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5 Articles That Reveal The Real Value Of Employee Engagement

By Shelley Trout

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If there's one thing that's certain in the world of Human Resources, it's that **employee engagement matters** (<https://www.15five.com/blog/2017-employee-engagement-trends/>).

If there's a second thing that's certain, it's that HR knowing this has done almost nothing to improve employee engagement

(<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>).

If you're anything like me, these revelations are enough to leave you baffled and a bit lost – and you would be in good company! At Human Resources Today, (<https://www.humanresourcetoday.com/>) we see a lot of HR experts ponder the apparent paradox: over a billion dollars is being spent annually in the USA alone on employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) programs, and only 32% of employees (<http://www.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/216155/reasons-why-employee-engagement-programs-fall-short.aspx>) consider themselves engaged at work.

Even progressive, people-focused companies are beginning to wonder if there's any point to this engagement spending. Employee survey and engagement software can be expensive and time-consuming, while promises of increased performance are nebulous at best. And now the workplace is populated with Millennials (<https://www.15five.com/blog/how-engage-millennial-employees-accountability/>), who are notorious for leaving jobs after only a handful of years. Is it worth the investment?

We've rounded up five experts in the world of HR who strongly believe that employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) is still of paramount importance – provided you're doing it well. They argue that leaders must think beyond the numbers. Engagement must be approached as part of the whole employee experience, beginning with onboarding and continuing throughout a person's career:

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1) Go Beyond Employee Engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) to Business Results

From People Strategy (<https://www.peoplestrategy.com/category/blog/>)

If there's one writer who understands the disconnect between people analytics and their application, it's Ben Eubanks (<https://twitter.com/beneubanks>), a Principal Analyst at Lighthouse Research & Advisory (<http://lhra.io/>). "Engagement is not a program," he states. "The truth is that employees are probably tired of your 'programs'."

Nor is engagement an outcome, he continues, referencing the fact that some HR leaders check engagement scores as if they were sales figures. A company with engaged employees will see the outcome in increased innovation, retention and revenue – but to treat engagement itself like the final goal is limiting your business results.

To treat engagement itself like the final goal is limiting your business results. (<https://twitter.com/share?text=To+treat+engagement+itself+like+the+final+goal+is+limiting+your+business+results.&via=15Five&related=15Five&url=https://www.15five.com/blog/employee-engagement-human-resources-today/>)

CLICK TO TWEET ([HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/SHARE?+TREAT+ENGAGEMENT+ITSELF+LIKE+THE+FINAL+GOAL+IS+LIMITING+YOUR+BUSINESS+RESULTS.&VIA=15FIVE&RELATED=15FIVE&URL=HTTPS://WWW.15FIVE.COM/BLOG/EMPLOYEE-ENGAGEMENT-HUMAN-RESOURCES-TODAY/](https://twitter.com/share?text=To+treat+engagement+itself+like+the+final+goal+is+limiting+your+business+results.&via=15Five&related=15Five&url=https://www.15five.com/blog/employee-engagement-human-resources-today/))

Ben's solution?

“The challenge is to see engagement not as a one-off activity, but as a holistic view of the employee experience... That means everything from the first moment the person applies for a job all the way through to managing work schedules, getting performance reviews, and beyond.”

Tackling employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) from this perspective and actively combating the way we think about outcomes and programs is the key to better business results. Read more of Ben's sage advice here (<http://www.humanresourcestoday.com/employee-engagement/?open-article-id=5530126&article-title=going-beyond-employee-engagement-to-business-results&blog-domain=peoplestrategy.com&blog-title=peoplestrategy>).

2) Are Your Employees Engaged? Look in the Mirror

From DecisionWise (<https://www.decision-wise.com/blog/>)

Continuing in a similar vein, Tracy Maylett, CEO and President of DecisionWise, writes about employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) as one of the responsibilities of the manager. However, he also notes that most managers are only rewarded or punished based on their results – and that this can lead to management overlooking the fact that “*what gets done is as important as how it gets done.*”

What gets done is as important as how it gets done.

The *how*, of course, refers to your employees’ level of engagement.

