



## Engaging the workforce

Getting past once-and-done measurement surveys to achieve always-on listening and meaningful response

**Deloitte Employee Engagement Perspectives**



# What is employee engagement?

Organizations are increasingly talking about engagement, but not everyone is defining and measuring it in the same way. Engagement typically refers to an employee's job satisfaction, loyalty, and inclination to expend discretionary effort toward organizational goals.<sup>1</sup> It predicts individual performance and operates at the most fundamental levels of the organization—individual and line—where the most meaningful impact can be made. Workplace culture is related, though operates on a different level. Culture is a system of values, beliefs, and behaviors that shape how real work gets done within an organization. It predicts company performance, and is shaped and cultivated at the most senior levels of the organization.

The vast majority of executives responding to our Global Human Capital Trends survey rated engagement as a priority for their companies.



executives rated **engagement** as **important** or **very important**.<sup>2</sup>

But company actions regarding engagement don't always support that level of importance.

Just **64%** of respondents say they are measuring employee engagement once a year.<sup>3</sup>



And

**one in five (18%)**

said their companies don't formally measure employee engagement at all.<sup>4</sup>

As the workforce and its expectations about work evolve rapidly, employers should start treating engagement as the business-critical issue it is.

# Why does employee engagement matter?

## Engagement is critical because it is directly linked to business outcomes.

Consider research on how engagement affects productivity, revenue growth, and performance and retention.



## This retention aspect is particularly pertinent.

The ease of exploring job opportunities online and a new acceptance (sometimes even an expectation) that employees will change jobs more frequently than in the past means employers need to think about ways to motivate employees to stay. An organization's ability to keep employees engaged is a valuable retention tool and a hedge against voluntary turnover.

## Changing workforce demographics and increased diversity also highlight the challenge and criticality of employee engagement.

Today's organizations should try to attract, embed, and retain a workforce encompassing workers from a variety of demographics and a blend of full-time, part-time, contract, and contingent employees.



Despite this reality, research finds that:

Only

11%



of companies have a highly inclusive work environment<sup>8</sup>—it's hard to feel engaged if you don't feel included.

And while about

**one in four**  
**Millennials (26%) surveyed**

rated employee satisfaction/loyalty/fair treatment as the most important value supporting a business's long-term success,<sup>9</sup>



only



believe they are very good at engaging Millennials and other generations in the work environment.<sup>10</sup>

Measuring and managing engagement should be an ongoing, always-listening process that enables organizations to actively hear and respond to their employees in timely and focused ways.



# Measuring engagement

## **The problem with once-and-done: too infrequent, too slow.**

Annual employee engagement surveys have long been the norm in many organizations. While yearly touchpoints are better than not measuring engagement at all, they may leave a lot to be desired. The process can actually build distrust in the workforce if employees see engagement surveys as a compliance-motivated exercise instead of a genuine desire to respond and improve. The cycle time, particularly in large organizations, can also be quite long. By the time you disseminate the survey, gather the results, interpret the results, and plan interventions, the problems may have passed, the damage from the issues identified is done, or new issues have surfaced that have not been captured.

## **Instead, measure frequently and tie results to action.**


To be effective, measuring and managing engagement should be an ongoing, always-listening process that enables organizations to actively hear and respond to their employees in timely and focused ways. This might include not only using a comprehensive baseline survey but also taking more frequent pulses at least quarterly to dig into the issues. These pulses can be targeted to measure aspects of the job directly tied to engagement, organizational priorities, or hot-button issues.

# What drives engagement?

Deloitte’s years of research and experience with hundreds of organizations suggests that five main indices and underlying attributes work together to drive engagement and make organizations “simply irresistible” to the workforce—both prospective and current employees.




## The Simply Irresistible Organization™


<b>Meaningful work</b> 	<b>Supportive management</b> 	<b>Positive work environment</b> 	<b>Growth opportunity</b> 	<b>Trust in leadership</b> 
Autonomy	Clear and transparent goals	Flexible work environment	Training and support on the job	Mission and purpose
Select-to-fit	Coaching	Humanistic workplace	Facilitated talent mobility	Continuous investment in people
Small, empowered teams	Investment in development of managers	Culture of recognition	Self-directed, dynamic learning	Transparency and honesty
Time for slack	Agile performance management	Fair, inclusive, diverse work environment	High-impact learning culture	Inspiration
<b>Cross-organization collaboration and communication</b>				


Source: Bersin by Deloitte.




## The Simply Irresistible Organization:<sup>11</sup> What these dimensions measure

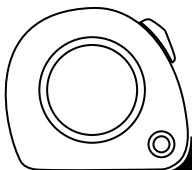
 **Meaningful work** that aligns employees to their strengths, gives them a sense of purpose and empowerment, and enables them with the tools and autonomy they need to develop and succeed.

 **A positive work environment** that is flexible, collaborative, humane, and inclusive, with benefits and programs that allow work to fit into employees' lifestyles and an emphasis on maintaining a culture of recognition.

 **Supportive management** that guides and empowers its employees by setting clear goals, coaching for high performance, developing future leaders, and providing continuous feedback.

 **Trust in leadership** due to inspirational leaders who invest in their people, communicate honestly, and fulfill the organization's mission, vision, and purpose.

 **Growth opportunity** for continuous learning, professional development, and career progression, including a focus on supporting and facilitating internal mobility.



**Underlying all of these are collaboration and communications that provide and promote simple and logical processes alongside the resources that employees need to do their jobs.**

# From reactive once-and-done to proactive always-listening

Building and sustaining an engaging environment is an ongoing, proactive process. If companies commit to simplify and streamline their processes and leaders from the most senior levels to frontline managers demonstrate the desire to listen, respond, and improve, the workforce is more likely to be receptive and supportive too—which are themselves forms of engagement.

To work toward that goal, companies should consider the following:



### Review legacy employee engagement providers

to confirm they meet the needs of the organization's changing workforce demographics and can measure the current employee population.



### Measure engagement for a baseline understanding

of where engagement is broadly, and also further measure themes via pulse surveys to move the organization from a "once and done" approach to "always listening." Pulsing can help organizations quickly gather insight and feedback to determine interventions designed to support higher engagement.



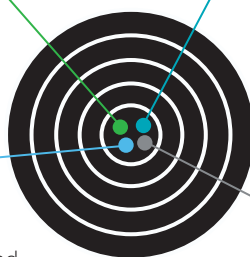
### Address engagement issues quickly,

at the business unit or team lead level, where engagement really matters and managers can make a meaningful impact on their staff's level of attachment toward their job, coworkers, and organization.



### Link engagement measures to business outcomes

(for example, performance management results or sales data) to identify problem themes at the most fundamental level and to help sustain engagement over time.



## Employee engagement extends beyond employee satisfaction—and an active and inclusive approach can capture the distinction that will move the needle where it matters most.

Frequent and agile outreach will gather the objective insights and feedback required to understand strengths and gaps. This understanding can then be used to drive the behaviors needed to improve employee engagement in a timely and meaningful way.

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## Endnotes

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