

Great Day Resource Guide

Click each Resource to access information.



Individual

Manager

Executive

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Individual
Individuals need to be enthused, meaning their willingness to perform is supported by individual talents and alignment with organizational priorities. They must have the tools and resources they need to achieve results. Each individual is accountable for identifying and clearly communicating what is important to them and what they think they do well.

Executive
In addition to their primary role, executives are also managers and individuals. They must balance all three roles accordingly. Executives are responsible for establishing an environment that fuels engagement. Using a clear vision, mission, and values to guide their actions, they can facilitate engagement throughout the organization.

Manager
Managers connect organizational strategy with individuals' needs and goals. While managers are first and foremost individuals themselves, they are responsible for communicating strategic priorities and coaching employees towards higher levels of engagement.

Commonly Used Items
The following items are often included in surveys, depending on an organization's culture, past survey initiatives, and current talent management and strategic objectives. Many explore organizational policies and practices.

How to Use This Guide

Appendices

How to Use This Guide

This guide contains insights and recommendations for addressing engagement survey items. It is designed to spark your thinking for creating an environment that fuels great days at work and for coaching individuals toward higher levels of engagement.

A few reminders as you use this guide:

- Everyone in your organization has a role to play in achieving more great days at work. If you are a manager or executive, the very nature of your leadership position means you have more responsibilities. However, there are plenty of things that employees who are not leaders can do to take control of their personal success and satisfaction. Be sure to conduct a team meeting to review survey results and identify actions the team can take (within its control and influence) to increase engagement levels.
- Survey insights provide useful information, but don't look to statistical analysis alone to direct actions for increasing engagement. All survey findings need to be considered in context with your organization's other performance metrics, as well as the goals and priorities of your team.
- High survey scores are not the goal. The goal is the extraordinary accomplishments that can be achieved by more engaged employees having more great days at work.



This guide is organized in sections, just as the survey items are grouped in your report.

- There are tips for each item, but don't concentrate on fixing one or two particular items because they are low. Keep in mind that your survey items may have been tailored for your organization so the wording and numbering in your survey reports may differ from that in this guide. Use all the information throughout the report to shape your approach for addressing trends or themes (e.g., communication, alignment, meaningful work, trust). You can also use this guide to identify something you can do today, with or without survey data, to fuel more great days at work for your team and you.
- Visit the Team Meeting section (Appendix A) to plan how to share the survey results and brainstorm with your team.
- Visit the Engagement Conversations section (Appendix B) to learn how to hold conversations with individual members of your team to explore their specific drivers of job satisfaction and contribution. This section contains best practices and templates to guide you.
- If you have not yet seen the X Model of Engagement video, please view it at: <https://www.engagementbuildingtools.com/EngagementResourceLibrary/EEResources.aspx?q=cD0xJnY9MSZzPTExNyZsPTEmeD18>

Individual (I) Items

I is for individuals. Individuals need to be in gear and enthused, meaning their willingness to perform is supported by individual talents and alignment with organizational priorities. They must also have the tools and resources they need to achieve results. Each individual is accountable for identifying and clearly communicating what is important to them and what they think they do well.

The Individual (I) Index is comprised of 8 items, which reflect how employees feel about their work and your organization.

- If you are looking at Direct Report Data, you can influence I items by learning more about each team member's engagement drivers and clearly linking work priorities and roles to the organization's big picture.
- If you are looking at Rolled-Up Group Data, consider how you can impact these items through broad-brush initiatives or changes in organizational practices.



Individual (I) Items

I am clear on my work priorities.

I am proud to work here.

I think of my work as more than "just a job."

I like the work that I do.

I understand how my own work priorities support the organization's strategy.

I do more than is expected of me.

I have career opportunities in this organization.

More often than not, I am very satisfied to work here.

Why This Matters

Full engagement reflects maximum contribution and maximum satisfaction. If people don't know what matters most to the organization, they can't contribute fully. Since priorities can shift rapidly (and often), what was clear last month might be murky today.

Employees need to have a clear vision of what tasks they are responsible for in order to spend their valuable time and talents on the right thing.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Are you crystal clear on team priorities?
- When was the last time you reviewed each person's workload and priorities?
- Do you have new team members who are still getting up to speed without specific projects?

Try this:

- Talk to your manager if you aren't clear.
- Ask people what they think their top three priorities are. You may be surprised to find employees working on lesser priorities or tasks that used to be important but aren't now.
- Conduct weekly team check-ins or meet one-on-one.
- Regularly ask people what they are working on.
- If you think people are overloaded, ask if they would like to meet and figure out their priorities and brainstorm ways to get the other projects done.
- Don't just assign new team members to projects without discussing how their job connects to the big picture, confirming what's most important, and answering any questions they may have about juggling priorities.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- When was the last time you discussed priorities with your direct reports?
- How and how often are you communicating vision and strategy?
- What recent strategy shifts or decisions may have contributed to the favorability for this item?

Try this:

- Frame all your communications (verbal and written) with the organization's top strategic priorities.
- Don't assume that the managers who report to you are crystal clear on priorities, especially if you work in a matrixed or fast-moving organization.
- Follow up with managers whose work groups appear to be unclear.

Individual (I) Items

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Why This Matters

Pride contributes to a positive emotional connection to work, which is a key ingredient in engagement. Pride is much more than an organization's reputation or cool products. It reflects a belief that the organization is living its external brand inside.

People want to wake up every day and work for an organization they feel good about. It's difficult to achieve full engagement when the work day starts off without pride in your organization.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- What recent event or decision may have influenced pride scores?
- Are people unhappy with recent decisions?
- How do you feel about the organization? Are you proud to work here? Are your feelings known to your team?

Try this:

- Share with your team your reasons for joining and staying. Pride and engagement are contagious.
- Invite client-facing employees or actual customers to speak to your team.
- Share positive news whenever you receive it.
- If you are struggling with a recent decision, make sure not to bad-mouth senior leaders.
- Communicate your pride in the accomplishments of your team.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How often do you communicate the link between customer or community experiences and what employees do?
- Is something not working well? (i.e., is there a practice or product issue that needs to be addressed?)

Try this:

- When discussing strategy, make sure the message includes the organization's mission as well as the impact on the larger community and customers.
- Tell more stories. Share the positive impact that the organization has with concrete examples and with stories about people, not only financial metrics or other data.
- Be positive and candid in your messages about market differentiation. Highlight what the organization does better than anyone else in your industry. If there are areas where you're playing catch-up, admit that there is still work to be done. For example, if the strategy is to focus on being the lowest cost provider rather than the highest quality product, make sure employees understand the strategy and how it benefits customers.

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Why This Matters

Great days and full engagement result when people find meaning in what they do. If given a choice, few people actually seek a job that just pays the bills. Understanding how what they do fits into a larger plan ("the big picture") raises a person's emotional commitment to their work. Employees don't have to think of their work as a career, but the work does need to fulfill personal goals, values, or needs.

You don't have to be running a humanitarian organization for employees to be able to think of their work in this way, but you do need to show how the work matters.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you know the career aspirations of each team member?
- What messages do you send when you talk about the team's purpose and goals? Are you reinforcing the meaning in your team's work?
- When was the last time you asked team members why they like what they do?
- Why do you come to work each day? Are you stuck in a rut? On auto-pilot? Fully engaged?

Try this:

- Don't make assumptions. A task that bores one person can excite another. Lead a team discussion about great days at work to understand what motivates each team member.
- Invite client-facing employees or actual customers to speak to your team to underscore and reinforce the impact that their work has.
- Provide recognition for employee achievements more often. Don't just highlight the results, but also the effect they have on others.
- Talk to team members regularly about their work. Share what you enjoy most. Ask them what projects or tasks engage them.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- When was the last time you shared stories about the impact of the work that employees do?
- Can the managers you've hired inspire their team members or are they only concerned with results?
- Why do you come to work each day? Are you stuck in a rut? On auto-pilot? Fully engaged?

Try this:

- When you discuss strategy, try to paint a vivid picture of the organization's purpose. Make sure the message includes the impact on the larger community and customers.
- Share your enthusiasm. If you're not enthused, don't pretend that you are.
- Tell more stories. Share the positive impact the organization has with concrete examples and with stories about people, not only financial metrics or other data.
- Coach or provide training for your managers by communicating with meaning and inspiration, not just the facts. Attend the training yourself!

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Why This Matters

When people like the work they do, they are willing to go the extra mile in order to deliver extraordinary results. In order for employees to be fully engaged, their values, talents, skills, and goals need to be aligned with the job they perform.

Few people really want to spend their work days unfulfilled or sticking it out for the promise of a larger goal.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- If this item has low favorability, do you really know why employees don't like their work?
- Have the tasks or focus of your team changed recently?
- Is your hiring profile a fit for the jobs you have?
- Are only some people on the team getting to do the most exciting work?
- Is your team seen as a "stepping stone" toward loftier roles in the organization?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (see Appendix B). Pay particular attention to the topic of job satisfaction, and explore what aspects of the job are most enjoyable, challenging, or distasteful.
- Manage new hire expectations, and be realistic with employees about what you can change.
- Delegate more to provide development opportunities or a change in routine.
- Think twice before you fill open positions during reorganizations (e.g., "We don't need Cooper on Pat's team, so let's put him on your team.") Make sure all new team members have the skills, interest, and fit for their roles.
- If you're concerned about fit, meet often. Don't let early signs of performance problems go unaddressed.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- What's the root cause of lack of fit?

Try this:

- Review your hiring and promotion profiles with your managers and HR to determine mismatches.
- Work with your managers and HR to create sample career paths or provide career management tools to help employees move out of entry level jobs more quickly.
- Hold managers accountable for addressing bad fit or performance problems on their teams. Disengaged employees negatively impact the people around them.

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Why This Matters

The degree to which employees understand the organization's priorities largely impacts engagement levels. When people believe their work has meaning and know how their work links to the big picture, they can take initiative and deliver results without much direction. When people are disconnected from organizational priorities, they are more likely to be unsatisfied with their work and contributing at low levels.

Employees want to leave work each day knowing they spent their valuable time and talents on work that has meaning.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you understand how your team's priorities support the current strategy?
- Do you regularly and clearly make the link for employees between work priorities and how they contribute to the organization's strategy?
- Has the organization's strategy shifted recently? Were the changes well-communicated?

Try this:

- If you are not clear on the organization's current strategy, talk to your manager.
- When you assign tasks, explain how the work benefits the organization.
- During times of change or uncertainty, restate and reinforce the organization's strategy. Help your team keep perspective and focus on what matters most.
- If the larger strategy is being debated or truly unclear, keep your team focused on short-term priorities and emphasize the positive impact on customers.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Are all senior leaders clear on – and committed to – the organization's strategy? Are there differences at the top that undermine full strategy alignment?
- Are you letting nonessential projects steal time from the organization's top priorities?
- Are you and your peers being more opportunistic and less strategic?

