



EBOOK

# Using Learning to Improve Employee Engagement



# Employee Engagement in Today's Workplace

## Why Employee Engagement?

What was once thought of as a fad is now a top-of-mind issue for HR managers and CEOs across the globe. Even though the term 'employee engagement' is open to translation and can mean a variety of different things to different people in different sectors, the very notion of why it is important is easy to understand: an employee that is engaged is far more productive, effective and efficient compared to an employee that isn't.

It can be hard to quantify what makes an employee engaged, but you'll know them when you see them. They work with a smile, they motivate others, they get tasks done, they communicate well and they represent the brand your company has aimed to demonstrate with every employee it has hired.

According to Gallup, engaged employees show up and do more work, they care more about the products and

services they deliver to customers, and they display a higher commitment to quality and safety.

Translated into business outcomes, highly engaged business units experience:

- 41% reduction in absenteeism, a 17% increase in productivity and 24-59% lower turnover
- 28% reduction in shrinkage (the dollar amount of unaccounted-for lost merchandise) and a 40% reduction in quality defects
- 70% decrease in employee safety incidents and a 58% decrease in patient safety incidents
- 10% increase in customer metrics and a 20% increase in sales
- 21% greater profitability

**In the U.S.,  
only 33% of  
employees  
are engaged.**

**Worldwide,  
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rose from  
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in 2016.**

## The Current State of Engagement

Gallup reports that, in 2016, 33% of US employees were involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. In other words, engaged.

This means that the majority of employees (51%) are not engaged and haven't been for quite some time. The State of The American Workplace report shows that employee engagement has barely budged over the past decade and a half.

Worldwide, Aon's Global Employee Engagement Index rose from 62% to 65% in 2016. A bit better, but still leaving a lot of room for improvement.

The concept of employee engagement is often confused with satisfaction or happiness, when in fact it is "the level of an employee's psychological investment in their organization." Achieving it is not an easy task. It requires actively engaging employees through a strategy that drives improved performance. As Gallup points out, most companies have fallen into the engagement survey trap by:

- viewing engagement as "just" a survey or program
- focusing more heavily on survey data or reports than development
- defining engagement as a percentage of employees who are not dissatisfied or are merely content with their employer
- relying on measures that tell leaders and managers what they want to hear
- measuring workers' satisfaction or happiness levels and catering to their wants

While measuring engagement is important, follow-through is key. Companies should aim to improve business performance by treating employees as stakeholders of the company's future. That means focusing on concrete performance management activities, such as clarifying work expectations, giving people what they need to do their work, providing development and promoting positive coworker relationships.

# Learning and Development – Essential For Engagement

## What drives engagement?

If we look at these reports and worldwide engagement surveys, we can identify the following engagement drivers:

- Job satisfaction
- Alignment with goals
- Trust among coworkers
- Learning and development
- Growth opportunities
- Manager effectiveness
- Feeling valued
- Benefits
- Individual contribution
- Trust in senior leaders
- Teamwork
- Job security
- Safety
- Work environment
- Work/life balance
- Company reputation
- Employee value proposition (EVP)
- Corporate responsibility
- Leadership
- Career opportunities
- Performance management
- Rewards and recognition
- Collaboration
- Empowerment/autonomy
- Challenging work

## Employees want to grow

In 2016, growth opportunities becomes the #1 driver for new employees, tenured one year or less. (Quantum Workplace)

For employees across all levels, regardless of seniority, the following statements were among the top 5 engagement drivers:

*“The leaders of the organization value people as their most important resource.”*

*“I see professional growth and career development opportunities for myself in this organization.”*

“The only way for organizations to ensure their workforces are fully productive and able to achieve business goals is to make sure employees are continuously learning, so that they are driving the business forward. “

HBR

When looking at how to keep an organization in top form, learning and development can be one of the best ways. The Association for Talent Development, based in the United States, concludes that “organizations are more competitive, agile, and engaged when knowledge is constantly and freely shared.”

In fact, after surveying around 830 companies in 2015, they found that organizations with a culture of learning were some of the highest performers. They also found that they attracted more talented employees and had higher levels of customer satisfaction.

