Macorva

Employee Engagement:

# Giving Your Employees a Voice in the Workplace

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Introduction:

What Is Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement is defined as the "emotional commitment employees have to the organization and its goals."[1] When employees are emotionally connected to the organization and committed to their work, they give their best effort. That extra effort helps the organization achieve breakthrough performance that might not have been possible otherwise.

Employee engagement is often confused with employee morale or job satisfaction. However, employee engagement is not merely how satisfied or even how happy people are at work.

Studies show that employees can be satisfied with their jobs but still be only moderately engaged.[2] Instead, engagement describes a level of enthusiasm and devotion that causes people to go above and beyond what is expected. Engaged employees want their companies to succeed, and that distinction can make or break a business.
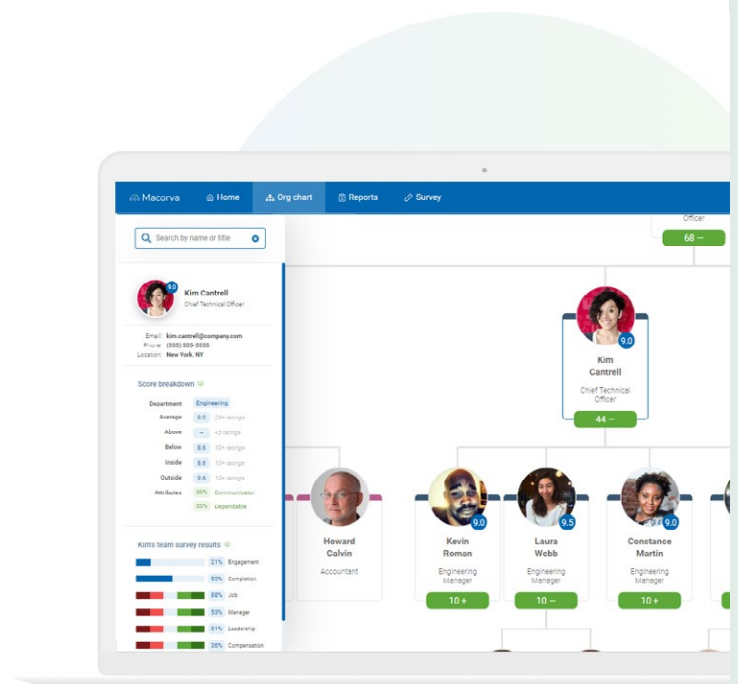
The Importance of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has tremendous power to boost performance and improve workplace culture. Engaged employees are positive, optimistic, and welcome to change. You can often see this reality play out in the day-to-day of the workplace.

They complain and criticize less, and they embrace new challenges. Highly engaged employees are consistently linked to:

Higher Productivity

When people are committed to company goals, they're more productive and efficient in their work. Even further, engaged employees also support higher productivity in the workplace by helping others "see the connection between their everyday work and the larger purpose or mission of the organization."[3] Engaged employees encourage more communication and collaboration in the workplace, inspiring others to also take ownership of company goals.

Lower Turnover and Absenteeism

Engaged employees are excited to come to work. Joint research from the Queen's School of Business and Aon Hewitt found that organizations with the most engaged employees experience 20 percent less absenteeism.[4] Engaged employees are also far less likely to leave. According to research by Gallup, 73 percent of "actively disengaged" employees are looking for new opportunities, compared to only 37 percent of engaged employees.[5]

Higher Morale

Engaged employees boost morale. Research shows that engaged leaders have higher percentages of engaged direct reports.[6]

however, employees don't have to be in a leadership position to influence the attitudes and behaviors of coworkers. Engagement tends to be contagious, and engaged employees in any role can boost the morale and engagement of those around them.

Higher Profitability and Shareholder Returns

High engagement is consistently linked to high returns. A Gallup meta-analysis found that highly engaged work groups outperformed less engaged work groups by 22 percent in overall profitability. The study also found that organizations with engaged employees experienced higher earnings per share than those without. Engaged employees seek out new ways of delivering greater value to customers, leading to higher efficiency and profitability.

While high engagement has been shown to yield high returns, low engagement has also been consistently linked to negative outcomes.

When employees lack commitment and enthusiasm for the company and its goals, the organization can experience the following negative effects:

Lower productivity: Employees who are not engaged rarely look for ways to do things better or more efficiently.

Low morale: Poor engagement can be just as contagious as high engagement. Even a few disengaged, unenthusiastic employees can negatively influence others, especially new hires who are still forming relationships with their company and coworkers.

Attrition: Even top performers who are disengaged are more likely to seek out new opportunities than engaged performers.