Try this:

- Communicate the organization's strategy at every meeting. Again and again.
- When strategy changes, explain why. This can have a dramatic impact on your trust scores. Communicate more than you think you need to.
- Hold yourself and your peers accountable for sticking with the strategic imperatives you've agreed to. Raise your concern if you see signs that your peers are not on board.
- Make yourself available to answer questions about the organization's strategy during location visits, department "ask an exec" lunches, and other informal employee gatherings.

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Why This Matters

Maximum contribution is an ingredient in full engagement. It means giving "110%." If people don't agree with this statement, they are definitely not engaged. That is a problem.

People will apply discretionary effort when they find their work meaningful and feel recognized and rewarded for their extra efforts.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Are you tolerating poor performance? Are you performing poorly?
- How have you clearly communicated your expectations of employee behavior and results?
- When was the last time you recognized stellar effort?

Try this:

- Use the engagement conversation guidelines (in Appendix B) to clarify what maximum contribution looks like – and to discuss employees' under-utilized talents. Do this even if you have set performance goals in the last 6 months.
- Coach poor performers up or out. They have a negative impact on the rest of the team and their lack of consistent or ineffective contribution sends a message that your expectations are low. Whatever you do, don't praise them when it's not deserved.
- Reward extra effort but be careful that you don't encourage a burnout culture or confuse "working more hours" with peak performance.
- Expect a lot from your team. Leaders excite others to exceptional performance through inspiration and high expectations.
- Take steps to increase your own engagement if you're on auto-pilot. You set the tone for the team.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Are you tolerating less effective managers? Are there certain teams or departments that seem to be disconnected or struggling to get traction while others are going above and beyond expectations?
- Does your performance management system actually drive high performance?
- Do you hear yourself saying "our people are our greatest asset?"

Try this:

- Model the commitment, teamwork, and effort you expect of others.
- Coach low-performing managers up or out.
- Inspirational leadership requires a balance of clarity and meaning, performance focus, and personal connection. Focus on using these concepts in your communications with employees.
- If there has been significant change or uncertainty, make the rounds, connect with employees, address concerns, and do your best to inspire commitment to the larger purpose.
- Provide detailed examples when recognizing performance. Don't praise with platitudes.

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Why This Matters

Career development is one of the most common engagement and retention drivers. Many organizations find, however, that career items consistently receive the lowest favorability in surveys.

People have different definitions of career, but where most people can agree is that they want a meaningful future with their employer. When they don't see that type of future, they may settle for what they perceive as a decent job. They may also actively seek opportunities outside your organization or be attracted by competitive offers.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you know the career aspirations of each team member?
- Can you articulate your organization's point of view on career?
- Are you familiar with the career resources available?
- When was the last time you talked about "what's next" with each team member?
When was the last time you talked about "what's next" for you with your boss?

Try this:

- Become familiar with your organization's career philosophy, resources, and processes.
- Invite an HR colleague to speak to your team about career development tools.
- Schedule a career coaching conversation with each team member at least once a year. If you think someone may be bored, hold the meeting now.
- If you are hoarding talent because you don't want to lose valuable team members, stop.
- Help employees gain visibility with senior leaders and other departments. Make introductions to support employees' networking efforts.
- Provide performance feedback and manage expectations.
- Provide stretch assignments to build employees' portfolios of skills and experiences.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- What have you done recently to support the careers of your direct reports? Are you providing opportunities for them to obtain experience and skills without a promotion?
- Are you familiar with the career development tools your organization offers?

Try this:

- Schedule a career conversation with each manager who reports to you at least once a year.
- Share your career story, especially if it was a circuitous path, to illustrate career possibilities.
- Work with HR colleagues to identify a leadership pipeline and succession plans for your unit.
- Work with HR colleagues to define "career" for the organization, and provide training and tools for individuals and managers to effectively talk about career.
- Paint a picture of the future of the organization with employees in it. Emphasize that there is much work to be done, and that the organization and employees can grow together.

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Why This Matters

Full employee engagement reflects a combination of maximum job contribution and maximum job satisfaction. Employees who aren't satisfied with their work situation aren't having many great days at work. They are unlikely to apply the discretionary effort that your organization needs. They may leave. Worse, they may stay and negatively influence the engagement of their colleagues and damage productivity.

Working with team members who express little enthusiasm for the job drags the whole team down.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- What are the potential causes of low favorability for this item?
- Do you know what each team member enjoys about their work and what gets in the way?
- How did you answer this question?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (see Appendix B for guidance). Pay particular attention to the topic of job satisfaction, and explore what aspects of the job are most enjoyable, challenging, or distasteful.
- Review your team's survey findings to understand potential satisfaction drivers. How did they respond to the question about drivers that can directly increase their satisfaction? How can you give them what they say they need?
- Discuss barriers to engagement during a team meeting, focusing on the factors that you and the team can control. If you commit to changing your behavior or following up with senior leaders, do it.
- Enlist the support of your manager and/or peers in creating an environment that supports full engagement.
- If your own job satisfaction is low, take steps to change what you can about your work environment. Keep negativity in check.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Are the managers who report to you fully engaged?
- What recent changes in priorities or procedures may have impacted satisfaction?

Try this:

- Look for themes in the survey findings to determine possible causes of low satisfaction. What organizational practices need to change? Is there evidence that particular managers are struggling?
- Meet with your managers to discuss strategies for increasing engagement across teams.
- Meet with your managers one-on-one (using the engagement conversation guidelines from Appendix B) to discuss their personal engagement equations.

Manager (M) Items

M is for managers. Managers connect organizational strategy with individuals' needs and goals. While managers are first and foremost individuals themselves, they are responsible for communicating strategic priorities and coaching employees towards higher levels of engagement.

The Manager (M) Index is comprised of 9 items, which reflect how employees perceive their immediate manager/supervisor.

- If you are looking at Direct Report Data, you are this work group's "M." Pay attention to these items, and remember that the findings reflect the impact, not intent, of your efforts.
- If you are looking at Rolled-Up Group Data, you may want to review and discuss individual managers' results to understand the detail behind the M scores.



Manager (M) Items

I trust my manager.

I have a great working relationship with my manager.

My manager encourages me to use my talents as much as possible.

My manager asks for and acts on my input.

My manager recognizes and rewards my achievements.

My manager treats me as an individual with unique interests and needs.

My manager provides regular, specific feedback on my performance.

My manager delegates assignments effectively without micro-managing me.

My manager has built a strong sense of belonging within our team or department.

Why This Matters

Research shows that people who trust their managers are more engaged. High trust drives discretionary effort and ensures that employees feel good about their work environment and experience greater job satisfaction.

Often, low favorability for this item indicates uncertainty, not necessarily lack of trust. Employees may be new, or the manager may be new and unproven in the eyes of team members.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- On a continuum of high trust to low trust, where would you place all of your employee relationships? Do you trust your team?
- Why did you rate some relationships lower?
- Would your employees agree? Are you sure?

Try this:

- Model trustworthy behavior – be honest, be consistent, and accept all questions as valid. If you behave this way, eventually your employees will, too.
- Keep your promises and follow through.
- Walk the talk. You have to genuinely care about employee engagement. People will figure it out if you don't.
- When a new employee arrives, make an extra effort to get to know that person – and to share information about your background, interests, challenges, and especially your work style.
- Demonstrate that you trust employees. Trust breeds trust, and as a leader you need to take the first step.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- What may be contributing to low scores? New managers or employees? Bad manager behavior?
- What could you be doing to contribute to the trustworthiness of your managers? Share more information more quickly? Address individual managers' performance problems?
- Do you trust the managers who report to you?

Try this:

- Take a look at all of your managers' scores. Ask managers with high trust scores what they attribute those scores to.
- Make sure you get to know your managers and earn their trust. High trust is contagious. Low trust trickles down quickly with a negative impact. If your managers don't trust you it may be obvious to their teams that they're protecting themselves. That behavior will erode trust with their employees.
- Place your trust in your managers. If employees think you are micro-managing or doing "end runs" around managers, they will be less likely to trust their bosses.

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Why This Matters

Research connects strong employee-manager relationships with high employee engagement. In fact, a strong relationship may be even more important than a manager's skills. This doesn't mean that managers and employees need to be best friends. It does mean that they have figured out how to work effectively together.

This item is also closely aligned with "I trust my manager."

Managers

Ask yourself:

- When new people join your team, do you talk about how you like to work?
- How often do you ask for feedback from employees on how you manage the team?
- On a continuum of strong to weak, where would you place each of your working relationships?
- Why did you rate some relationships lower? Would your employees agree? Are you sure?
- If favorability for this item is lower than you expected, consider your tenure or that of your team. Has there been enough time to get to know one another?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Pay particular attention to the topic of working together. Explore topics like check-ins (what's too little or too much?), decision-making authority, and meeting style. Make sure to ask "What would you like me to do more of? Less of? Continue doing?"
- Make an extra effort to get to know new hires – and to share information about your background, interests, challenges, and especially your work style. Encourage them to talk to other team members about what it's like to work with you.
- Don't treat everyone the same. Different team members will have different coaching needs.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- What may be contributing to low scores? New managers or employees? Bad manager behavior?
- How would you assess the working relationships you have with the managers who report to you? Do you know if they feel the same way?
- Have you observed manager behavior that could negatively impact working relationships?

Try this:

- Build effective working relationships through some of the tips above.
- Provide detailed feedback to managers on actions or decisions that you think might have a negative effect on employees. Don't go around managers by asking employees about the impact. Encourage the managers to talk to their teams directly.

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My manager delegates assignments effectively without micro-managing me.

My manager has built a strong sense of belonging within our team or department.

Why This Matters

Talent utilization is very important to employees. They've spent years developing their skills and want to contribute as much as possible using their areas of strength.

Engagement suffers when people feel their unique talents are being ignored or under-utilized.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you really know what your employees' talents are? Do your employees share your view?
- Are you consciously matching employee talents with tasks?
- When was the last time you spoke with employees about which of their talents provide the most job satisfaction?
- Do you keep the most challenging or interesting work for yourself?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Pay particular attention to the topic of talent utilization, and explore knowledge and skills that might benefit the team.
- Delegate more to provide opportunities for your employees to use their talents or a change up in routine. Discuss these potential changes with your employees first to make sure they are on board and that these new tasks or projects align with their talents and interests.
- If current work priorities don't make the best use of employee talents, create an informal mentoring or coaching program where team members can help others develop in the expertise they are known for. This approach achieves a number of benefits including recognizing talents, leveraging expertise, providing low-cost development, and building the skills of the team.
- Provide a stretch assignment or special project that requires an employee's strongest skills.
- "Swap" or "lend" your team members to other teams to provide the necessary expertise to accomplish short-term assignments or development. Make sure to ensure that scope and prioritization are discussed upfront with the employee and the team who they'll help out.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Do you have a clear vision of the skills and knowledge required to achieve your work group's current goals and position you for future success?
- When was the last time you talked to your team about how their skills achieve the results you need?