“You’re an employee and you have responsibility to be an engaged employee. But you may also be a manager, and as a manager you have some responsibility for the engagement of others as well.”

Tracy notes that when a person is promoted to a managerial role, it is usually because they have shown proficiency in their job – not necessarily because they have the necessary tools to lead. A skilled employee who knows nothing about management can quickly find him or herself in a “managerial death spiral,” trying desperately to deliver the results at any cost, because the results are what the organization rewards.

“Hopefully, you’re the manager who gets it,” Maylett says. Engaging yourself, actively seeking to learn, adapt, and gain the necessary skills, will automatically see your team becoming more engaged as well. This offers a unique slant to the engagement conversation, which can be explored in more detail here (<http://www.humanresourcetoday.com/employee-engagement/?open-article-id=4994125&article-title=are-your-employees-engaged--look-in-the-mirror---&blog-domain=decision-wise.com&blog-title=decision-wise>).

3) Improve Employee Engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) Using Neuroscience

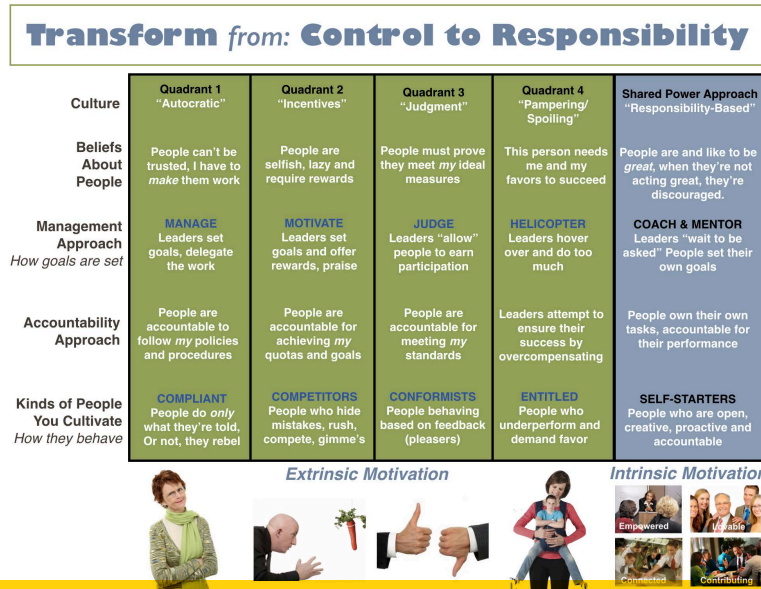
From Get Hppy (<http://www.gethppy.com/>)

Don’t be intimidated by the word, *neuroscience*. You won’t have to go back to school or buy an fMRI machine.

Neuroscience is the study of the nervous system, and the way the brain responds to the environment. It’s the area of science that gave rise to well-known ideas like “flight or fight,” and that comes into play here. Basically, the more safe and secure the work environment feels to the employee, the more

likely they are to engage and interact with it, leading to increased learning and innovation. However, if your employees feel threatened (<https://www.15five.com/blog/failed-job-interview/>), you can bet they're eyeing the door more than they're thinking about work.

The crazy part is that normal business practices go a long way towards making an employee feel threatened. Assessment, feedback and evaluation are all interpreted as potential threats by the brain.



So how can employers use the brain's own mechanisms to engage employees?

Dr. David Rock (<https://twitter.com/davidrock101>), the Director of the NeuroLeadership Institute, has suggested the acronym *SCARF* to measure the social forces that may be playing against your employees' sense of safety: *Status, Certainty, Autonomy, Relatedness and Fairness*:

Four Core Social Needs
A Key LifeWork SYSTEMS Concept

We all want a sense of *belonging* and *significance* and need to *feel*...



“The SCARF model uses a very basic aspect of human existence, **threat and safety**. We may not think about these two things on a minute to minute basis, but **our brains are always reacting in ways that relate to the pathways that were created in our ancestral pasts.**”

For great tips on how to address each of these aspects and **build a work environment that is automatically “safer” to the human brain**, you can read the main article here (<http://www.humanresourcetoday.com/employee-engagement/?open-article-id=5255326&article-title=improve-employee-engagement-using-neuroscience&blog-domain=gethppy.com&blog-title=gethppy>).

