

# THE AUTHORITY GUIDE TO ENGAGING YOUR PEOPLE



Raise staff performance and wellbeing, increase profitability and improve customer satisfaction

**SUE MITCHELL**

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Nothing destroys a person's or a team's energy, enthusiasm and engagement more than a negative attitude, which festers and spreads dissent widely so everyone suffers.

**Gallup, State of the Global  
Workforce report**

”

# Introduction

Have you ever been sitting in an office where it seems like everyone is complaining? Miguel thinks the management are out to get him. John says he can't respect his manager and doesn't know why he got the job, he's not competent. Leila says she went on a training course last week but doesn't dare try anything out in case she's told off for doing things differently and being blamed if something goes wrong. Rebekka says she hates working here, it's so negative and demoralising. She's wondering whether she should find another job, but maybe it's better to stick with what you know. At least she can walk to work, do the minimum you need to get by and have a life outside work.

Have you ever worked in an organisation with a silo mentality, where highly competitive teams work against each other, not sharing information that would help another team be more effective? Or where cliques contribute to tense relationships and some people seem to get special privileges? Or where people are afraid to take any decision themselves?

In contrast, have you experienced a workplace where everyone is totally committed to what they are doing? They want to deliver their best work and know they are making a difference.

They talk about how they can work better together and share information to more effectively deliver progress towards the common goals – so there is no repetition or delays waiting for another section to do their part. They look out for what they can do to make improvements, feel confident to take decisions relating to their role and feel proud about their organisation. Working with them is a great experience for colleagues and customers. The difference comes down to engagement. It never happens by chance. Engagement fundamentally depends on your mindset as a manager and leader, influencing how you behave with others and how you design strategy, systems and processes. This book gives you insights and practical tips to engage your people and make the difference for your team and organisation. Additional tools and resources are available on my online resources page for each chapter to help you implement the ideas.

# 1. Why engagement matters

## What is engagement?

Engagement is emotional commitment, which happens when you:

- have a positive emotional state, which is more likely when you experience wellbeing and are not stressed
- feel personally motivated to give extra value in terms of your attention, time, energy, focus, quality of work and so on (called investing your discretionary effort). You want to do what it takes to work to the best of your ability, deliver results and create value for your organisation. You work smarter and offer ideas and solutions to problems that you encounter
- have high job satisfaction and fulfilment
- have confidence in the organisation's future and believe in what it is doing.

As a result you become committed to the organisation and a loyal advocate for its products, services and as a place to work.

## Why engagement matters

Repeated global surveys by Gallup find that engagement strongly raises performance, yet the 2013 Gallup report, State

of the Global Workplace, found that worldwide only 13 per cent of people are actively engaged in their work. Most employees, 63 per cent, are 'not engaged' while 24 per cent are 'actively disengaged', meaning they are unhappy and spreading unproductivity, negativity and dissent within the organisation. In the UK only 17 per cent of employees are engaged, 57 per cent are not engaged and 26 per cent are actively disengaged. That's something every business professional should want to address and make sure that their organisation stands out as one of the few where everyone feels proud to work and is highly engaged. The difference is not only a great place to work where you enjoy what you do and being with colleagues, but also higher performance, higher productivity, higher customer satisfaction, higher staff satisfaction, reduced turnover of staff with consequent savings in costly recruitment and development implications, fewer poor quality incidents and fewer safety incidents. Over many years, across countries, organisations and thousands of employees, the Gallup surveys consistently show that organisations with high engagement strongly outperform those without, and have earnings up to four times higher than their competitors.

Engagement helps business to drive growth, be more resilient and succeed through periods of change, uncertainty and turbulence. In a special report for the UK government, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) showed that engagement can unlock productivity and transform not only organisational performance but also people's working lives, especially when a commitment to employee wellbeing and engagement is brought into the core business strategy. In their review on organisational wellbeing, Jeffrey and colleagues (2014) reported that focusing on wellbeing brings engagement and also raises creativity, innovation, productivity, loyalty, customer satisfaction and performance.

The pace of change in the world increases year on year. Now is the time to engage people in your business so you all pull together in the same direction. Identify your opportunities, focus on what you can do best, and make it possible for your people to bring all their capabilities and skills into work, feel proud to work in your business and help your business thrive.

Your business can't survive without people, whatever the nature of your work, the kind of organisation or size of business. Sole trader to global corporate, local charity to international non-governmental organisation, engineering or technology to arts or therapies – ultimately your business needs people in order to thrive. (Even if you are the only person in your business, you need to engage yourself, your customers, your suppliers and your extended team – accountant, PR and so on.) When you inspire your people to be engaged with their work, they make your business great. Conversely, when you actively disengage your people, they can break your business – are you aware of how your actions and behaviour influence how the people around you feel?