Try this:

- Hold managers accountable for developing their team members, not just results.
- Review current job and hiring profiles to help ensure job fit.
- Model the behaviors you want managers to use by talking to your managers about their talents and giving them projects where they can apply them. Try holding engagement conversations as described above.

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My manager provides regular, specific feedback on my performance.

My manager delegates assignments effectively without micro-managing me.

My manager has built a strong sense of belonging within our team or department.

Why This Matters

People spend thousands of hours on the job each year. It's natural that they want to have a say in what happens in their work environment. Involvement is a commonly identified driver of engagement and is also a way of recognizing employees' expertise and contribution.

This is not consensus decision-making. It's making the most of the brainpower on your team to achieve the highest performance possible. The best decisions usually result from multiple, diverse viewpoints.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- When was the last time you involved team members in strategy setting or problem solving? Or do you ask for input on executing decisions only?
- Were there recent decisions that may have led to the favorability for this item?
- How comfortable are you in debating ideas?

Try this:

- Conduct a team meeting to review the survey results and identify actions the team can take (within its control and influence) to increase engagement levels. Make sure to ask, "What do you need me to start, stop, or continue doing?" Then hold the team – and yourself – accountable.
- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Pay particular attention to the topic of working together. Explore your current decision-making process.
- Delegate more when possible and set expectations about levels of decision-making authority.
- If you ask for ideas, follow through. If you don't act on an idea, go back to explain why.
- If there is no room for discussion, say so. Asking for ideas and then doing what you had originally planned to do all along wastes time and damages engagement.
- Slow down. Hold regular meetings even when everyone seems to have too much to do. The excuse of "there was no time to involve the team" doesn't work with team members who are eager to contribute their creativity and brainpower to support the organization's goals.
- Credit employee ideas in your communications and meetings. Be overt in making links between employee feedback and your decisions.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Does this item have low favorability across teams? Or are there one or two teams where involvement is low?
- What leadership behavior are you modeling? Do you make decisions behind closed doors?

Try this:

- Talk to your peers about your culture. Are you, collectively as leaders, minimizing involvement?
- Involve managers who report to you in problem solving. You don't have to have all the answers.

Manager (M) Items

I trust my manager.

I have a great working relationship with my manager.

My manager encourages me to use my talents as much as possible.

My manager asks for and acts on my input.

My manager recognizes and rewards my achievements.

My manager treats me as an individual with unique interests and needs.

My manager provides regular, specific feedback on my performance.

My manager delegates assignments effectively without micro-managing me.

My manager has built a strong sense of belonging within our team or department.

Why This Matters

Recognition is a common engagement driver and most leaders know this. Doing it effectively, however, isn't easy. Organization-wide practices and strategic recognition tools can help, but recognition works best when it is personal and appropriate.

When you acknowledge the behaviors and accomplishments that differentiate your organization in the marketplace, you fuel both satisfaction and contribution. Individuals understand what they need to keep doing to sustain the organization's success.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you know what your people are doing?
- Do you know what kind of recognition each team member prefers?
- How do you "parcel out" recognition among team members? Would your employees say it's fair and equitable? Deserved? Genuine? Often enough?

Try this:

- Be creative. Consider hand-written notes, positive feedback given in private, a more public mention of a specific achievement (e.g., during a team meeting), an email with your boss copied (and/or the client or your boss's boss), or time off. You can recognize employees without spending money.
- When employees take a calculated risk and fall short, recognize the effort and reinforce positive behaviors.
- Consider rewards for team accomplishments, but beware of recognizing everyone equally if you have low performers on your team. Instead, address performance issues and manage expectations of what kind of performance will be recognized.
- Avoid statements like "great job" unless you can back them up with specific examples of what made it great.
- Say "thank you" more, ideally with a comment on the positive impact the employee's work had.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How have you been supporting managers' efforts to recognize their teams' accomplishments?
- How often do you praise the managers who report to you?

Try this:

- Be visible in your praise of the managers who report to you.
- When you hear about achievements, send personal notes or emails or stop by the employees' desks. Let them know that their manager told you about their work. Let them know how it makes a difference.
- Lead a brainstorming meeting about cost-effective ideas for rewards and recognition.

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Why This Matters

Stellar performance results from aligning tasks and individuals' talents. Every person comes to work with different values, aspirations, talents, and interests. In this way, engagement reflects an individual's personal relationship with their work. If managers don't understand their employees as individuals, it is unlikely that anything will be working well.

Managers, however, need to go one step further by demonstrating their understanding of their employees' unique skill sets and goals.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How often do you talk to team members one-on-one?
- Do you know employees' work preferences? Strengths? Weaknesses? Interests?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (see Appendix B). Take the time to explore all four topics: satisfaction, contribution, talent utilization, and working together.
- Help employees create individual development plans, and conduct regular coaching conversations.
- Keep in mind research insights on generational and cultural differences, social styles, or other characteristics of employees, but coach individuals - not the demographic category. For example, not all Millennials have the same interests, priorities, or drivers of satisfaction and contribution.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Are there organizational practices that may actually fuel the perception that employees are not treated as individuals?
- Do you treat the managers who report to you as individuals?

Try this:

- Meet one-on-one with your managers. Ask them about the individuals on their team.
- Provide leadership development for the managers who report to you, especially if they come from highly technical, project-focused individual contributor roles. They may err on the side of focusing on tasks rather than people.

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Why This Matters

Regular feedback is an important element of job satisfaction and job contribution. On the satisfaction side, feedback helps people know that their work matters and they are focusing on the right priorities. It lets them know that their manager is paying attention to what they are accomplishing on the job.

In regards to contribution, employees (especially high performers) want performance feedback so they can achieve even better results. "More feedback" is often listed as the top driver that could boost employees' contribution.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How often do you give feedback?
- What gets in the way of your giving more feedback?
- Do you give feedback to some team members more than others? High performers are often overlooked or told only "great job." Managers also avoid difficult conversations with low performers.

Try this:

- Talk to employees more often about their projects. Ask them what they think they did well and what they might do differently next time. Once this has been done, then offer your observations (ideally with specific examples).
- Ask employees what kind of feedback they find most useful. High performers will often ask for very specific guidance.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- What expectations have you set for managers around coaching their team members?
- Are you allowing managers to tolerate low performers?
- Do managers truly know what their employees are doing on a daily basis? Should they know more?

Try this:

- Give feedback to the managers who report to you.
- If this item has low favorability across your unit, lead a meeting with the managers who report to you to strategize ways to provide more feedback to employees. Encourage the sharing of best practices, especially if your culture feels like it is feedback-adverse.

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My manager delegates assignments effectively without micro-managing me.

My manager has built a strong sense of belonging within our team or department.

Why This Matters

One of the most common drivers of job satisfaction is “more opportunities to do what I do best.” For employees to do their best work, they need to feel that they control how their work is done. Micromanagement sends the message that employees’ judgment, ideas, and talents aren’t valued. It doesn’t fuel great days at work.

Knowledge workers, in particular, desire autonomy in determining how best to achieve results. Autonomy doesn’t mean that employees have the freedom to do whatever they want. It does mean, however, that they can use their judgment within the constraints and expectations set by their manager.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Have you taken on projects or tasks that your employees are responsible for?
- Do you believe that your team members have the skills and knowledge required to do the work you assign?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines from Appendix B). Pay particular attention to the topics of working together and contribution so you can manage performance expectations in addition to how you like to monitor progress on projects.
- Discuss and agree on check-in points and levels of authority when assigning projects.
- Give your employees specific direction without micromanaging. You should describe desired results, provide restrictions (e.g., budget, deadlines, etc.), and answer any and all questions your employees may have.
- Talk to new hires about how you will get to know their working style during their first projects. If appropriate, set expectations that you’ll continue to check in more often than you normally would.
- When in doubt, ask employees if they would like you to be less involved in their work. If you have concerns about a project, be honest. Discuss what type of check-ins would work best for you both.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Do you micromanage? Do you encourage your managers to do it?
- Do you often go around the managers who report to you and talk to their team members directly about projects?

Try this:

- Consider leadership training for your managers, especially if they have been promoted from the role of expert. Transitioning to being a manager of people, not just of projects, is hard.

Manager (M) Items

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My manager provides regular, specific feedback on my performance.

My manager delegates assignments effectively without micro-managing me.

My manager has built a strong sense of belonging within our team or department.

Why This Matters

Most people want to be part of something bigger. This may be meaningful work, but it can also mean a sense of community and belonging. Research shows that employees who feel disconnected from their colleagues and superiors are often the most disengaged.

In contrast, when people describe great days at work, they often talk about camaraderie and teamwork or a sense of purpose and pride – all outcomes of a strong work community.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How would you describe the employees who report to you as a team? Would they say they are part of a team?
- What challenges exist to forming a stronger sense of belonging? Geographically distributed team members? Shift work? Heavy workloads?

Try this:

- Conduct a team meeting to review survey results and identify actions to increase engagement levels. Encourage the team to take control of their engagement wherever possible (see page 39 to review the Team Meeting Agenda).
- Conduct regular team meetings (virtual or in-person) to review projects and allow people to share accomplishments. Ask employees what they would like to achieve during meetings.
- Rather than jumping into tasks right away, the first 10 minutes of each meeting should be focused on recognition, the sharing of personal achievements, or your own personal insights on why the team's work matters.
- Encourage team members to work together. Stay alert to individuals who may be less involved.
- Monitor your use of email; are there messages you can deliver by phone or in person to encourage discussion among the team?
- Remind the team why their work matters in nearly every communication. Provide specific examples of the impact the team had whenever possible.
- Set ambitious goals and encourage innovative ideas for achieving them.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Have you created a sense of belonging within your unit? Across teams?
- Which teams in your unit seem to work better together than others? What is different about the team make-up or manager behaviors in those groups? What can be replicated?
- What can you do to convey the significance of what teams do?

Try this:

- Encourage a collegial culture. Be aware of competitiveness or exclusionary "cliques" in pockets of the organization.

Executive (E) Items

E is for executives. In addition to their primary role, executives are also managers and individuals. They must balance all three roles accordingly. Executives are responsible for establishing an environment that fuels engagement. Using a clear vision, mission, and values to guide their actions, they can facilitate engagement throughout all levels of the organization.

The Executive (E) Index is comprised of 5 items, which reflect how employees perceive senior leaders.

- If you are looking at Rolled-Up Group Data, you may be this work group's "E." Consider not only what you can do, but also how you can enlist your managers in communicating and implementing decisions.
- If you are not a senior leader, consider what you can do to influence how your team perceives the leaders above you.



Executive (E) Items

I trust the senior leaders of this organization.

Senior leaders act in alignment with our organization's core values or guiding principles.

Senior leaders communicate effectively.

Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose.

Senior leaders have created a work environment that drives high performance.

Why This Matters

Research shows that employees who trust senior leaders tend to be more engaged.

High-level executives set the tone for the entire organization and shape its culture. People want to work for an organization where they think the leaders at the top are making wise decisions and behaving appropriately.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you trust the leaders at the top?
- Have you seen executive behavior that may have been misunderstood?
- Have you made any comments that may have undermined trust in senior leaders?

