HOW TO ENSURE
YOUR TEAM ARE ENGAGED

CLAYTON
RECRUITMENT

WHERE BUSINESSES COME
TO RECRUIT TALENT

In today's highly competitive market, employee engagement can make or break your company's chances of success – directly impacting staff attrition and retention.

Creating an engaging environment for your staff, capable of inspiring, motivating, and delighting your team has a huge range of potential benefits.

For companies actively recruiting, jobseekers are more likely to be attracted to job postings for companies offering an "engaging" workplace – and ways in which potential employers can demonstrate this in their external communications.

Today's top professionals are increasingly searching for meaning, empathy, and good work/life balance from the organisations they work for.

Investing in staff engagement as a strategy is a good way to show candidates you can put their needs first, as well as benefitting from the many benefits and output of your efforts.

However, employee engagement isn't just valuable for attracting new talent; it's also critical to retaining the staff members you already have. The challenges of the last couple of years have pushed employees to re-assess their values, and many are switching jobs to seek higher levels of engagement and satisfaction with companies whose values align with their own. In the dawn of a post-pandemic society, engagement strategies are how you convince top talent to stay put, and not be dazzled by the bright lights of a industry that is battling to attract that same talent for themselves.

In fact, according to Gallup, it takes more than a 20% pay rise to convince an employee to abandon a post where they feel engaged.

Yet it costs next to nothing to lure a disengaged staff member from their jobs.

What's more, the same study shows even if you manage to hold onto a disengaged employee, you may not be getting their best work. The cost of lost productivity related to lack of engagement adds up to losses of around 18% of an employees annual salary.

In this report, we'll be looking at how to identify disengaged employees, and what you can do to re-engage, retain, and delight your team.

What is Employee Engagement?

To improve employee engagement among your staff, we first need to define what "engagement" means in the workplace. The easiest way to define employee engagement is :

"the emotional commitment a staff member has to an organisation and its goals".

An "engaged" employee is passionate about their work, invested in the success of the brand, and happy with their position in the company.

According to research, employee engagement and productivity go hand-in-hand. Engaged employees are more likely to give their all in any task, and go above and beyond to benefit the company. They're keen to prove themselves to their managers, and maintain their position with the business.

Other studies have shown employee engagement also leads to other positive business metrics, such as increased customer satisfaction, efficiency, innovation, and staff retention.

Most companies know an engaged workforce is more beneficial to their bottom line than a disengaged team. Unfortunately, the level of engagement among today's employees is notoriously low. According to research from Accenture:

- Only 1 in 6 people feel highly connected to their organisation and colleagues.
- About 1 in 4 people believe leaders are responsive to their needs.
- Only 1 in 5 people feel comfortable discussing their needs with colleagues.

On a day-to-day level, only around half of UK workers feel enthusiastic about their roles, and one in three feel "full of energy" at work. On the other hand, a fifth of workers say they feel constantly exhausted, under excessive pressure, and ready to quit or find a new job.

When do Employees Become Disengaged?

Interestingly, most employees don't arrive at a new job feeling disengaged.

If you use the right recruitment strategy, your candidates should arrive in your business filled with optimism and excitement. So, what causes employees to become disengaged?

There are a number of factors which can prompt disengagement among team members. The process of disengagement can happen over several months or years, or it could be a quick response to a significant workplace issue.

One much-publicised issue in the market is the presence of burnout. Jobs for many staff members are becoming more complex and demanding, leading to feelings of exhaustion and fatigue. One of the common symptoms of burnout is being disengaged in the workplace.

Other common causes of disengagement include:

- Poor management: Around 75% of employees quit their roles because they're unhappy with their manager. If business leaders don't support and guide their staff, offer recognition and constructive feedback, and collaborate with employees, this often causes disengagement.
- Lack of workplace relationships: Relationships in the workplace are important to engagement. All employees want to feel as though they're supported at work, and many want to be friends with their colleagues.
- Poor communication: Limited communication in the workplace can often lead to feelings of isolation and distrust. Engaged employees need transparent leaders, regular communication with their team members, and the chance to build relationships.
- Limited feedback: Employees want to learn from their mistakes and be recognised for their accomplishments. Around 90% of employees say they work harder when they receive the right recognition.
- No sense of purpose: Today's employees want meaning from their jobs. Any member of the team without a sense of meaning will start to disconnect from the workplace, and may not feel a sense of ownership over their work.
- Lack of progression: All employees want to feel as though their careers are leading somewhere. A lack of opportunities in the form of career growth, training, and development can leave team members frustrated and uninspired.