4) Stop the Employee Engagement Survey Madness

From TLNT (<https://www.ere-media.com/tlnt/>)

David Lee presents us with a sobering reality: “Over a billion dollars is spent annually in the US alone on employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) surveys and improvement interventions.” The message we can take from this? Employee engagement done poorly may very well *not* be worth pursuing.

Inferiority Complex

“Inferiority feelings rule the mental life and can be clearly recognized in the sense of deficiency and dissatisfaction, and in uninterrupted struggles both within individuals and humanity.”

Alfred Adler, Psychiatrist, 1870-1937



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“You don’t want another year to go by where you sink time, money, and social capital into another employee engagement

(<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>)

survey followed by “solutions” that don’t move the engagement needle, do you?”

Rather than repeat the same old tricks and hope for different results, Lee suggests that managers carefully consider the three primary factors contributing to the failure of employee engagement

(<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>)

programs: execution flaws, paradigm flaws, and courage flaws:

– **Execution flaws** cover everything from the interpretation of the surveys, to “whose job it is” to fix the engagement problem.

– **Paradigm flaws** perpetuate ideas such as surveys of large data being more useful than one-on-one conversations (<https://www.15five.com/one-on-ones/>) with select individuals.

– **Courage flaws** are what prevent management from seeking honest feedback, “hiding behind surveys” instead.

For his in-depth analysis on each of these flaws, as well as his recommended next steps and solutions, you can read the full article here

(<http://www.humanresourcetoday.com/employee-engagement/?open-article-id=6652204&article-title=stop-the-employee-engagement-survey-madness&blog-domain=tlnt.com&blog-title=tlnt--the-business-of-hr>).

5) Wanna Calculate Your Employee Engagement

(<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>)

ROI?

From 15Five (<https://www.15five.com/blog/>)

Changing the way you approach engagement, and learning to interact with your employees as an engaged manager, is an inexpensive way to promote employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) within your company. But changing our behavior can be difficult, and even harder to cultivate in others.

Is checking in on your new managers and building a culture of engagement really worth the hassle?

Hollie Nishikawa (<https://twitter.com/HollieNish>), Director of Demand Generation at 15Five, is not only certain that it is – she can prove it. For those who appreciate the cold, hard numbers, Nishikawa has devised a worksheet that revolves around calculating your employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) ROI.

“Engagement can be hard to quantify, but an engaged employee wears it on their face and demonstrates it in their work and in their communication. You may know that employee engagement (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) is important, but do you know how it can impact your bottom line due to less turnover and absenteeism, and higher productivity?”

The ROI worksheet helps you calculate the cost of absenteeism and employee turnover at your organization, by examining the outcomes heavily influenced by engagement or lack thereof. For example:

– According to Gallup (<http://www.gallup.com/services/191489/q12-meta-analysis-report-2016.aspx>), businesses with highly engaged teams experience a 20% lift in employee productivity.

– According to the Workforce Institute on Absenteeism (<http://www.workforceinstitute.org/wp-content/themes/revolution/docs/Absenteeism-Bottom-Line.pdf>), businesses saw a drop in absenteeism (unearned PTO) by 41% when teams were engaged in their work.

Want to see how much you could be increasing your revenue and saving by reducing turnover? Head on over and download the worksheet here (<http://www.humanresourcetoday.com/employee-engagement/?open-article-id=5204191&article-title=wanna-calculate-your-employee-engagement-roi-&blog-domain=15five.com&blog-title=15five>).

Until we find a different buzzword (<https://www.15five.com/blog/how-to-stop-using-these-10-horrible-business-buzzwords/>) to describe employees who are committed and passionate about their jobs, the term *employee engagement* (<https://www.15five.com/blog/7-employee-engagement-trends-2016/>) is here to stay. But no matter what you call it, engagement cannot be fostered via a program or a handful of tactics. Engagement must stem from an understanding that employees are people, and from managers who create work environments where everyone naturally thrive.