Try this:

- Ask your team if they have any questions about recent decisions. If you can't answer their questions, follow up to get the answers.
- Provide upward feedback on the impact of executive communications or decisions.
- Invite senior leaders to attend team meetings for informal discussions.
- Tell stories of situations where senior leaders demonstrated competence and trustworthiness.
- Look for opportunities to educate your team on the competing priorities that leaders must juggle.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Do you trust your peers?
- Do you have full confidence in the direction of the organization?
- Is it safe to speak up and constructively challenge things in your organization?
- Have you done or said anything that could have been misinterpreted?
- When you communicate a decision, do you explain your decision-making process and the performance or personal rationale?
- Do you change your decisions often?

Try this:

- Remember that your intent is one thing; the actual impact or perceptions of your actions are another.
- Find a few managers who will be brutally honest with you. Ask them what you have done or said to build – or break – trust.
- Walk around. Try to be more accessible, "that which isn't known isn't trusted."
- Be honest, even if it's not welcome information. Hard truths are better than skirting issues.

Executive (E) Items

I trust the senior leaders of this organization.

Senior leaders act in alignment with our organization's core values or guiding principles.

Senior leaders communicate effectively.

Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose.

Senior leaders have created a work environment that drives high performance.

Why This Matters

Many organizations promote specific core values that are posted on their walls. The more emphasis that is put on these guiding values in executive messages, the closer employees will scrutinize leader behavior. Not respecting these principles at the highest level will lead employees to view senior leaders as hypocritical and will damage engagement.

This item is aligned with "I trust the senior leaders of this organization," because employees who perceive leaders as not walking the talk are unlikely to trust them.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you get to observe the behavior of senior leaders more than your team?
- Have you seen executive behavior that may have been misunderstood?
- Do you believe their actions consistently align with the organization's values?

Try this:

- Do your best to model organizational values and hold your team accountable for doing so.
- Ask your team if there are any questions about recent decisions or actions that appear out of alignment. If you can't answer their questions, follow up to get the answers.
- Provide upward feedback on employee perceptions of executive actions or decisions.
- Invite senior leaders to attend team meetings for informal discussions so they can answer questions and become better known.
- Tell stories of situations where you saw senior leaders act in alignment with core values.
- When you see a leader behaving in a way that does not support a core value, provide constructive feedback. However, don't bad-mouth him or her in front of your team.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How do you and your peers hold each other accountable for living the organization's values?
- Have you done or said anything that could be misinterpreted?
- When you communicate a decision, do you explain your decision-making process and link the decision not only to the organization's strategy, but also to its core values?

Try this:

- Memorize the organization's values.
- Find a few managers who will be brutally honest with you. Ask them what you have done or said that could be perceived as being out of alignment.
- Be honest, even if it's not welcome information. Hard truths are better than skirting issues.
- Be open to feedback – remember that it is based on perception and effect, not your intent.
- Don't make excuses. Acknowledge, apologize and move on as appropriate.

Executive (E) Items

I trust the senior leaders of this organization.

Senior leaders act in alignment with our organization's core values or guiding principles.

Senior leaders communicate effectively.

Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose.

Senior leaders have created a work environment that drives high performance.

Why This Matters

Most executives need to lead a large workforce of people they rarely see and may never meet. Therefore, communication is one of the only leadership tools available for inspiring people to achieve greater accomplishments. Leadership communication shapes the organization's culture and sets the overall tone for the work environment.

This item is closely linked to trust (as is living the organization's values). Employees who don't believe what leaders say won't give 110% and won't feel emotionally connected to the organization. They won't feel confident about the direction of the organization and won't be engaged.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you believe what senior leaders say?
- Have you heard executive messages that may have been misunderstood?
- Is the behavior of one or two executives influencing the response to this item?

Try this:

- Tell the truth yourself.
- If you don't understand a decision or communication, ask your manager about it.
- Provide upward feedback on employee perceptions of executive communications.
- Invite senior leaders to attend team meetings for informal discussions so they can answer questions and become better known.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How often do you catch yourself spinning a message to avoid sharing unwelcome information or putting a positive spin on a negative situation?
- Do you call your peers out when they mis-speak?
- Have you done or said anything that could be interpreted as contrary to an earlier message?

Try this:

- Be positive but honest. For example, people tend to remember "there won't be layoffs" when you say "we hope there won't be layoffs."
- Don't speculate! When you're unsure, be honest.
- If you can't provide answers now, let people know when you can.
- Work with an executive coach or attend a leadership communication workshop if you feel you are being misinterpreted. A lot of leaders, for example, deliver successful messages but then lose credibility in how they respond to follow-up questions.



Executive (E) Items

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Senior leaders communicate effectively.

Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose.

Senior leaders have created a work environment that drives high performance.



Why This Matters

Meaningful work is a key engagement driver. You don't have to be running a humanitarian organization to show how the work matters. Employees need to understand how their daily actions make a difference in achieving the organization's goals and impact customers. That understanding fuels an emotional connection to the organization and helps employees make the best decisions about their priorities.

Alignment starts at the top where senior leaders set the vision and direction of the organization. As a result, the linkages to daily work need to begin with them, and cascade down through the manager ranks.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you know the organization's mission and current strategy?
- Have you heard executive communications emphasizing the organization's purpose that your team may not have heard?

Try this:

- Whenever you hear senior leaders discussing strategy and purpose, share a summary of those comments with your team. Do so even if you think they have heard it before.
- Provide upward feedback on employee perceptions of executive actions or decisions.
- Invite senior leaders to attend team meetings for informal discussions so they can answer questions.
- If you're wondering about strategy and recent decisions, talk to your manager for clarification. Don't bemoan the lack of direction with your team.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Has your organization experienced a significant shift in direction or an organizational change that may be raising questions in the workforce?
- When you communicate a decision, do you explain your decision-making process and link the decision to the organization's larger purpose?

Try this:

- Find a few managers who will be brutally honest with you. Ask them if the strategy is clear through all levels of the workforce and where the breakdowns may be occurring.
- Be open to feedback, remembering that it is based on perception and effect, not your intent.
- Tell more stories. Do your best to make the mission of the organization come alive in living color. Also describe your vision of the future with specific examples.

Executive (E) Items

I trust the senior leaders of this organization.

Senior leaders act in alignment with our organization's core values or guiding principles.

Senior leaders communicate effectively.

Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose.

Senior leaders have created a work environment that drives high performance.

Why This Matters

Fully engaged employees are both enthused and in gear. "In gear" means their willingness to perform is backed up by their individual talents, alignment with organizational priorities, and the tools that they need to achieve results.

A lack of resources, a crushing workload, cumbersome organizational practices and a lack of team cooperation will create a work environment that does not support performance. It will impact job satisfaction, too. This item has a strong relationship with your overall trust scores!

Managers

Ask yourself:

- What can you do to shape your team's work environment?
- What one or two changes in the work environment would have the biggest impact on your team's satisfaction and contribution? How (and to whom) can you make your case for change?

Try this:

- Reward high performance and watch for burnout.
- Remove barriers to performance wherever you can.
- Talk to your peers about the organizational practices that get in the way of high performance for their teams. Look for themes and brainstorm ideas for driving change from the management ranks. Strategize how to provide upward feedback on small changes that would have significant impact.
- Watch what you say and do. Acknowledge your team's frustration, but don't join gripe sessions.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- To whom can you turn to get candid feedback on decisions and policies?
- Are you and your peers aligned? Are there disagreements at the top of the organization that may be creating silos or barriers to smooth working conditions throughout the organization?
- When was the last time you examined the daily practices and processes for your unit?
- How well do you hold managers accountable for results? Are there performance issues you should be addressing?

Try this:

- Ask the managers who report to you what is getting in the way of high performance. Work with HR, finance, or other peers to address organization-wide practices that don't work.
- Resolve disagreements with peers. If necessary, bring in an executive coach to facilitate a team meeting to address issues that are interfering with your effectiveness as a leadership team.
- Invite employees to make suggestions on process improvements.

Commonly Used Items

Commonly used items. Other items are often included in surveys, depending on an organization's culture, past survey initiatives, and current talent management and strategic objectives. Many explore organizational policies and practices.

- If you are looking at Rolled-Up Group Data, you may have significant control or influence over the practices that affect employees. Consider which ones you and other senior leaders can influence with your behavior and/or decisions. Sponsor multi-functional project teams to tackle systems that cut across the organization.
- If you are not a senior leader, pay particular attention to items that are similar to other "M" items. You have the most control over these. Work with your team to identify actions that can influence aspects of your organization's culture. Although senior leaders set the tone for culture, the actions of every individual will reinforce or help change it.



Commonly Used Items

My manager treats me with respect.

I feel that my opinions are highly valued by my manager.

I feel that my thoughts and opinions, including constructive criticisms, are highly valued.

I feel I am a valued and important member of the team.

I am encouraged to be creative and innovative in my job.

We have a sufficient number of performance conversations throughout the year.

My colleagues are committed to doing quality work.

There is good teamwork and cooperation among the departments in our organization.

It is safe to speak up and constructively challenge things around here.

There is a fair system in place to evaluate employee performance.

This organization cares for its employees.

My organization provides me with the training and resources to do a good job.

My job makes full use of my skills and abilities.

I have an opportunity to grow and develop in my current position.

I have a good balance between my work and personal life in my current job.

I believe that my level of engagement (see definition) is increasing.

I believe in and am inspired by what our organization is trying to achieve.

I believe that this organization has a promising future.

I believe that the real change will come as a result of this survey.

Why These Matter

The items highlighted to the left are linked to respect and involvement. Mutual respect is the foundation of effective working relationships, and solid employee-manager relationships correlate with high engagement. As people look for meaning in their work, it's important to recognize the value of their ideas. When you do, they'll feel a sense of accomplishment (which drives their satisfaction) and continue to think about ways to improve work processes and better fulfill your organization's mission. Consider these as additional "M" items.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How do you react in conversations and then follow up to new ideas?
- Do you react differently to suggestions depending on who is making them?
- Were there recent events or conversations that may have led to low favorability?
- Do you ask people what they think and allow them to respond honestly?

Try this:

- Assume good intent when someone has criticism, even if the person complains a lot. Ask questions to clarify the intent and understand specifics. Then explain what you can or will do.
- Thank people for their candor whether you agree with their comments or not.
- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). When discussing how you work together, ask what you can do more or less of to encourage the sharing of team members' ideas.
- Review the tips for Item 14: My manager recognizes and rewards my achievements.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Do you encourage your managers to solicit new ideas from their teams?
- Is there a process in place for making suggestions or testing out new ideas?
- How do you react to new ideas and opinions that differ from your own?

Try this:

- Encourage the managers who report to you to highlight team member accomplishments in department meetings.
- Model openness to new ideas. When something has been tried before, acknowledge the positive aspects of the idea before explaining what worked or didn't.
- Ask a trusted colleague how you appear to react to new ideas.

