

Employee-Engaging Leadership Behaviors: Assessment

Original Report: *Three Shifts for Employee Experience Success*

SUMMARY

Engaged employees are a critical component to organizational success as they bring a higher level of commitment and contribution to their work. Strong leaders understand this connection between business performance and employee engagement, and they recognize that their success depends on the performance of the people around them. Use the *Employee-Engaging Behaviors and Practices Assessment* to evaluate your current employee-engaging leadership skills. Then review the information provided on pages 3 through 5 to develop plans for becoming a more effective leader.

THREE BELIEFS OF EMPLOYEE-ENGAGING LEADERS DRIVE IDEAL BEHAVIORS

XM Institute research shows that high-performing companies have a disproportionate number of highly engaged employees. This is because when employees are engaged, they are more likely to stay late at work if something needs to be done, help someone at work without being asked, do something good for the company even if it isn't expected of them, and make recommendations for improvements at the company.

Effective leaders understand this connection between business performance and employee engagement and realize that their success depends on the performance of people around them. To create an environment where their employees can thrive, these leaders not only recognize some fundamental truths about humans beings – like that they want to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives, cultivate what is best within themselves, and feel appreciated – but they apply that understanding to their work by demonstrating three employee-engaging beliefs and behaviors:

- 1. RESPECT.** *I believe my employees will do their best when they feel recognized as individuals.* When managers embrace this belief, they understand that people have different needs and desires, that they want their efforts to be appreciated and ideas to be heard, and they have different strengths and weaknesses (see page 3).
- 2. CONNECT.** *I believe my employees will be more effective when they feel they are helping the organization succeed.* Leaders who embrace this belief are able to better connect employees and their work to the team or company mission because they recognize that people want to find meaning in their work, they want to feel helpful, they will be more empowered when they understand the goals of their work, and that they want to see the results of their efforts (see page 4).
- 3. ELEVATE.** *I believe my employees will flourish when they feel they are being supported and encouraged.* Helping employees reach their full potential is perhaps the most important and most challenging work employee-engaging leaders will do. It starts with understanding that while people want to know how they are doing and feel like they have an advocate on their side, sometimes they also need help uncovering opportunities, they need to be encouraged to take risks, and they often feel reluctant to ask for help when they need it (see page 5).

HOW TO USE

To help you evaluate and strengthen your employee-engaging leadership skills, you can use this tool in a number of ways:

- + **Self-assessment.** Take this assessment yourself and identify the strengths and weaknesses of your employee-engaging practices as well as which behaviors you would like to work on improving.
- + **Group discussion.** Give this assessment to people who are familiar with your leadership style and ask them to evaluate your leadership behaviors. Discuss areas of strengths and weaknesses identified as well as where you agree and disagree with their assessment.
- + **Action planning.** Develop plans for becoming a more employee-engaging leader using the information provided after the assessment, which identifies 45 everyday actions you can use every day to respect, connect, and elevate employees.

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To what degree do these statements describe how you treat your team members?

1 = Almost Never **2** = Sometimes **3** = Usually **4** = Almost Always **5** = Always

I show appreciation for their efforts	
I take into account their individual needs and desires when I work with them	
I recognize that their personal lives affect their work	
I help them leverage their individual strengths and overcome their weaknesses	
I actively listen to their ideas and feedback	
RESPECT average	
I help them find meaning in their work	
I thank them when their actions help the team, customers, or the company	
I reinforce the link between their efforts and our results	
I help them understand our goals so that they feel empowered	
I help them feel like they belong	
CONNECT average	
I let them know how they are performing	
I advocate on their behalf	
I help them uncover opportunities	
I encourage them to take risks	
I look to help them even when they don't ask for it	
ELEVATE average	

OVERALL total

EVALUATE THE RESULTS:

Focus Areas:

13 or less : **Very Weak**
14 to **16**: **Weak**
17 to **19**: **Okay**
20 to **22**: **Strong**
23 to **25**: **Very Strong**

Overall:

44 or less : **Demotivating**
45 to **51**: **Inhibiting**
52 to **59**: **Unaffecting**
60 to **67**: **Encouraging**
68 to **75**: **Engaging**

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RESPECT: Recognize Each Employee as an Individual

Demonstrating respect as a leader stems from embracing the key belief that *employees will do their best work when they feel recognized as individuals*. This belief is built upon understanding that people:

- + Want their efforts to be appreciated
- + Have different needs and desires
- + Have different strengths and weaknesses
- + Want their ideas to be heard
- + Are affected at work by their personal lives

When leaders respect employees, they view them as unique people with their own needs, goals, and motivators. Every day, leaders can demonstrate respect and recognize each employee as an individual when they:

- 1. Encourage employee feedback.** Employees are significantly more engaged when they feel like the company asks for their feedback and takes action on it. The company can collect this feedback through formal channels – like annual employee surveys – as well as through informal, direct exchanges with their managers and others at the company.
- 2. Understand intrinsic motivators.** Individuals are most profoundly motivated by their desire to fulfill four intrinsic needs: gaining a sense of meaning, having control and choice in how things get done, increasing their competence and skill, and progressing towards their goals.
- 3. Appreciate individual strengths.** XM Institute research found that employees who regularly receive positive feedback from their boss are more likely than other employees to do something unexpectedly good for the company. Additionally, the research behind the “Appreciative Inquiry” technique has shown that individuals are more successful in changing their mindsets and behaviors when they are asked to focus on what they feel is working well and then build upon that.

