



Where to start when developing your employee engagement strategy

A free practical guide to setting your objectives,
defining your goals and bringing your vision for
employee engagement to life

Includes free 'future vision' activity and strategy template



Where to start...

In recent years, we've seen more focus on Employee Engagement than ever before., yet despite this, the global 'needle' on employee engagement has barely moved – we call this the employee engagement gap.

Over the last three years, People Lab have run an extensive research programme, to understand why we're not seeing progress. One of the major reasons for the engagement gap is a real lack of engagement strategies and plans*. How can we expect to improve engagement if we don't have a strategy and a plan for it?

We know that developing your strategy isn't always easy, so we've created this simple guide to get you started. The first step in creating an effective strategy, is to agree your objectives and how you will measure success. So here are our recommended steps, to help you define your employee engagement objectives for your organisation.

1. Make sure your engagement objectives align with your business strategy and goals

Good employee engagement objectives should be aligned to what your company is trying to achieve – the strategy, goals, priorities, issues, challenges or opportunities the business itself is grappling with. This is what the term 'strategic alignment' is all about.

Having an engaged workforce is about helping the organisation move forward – yet much of what we do is often disconnected from corporate goals. To *be* valued, employee engagement must *add* value to the organisation in some way – and must be seen to do so!

Think about the key themes and areas your company is currently focusing on.

It could be growth, innovation, customer experience or service, sales...you get the picture!

Once you have discussed and identified the broad themes, agree 3-5 that you are going to focus on and prioritise. If you need help narrowing these down, look at the potential impact your employees have on each theme and its subsequent success. For example, you might say employees are able to generate great ideas for new products under 'innovation' so therefore give it a high priority.

Once you've agreed the current focus for your company, the priorities and how employees can impact themes areas, you can use this into the next part of your strategy development, which focuses on developing your employee engagement goals and outcomes.

*Spotlight On Employee Engagement research found that *only 45% of organisations had an employee engagement strategy in 2016, 42% in 2017 and 52% in 2018*



2. Defining your vision for employee engagement

Having a clearly articulated vision for employee engagement in your organisation is important to ensure everyone is on the same page and heading in the same direction.

Regular followers and/or clients of ours, will know that we like to focus on the future we **want** to see, rather than always focusing on what is 'broken' or needs improving.

You'll find that by mapping out what the desired future looks like, you'll still cover the issues, and things that need fixing – for example, if it's employee voice that's poor, you'll no doubt include something that reflects 'great employee voice' in your future vision.

But it's more than just about taking a positive 'spin' on the issues – by focusing on what you want to see in the future, rather than just fixing today, you'll also open yourself up to new ideas and opportunities. We like to use an activity on future vision, which is based in psychology and neuroscience – we've included a free activity sheet download at the end of this booklet to help you create your future vision, it also includes all the science behind why this works.

3. Defining your goals and outcomes

Once you've decided how your strategy will support your company strategy, and your future vision, you can now think about defining your engagement goals and outcomes.

Understanding the purpose of engagement within your company, and why, and how it will help you achieve your overall business strategy, is the cornerstone of achieving alignment.

An engagement strategy which can be clearly linked to the overall business strategy, enables practitioners to demonstrate the value to the business and get buy-in from key stakeholders.

Very often the focus on employee engagement comes from specific objectives such as being part of the UK Times Top 100 companies to work for. Sometimes the objective is to create a great place to work, or become an employer of choice. These are examples of employee engagement goals.



You now need to link these goals to desired business outcomes, which are part of the company strategy. For example, these outcomes could include lowering employee turnover, or increasing customer satisfaction metrics. These are some examples of employee engagement goals and business outcomes:

Example Employee Engagement Goals

- Achieve Investors in People Gold
- Get on The Times or Fortune Top 100 list
- Become a great place to work
- Become an employer of choice
- Increase survey response rates
- Increase employee engagement index on annual survey

Example of Business Outcomes

- Reduce employee turnover
- Reduce absenteeism
- Increase productivity
- Increase sales
- Improve customer experience
- Improve company reputation

To help you define your goals and outcomes you might wish to consider:

- Why do you want engaged employees?
- What are the outcomes you are hoping to achieve?
- How are they tethered to your organisation or business outcomes?
- For what purpose?

Whilst considering your goals and outcomes it's also helpful to think about how you will measure them...