Commonly Used Items

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My job makes full use of my skills and abilities.

I have an opportunity to grow and develop in my current position.

I have a good balance between my work and personal life in my current job.

I believe that my level of engagement (see definition) is increasing.

I believe in and am inspired by what our organization is trying to achieve.

I believe that this organization has a promising future.

I believe that the real change will come as a result of this survey.

Why This Matters

If your survey includes this item, it's likely that your organization holds creativity or innovation as a core value. It's important that every individual think about new ways to approach their work, which can lead to higher productivity, increased customer loyalty, and a stronger bottom line. Innovation should never be delegated to one department!

Creativity is also a commonly held personal value. Aligning employees' personal values with the organization's goals can increase engagement. Consider this as an additional "M" item.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Are you comfortable with new approaches? How do you react to new ideas?
- How do you react when something new doesn't work?
- When was the last time you asked team members to provide input into solving a problem?
- Do you know which of your team members enjoy being creative or taking risks?

Try this:

- Conduct regular team meetings to discuss new ideas. Brainstorm without restrictions and try to identify at least one action the team can build on or implement now.
- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Ask what people enjoy most about their work. Ask when they feel most creative.
- Delegate assignments that require creativity instead of handling them yourself.
- Respond to mistakes and risks that go awry as lessons learned. Don't punish creativity.
- Review the tips on the previous page for valuing and respecting team members' input.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- If your organization holds innovation or creativity as a core value, how do you talk about what it means – or doesn't mean?
- What do you do when new ideas fail?
- Do you wrestle with problems or identify new ventures? Do you reflect on your own or involve others?

Try this:

- Involve the managers who report to you (or representatives from their teams) when you need to be creative in solving a problem or identifying new opportunities.
- Tell stories that illustrate the type of creativity your organization needs. Effective stories include a lot of details so that people understand what behaviors should be replicated.
- Consider leadership training for your managers on innovation, especially if you are trying to transform a more traditional operational model or a risk-averse culture.
- Be thoughtful in how you talk about failed ventures. (Some enterprises actually provide bonuses to teams willing to take calculated risks that did not deliver.)

Commonly Used Items

My manager treats me with respect.

I feel that my opinions are highly valued by my manager.

I feel that my thoughts and opinions, including constructive criticisms, are highly valued.

I feel I am a valued and important member of the team.

I am encouraged to be creative and innovative in my job.

We have a sufficient number of performance conversations throughout the year.

My colleagues are committed to doing quality work.

There is good teamwork and cooperation among the departments in our organization.

It is safe to speak up and constructively challenge things around here.

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This organization cares for its employees.

My organization provides me with the training and resources to do a good job.

My job makes full use of my skills and abilities.

I have an opportunity to grow and develop in my current position.

I have a good balance between my work and personal life in my current job.

I believe that my level of engagement (see definition) is increasing.

I believe in and am inspired by what our organization is trying to achieve.

I believe that this organization has a promising future.

I believe that the real change will come as a result of this survey.

Why This Matters

Engagement is not only about satisfaction but also about contribution. Performance conversations set clear expectations about which work priorities matter most. They also provide valuable feedback on goal progress and how employees are achieving results. (High performers, in particular, crave performance feedback so they can achieve even better results.)

This item is aligned with the “M” item of “my manager provides regular, specific feedback on my performance.” It also provides insights into the effectiveness of your organization’s performance management approach, which is a culture/systems issue. Consider this as an additional “M” item.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you think you have sufficient performance conversations with your team? If you don’t, what gets in the way of talking more?
- Do you give immediate performance feedback throughout the work day?
- Do you fully understand the features and benefits of the performance management system?

Try this:

- Clarify expectations set in your performance management approach, and make time to conduct all the meetings that employees expect to hold with you.
- Since “sufficient” is open to individual interpretation, explore this topic during engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Ask people if they want more or less feedback, and create individualized schedules for connecting.
- Hold quarterly office hours for informal performance conversations, giving team members the freedom to meet or not.
- Get clarity on the performance management system if necessary.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How do you hold the managers who report to you accountable for coaching and conducting performance conversations?
- Are the managers who report to you skilled in coaching? Are they tolerating low performers?
- When was the last time you revised your organization’s performance management approach?

Try this:

- Conduct regular performance conversations with the managers who report to you. Focus on not only their team’s results but also on each manager’s leadership behaviors.
- Sponsor a review and re-tooling of your organization’s performance management system (especially if more emphasis is on checking online boxes than having productive conversations). Ask people what works well and what can be improved.
- Revisit the training that managers receive in coaching skills to determine whether low confidence or skill comfort is a barrier to performance conversations.

Commonly Used Items

My manager treats me with respect.

I feel that my opinions are highly valued by my manager.

I feel that my thoughts and opinions, including constructive criticisms, are highly valued.

I feel I am a valued and important member of the team.

I am encouraged to be creative and innovative in my job.

We have a sufficient number of performance conversations throughout the year.

My colleagues are committed to doing quality work.

There is good teamwork and cooperation among the departments in our organization.

It is safe to speak up and constructively challenge things around here.

There is a fair system in place to evaluate employee performance.

This organization cares for its employees.

My organization provides me with the training and resources to do a good job.

My job makes full use of my skills and abilities.

I have an opportunity to grow and develop in my current position.

I have a good balance between my work and personal life in my current job.

I believe that my level of engagement (see definition) is increasing.

I believe in and am inspired by what our organization is trying to achieve.

I believe that this organization has a promising future.

I believe that the real change will come as a result of this survey.

Why This Matters

People who don't believe that their colleagues have high standards and a commitment to quality may experience decreased engagement, depart out of frustration or lower their own standards – all bad outcomes as you drive organizational imperatives.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How do you hold your team accountable for results and continuous improvement?
- What messages are you sending about the importance of quality work?
- What messages are you sending about the work of other teams?
- How often do you provide constructive feedback to your team or others?

Try this:

- Hold regular project review meetings to discuss results, lessons learned, and ideas for improvement. Focus on processes and address behavior as necessary.
- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Ask how individuals define quality. Like beauty, quality is in the eye of the beholder. People may view it through different filters (e.g., customer needs, profitability, speed).
- When team members complain about other people's work, ask questions to understand the underlying issue. Encourage team members to give their colleagues feedback (rather than expecting you to take action).
- Recognize quality work in team meetings, providing specific examples of what was stellar.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How often do you talk about quality, performance standards, or core organizational values like excellence and exceeding customer expectations?
- What may be contributing to low scores? One team in particular? A recent incident?

Try this:

- Take a look at all of your managers' survey findings. Ask managers with high scores what they attribute their scores to.
- Consider leadership development for managers, specifically in providing feedback. Unskilled managers may not be comfortable addressing performance issues.
- Talk to your peers about your culture. Does it embrace excellence? Are the most common leadership messages about financials or efficiencies rather than quality? If so, make an effort to balance communications on what the organization values.

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Why This Matters

No one succeeds on their own. Effective teamwork is a requirement for high performance. In addition, people experience a feeling of belonging and camaraderie when teamwork is in place, which drives engagement. This item relates to “senior leaders have created a high-performance work environment” because organizational silos often start at the top. Consider this as an additional “E” item.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How do you talk about other teams or departments?
- Have you forged strong partnerships with managers in other departments?
- Have you built team community at the expense of collaboration with other parts of the organization (e.g., “our team is the best” mentality)?
- What challenges exist to strengthening collaboration among departments? Geography? Heavy workloads? Competing priorities? Lack of cohesion at the top of the organization?

Try this:

- Hold your team accountable for being good team players, modeling the cooperation you want to see among departments.
- During your meeting to discuss survey results, brainstorm actions the team can take to build stronger relationships with other departments (e.g., inviting people from other departments to present in lunch-and-learns).
- Ask team members to identify processes or procedures that discourage teamwork.
- Provide upward feedback if senior leaders do not seem to be working together.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Do you feel that you are a part of a cohesive leadership team?
- Does the organization have silos?
- Have you forged strong partnerships with leaders in other departments? Do you know what their goals and challenges are? Do you know them personally?

Try this:

- Ask the managers who report to you about competitiveness or exclusionary cliques in the organization.
- Look at your managers’ survey findings. Which teams have the lowest scores? Talk to the managers to better understand the challenges their teams face.
- If your team is dysfunctional, bring in an executive coach to help the team address underlying issues and behavioral problems. Encourage all senior leaders to commit publicly to working better together as a team.
- Hold regular company-wide meetings for all employees to be informed on the activities in each department.

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Why This Matters

Successful organizations are built on bright ideas and employee commitment. The best ideas often result from debate and diversity of thought. Commitment happens when people understand the why of decisions. Sometimes as they process decisions, they will need to ask questions that challenge the thinking of leadership.

When people feel comfortable speaking up, problems or ethical issues can be addressed in their infancy. This is critical in today's transparent, internet-enabled world. Cultures where it's safe to speak up are less likely to make headlines for the wrong reasons.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How do you react to new ideas or criticism?
- How often do you constructively challenge policies or leadership decisions?
- How often do you ask your team members what they think about a decision?
- Do you avoid controversial topics or do you embrace conversation about them?
- Have there been any recent situations that might have influenced the favorability of this item?

Try this:

- Model candor and openness with your team by inviting opposing points of view, and questions about policies and decisions.
- When you discuss something controversial with senior leaders, loop back with your team to reinforce positive outcomes.
- Encourage people to share accountability for speaking up (e.g., by giving feedback directly to one another rather than involving you as manager).
- Provide feedback to senior leaders if you believe their behavior does not create an environment of candor.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How do you react to criticism?
- To whom can you turn to get candid feedback on your behavior and decisions?
- How do you hold the managers who report to you to high standards of openness and candor? (For example, do you allow managers to "shoot the messenger" of unwelcome information?)
- How do people react to your comments? Do they act on comments as if they were mandates?

Try this:

- Share stories that illustrate positive outcomes of individuals speaking up.
- Ask the managers who report to you to give you feedback about your handling of problems or unwelcome information.
- Be careful in how you discuss ideas or process feedback. What you consider a "healthy debate" could be uncomfortable for others and they may shut down.

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Why This Matters

Most performance management systems can be improved. However, research indicates that how you implement the system you have matters most. The operative word in this item is fair. Perceptions of fairness are shaped by the conversations that occur (or don't happen) as well as the consistency with which managers follow the established approach.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do your team members fully understand how you approach performance appraisals?
- How does your approach compare with what other managers do?
- How often are team members surprised at their appraisals?

