The Leaders Guide to Employee Engagement
Employee engagement can deliver huge benefits to business. When things go wrong, a lack of engagement can have serious effects.

This practical guide is designed to help you understand what employee engagement is and how you can go about engaging your employees, making sure it’s the best it can be?

How many times have you read in company annual reports and presentations etc that employees are our major asset (our vital resource) but more often or not the behaviours exhibited by these organisations do not reflect that sentiment?

What is employee engagement?

Forget job satisfaction and motivation. You can be motivated and full to the brim with job satisfaction without feeling properly engaged. A fully engaged employee is wholly involved in their work. They’re enthusiastic about it. And their positive feelings encourage them to naturally further their employer’s interests. In its most formal guise, it’s a measurable insight into someone’s positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and the organisation they work for... so much so that it profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform.
Take engagement to the max and it means an employee does a wonderful job and goes several extra miles: they might come up with ground-breaking ideas, discover new opportunities, deliver new customers, enhance your employer brand, identify fresh markets, take new product development to profitable new levels and even encourage talented contacts to join your business. In a word, they’re much more than an employee. They’re an advocate, which is employee gold dust.

**How does a lack of engagement affect business?**

When employees feel disengaged they do their jobs... and that’s it. They don’t think beyond their everyday tasks, they don’t bother having bright ideas and they side-line creativity. All of which means the employer loses out on all kinds of opportunities. If the whole organisation is disengaged, you can imagine the damage it can do to the bottom line, affecting morale, limiting prospects, and devaluing competitive advantages.

**What drives disengagement?**

It’s relatively simple to keep people engaged. Most of us enjoy mentally stimulating day-to-day work. We like our efforts to be recognised, acknowledged, and valued by colleagues and managers. We like to work for organisations we’re proud to recommend to others. We aspire to working for a company long-term and growing with them. And we’re happiest when we work with colleagues and managers who genuinely appreciate and value the business as a whole.
How can employee engagement be improved?

- Make sure employees feel their job is important
- Ensure the role is clear so employees know exactly what’s expected of them
- Provide the basic materials and equipment people need to do the best possible job
- Create a culture in which positive input and creative contributions are important
- Make sure there are advancement opportunities for people to aim for
- Provide regular feedback
- Bear in mind that a simple thank you is usually worth a great deal
- Ensure positive working relationships with peers, managers and subordinates
- Make sure employees’ understanding of the organisation’s values is on the button
- Put in place inspirational leadership
- Create a system of effective internal communications so everyone knows what’s going on
- Incentivise people to reward engagement though employee benefits, with realistic targets and public acknowledgement

What are the short and long-term benefits?

In the short term, fully engaged employees will work harder because they enjoy their working life more. They’ll be more creative, pro-active and motivated. In the long term, there are proven links between engagement and a healthy bottom line. Engaged employees are more loyal, staying with companies for longer and becoming keen advocates, dedicated brand ambassadors for products and services.
The journey into engagement

From our experience the journey usually starts with a pressing issue. Some recent examples we have assisted with. An oil company identifying the benefits of core workers and contractors on the same installation working closer together. A gas processing plant that over a period of time the employees have become complacent and disengaged from the business. This is a good example of them being well communicated too, but still disengaged.

From our experience the best way to address engagement issues is to get staff to identify that ‘there is a problem’ and get them to recognise they are part of the solution and can solve the issues.

We usually recommend that a diagonal slice of employees meet in a workshop environment to first of all identify that there is a problem and then go about a process to deliver solutions. By doing this you immediately create internal champions for change.

Trying to engage people around a business plan etc. will seldom engender enthusiasm as much as engaging people around issues that they have influence over. This creates a powerful alignment and can be a great motivator for change especially if directed by the right process.

Performance improvement in the Scottish Oil Industry
This successful project stemmed from the desire to improve safety performance, increase productivity rather than simply reduce costs plus give personnel opportunities to develop and take more responsibility. Explore this story
These quotes from a workshop into addressing the safety culture in an oil company show the enthusiasm for change that can be generated.

“We are making major improvements in our safety culture”

“Individuals have gained in confidence”

“People are working more effectively together”

“Atmosphere on the plant has changed”

“Individuals are confident and at ease with each other”

“People are now challenging things – ‘we’ve always done it this way’”

Engagement issues come in many different guises. Eg developing new teams with a common purpose, responding to the feedback from employee surveys, building a common culture after mergers, building an inclusive safety culture. You will see many examples and case studies in our website [click here](https://www.vitalresources.co.uk).
The Engagement Survey

Knowing what employees and other key business stakeholders think and feel makes good business sense. Our colleagues at Q4 consulting have over many years of research have developed survey tools to enable you to target and address engagement issues. The survey instruments are practical, focussed, and pragmatic and produce actionable results.

The key is to act on the findings from the survey. This way the employees will see that they are not only identifying issues but can also be part of the solution in addressing engagement issues.

In his book The Engagement Manifesto (a recommended read) Alan Crozier outlines some rules of engagement to keep in mind.

1. Be clear about what you mean about engagement

2. Ensure senior management are fully invested in it

3. Clarify how you will measure engagement and identify the contributing factors

4. Ensure everything you do supports your core purpose and values

5. Where action is required, acknowledge that a single intervention is unlikely to be successful. It will have to be supported elsewhere in the system
Keep the lines of communication and consultation open

Wherever you sit in the organisation, collaborate with your colleagues. They may have more useful levers to pull than you do (see no 5)

Engagement is not an event; it is an ever ending journey

Look for and measure the impact of engagement in your business results and link them to objectives

Recognise, reward, celebrate and reinforce what you are doing well – keep doing it.

At the Scottish Manufacturing Advisory Service conference most delegates rated engaging their people as their number one challenge.

We know that from various research studies and from our work in organisations an engaged workforce will make a big impact.

Take a moment to think the impact that engaging your people could have on the following areas of your business:

- Service
- Sales
- Quality
- Safety
- Retention
- Sales, Profit and Shareholder Returns
Engaging your people may not be as difficult as it may seem. We hope this guide inspires you to think about ‘What is Possible’. Give our Lead Consultant Bill Stoddart a call +44 (0)7831 398 744 or email bill@vitalresources.co.uk to discuss how Vital Resources can help.

**About Vital Resources**

Vital Resources is a full service organisation development consultancy known for delivering highly strategic, practical, results-driven work in **strategy, leadership, teambuilding, service excellence, performance management and effective meetings**.

We’re passionate about creating successful story’s and we’re committed to growing your business though your people.

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