

8 EMOTIONAL DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

BY BILL HOGG

We've all seen the lists -- the definitive list of drivers for employee engagement. Unfortunately, every research company and consultancy has a slightly different list. If it's not on the list, is it not important? Who's right?

Well, to a certain degree they all are -- the problem is trying to create the definitive list. Lists aren't bad, but too often they are linked to tick boxes which suggest people can tick them off as complete. And employee engagement is never complete.

Employee Engagement Is An Ongoing Challenge For Organizational Leaders

Consider this scenario: 3 of 4 employees are not engaged and 1 is actively disengaged. Too many employees are just there for the pay check and perform at a level that allows them to get by while doing less than their best. Many employees also underperform because they are disinterested or not challenged in their current role.

To change this situation and get the most out of employees, company leaders can forget about lists and remind themselves that engagement is an **emotional** reaction to the work environment.

Understanding the core emotional drivers that engage your employees is the key to achieving a high performance culture. It is only when companies can make the emotional connection with employees that they are able to shift from having satisfied employees to engaged employees and see a measurable increase in productivity, profit, and sales.

Emotional Drivers Of Employee Engagement

So let's talk about some of the emotional drivers that foster employee engagement. Dare I say it -- here are eight emotional drivers -- in no particular order -- that leaders need to leverage to develop engaged employees:

1. **Pride:** Employees are more willing to engage when they are proud of what they do and believe that what they do plays an important role in company success. If they work for a company that has a good reputation based on trust and integrity and they feel the job they do offers value to their customers -- then they feel valued and enjoy a sense of pride and willingness to contribute. Is their job something that makes them proud to tell their friends? How do your employees feel about being associated with your organization? Do they take pride in working for your company? Is your organization making a contribution?
2. **Recognition:** Everyone likes a kind word and to be recognized for having done a good job. By customers, by supervisors and by colleagues -- it doesn't matter, we all feel good when someone says something nice about our work. So take an interest in your employees and recognize their efforts. Show your appreciation when it is warranted and show that you care for their well-being. Make sure that when customers say good things about their experience that it gets passed on to everyone who helped make that experience great -- not just those people on the front line who get praised directly. When was the last time you recognized an employee for a job well done? How do you recognize your employees? Is recognition built in as an intentional part of your culture?
3. **Stimulating Work:** Employees are more engaged when they are in a position that is stimulating and challenges them on a daily basis. Challenge your employees by offering projects that help them grow and

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develop their skills. Are your employee's skills and abilities a good match for the role they perform? A bored employee is a dis-engaged employee.

4. **Personal Development:** In addition to having stimulating work, employees want to feel they are growing in their job. If an employee knows that 5 years from now they will be in the same position without the opportunity to grow, it will be difficult for them to engage and perform at a high level. Give your employee the opportunity to grow and develop their skills year over year through training, coaching and internal growth programs. What opportunities do you make available to your employees to expand their role and capabilities? Do they see this job as a stepping stone to other opportunities within the organization or are they locked in a dead end?
5. **Clarity:** Employees are more engaged when they have clarity around the vision and mission of the organization and understand their role and see the connection between their job and how it influences company performance. Provide clear expectations and role responsibilities so your employees understand how their work contributes to company goals. Do your employees know how they fit into the big picture and the impact they have on overall performance? Do they understand what outstanding performance looks like in their role?
6. **Positive Work Environment:** Employees perform better in positive work environments. Being surrounded by positive, supportive co-workers significantly impacts a person's willingness to engage. Creating personal relationships within the organization also builds emotional bonds and creates a stronger sense of team and commitment than when people see the work environment as simply a place where they go to work. Does your company have a positive work environment that produces engaged and productive employees? Do you have planned activities that build a team environment based on personal connections with co-workers? If not, what can you do to improve your work environment?
7. **Relationship with Manager:** Even within a positive work environment, a manager can make or break an employee's willingness to be engaged. A bad manager can destroy a good work environment -- while a great manager can make a bad work environment bearable. Better yet -- great managers in great work environments trump all. Great managers who build strong relationships with their employees create positive work environments. Do your managers listen to feedback from their staff and build personal connections with each as individuals? Do your managers have good relationships with your front line staff? What can you do to improve your employee's relationship with their managers?
8. **A Voice:** Employees are more willing to engage if they are given a voice and are given a platform to be heard, especially when it comes to strategy and issues within their department. Do you allow your employees to have a voice and provide feedback related to their role with the company?

If you pay attention to these emotional drivers, you will find that all the lists are covered. Organizations that are committed to engaged employees understand that it is an ongoing process which is never complete. Hopefully thinking about these emotional drivers will keep you driving in the right direction -- but never feel you are ready to tick the box on the list of drivers.

Leaders that focus on creating a culture that incorporates these emotional drivers will not only improve their organizational culture, but also their employees overall attitude, commitment, and performance.

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Bill is the "just do it" guy who has walked in your shoes. Senior leaders at organizations like Anheuser-Busch/InBev, the Bay, RBH and ServiceOntario hire Bill to navigate change and influence and inspire higher performing teams that deliver exceptional customer service, higher productivity and improve profits.

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