Try this:

- Ask your HR partner to hold a refresher session on the performance management approach, focusing less on how to fill out the forms or online fields, and more on strategies for successful conversations.
- Don't wait until the annual performance appraisal time to share difficult feedback. Address performance issues as they arise.
- Don't blame the system (e.g., "I can only assign three 'exceeds' to team members"). Instead, provide specific examples to illustrate your evaluation and explain what a higher level of performance would look like to you.
- If you believe the system is not equitable, provide that feedback to the appropriate leaders.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How do you hold the managers who report to you accountable for performance management?
- Are there inconsistencies in how performance management is addressed?
- Are you tolerating low performers or people who obtain results with undesirable behaviors?
- When was the last time you discussed your organization's performance management approach with your HR leaders? Does it reflect the latest research on organizational effectiveness and successful talent management?

Try this:

- Encourage managers to deal with performance problems decisively.
- When you discuss performance, use specific examples to illustrate the behaviors, not only results, associated with high performance.
- If necessary, schedule a meeting with HR leaders to discuss your current approach and options for improvements.

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Why This Matters

Your strategies come to life through your workforce. It represents one of the largest expenses your organization has. Clearly you care about employees. But do your employees feel that commitment in the messages, systems, benefits, and actions of leadership?

When employees believe their organization cares about them, they are more willing to devote extra effort and stick around through bad times, not just the good times. So it's important to show that the organization cares. Consider this as an additional "E" item.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How do you talk about the organization?
- How do you help your team see the organization's commitment to them?
- How do you demonstrate your commitment to the team?
- What recent events might have influenced the favorability for this item?

Try this:

- Look for opportunities to talk about the challenges that senior leaders face in balancing the needs of all stakeholders, including employees. Invite a credible senior leader to address your team.
- Share a personal story that illustrates how senior leaders went out of their way to address employee needs.
- Invite your HR partner to speak to your team about employee benefits and policies, and the involved decision-making process required to provide excellent workforce support.
- Talk about, as appropriate, recent restructurings with compassion, acknowledging the hard strategic decisions and the steps taken to take care of employees affected.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How do you demonstrate caring for the workforce? In words or in actions?
- When was the last time you spoke candidly about the competing priorities of workforce needs and organizational objectives?
- If you were considering joining this organization as a new hire, would you be impressed by its benefits and articulated commitment to employees?

Try this:

- Remember you are "they." You are the organization.
- "Show the math" of decisions that affect employees -- that is, explain the process and considerations discussed by senior leaders. Share how you feel about the difficulty of the decision.
- Review the tips for item 6 "I trust senior leaders of this organization," and item 19 "Senior leaders act in alignment with our organization's core values or guiding principles."

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Why This Matters

People cannot achieve maximum contribution if they don't have the tools they need. They won't be fully satisfied if they know they could do a better job if they had more support. More resources (e.g., staff, budget, equipment) rank high as contribution drivers. Training addresses contribution and satisfaction. It ensures that people have the skills and knowledge to perform at their best and it satisfies the commonly held value of personal development.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How do you bring new team members on board?
- How often do you have development discussions with team members or provide stretch assignments for personal growth? When was the last time you asked your team members what they need to improve performance?
- Do your L&D colleagues understand what training your team needs?

Try this:

- Talk to your team about cross-training opportunities, where team members can share their expertise with one another.
- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Discuss how to build on their talents and address weaknesses that hold them back. Ask what kind of resources they need to do an even better job.
- Ask team members to schedule an agreed-to number of days for personal development. Every quarter, check in to see if they are taking advantage of L&D opportunities. Partner with your L&D colleagues to make sure they understand what training your team needs and for you to understand the options available to you and your team.
- Compare notes with your peers on resource allocation, and collaborate on a plan for providing resources where they matter most.
- Talk to your manager about resources. Enlist his or her support in addressing your team's needs. You don't get what you don't ask for.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Do you and your colleagues model a commitment to personal development?
- What recent decisions may have influenced the favorability for this item?
- When was the last time you asked the managers, who report to you, what their teams need more of?

Try this:

- Talk about your learning experiences to reinforce a culture of growth and development.
- Talk to your HR leaders about the organization's onboarding processes to ensure that new hires and transfers get the training and support they need from the start, as well as on-going opportunities to keep employees.

Commonly Used Items

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Why This Matters

Your organization compensates employees for their knowledge, experience and skills. You'll receive the biggest return on investment when people are applying their talents to drive your strategy every day. At the same time, people want a sense of accomplishment and meaning in their work. They want to be valued. They want to accomplish great things. One of the top drivers of satisfaction is "more opportunities to do what I do best."

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you know your team members' strengths and weaknesses? Would they agree with your assessment of their skills?
- How many people on your team are doing work that doesn't make the most of their expertise?
- How much control do you have over the projects that you assign team members?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Pay particular attention to the section on talent utilization, asking people which skills or knowledge are under-utilized.
- Don't wait for formal engagement conversations. Take 15 minutes to talk with team members about what they do well and what they like to do. Use those insights when assigning projects.
- What are your options when people have to do work that doesn't fully leverage their skills?
- Are any of the following in your control to do: Assign special projects? Suggest they volunteer for a task force? Ask them to coach other team members in one of their top skills? Nominate them for a high-potential program?
- Be honest with yourself. Is it time to encourage a team member to pursue an opportunity outside your team, which would better utilize his or her talents? If so, support that team member's career growth.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How are hiring and promotion decisions made?
- Do employees know what skills and knowledge are required for different departments or job families?
- How do you hold managers accountable for developing their teams?

Try this:

- Talk to the managers who report to you about their team members' strengths and who demonstrates potential for handling more responsibility.
- Encourage managers to provide stretch assignments. If they are 100% comfortable with assigning a project, it's overdue.
- Consider training to help managers more effectively coach and develop their team members.

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Why This Matters

As the organization grows to meet new demands, so must its people. The skill sets that got you here are not necessarily the ones needed in next decade; learning and development are requirements for maximum contribution. Personal growth is also a key satisfaction and retention driver. Career research indicates that people will stay in roles as long as they believe they are growing. That's good news for organizations which are flatter and have fewer structured career paths.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How often do you talk to your team members about their professional growth?
- Do your team members have formal development plans to build on talents required for their roles and explore skills and knowledge that fuel their passion for work?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Talk about ways people can build on talents. Ask about their personal growth goals.
- Talk about development during formal performance appraisals, identifying the skills that are most important to success now – and in the future.
- Meet with your team to brainstorm learning opportunities outside available courses offered by L&D. Investigate the 70/20/10 approach to learning. Encourage team members to teach each other.
- Ask team members what they would like to learn about your organization, and invite appropriate colleagues to present during lunch-and-learns.
- Review the tips for the item "my organization provides me with the training and resources to do a good job."

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How committed are you personally to learning and development?
- How have you communicated your commitment recently?
- How do you support the development of the managers who report to you?

Try this:

- Talk about the need to learn and grow as an organization and individuals. Tell success stories, with specific details, of professional growth that made an impact for the organization.
- Review the survey findings of the teams with your L&D leader. Identify teams that have the biggest need for development. Create development strategies for those teams.

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Why This Matters

When people are engaged, their work works for them – and for the organization. When there is an imbalance in favor of the organization, the organization benefits for a time, but people will eventually quit and stay (becoming disengaged) or quit and leave the organization.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- Do you really know how people feel about their workload?
- What messages are you sending in the way you work? Do you send pre-dawn emails? Skip vacations? Contact your team after hours?
- What is the organizational culture and unwritten rules about work/life balance?

Try this:

- Set appropriate barriers for your own work and personal life. If you are comfortable with after-hours phone calls or emails while on vacation, be clear in your expectations of the team so they don't assume they need to match your approach.
- Help team members prioritize. Which of the 10 to-dos on their list must be done this week?
- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). "Balance" is an intangible term, open to interpretation. Ask about workload. What is too much for one person may fuel peak performance for another.
- Talk about work/life integration and, when possible, a more flexible work environment with team members. People juggling responsibilities at work and at home may need to be creative with schedules.
- Provide kind but candid feedback if you see a team member working inefficiently or creating more work for him- or herself. Sometimes the imbalance is caused by how someone is doing the work, not by their responsibilities.
- Hold a team meeting to brainstorm innovative ways to manage the team's projects. Be prepared with ideas or possible resources to call on.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- What is your organizational culture like? Are people pressured to be accessible 24x7?
- What messages are you sending in the way you work? Do you send pre-dawn emails? Skip vacations? Contact your team after hours?

Try this:

- Stories shape culture. Don't encourage tales about hours worked or personal sacrifices. Instead look for examples of challenging projects completed by working smarter not necessarily harder.
- Talk about what you do during your time off. Let people know that you value your life outside of the organization.
- Encourage your managers to take time off. The teams of good managers can function in their absence.

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Why This Matters

Survey reports use mathematical formulas to determine engagement levels at the time of the survey, but employees know how they feel each day at work. This item provides a "second opinion" on employees' engagement levels. Employee perceptions are important.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How did you respond to this item?
- Were you surprised by your team's responses?
- How do you and your team talk about engagement?
- What recent events might have influenced the favorability for this item?

Try this:

- During your team meeting, highlight this item if it has high favorability. Ask for volunteers to talk about what they have done to take control of their engagement. Ask about other factors that shaped team responses.
- Share personal examples of actions you've taken to increase your engagement.
- Post the engagement model somewhere visible to your team (e.g., on your office door or in a common area) with sticky notes. Encourage individuals to mark their spot every week (without their names). Talk to your team about how to do this while protecting individuals' identities. An electronic solution might be best.
- Plan engagement conversations with individual employees (using the guidelines in Appendix B). Ask people what's different now compared to the previous survey time frame. Pay particular attention to discussing what you and the employee should stop, start or continue doing to increase or maintain high levels of engagement.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How did you respond to this item?
- Review the scores for the managers who report to you. Which surprise you? Whose team has high favorability and might offer ideas that can be replicated throughout your unit?
- What recent events might have influenced the favorability for this item?

Try this:

- Plan engagement conversations with the managers who report to you (using the guidelines in Appendix B). If the engagement levels of those managers increase, it's likely that their teams' engagement levels will, too. Dead batteries cannot jump start others.
- Schedule one-on-one meetings with the managers of teams with low favorability to explore what could be contributing to the responses and actions you and the manager might take.
- Talk about your own engagement. Highlight detailed examples of being in "the zone" as well as your personal struggles to regain engagement in difficult times.

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Why This Matters

This item relates to "I am proud to work here" and "Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose."

Employee pride is a component of engagement. The more emotionally connected people feel to your organization, the more willing they are to work harder and stay longer.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How clear is the organization's mission and values?
- Can you and your team recite the mission and values?
- How often do you connect your comments to the larger mission and values?
- Does everyone understand how the team supports the organization's mission?

Try this:

- Share with your team your reasons for joining and staying. Pride and engagement are contagious!
- Invite client-facing employees or actual customers to speak to your team.
- Review the organization's mission and values with your team. Talk about examples of the mission in action. Tell stories. Answer questions, to the best of your ability, about how recent decisions support the mission.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How often do you talk about the impact that your organization has on customers? The community? The world?
- How often do you link to the mission when communicating leadership decisions?
- How inspired are you?