Research done through LinkedIn also found that the main way for employees to be productive and achieve goals is for employers to provide them with opportunities for continuous learning. This helps employees continue to improve their skills and be more flexible and adaptable, as changes related to technology and other workplace matters can arise quickly. When continuous learning is supported, employees feel valued, helping to boost employee engagement and retention.

Employee engagement and learning and development are two sides of the same coin. You cannot have one without the other. If a company doesn't provide the right level and quality of learning and development, it cannot improve engagement.

# The Value of Continuous Learning

Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends Report for 2017 identifies careers and learning as the second most important trend, with 83 percent of executives identifying these issues as important or very important. According to Deloitte analysts, the concept of a “career” is being shaken to its core, driving companies toward “always-on” learning experiences that allow employees to build skills quickly, easily, and on their own terms.

These new learning models both challenge the idea of a static career and reflect the declining half-life of skills critical to the 21st-century organization. Companies looking to remain competitive need to help employees grow and thrive as they adopt this upgraded career concept.

Continuous learning is imperative for the new workforce. Employees at all levels expect dynamic, self-directed, continuous learning opportunities from their employers, but not all of them can deliver.

To enable continuous learning in your organization, you need to dedicate resources, set the right expectations, and align your corporate culture with the goal of enabling employees to get the learning they need, when they need it, at every stage in their careers.

The right learning and development initiatives can greatly enhance employee engagement by nurturing talent and helping people learn new things and improve their performance.

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# Connecting Learning And Engagement

Today's employees expect more learning and development opportunities such as trainings, coaching and mentoring, in order to feel engaged. Studies show that 80% of 2016 grads expect their first employer to provide formal training. Here are some tips to help you create your own learning initiatives, in order to foster higher engagement:

## 1. Work on creating a learning culture not just a learning program

'Many focus on digital technology to reinvent the workplace – but without a strong learning culture, they will not succeed.' – Deloitte

Work out what learning culture you want to have in your business and work towards that goal. Your learning culture should be in sync with business values and other employee engagement tactics. So, if the business wants to encourage engagement by fostering innovation from the ground-up, for instance, filter that into your learning culture by creating one that listens to, curates, and shares great ideas.

## 2. Take your time creating an effective onboarding program

A growing number of leading organizations are systematically fostering engagement through new hire onboarding.

Having implemented a more robust

onboarding program, they are seeing improvements in key talent metrics and are consistently winning the war for talent. (Brandon Hall Group)

As presented in the Brandon Hall Group report, High-Performance Onboarding: A New Model for Excellence, the most effective employee onboarding programs share several essential elements that breathe life into traditional administrative processes—Momentum, Enablement, Collaboration, Assimilation, and Connection.

## 3. Introduce a mentorship program

Mentors are able to provide practical workplace advice whilst at the same time helping steer a younger employee's career path, giving it shape and direction above and beyond what they may have considered themselves. (Hppy)

Mentoring programs can provide the access to training and ownership that so much of the workforce currently craves, and can also be an important factor that

determines whether employees choose to stay on, and continue to perform at their best.

#### **4. Combate disengagement with learning**

Many companies underestimate how many disengaged employees they have, but according to the 2016 Udemy Workplace Boredom Study almost half of full-time employees in the US (43%) are disengaged and 51% feel this way at least half the time. Udemy found that boredom isn't just related to a tedious job, it has more to do with few learning and development opportunities. Employees are stagnating and they are feeling the effects.

If you have employees who are disengaged, they have probably been like that for a long time. In most cases you will not be able to send them an email about an upcoming training and expect them to jump on board and start working at full speed again. Why not create a [learning bootcamp](#) that can provide a more intense experience?

#### **5. Try integrated learning**

There are some companies and leaders in business who are adapting to the changes in learning and using integrated learning effectively. Companies like IBM, Toyota, General Electric, Microsoft, and Ford are a few of the major corporations that are beginning to alter their learning programs to incorporate integrated learning.

Elon Musk is world famous for his innovative companies and products. Many believe that he reached this state in his career by incorporating integrated learning into his life early on. He is well known for reading 2 books a day, across

various disciplines. He learns about topics beyond one industry and has mastered the art of learning transfer: being able to take concepts from one area and apply them to another or to real world applications.

