.
- * Your employees are returning to a workplace that is very different from the one they left
- * The workplace will be different across 4 dimensions: social, health & safety, physical/environmental, the work itself
- * Forget about a “new normal.” Everything will continue to be fluid

Poll: What is your organization's return to the workplace plan?

- * Everyone is expected back—either now or at a date in the near future
- * Employees have some flexibility about working from home or coming in
- * Everyone can continue working from home
- * We don't really have a plan yet

The Not-So Normal: Social

- * Hugging?
- * Handshakes?
- * Birthday celebrations?
- * Social interactions are important
- * Physical distancing, social connection



The New Not-So Normal: Health & Safety

- * Temperature checks
- * Mask requirements
- * Testing
- * Breakrooms
- * Elevators



The New Not-So Normal: Physical Layouts

- * 6 feet of separation
- * Plexiglass
- * Cubicle layouts
- * Conference rooms
- * Alternating workdays



The New Not-So Normal: Work

- * We have proven we can work remotely. Now what?
- * WFH?
- * WFO?*

 - * (*Work from office)

- * WFB?*

 - * (*Work from both)

- * WTF?
- * Teamwork and collaboration
 - * We still want it, but it has to look different



Frequently Asked Questions

- * 2020:
 - * Can everyone see my screen?
 - * Do you know you're on mute?
- * 1st half of 2021:
 - * Pfizer or Moderna?
 - * Any side effects?
- * 2nd half of 2021:
 - * When are you going back to the office?
 - * Where are you working from today?



Post-COVID Challenge: How Do We Engage Remote Workers?

The Big Question: How do we keep our employees engaged with each other if some are working from home or socially distant?

- * Remind people that the work is important—both the mission of the company and their individual contributions
- * Frequent and regular connections between managers and employees

More Tips on Engaging Remote Workers

- * Remember the social interactions. Virtual watercoolers, non-work videoconferencing meetings, happy hours, dance parties, funny hats, etc.
 - * Videoconferencing is great for online meetings and classes, but it also can be an important tool for social interactions
- * Remember to keep engagement—and productivity and retention—a top-of-mind priority for your managers and executives

5 Tips for Successful Reboarding

1. Safety first. Always communicate the what and the why
2. Don't forget the importance of the social aspects of a workplace. Remember: physical distancing, social connection
3. Focus on engagement. Productivity and retention are vitally important and are the goals
4. Culture matters—and your culture will change
5. Don't forget change management—there are no small changes

THANK YOU!

- * For more, join me at the Colleague Café
- * Or reach out any time: mark.allen@pepperdine.edu