### How do you engage people?

Engaging people is about inspiring positive mindsets and changing the behaviour of every person so that the cultural norm is positive. To engage your people you need to create a positive environment and a culture of trust and responsibility where people can thrive, which requires:

- providing personal resources, organisational resources and infrastructure that people need to excel in their role. Personal resources include recognising the knowledge, behaviour, skills and mindset that a person has and also investing in learning, coaching and development to support him or her to have the attitude and capabilities to excel now and in future

- activities that stimulate positive mindsets and release each person's full potential as well as improving overall wellbeing. The most important activity is leadership behaviour by line managers and senior leaders for inspiring a compelling vision, trust and good communication – especially listening and acting on the information
- activities that prevent stimulation of the threat centre in the brain (Chapter 9) including strategy and changing organisational processes to remove obstacles and frustrations. This is especially critical to think through during periods of change, which can threaten many core motivators at once (Chapter 10) and destroy engagement

Barriers and obstacles to engagement are not just lack of engagement drivers but also different factors, that cause job dissatisfaction (see Chapter 10). In their large-scale survey on engagement in 2015, PwC report that increasing deliberate activities that raise engagement and intentionally reducing obstacles to engagement leads to higher productivity as more engaged people spend more days actively making progress towards the common purpose.

### Key drivers for engagement

- Leadership behaviour sets the tone at the top for company direction and culture and leadership behaviour by all managers, especially immediate/line managers explains a high proportion of engagement in organisations across the world. The relationship with their manager is one of the commonest reasons people give for leaving a role. (Chapter 2.)
- A compelling and motivating vision:
  - gives meaning and purpose to your work (Chapter 3)

- gives confidence in the company, where it is going and its future, and a feeling of job security and pride in working for a successful company.
- Trust: research by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM, 2014) revealed that levels of trust within the organisation drives engagement: trust in leaders and managers, as competent role models with trustworthy intentions; trust that leaders have in those they lead; and trust among peers and within teams. Trust leads to healthy working relationships for effective collaboration and cooperation. Essential behaviours include being open and fair, communicating effectively, being able to make decisions, and showing integrity and competence.
- Inspire cultural norms throughout the organisation of what is accepted behaviour.
- Clarify company core values with which everyone can identify (Chapter 3).
- Effective communication (Chapters 4 and 5).
- Respect and fairness: everyone is treated well and with respect, whatever their role, background or ethnicity. There is no favouritism (Chapters 4 and 10).
- Work to strengths: develop people's strengths and match roles to strengths to raise motivation and performance as people do what they do best (Chapter 6).
- Provide growth and development opportunities: support people to develop competence and achieve career aspirations to reward intrinsic motivators (Chapter 10).
- Commitment to quality and cooperation/collaboration: promote excellence and good working relationships, and make it easier to work effectively across units to reward intrinsic motivators (Chapter 10).

- Perform regular engagement surveys and act on the information: listen from the top (or as the organisation) and act on what is working and what needs changing to encourage much higher active engagement throughout the organisation (Chapter 4).
- Responsibility: promote self-management, decision making and a sense of control in work, even if only subtly within the confines of each job's parameters, to raise motivation through autonomy (Chapter 10).
- High-quality frequent interaction with line managers: these may be quick check-ins and rapid team catch-ups (20–30 minute meetings, often remote). Use a coaching approach (Chapter 7) for high-quality interactions. Many managers focus on discussing tasks mainly from their perspective or hold one-way briefings, even in one-on-one meetings, which are not engaging. Make time to ask about your team member's perspective, thoughts and concerns, not just on this task but on wider issues.
- Sincere commitment in core business strategy to enhance wellbeing for everyone in the organisation.
- The above drivers are drawn from: Gallup, 2013; Kouzes and Posner, 2012; MacLeod and Clarke, 2009; PwC, 2015; Strycharczyk and Elvin, 2014; Thomas, 2009).

## Engagement helps business to be more resilient and succeed through periods of change.

This *Authority Guide* addresses how businesses can increase their performance, productivity and customer/staff satisfaction through focusing on engagement. Sue Mitchell, an authority in coaching and leadership development, shows you how to build a team who is committed, inspired and eager to deliver their best work in order to make a difference.



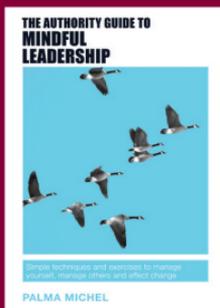
“The book goes beyond simple definitions of engagement and in a straightforward and articulate way brings into sharp focus what engagement is and why it is essential. The *how* is up to you as you read through the chapters, with each offering an insight into how best to ensure you are engaging your people in ways that are meaningful and effective.”

Peter Heath, Head of Service Delivery (West) for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

The Authority Guides are pocket-sized books offering highly practical and accessible guidance on business matters of every description. Aimed at the busy business professional and business owner, each book in the series has been written by an author who is not only an expert in their field but who is working today at the coalface of their specialism.



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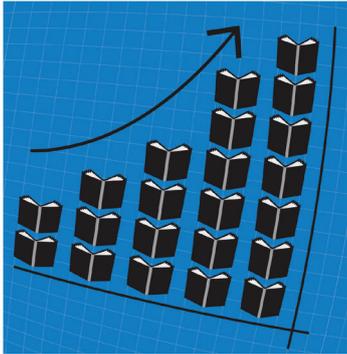


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