How to Identify a Disengaged Employee

When the team around you is engaged, it's easy to recognise the benefits. Productivity levels will soar, morale will improve, and service excellence will become the norm ensuring clients are equally more engaged and brand advocates. However, it's easier to miss the early signs of disengagement as they begin to develop.

Knowing how to identify a disengaged employee should ensure you can act rapidly to address the issue. Keep in mind, even if only one of your employees is disengaged, their negative attitude can end up affecting the entire workforce.

Here are the signs to look for to ensure feelings of disengagement don't spread:

- **Poor productivity:** If you notice your hard-working employees are no longer delivering the same output, this is a clear sign of disengagement. They may begin to frequently miss deadlines they had no issue with in the past, or they may produce poor quality work as a result of "rushing" through their tasks.
- **Withdrawal:** If one of your team is disengaged in the workplace, they're more likely to withdraw from the rest of the team. They may stop attending meetings, or refuse to take place in activities with the rest of the group.
- **Absenteeism:** When employees are disengaged, they may begin to spend more time away from work, calling in sick, or failing to follow a typical schedule. They may also take more breaks when they're at work.
- **Attitude changes:** If an employee's attitude or mood generally changes for the worse, this is usually a tell-tale sign of disengagement. They may be more argumentative or combative, or may simply appear unhappy and uninterested in their work.
- **Lack of drive:** Disengaged employees aren't motivated to accomplish any specific goals or hit targets. They stop trying to learn new things and avoid any new challenges. They may even actively avoid opportunities to develop themselves and grow.

If disengagement in the workplace goes on for too long, it can also lead to an increase in turnover. If your employees start consistently looking for new work, or start listing their CVs on job sites, this is a clear sign their engagement levels are suffering.

How to Engage Employees: Building an Engaged Culture

If you recognise signs of disengagement in your workforce, it's important to act fast to avoid turnover. Research tells us there are [various dimensions](#) of working life which contribute to employee engagement, from leadership strategies to workplace relationships.

For the most part, however, the best way to build engagement among employees, is to develop a company culture committed to keeping staff satisfied, healthy, and motivated at work.

One of the reasons employee engagement issues are becoming more common in the modern world, is many organisations have yet to update their culture to suit the new priorities and demands of employees. Countless businesses still believe a good "company culture" simply revolves around competitive remuneration and benefits packages, or a fun workplace.

However, creating a culture capable of engaging employees today requires a much heavier focus on humanising the workplace. Companies need to focus on empathy, wellbeing, and flexibility, to both appeal to new employees, and retain their existing staff.

Here are some of the best ways to build a culture of engagement at your company:

1. Focus on Effective Communication

According to Accenture's research into disengaged employees, one of the most common reasons engagement drops in a business, is because employees feel leaders don't listen to their needs. A lack of communication in the workplace harms everything from feelings of trust and transparency to employee satisfaction levels.

Building a strategy for consistent and positive communication with your employees ensures you can keep your finger on the pulse of their experiences and expectations. It's an excellent way to find out what's bothering your team members, and where sources of disengagement may begin.

Companies can start by developing a system which makes it easy for staff members to share their feedback about the business experience anonymously. Allowing team members to make comments without the fear of judgement should ensure you can capture more authentic insights.

It's also worth ensuring employees always have someone to turn to when they have questions about the expectations of the business, or their role. An open-door policy among supervisors, HR leaders, and managers can lead to a more trusting and connected community of team members.

Leaders in the company can even send out regular surveys, or questionnaires to ask their staff members how they feel about their role, and what they believe they need to perform at their best.

Aside from improving communication between employees and leaders, it's also worth making sure your staff members have multiple ways to connect and build relationships. This is particularly crucial in the age of hybrid work, where remote staff can often feel isolated from the rest of the team.

Host regular video meetings and town-hall sessions where you can discuss changes in the business, or simply promote bonding between colleagues.

2. Prioritise Feedback and Recognition

Feedback is important for any staff member to ensure they can continue serving the best interests of the company and their clients. Even negative feedback, at times, can be a good way to set expectations for team members, and help them to avoid common mistakes.