Try this:

- Tell more stories. Stories connect with minds and hearts, so that people understand what you're saying and care enough to take action.
- Invite managers and their teams to share their stories of your organization's mission in action. Write them up or post videos on the organization's website.

Commonly Used Items

My manager treats me with respect.

I feel that my opinions are highly valued by my manager.

I feel that my thoughts and opinions, including constructive criticisms, are highly valued.

I feel I am a valued and important member of the team.

I am encouraged to be creative and innovative in my job.

We have a sufficient number of performance conversations throughout the year.

My colleagues are committed to doing quality work.

There is good teamwork and cooperation among the departments in our organization.

It is safe to speak up and constructively challenge things around here.

There is a fair system in place to evaluate employee performance.

This organization cares for its employees.

My organization provides me with the training and resources to do a good job.

My job makes full use of my skills and abilities.

I have an opportunity to grow and develop in my current position.

I have a good balance between my work and personal life in my current job.

I believe that my level of engagement (see definition) is increasing.

I believe in and am inspired by what our organization is trying to achieve.

I believe that this organization has a promising future.

I believe that the real change will come as a result of this survey.

Why This Matters

Although most employees understand that there is no such thing as a career for life, they value job security and want to work for a successful organization. This item relates to "I understand how my own work priorities support the organization's strategy."

In addition, consider this an additional E item. Senior leaders are responsible for setting a clear organizational direction and aligning the workforce. Employees are more likely to feel uncertain about the future if they don't understand the organization's strategy or they don't trust that leaders are making the best decisions.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How do you link team priorities to the organization's strategy?
- Are you clear on the strategy?
- What events or news might have influenced favorability for this item?

Try this:

- Highlight positive organizational metrics during regular team meetings.
- Invite senior leaders to talk about your industry and the organization's goals with your team. Encourage team members to ask questions about strategy or financial performance. This is especially important if your team's expertise is not marketing or strategy.
- Talk about why you joined and why you stay. Your confidence can be contagious.
- Review the tips for 7. I understand how my own work priorities support the organization's strategy.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- How often do you talk about your organization's position in its industry?
- How candid are you and other senior leaders in acknowledging threats or weaknesses?
- What events or news might have influenced favorability for this item?
- Do most employees understand your industry and the inner workings of running your organization?

Try this:

- Communicate organizational metrics in every employee gathering you have. Translate terms for people with phrases like "What this means is..." or "This increase is important because..."
- Be thoughtful in your communications. Acknowledge but don't dwell on organizational challenges. Don't sugar-coat bad news. Focus on what you and your peers are doing to lead the organization forward.
- Review the tips for item 7 "I understand how my own work priorities support the organization's strategy" and item 6 "I trust senior leaders." If people don't trust you and your peers they will not be confident in the organization's future.

Commonly Used Items

My manager treats me with respect.

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My organization provides me with the training and resources to do a good job.

My job makes full use of my skills and abilities.

I have an opportunity to grow and develop in my current position.

I have a good balance between my work and personal life in my current job.

I believe that my level of engagement (see definition) is increasing.

I believe in and am inspired by what our organization is trying to achieve.

I believe that this organization has a promising future.

I believe that the real change will come as a result of this survey.

Why This Matters

The lower the favorability for this item, the bigger the opportunity for you to prove people wrong!

It's useful to understand how cynical the workforce is about change. And if you've conducted surveys in the past, this item is a reflection of how well your organization did last time at acting on results.

Managers

Ask yourself:

- How did you respond to this survey item?
- Are you surprised by your team's response to this item?
- If applicable, what happened (or did not happen) after the last survey?

Try this:

- Hold team meetings to discuss the survey results and identify actions the team can take to increase engagement.
- Provide a summary of commitments to the team after you meet. Pay particular attention to what you will do and what team members agreed to do.
- Check on engagement commitments in regular team meetings, recognizing progress and acknowledging challenges. Brainstorm responses to challenges.
- Hold team members accountable for ideas they have to improve engagement.
- Ask for feedback on how you're doing as a manager supporting team engagement.
- When you see organizational change or leadership decisions that are direct responses to survey findings, talk to your team about them. If you don't connect the dots between their survey responses and organizational changes, the team may attribute the changes to something else.

Executives

Ask yourself:

- Are you committed to engagement?
- How did you and your colleagues respond to this item?
- Is the favorability for this item higher than it was in the last survey?

Try this:

- Discuss the survey findings with your peers and identify actions you all can take, personally as leaders, no matter what the organization-wide priorities are.
- Go public with your personal leadership commitments.
- Ask the managers who report to you to share the summaries of commitments from team meetings.
- Ask managers to provide progress reports every quarter.
- If you make organizational changes in response to survey findings, make sure people understand the connection.
- Acknowledge positive movement in the item score and remind people what was done in response to the last survey's findings.

Appendices

Click each Appendix to access information.

[**Appendix A: Team Meetings**](#)

[**Appendix B: Engagement Conversations**](#)

Appendix A

TEAM MEETINGS

Team Meeting Agenda

Open the Meeting

- Set a positive tone with a personal comment or story of engagement in action.
- Remind people, as appropriate, how the organization defines engagement, why it is important, and the need for it to be a shared responsibility (you can show the animated engagement model by clicking here: <https://www.engagementbuildingtools.com/EngagementResourceLibrary/EResources.aspx?q=cD0xJnY9MSzPTExNyZsPTEmeD18>).
- Explain how the team's actions will complement the engagement strategies of senior leaders.

Explore the Findings

- Provide copies of the report.
- Begin with a brief comment on your own reactions to the findings. This type of honesty and candor can help build trust (item 1) and strengthen your working relationships (item 11).
- Review the findings as appropriate, remembering to ask for team reactions and comments (e.g., "Are you surprised?""What do you make of this?"):
 - ◆ Key highlights
 - ◆ Drivers of contribution and satisfaction (Explain that these are the factors that the team said could have the biggest impact on their engagement. Ask the group to elaborate on what those factors might look like in their jobs.)
 - ◆ Substantial differences in the work group data compared to that of the organization
 - ◆ The Top 3 and Bottom 3 items
- Wrap up your exploration by asking "What stands out as the most important takeaways?"

Discuss Ideas for Increasing Engagement

- Identify actions the team can take with questions like:
 - ◆ What actions can we take that are within our control?
 - ◆ How can we influence changes or decisions not directly within our control?
 - ◆ How can we modify our response when we experience things that affect our engagement but are out of our control or sphere of influence?
- Summarize agreements on what the team can do.
- Discuss actions you, as leader, can take:
 - ◆ Share your own ideas and ask for the team's reaction.
 - ◆ Ask for suggestions on what you might stop, start, or continue doing to support the team's engagement.
 - ◆ Clarify suggestions with questions like, "Can you give me an example?"
 - ◆ Be clear on ideas that you can't or won't consider. At the same time, be careful about rejecting suggestions outright. You can always say you'll think about an idea and get back to them. Just make sure to follow up.
- Ask for observations or suggestions to share with HR or senior leaders about supports and barriers to engagement:
 - ◆ Keep the conversation constructive and manage expectations that information sharing does not equal immediate change. Help the team select no more than two of the most important messages.

Conclude the Meeting

- Thank the team for their ideas and candor.
- Confirm agreements. Review your next steps and theirs.

Appendix A

Tips for Team Meetings

Open the Meeting

- Set a positive tone with ground rules that encourage open discussion.
- Set this meeting in the context of organizational priorities.
- Be sincere about what you hope to accomplish.

Team Meeting Goals

- Explore findings.
- Agree on actions to take control of your own engagement as a team.
- Discuss actions you can take as the leader.
- Identify insights or messages to share with the fellow leaders and other divisions.

Explore Your Workgroup's Findings

- Start with a brief, authentic comment about your reactions.
- Share highlights of the data. Point out the factors that positively influence satisfaction and performance.
- Ask for reactions with questions like: Are you surprised? What do you make of this finding?
- Wrap up by asking: What stands out as the most important takeaways?

Appendix A

What Can We Do?

It's useful to have one or two ideas to share, but this part of the meeting should be shaped by your team. If you think you might need to intervene to keep people focused on their accountability (rather than a gripe session), make notes on a few actions that the work group can influence.

What Can I Do?

Think ahead about any bold actions are you able (and willing) to take to demonstrate your commitment to organizational health and employee engagement. Don't forget to ask for reactions, and clarify comments with questions like: "Would this be useful? So you want me to...is that right?"

Appendix A

Gathering Insights

This meeting provides an opportunity for you to move beyond quantitative data to understand employees' perceptions and needs. You might say, "What message should I share with other leaders and our HR colleagues?"



Closing and Next Steps

In addition to summarizing agreements made, be prepared to make positive closing comments.

- Recognize honesty, commitment and creativity exhibited during the meeting.
- Reaffirm your commitment to the group's engagement.
- Recognize their attitude, efforts and achievements.



Record the commitments made during the meeting and publicize the plan to help your work group stay on track.

Appendix A

Team Meeting Follow-Up

You have invested valuable time in reviewing your survey findings and helping your team to process the information. The most important factor, however, is the follow-through to ensure an ongoing dialogue about engagement.

After the Meeting

- Summarize the team's insights, actions you committed to, actions the team agreed to, and one or two observations that senior leaders and/or HR colleagues might find useful.
- Send a thank-you email and meeting summary or action plan to everyone immediately after the meeting. Set a date for a follow-up team meeting.
- It's important that after the meeting you act as a role model to the rest of the team on follow-through.

Appendix B

ENGAGEMENT CONVERSATIONS

An **Engagement Conversation** is a discussion about the drivers of an employee's satisfaction and contribution on the job. The employee is given a chance to share what energizes him or her, the challenges faced, and the aspects of work that would help him or her do their best work. He or she can also clarify his or her work priorities and give you feedback on what support they need to become more engaged at work.

You may not always have time to hold a 60- to 90-minute Engagement Conversation. That doesn't mean you need to postpone any dialogue. Instead, use the questions in "Talking About Engagement on the Run" at the end of this section to explore just one aspect of engagement at a time.

Engagement Conversation Tips

Goals of an Engagement Conversation

This *is* an opportunity to:

- Learn/confirm the employee's point of view on job satisfaction and personal success.
- Identify, when appropriate, career obstacles and goals.
- Answer questions and provide clarity on what maximum contribution looks like.
- Demonstrate your support and strengthen your working relationship.
- Plan actions that you and the employee can take to support increased engagement.
- Begin an ongoing dialogue.

It is *not* the time to:

- Provide long-overdue performance feedback.
- Conduct an extensive career coaching conversation or create a detailed development plan.
- Share all your ideas on what the employee should do to be happier or more productive.

You may not need to explore every topic in depth if you have regular conversations about priorities and goals, have discussed career aspirations, or created a development plan recently. It is important, however, to test assumptions and re-confirm information. Employees' personal situations change and impact their satisfaction and contribution at work. A recent change in job conditions, which might seem inconsequential to you, could affect some employees but not others.