EVERYDAY ACTIONS OF EMPLOYEE-ENGAGING LEADERS TO RESPECT EMPLOYEES

Encourage Employee Feedback	Hold “lunch & learn” sessions with team to openly discuss different topics
	Periodically dedicate a team meeting to get input from employees on how things are going
	Talk about the company’s employee survey positively and discuss results with employees
	Ask employees how you are doing in supporting their efforts
	Meet with employees individually to stay up to date on what’s happening in work and life
Understand Intrinsic Motivators	Identify what motivates each member of your team
	Match employees’ motivators to projects and assignments that will draw them out
	Combine individuals with different motivators when forming work teams
	Facilitate a team meeting where people share their personal intrinsic motivators with each other
	Encourage individuals to share their personal goal(s) (work or personal) with each other
Appreciate Individual Strengths	Recognize employees’ strengths during performance reviews, not just improvement areas
	Publicly share employee success stories with the team and to the larger organization
	Match an employee who is strong in one area with someone who is weaker as a peer mentor
	Understand your own strengths as a leader
	Ask employees to discuss times when they felt they were doing their best work

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CONNECT: Help Employees Feel Part of Something Bigger

Connecting employees and their work to the team or company mission and goals is the natural result of believing that *employees will be more effective when they feel that they are helping the organization—and their team—succeed*. This belief is built upon understanding that people:

- + Want to find meaning in their work
- + Want to feel helpful
- + Are more empowered when they understand the goals
- + Want to feel like they belong
- + Want to see the results of their efforts

Leaders can connect employees to something bigger every day when they:

- 1. Start with “Why.”** Employees who understand the purpose behind what they are being asked to do – the “why” – will be more inspired and energized by their work and will feel more connected to others who share this goal.
- 2. Discuss employees’ actions in context.** The line of sight between the company’s mission and an individual’s work can sometimes be vague – unless leaders take the time to define and reinforce specifically how each employees’ actions support the company’s ultimate goals and results.
- 3. Share customer success stories.** To feel connected to their work, employees not only need to understand how they are personally contributing to the company’s success but also need to understand how their work helps customers. Regardless of whether employees are on the front-line or in a non-customer-facing role, leaders can help them recognize their contributions by sharing stories and customer feedback highlighting the positive impact they are having.

EVERYDAY ACTIONS OF EMPLOYEE-ENGAGING LEADERS TO CONNECT EMPLOYEES

Start with “Why”	Develop a script about “why” the company’s mission and values matter to employees and customers or “why” the company is going through a change
	Follow the <i>Why this is important—What success looks like—How we will do this</i> format for your communications
	Be sure your direct reports have their own script for communicating “why”
	Solicit employee feedback on how well they understand the “why”
	Review the “why” at the start of each team meeting
Discuss Employees’ Actions in Context	Regularly connect employees’ work back to how it impacts the company’s mission and purpose
	Translate the company’s brand promises into the behaviors your team must exemplify to customers
	Discuss metrics and KPIs in relation to how they demonstrate the team/company is achieving its mission and purpose
	Help employees understand how their efforts fit into the broader customer and employee journey
	Help employees understand the dependencies and interdependencies of their work with other parts of the company
Share Customer Success Stories	Tell stories that highlight how employee actions contributed to positive organizational outcomes
	Share actual comments and quotes from happy customers
	Invite customers to share with employees how the company’s products or services makes a difference in their lives
	Expose employees to how the company’s products or services affect customers
	Periodically meet with customers to capture their stories directly

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ELEVATE: Empower Employees to Reach Their Full Potential

Elevating employees to reach their full potential is predicated upon a leader believing that *employees will flourish when they feel they are being empowered to uncover and embrace meaningful opportunities that allow them to thrive*. This belief is built upon understanding that people:

- + Want to know how they are doing
- + Need help uncovering opportunities
- + Want to feel they have advocate on their side
- + Need to be encouraged to take risks
- + Do not always ask for help when they need it

Leaders can elevate employees on a daily basis and empower them to reach their full potential when they:

- 1. Regularly provide feedback and coaching.** Employees receive frequent feedback about their performance to help them correct mistakes and replicate good practices. Employee-engaging leaders therefore do more than just the “mandated” performance reviews – they give (and receive) feedback regularly throughout the year.
- 2. Look for development opportunities.** Some employees can push themselves while others need a little nudge. Identifying development opportunities starts with leaders understanding employees’ goals and helping them find team-specific or company-wide opportunities for them to learn and grow.
- 3. Are a resource.** Employees can’t do everything themselves, yet they can be hesitant to ask for help. Leaders must be able to adopt employees’ perspectives and understand what they need to succeed, whether that means making an introduction, freeing up resources, or removing obstacles getting in their way.

EVERYDAY ACTIONS OF EMPLOYEE-ENGAGING LEADERS TO ELEVATE EMPLOYEES

Give Regular Coaching and Feedback	Ask employees how you can help them apply lessons learned at recently attended training classes
	Don't wait for mandated “review periods” to give performance feedback to employees
	Be prepared with your recommendations for improvement but also get employees to share their own ideas on how they can get better
	Use skip-level meetings or multi-rater assessments to gain additional feedback to share with your direct reports
	Ask employees about the specific things they are looking for feedback and coaching about
Look for Developmental Opportunities	Discuss employees’ short-term and long-term career goals
	Free up employees for special projects or opportunities in other parts of the business that align with their goals
	Involve employees in process improvement or innovation efforts on the team or enterprise-wide
	Understand and get full use from company’s HR tools designed to support employee development
	Set up job-shadowing opportunities in collaboration with other cross-functional leaders and their team members
Be a Resource	Hold periodic update conversations with individuals and teams so you have visibility to where you can lend your support
	Get employees to open up about what gets in the way of them being successful and help remove those obstacles
	Be transparent about company and team developments and share related information whenever possible
	Encourage employees to develop strong professional networks inside and outside of the company
	Spend time helping individuals understand how to identify and remove organizational obstacles to their projects or efforts