Developing a strategy for consistent feedback delivered by managers and supervisors to staff members can help to create a sense of transparency and continued growth among teams.

The most important form of feedback to focus on for most companies will be positive recognition. Around 72% of business leaders say recognition has a significant influence on employee engagement. Yet countless employees feel as though they don't get enough thanks for their work.

Showing recognition to your team members when they accomplish something is an excellent way to boost their sense of "meaning" in the workplace. A simple "Thank you" sent via an email or text message can be enough to motivate staff members to continue working towards their goals.

Some companies even go a step further, and implement gamification techniques to encourage positive competition between employees. Awarding prizes and gifts to team members who achieve the best results for your business is a great way to get everyone invested in their work.

Rewards don't necessarily need to be monetary either. Some employees will appreciate being given the option to work an extra day remotely as a reward, or the opportunity to take part in an important business project.

3. Start Focusing on Wellbeing

Today's professional talent want to work for a company that cares about their needs. Improving health and wellbeing strategies in the workplace demonstrates to both new and existing employees that you care about their continued wellness.

According to the CIPD's Health and Wellbeing at work report, implementing wellbeing initiatives leads to a healthier, more inclusive culture in the workplace, as well as better employee morale and engagement. However, many companies still consider wellbeing a "nice-to-have" element, rather than a necessity for happy employees.

Focusing on wellbeing not only improves engagement, but it can also reduce levels of absenteeism and lost productivity in the workplace. Since the pandemic, more staff members have been suffering from increased levels of stress and anxiety, and these are some of the main causes of long-term absences and burnout.

By implementing wellbeing initiatives, you can demonstrate a level of empathy to your employees, and reduce the number of people you lose to illness. Wellness programs can include:

- Mental health days which allow team members to work at home when they're feeling stressed, anxious, or in need of personal space.
- Mental and physical health support from specialists connected to the workplace. For instance, you could hire a counsellor to talk to your team once a month, or sign up to a 3rd party support network and signpost contact details in your internal communications, as well as how you will compliment this support as their employer.
- Strategies for work/life balance like allowing team members to change their working hours according to their needs, or decide where they want to work each day.

4. Implement Flexible Working Opportunities

Flexible working opportunities have become increasingly commonplace in the last couple of years. Since the pandemic, more team members have begun working from home – even on a part-time basis. Around 80% of firms in the UK have adopted some level of hybrid work.

Offering flexible working options to your employees is an excellent way to get them more invested in their roles, and keep them happy at work. Staff members with the ability to work from home are often more satisfied and productive. What's more, Gallup studies show flexible work also drives engagement, making team members feel more enthusiastic about their jobs.

- Try hybrid work: Hybrid work models blend in-office and remote work to ensure the people who can work from home have the opportunity to do so, when it makes sense.

- **Explore the 4 day work week**: Four-day work weeks are becoming increasingly popular throughout the UK, giving employees more time to recover from their work days (keep an eye on the UK pilot happening now across multiple sectors to ascertain impact on productivity and engagement).
- **Allow for schedule changes**: Allowing employees to work different hours on specific days based on their other commitments can make them more grateful to the business.

Speaking to team members about the kinds of flexibility they might like to see in the workplace is a great way to start planning on a new strategy. You can also track the results of your flexibility efforts to see which are paying off for your company.

5. Facilitate and Support Employee Development

92% of employees believe access to professional development is very important when they're deciding where to work. What's more, employees with professional development opportunities are 15% more engaged at work, and 34% more likely to stay with the business.

According to a study by LinkedIn, 94% of employees said they would even stay with a business for longer if they knew there were opportunities for development in place. Building a culture which champions growth, learning, and opportunities is an excellent way to ensure engagement.

There are a few ways companies can adjust their culture to focus on development, such as:

- **Setting goals with employees**: Arranging meetings between your staff members and managers where they can discuss short and long-term goals is a fantastic way to find out what your team members want to achieve. When managers help employees to achieve their goals, this improves workplace relationships, and helps staff to feel more committed to their role and the brand they work for.
- **Offering training opportunities**: Training is something every modern company should be investing in. Particularly now as the workplace continues to change at a record rate, it's important to upskill and re-skill staff on a regular basis. Finding out what your team members want to learn, or which talents they want to improve and offering the right training solutions is crucial – a well as helping you to plug any skills gaps and focus on succession planning to protect against flight-risk-employees who take those skills with them.
- **Providing mentorship programs**: Mentorship programs are excellent not just for encouraging a culture of learning, but also for boosting employee relationships. Allowing team members to choose a mentor and work with them regularly on their professional development plan will build a happier, more engaged culture.