Examples of goals and outcome measures

- Reducing sickness and absenteeism by improving employee well-being:
 - *Engaged employees in the UK take an average of 2.69 sick days per year; the disengaged take 6.19.*
 - *Example measure – UK average*
- Improving your customer experience:
 - *Seventy per cent of engaged employees indicate they have a good understanding of how to meet customer needs; only 17 per cent of non-engaged employees say the same.*
 - *Example measure – 70% employees agree they understand how to meet customer needs*
- Improving your employee retention rates:
 - *Engaged employees are 87 per cent less likely to leave the organisation than the disengaged.*
 - *Example measure – reduce attrition by 10% in 12 months*
- Improving your company reputation:
 - *Engaged employees advocate their company or organisation – 67 per cent against only three per cent of the disengaged. Seventy-eight per cent would recommend their company's products of services, against 13 per cent of the disengaged*
 - *Example measure – increase employee net promoter score by 10% in 12 months*

When setting your goals and outcomes remember the SMART acronym:

Specific – goals must be clear and unambiguous in what they need to achieve

Measurable – goals must include criteria to allow progress and delivery to be tracked

Achievable – goals must be within the organisations power to reach

Realistic – goals must be attainable given the resources available within your company

Timely – goals should have a time frame allocated for delivery

Some examples of SMART objectives and goals include:

- Achieving Investors in People Gold
- Improving your employee engagement index by x%
- X% of your employees saying that they would recommend your company to other people
- X% of your employees saying that your company is a great place to work
- Making the Best companies list or achieving Great Place To Work status
- A rating of 4 or more on Glassdoor



If you are struggling to articulate how you will measure the success in achieving one of your goals, it probably isn't concrete enough. You may want to consider, what you need Employee Engagement to deliver for you and what does success look like.

Ok, ready?

You should now have everything you need to start developing your strategy – and we've included a free template, which you can find at the back of this booklet.

Aligning your engagement goals and objectives to your organisational goals and strategy is critical to ensure engagement adds value to your business. The more clearly you can do this the more buy-in and commitment you will enjoy from your stakeholders.

This guide will help you to design your vision, purpose goals and outcomes for engagement.

The clearer you are about what it is you want to achieve by having an engaged workforce the more likely you are to achieve it. This clear articulation will also enable you to design a subsequent measurement plan to demonstrate to stakeholders the progress you are aiming for and the value engagement can add to an organisation.

Good luck!

If you would like any further help developing your employee engagement strategy visit our website www.peoplelab.co.uk, or send an email to info@peoplelab.co.uk to see how we can help you.

Strategy design template

Employee Engagement Definition:

Future Vision:

Goals

Outcomes

Action plan - Drivers

Measurement

Future Vision Activity

This activity is designed to help you to define your future vision for your employee engagement activity. It's helpful to involve people who have some responsibility for designing your engagement strategy and approach, for example, your senior team, HR team and engagement team.

To run this activity you'll need some materials, such as card, magazines, coloured pens, stickers, and any other craft materials you'd like.

Overview

Begin your session by asking the group if they have ever experienced any weird coincidences such as deciding to buy a new car and then seeing the car they'd been thinking about everywhere? Or for the parents in the room, upon finding out that they, or their partner was pregnant, suddenly seeing pregnant women everywhere?

Well, these situations aren't a coincidence at all, but actually the result of our own in-built spam filter.

We are bombarded with sensory images, sounds and data all day long and there is a part of our brain called the reticular activating system (RAS), which helps filter out any unnecessary stimulus that we're bombarded with.



The RAS consists of a bundle of densely packed nerve cells located in the central core of the brainstem. You can think of it as your own, personal executive secretary for your conscious mind. It is the chief gatekeeper to screen or filter the type of information that will be allowed to get through.

What is amazing is that you can deliberately program the reticular activating system by choosing the exact messages you send from your conscious mind. This is why we see the cars, or the pregnant women everywhere!

This is why it's so important to set goals, and visualize our future. We need to create a very specific picture of our future vision in our conscious mind. The RAS will then pass this on to our subconscious - which will then help us move towards this future vision we have created. It does this by bringing to our attention all the relevant information, which otherwise might have remained as 'background noise'.

Group exercise...

Ask your group to create a visual, such as a poster, or a mood board, using the materials you've provided, to communicate their future vision for employee engagement in your organisation. Imagining anything is possible, they should consider:

- What **could** it be like to work here in the future?
- What would be happening: what will it look like and feel like?
- What will a typical day be like?
- Why will people want to come and work here?
- Why will people want to stay?

After the exercise, ask the groups to present back their work and reflect on the common themes and differences. Finally, conclude the session by asking the group to come to a consensus on their desired future vision for employee engagement activity.