A note about trust: an Engagement Conversation, like any other manager-employee conversation, might be a bit uncomfortable if your employee doesn't know you well or if you've had a challenging work relationship in the past. If an employee seems reluctant to share his or her observations or ideas, do your best to clarify and confirm what is said. Don't talk too much or over-promise. If you do, you'll erode trust instead of building it.

Preparation

- Review the tips that follow.
- Provide your employee with a copy of "An Invitation...Join Me for an Engagement Conversation."
- Complete the "Engagement Conversation Preparation."
- Make notes in the "Engagement Conversation Discussion Guide" on what you want to say or which questions you want to ask.

Appendix B

Components of an Engagement Conversation

Opening

Set the right tone for this discussion and explain what you want to accomplish. You and your employee may be a bit nervous, especially if you don't have regular one-on-ones. Keep the tone informal and positive.

Satisfaction

Employees want work that works for them, yet everyone is different. What bores you might captivate someone else, so it's important to understand how each employee feels about work. Sometimes a small tweak in a job can have a significant impact on an employee's satisfaction and contribution. You should also understand what your employee enjoys most about work so that you don't inadvertently take that source of job satisfaction away. And even if you can't make the type of changes your employee desires, knowing satisfiers and dis-satisfiers will help you be a more effective communicator and coach.

Avoid sharing your assumptions. Ask questions and listen first. You may discover that you were wrong about the employee's outlook at work. It can be demotivating for an employee to hear that the boss thinks she's disengaged when she's not (or vice versa).

Contribution

Alignment and focus are essential to maximum contribution. Yet markets change, strategies shift, communication breaks down, to-do lists are endless. Even if you think your employee is clear on what needs to get done, it's a good idea to confirm your mutual understanding of what's most important and why. To ensure success, it's critical that you also understand what this employee needs from you in terms of coaching and support.

If your employee sets goals as part of your performance management process, you might ask him or her to bring that summary. Make sure to ask:

- What questions or concerns do you have?
- What support do you need from me?
- How often should we review your progress?
- What kind of feedback will be most useful to you? (Regular, specific feedback is a common engagement driver.)

Avoid turning this conversation into a performance coaching meeting. Schedule a separate conversation to address those topics.

Remember, employees don't always see a connection between what they do every day and the organization's success. This is a chance to provide that clarity, which will help the employee take initiative and make appropriate decisions in delivering the results you need. It also gives meaning to this person's role, which can increase commitment and satisfaction.

Talent Utilization and Development

Employees who apply their unique knowledge and skills to the things that matter most deliver the results needed. Research also reveals that "more opportunities to do what I do best" is a common driver of satisfaction. So it makes sense to make sure your employee's talents are fully used.

This isn't the time to give performance feedback or correct an inflated self-perception of knowledge and skills. It is the time to clarify your employee's take on where he or she needs (or wants) to develop. When in doubt, ask questions such as, "Can you give me an example of what you mean?" or "Why do you think this is important?" You may need to schedule another discussion to explore the employee's development in greater depth.

Working Together

Your relationship with your employee is a key engagement driver. The more you and your employee know about each other's work style, the better. Even if you have worked with this employee for years, there are things about you that he or she doesn't know – or vice versa.

Appendix B

Closing

You won't successfully address your employee's engagement in one discussion alone. This conversation lays a foundation for specific discussions about performance, development, career management, etc. It also is an opportunity for you and your employee to identify specific actions for increasing engagement.

In your closing make sure to:

- Thank the employee for his or her candor, especially if you uncovered differences or received unwelcome information.
- Summarize agreements made and any areas that need to be resolved, and review next steps.
- Express appreciation for the employee's efforts and accomplishments.
- Express confidence in his or her future.
- Articulate your commitment to the employee's engagement.

Adapt the following text to invite team members to participate in one-on-one conversations with you.

An Invitation...Join Me for an Engagement Conversation

I'm in the process of conducting Engagement Conversations with every team member to gain a better understanding of the drivers of your contribution and satisfaction. We will also discuss how we can work together to help you build or sustain high engagement.

Please read the information below and schedule an Engagement Conversation with me as soon as possible (if I have not already suggested a time). Plan at least 60 minutes.

This meeting is not a performance appraisal or career coaching conversation. It's your chance to share what energizes you, what challenges you face, and the aspects of your work that, if altered, would help you do your best work. It's also a time where you can clarify your work priorities and give me feedback on what support you need from me and from the organization to become more engaged at work.

How to Prepare

Consider these questions before the conversation, even if you think I know the answer. We may not cover each question in detail, but let's make sure that we start to talk about these issues. They will help me coach you and our team to higher levels of engagement.

- What type of assignment energizes you?
- What drags you down?
- What do you like most about your job?
- What change in your job would improve your satisfaction at work?
- What questions do you have about how your job fits with the organization's current strategy?
- What questions do you have about where you should focus your time and effort?
- What challenges are you facing?
- What skills and knowledge would you like to use more?
- Where would you like to grow? Where do you think you need to grow to do your job better?
- What ideas do you have for increasing your satisfaction and contribution?
- What do you need me to do more of? Less of?
- What do you need me to continue doing?

I look forward to our conversation.

Thank you.

Appendix B

Engagement Conversation Preparation

Discussion with: _____

How engaged do you think this employee is? What behavior or comments makes you think so? This speculation is for your eyes only.

What do you already know about the employee? What don't you know? (e.g., overall feelings about work, understanding of top priorities, struggles, recent performance, career aspirations, personal development goals, strengths, etc.)

What is the most important engagement outcome that you want to achieve in this discussion? (Keep it positive!)

What is your greatest concern? What can you do to address it?

Appendix B

Engagement Conversation Discussion Guide

Before your meeting, make notes on the questions you want to ask or the information you want to share. During the discussion, you can add notes or comments. Focus on asking questions and listening.

Opening

You might say something like this: "This Engagement Conversation is a chance for me to learn about what energizes you, what challenges you face, and aspects of your job that, if altered, would help you do your best work. We also can talk about your top priorities and what I can do as your manager to support not only your contribution but also your satisfaction on the job."

Satisfaction

Select a few questions from the list below. Clarify any vague comments your employee makes with questions like: "Can you give me an example of 'too much'? When you say 'often,' do you mean every day? Every week?"

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What type of assignment energizes you most? • What do you like most about your job? • What drags you down? • What change in your job would most improve your satisfaction? • What can I do? What do you need from me? 	<p>Your observations of when this employee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seems most satisfied or does his or her best work. • Gets stuck or looks disengaged. <p>Ideas you have that might boost the employee's satisfaction.</p>

Appendix B

Contribution

Select a few questions from the list below to help clarify what maximum contribution looks like.

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions do you have about how your work fits with our current strategy as an organization (or department)? • Where do you plan to focus your efforts in the next few months (or weeks)? • What challenges do you face? • What do you need me to do to help support you? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This person's top three short-term priorities. • Key milestones or measures that may need clarification. • Rationale for this focus (urgency or connection to larger purpose).

Talent Utilization and Development

Select a few questions from the list below to understand your employee's perspective. You may want to acknowledge the employee's development goals, but schedule another conversation to brainstorm ideas or create a more formal development plan. This is not the time to provide performance feedback or debate skill level.

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What knowledge or skills of yours are underutilized? What talents would you like to use more? • Where would you like to grow this year? • Where do you think you need to develop to achieve your priorities? • What ideas do you have for development? • What do you need from me? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The skills/knowledge most critical to achieving the employee's priorities. • Employee strengths that he or she may overlook. • Development opportunities.

Appendix B

Working Together

Ask the questions below to make sure that you have all the information you need to support this person's engagement.

Questions to ask...	Your perspective to share, if appropriate...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What else should I know? • What would you like me to do more of? • What would you like me to do less of? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges you face (e.g., competing priorities). • Expectations that you feel you need to manage. • Ideas for communicating differently.

Closing

- Thank the employee for his or her candor, especially if you uncovered differences or heard unwelcome information.
- Summarize agreements made and any areas that need to be discussed further. Review next steps: who does what by when? (Make sure your employee has to-do's. He or she is ultimately responsible for his or her engagement. You can only facilitate and coach.)
- Schedule another conversation if appropriate.
- Express appreciation for the employee's efforts and accomplishments (both recent and in the past) and express confidence in his or her future success.
- Articulate your commitment to the employee's engagement - to the achievement of maximum contribution and maximum satisfaction.
 - ♦ What can you say to personalize your commitment to this employee's engagement? Why do you care? What benefits can you envision? Be as specific as possible.

Appendix B

Following Up on Engagement Conversations

Immediately

- Send a thank-you email that summarizes any actions you have agreed to:
 - ◆ What you will do?
 - ◆ When?
 - ◆ How you will discuss progress made?
- Ask the employee to summarize what he or she plans to do as well.
 - ◆ What he or she will do?
 - ◆ When?
 - ◆ What support or resources are needed?
 - ◆ How will you discuss progress made?
- If you and/or the employee determined you need to have an in-depth conversation to discuss career development, performance challenges, development ideas, or overcoming obstacles to maximum contribution and satisfaction, schedule another meeting.
-

Regularly (monthly or quarterly)

- Revisit the themes that were common across all or many of the Engagement Conversations you conducted to determine actions you might take to support the team as a whole.
- Celebrate achievements and share best practices.
- Casually check in with individual team members on the topics discussed in the Engagement Conversation. You don't need to cover all the topics. Pick one and ask a question or two about it as you walk down the hall or at the end of a meeting or phone conversation (e.g., "Hey, I've been meaning to ask you how..."). See "Talking About Engagement on the Run" on the next page for additional ideas.

Appendix B

Talking About Engagement on the Run

You don't have to wait for a formal Engagement Conversation to learn more about individuals' engagement drivers. If you're walking down the hall with someone or have 10 minutes for a quick check-in, choose one of the topics below and ask one or two questions. The first time you do this, the employee may not have an answer. The more often you ask the questions below, the more employees will begin to increase self-awareness of what drives their engagement at work.

Ask Mind-Opening Questions

Satisfaction

- What aspect of this project (or type of assignment) energizes you most?
- What do you like most about this project or your job?
- What drags you down?

Contribution

- What questions do you have about how your job fits with the organization's current strategy?
- What questions do you have about where you should focus your time and effort?
- What challenges are you facing?

Talent Utilization and Development

- What skills and knowledge would you like to use more?
- Where would you like to grow?
- Where do you think you need to grow to do your job better?

Working Together

- What ideas do you have for increasing your satisfaction and contribution?
- What ideas do you have for increasing the team's overall satisfaction and contribution?
- What do you think you can start doing? Stop doing? Continue doing?
- What would you like me to start doing? Stop doing? Continue doing?
- What have I done recently that had a positive impact on your satisfaction or contribution?

Share Information and Acknowledge Efforts

Feel free to share information that will help individuals manage their engagement, such as:

- How organizational and team priorities have shifted
- The opportunities that exist for development
- A special quality or recent accomplishment of the employee that can you recognize

Always try to personalize your commitment to each employee's engagement.