6.   Let Team Members in on the Big Picture

[Transparency and honesty](#) have become major factors in any employee's decision of where to work, and whether to continue working with certain brands. A common complaint among disengaged employees in the professional market is they don't always know what's going on over their heads.

If your employees don't know the strategy and direction of the business, this can lead to concerns about job stability and future growth. It could also mean employees don't know which values they should be focusing on to prove themselves to their employers.

Creating a culture of "transparency", where you keep team members in the loop about major decisions made by the company is an excellent way to encourage staff buy-in. When employees know what's happening in their business, they're more likely to feel like an important part of the team.

It's also worth looking for ways to connect the work of your employees to the bigger picture or goals the business wants to pursue. Around 92.4% of employees say they work better when they see how the quality of their work matters to the targets of the business.

As talented professionals search for more meaning in their work, helping team members to see how their efforts influence the business can help to improve motivation levels.

How to Continue Building on Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is crucial to the success of any business. However, building any engaging company culture and delighting your staff isn't a set-it-and-forget-it process. It's not enough to simply implement the strategies above and then ignore engagement again.

As the preferences of professionals continue to evolve, business leaders need to make sure they're tuned into what their team members really want and need on a regular basis.

Regularly measuring engagement through surveys, meetings and feedback should help you to pinpoint areas where you need to continue improving. For instance, you may discover you need to:

- Train your leadership team: Helping your leaders to develop new skills for managing hybrid and remote workers could be crucial as your business continues to evolve. The more effective your leaders are, the more engaged your staff are likely to be.
- Improve technology: As the workplace evolves, some staff members may need additional technology to make them more productive in their roles. Keeping an eye on the software, hardware, and other critical solutions your staff needs is crucial.

- Adjust your onboarding process: Engaging employees should start from the moment you begin searching for a new staff member. You should be looking for ways to engage candidates with your job descriptions, and generate enthusiasm among new hires during the onboarding and training process.

The feedback you gather from your team members will help you to determine where you should be focusing your efforts to generate the best levels of engagement. Its also imperative of course, to communicate the results of any surveys that you do run – including any pinch-points or areas of concern. Being transparent and open in your communication in vital, and is a great opportunity to focus on the 'what now' and ways in which you are committed to making any changes that matter to the workforce.

Don't Underestimate Employee Engagement

Disengaged employees are becoming increasingly commonplace – perhaps as a fall out of the pandemic which has made individuals reflect on how, when, and where they work, as well as their outlook on life and indeed, life outside of their career. The good news is these team members aren't necessarily a lost cause. Employing the practices and strategies above should help you to re-engage your team members, and develop a company culture which both attracts and retains top talent.

Rather than simply standing by when your top workers are considering resignation, make sure you're ready to act and transform your business into the working environment the best talent is looking for.

As you continue to work on and optimise your engagement methods, you'll also want to ensure your efforts shine through in your recruitment strategy.

Highlighting the strategies you use to engage and support your employees when working with recruitment specialists can make it easier for them to attract the right talent to your team.

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We understand that while talent is your greatest asset – it can also be your scarcest resource - which is why you need a recruitment partner with the market expertise, insight and network to deliver the right people at the right time.

Clayton Recruitment has been partnering with organisations across the local, regional and national market for over three decades and during that time has built up an enviable reputation for trust and reliability. We provide an experienced and credible voice in the market by being able to demonstrate a detailed knowledge of the talent agenda.

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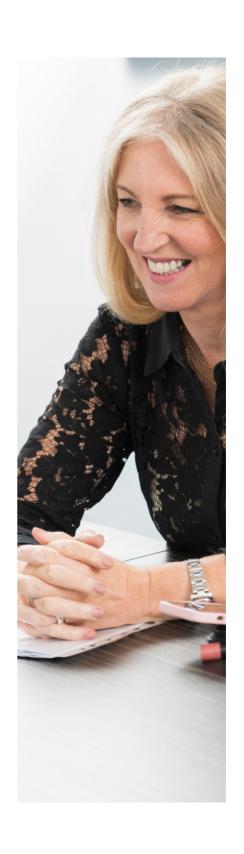
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