#### **6. Encourage social learning and peer learning**

Social learning is an informal process whereby coworkers learn from each other. This can be in the form of peer presentations, in the moment help with a task, or more technology-based help like blogs, wikis, forums, social media, and videos.

Peer learning doesn't usually occur via trainers at an institute but from peer experts. If you have employees with specialized skills, you can ask them to train other employees. You can also use videos and other technologies to learn from peers at other companies or even from peers based in other countries.

#### **7. Invest in new learning technologies**

The Bersin by Deloitte Human Capital Trends report shows that, despite the strong shift toward employee-centric learning, many learning and development organizations are still struggling with internally focused and outdated platforms and static learning approaches.

Mobile, social, and web-based platforms that can deliver on-demand learning content are the capabilities that companies should look to develop in the next years. These platforms will aim to offer learning experiences, provided by a cohesive learning architecture that enables tracking, measuring, and optimizing, based on real-time data.

# Conclusion

Learning and development gives companies a permanent competitive advantage. That is because learning leads to more innovation and creativity. It also increases the speed of the change process. Innovation and change impact all activities of an organization, creating opportunities for more success.

Much of that change and success is also dependent on the employees in the company. Learning helps employees become more productive. They are more efficient and effective in their work. This upward cycle is due in part to the feelings of empowerment and confidence that learning and better job performance give them. These are the fundamental pillars of engagement.

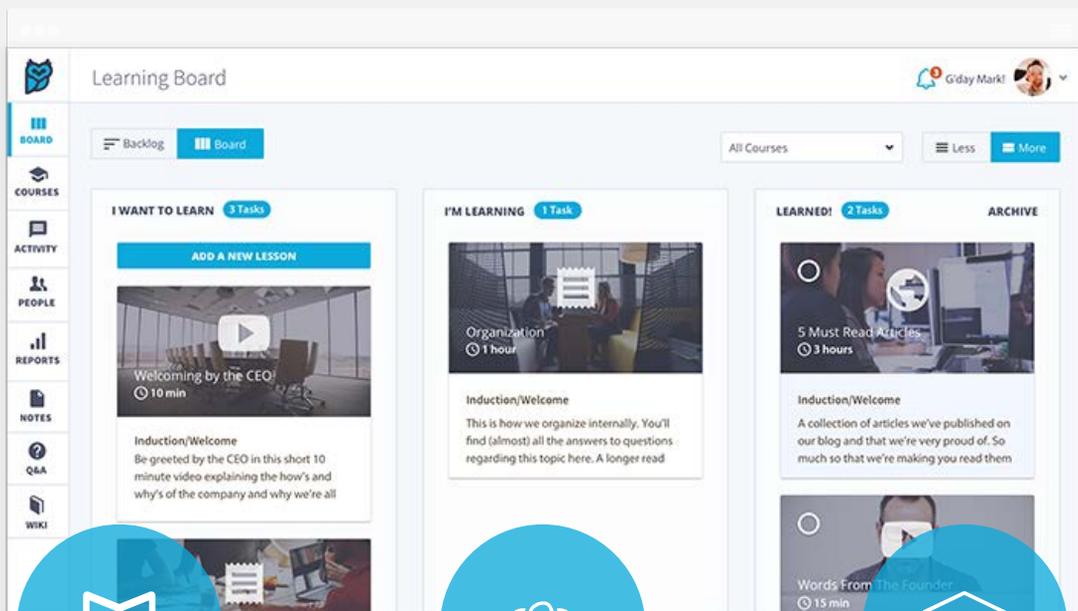
If you've been struggling trying to figure out the perfect formula to engage employees, perhaps you should start with learning. With some changes to leadership style, company culture and communication, learning can become a driver of employee engagement in any company.

[Download our eBook and learn how you can use learning management systems to improve engagement.](#)

# AGILE LEARNING SOFTWARE

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Use it to create learning habits that deliver tangible results.



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ONBOARDING**



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MANAGEMENT**

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## Resources

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