Lower or negative ROI: Disengaged employees work less efficiently to meet or exceed customer expectations, leading to a low or negative return on any investment you make in training, development opportunities, or changes in policy.

Given the benefits of employee engagement (and the negative effects of disengagement), you naturally want to do what you can to increase employee engagement in the workplace. Engagement is a mindset—to improve it, you'll need to implement a strategy that will transform employee attitudes about the company and their work.

How to Improve Employee Engagement

Building an engaged workforce depends on implementing the right tools and practices to empower employees and foster commitment to the company and its objectives. Recognition, strong leadership, and opportunities for giving and receiving feedback create a powerful formula for improved engagement in your organization.

Here are some strategies to improve employee engagement in your workforce:

Invest in Your Employees

Supporting employee growth and development shows employees that the organization cares about them, which inspires them to care more about the organization. Management training, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and cross-functional development are all ways you can invest in employees and demonstrate how much you value them and their contributions. Keep in mind that investing in your employees doesn't have to equate to a substantial capital outlay.

A mentorship program, for example, is an effective yet inexpensive way to invest in employees and their growth. Having one-on-one conversations with employees to understand their career aspirations will also demonstrate your commitment to their ongoing development.

Develop Strong Leaders

There's truth to the saying that people don't just leave a company—they leave a manager.[7] One in two employees have left a job to get away from a manager. Developing managers into strong leaders will not only prevent this outcome, but also provide the support and motivation many employees need to feel more committed to their work. According to Gallup research, managers account for 70 percent of the variance in employee engagement.[8] The same research found that management talent can exist nearly anywhere within an organization, not just with the current managers. Improving engagement through leadership isn't just about building up existing managers. It also requires identifying and developing potential leaders, which you can do through periodic talent reviews or an employee feedback platform.

Provide Visibility and Recognition

Even with little resources or budget, recognition has been identified as a top driver of engagement.[9] Recognizing their effort and results shows employees they're valued and appreciated. Recognition also positively reinforces behaviors you value most in employees. The more recognition employees receive for certain behaviors, the more they're encouraged to repeat those behaviors. In addition, when recognition is tied to exposure to senior leaders, employees see their hard work being noticed.

Here are some ways you can provide visibility and recognition to improve employee engagement:

Give an entry-level engineer the opportunity to present their project to the CEO.

Copy an employee's manager when recognizing their work in email.

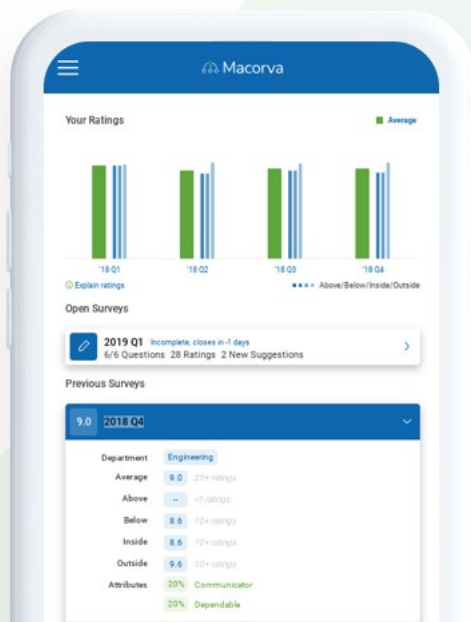Set up a welcome lunch with new employees and senior leaders.

Recognize a team or individual in a meeting, in front of their peers.

Revisit Employee Benefits and Offer Incentives

Competitive compensation is important, but there are other ways to use benefits to drive improved engagement. Plenty of benefits and perks provide a favorable ROI because of how much they boost employee engagement. It's important to periodically review benefits and perks that can help people feel more engaged and committed.

For example:

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Offering flexible work arrangements or remote work opportunities

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Adding wellness benefits such as gym discounts or pet insurance

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Providing snacks and drinks in company break rooms or kitchens

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Foster a Sense of Community and Teamwork

People spend a lot of time at work, so it's natural for them to want to feel connected with their coworkers and team. People generally find comfort in knowing they fit in, and research has identified the need to belong as one of the hallmarks of a fulfilling work experience. When people feel a sense of community at work, they benefit from having others who can answer their questions, provide support, and bond with them over shared experiences.[10] You can improve employee engagement by creating opportunities for employees to get to know their teammates, form relationships, and develop a sense of belonging.
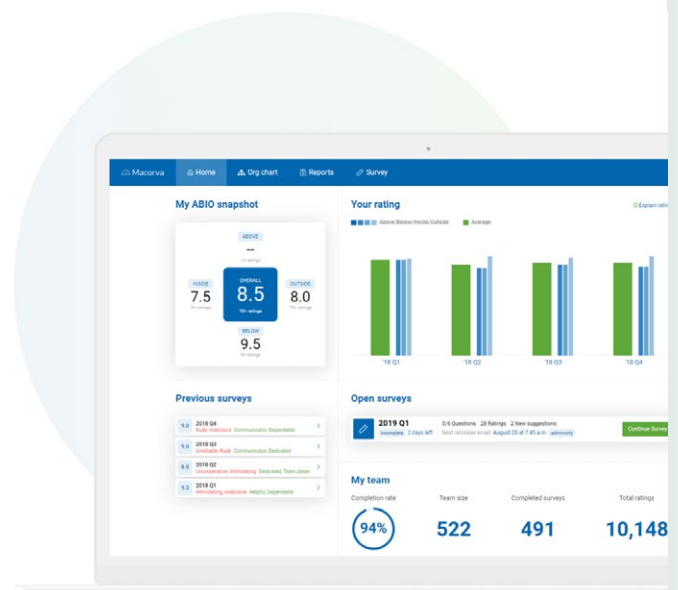
Here are a few examples to consider:

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Team-building exercises

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Off-sites

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Summer picnics, pizza lunches, or ice cream socials

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Charitable service projects that bring multiple teams together

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Establish Feedback Mechanisms

Feedback helps employees learn which behaviors work well and which don't in the workplace. But feedback shouldn't be one-way. Whether glowing or constructive, giving and receiving direct feedback benefits all employees. Sharing feedback empowers employees to enact change by voicing their concerns and suggestions, which builds up their connection to the company. In fact, research conducted by Salesforce found that employees who feel their voice is heard in the workplace are 4.6 times more likely to feel empowered to do their best work.[11]

Before asking for feedback, you should always implement a framework for acting on that feedback. Using feedback to improve engagement can backfire if employees take time to provide thoughtful, honest feedback, but it doesn't result in meaningful change.

Many practices and tools to improve employee engagement can be implemented with efficiency. Building a highly engaged workforce doesn't have to be onerous or costly. Investing in your employees bolsters their commitment to your company and its success.

Some examples of tools to facilitate the valuable exchange of feedback include:

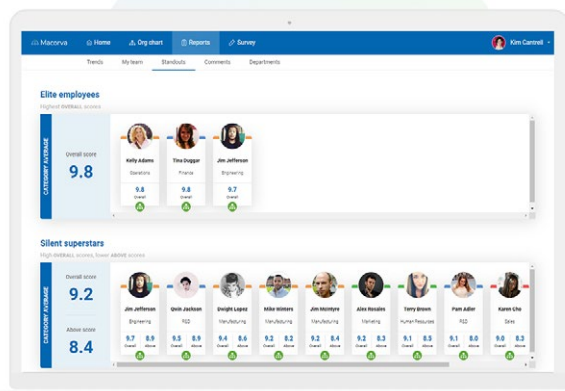A 360-degree feedback platform that returns feedback from peers, managers, and reports

Virtual or in-person feedback sessions

Employee engagement surveys

Stay Ahead of the Curve:
Visualize Employee Dynamics with Macorva

Macorva measures and improves engagement by empowering employees to share their experiences. We leverage modern technology to simplify the process of giving and receiving feedback.

We combine frictionless feedback, cloud computing, and web interfaces into a survey platform that measures employee engagement and empowers employees to rate and qualify their experiences with coworkers.

This 360-degree feedback is returned to every employee as a cumulative score, broken down into subscores from management, direct and indirect reports, department members, and others.

Macorva uses this detailed data to identify patterns linked to engagement. Team leaders receive standout reports of employees who lack visibility, hold high esteem across departments, struggle with management responsibilities, and more. Executive leaders receive departmental reports that break down the dynamics between each group.

With Detailed Feedback Returned at Every Organizational Level, Macorva Helps You:

Invest in your employees: Give employees actionable feedback that starts a conversation about their strengths and opportunities for professional development.

Understand the impact of employee rewards: Measure how satisfied employees are with their benefits and compensation

Build strong leaders: Proactively identify leaders who can fill management gaps and assist struggling leaders before they drive away great employees.

Encourage and reward teamwork: Leverage multi-rater feedback to encourage employees to pursue positive relationships with everyone in the organization, not just their manager.

Provide visibility: Reward widespread positive impact with visibility by identifying your "silent superstars."

Empower employees: Use Macorva's specific results to take action at every level and show employees the impact of their feedback.

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Gallup. February 24, 2017.
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https://www.salesforce.com/contents/impact-of-equality/.

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Unlock the Full Power of Employee Feedback.

Contact us to learn more about how Macorva can help your organization improve and sustain employee engagement.

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