

# Employee Engagement Handbook

A 2022 guide for new-age  
HRs with actionable solutions



loop



## Why you need this guide

This super simple guide helps you cut through the existing noise that surrounds engagement. It applies to the context you find yourselves working in today.

- We throw out all the stuff that's no longer accurate.
- We give you evidence-based, targeted, and concise advice to navigate employee engagement in the new normal.
- We suggest tools, approaches, and ways of working you can take into account for your business today.

Like playing a sport or learning to play an instrument, **first, you need to understand the steps to improve.** And then, practice, practice, practice. The results only come in when you commit to doing the work and being consistent about it.

Let's dive right in!

## 5 Proven Steps to Boost Employee Engagement →

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## Step 1:

# Gather data-driven insights to determine the direction of engagement

Imagine your market to be an ocean that endlessly sprawls across different directions, and your business, a ship. Will you let your ship cruise to the whims and fancies of the market winds? Or will you navigate in a specific direction? **The answer is simple.**

To navigate, however, you need a compass. That is data. Data allows you to focus on the right route and helps scale for maximum impact. Think of it as looking at the way your business performs through a magnifying glass. **Data is the cornerstone upon which successful decision-making rests.** It goes without saying that business leaders today rely on data as their primary tool for both short-term and long-term decision-making.



Valuable insights



Continual growth



Improved program outcomes



Optimised operations



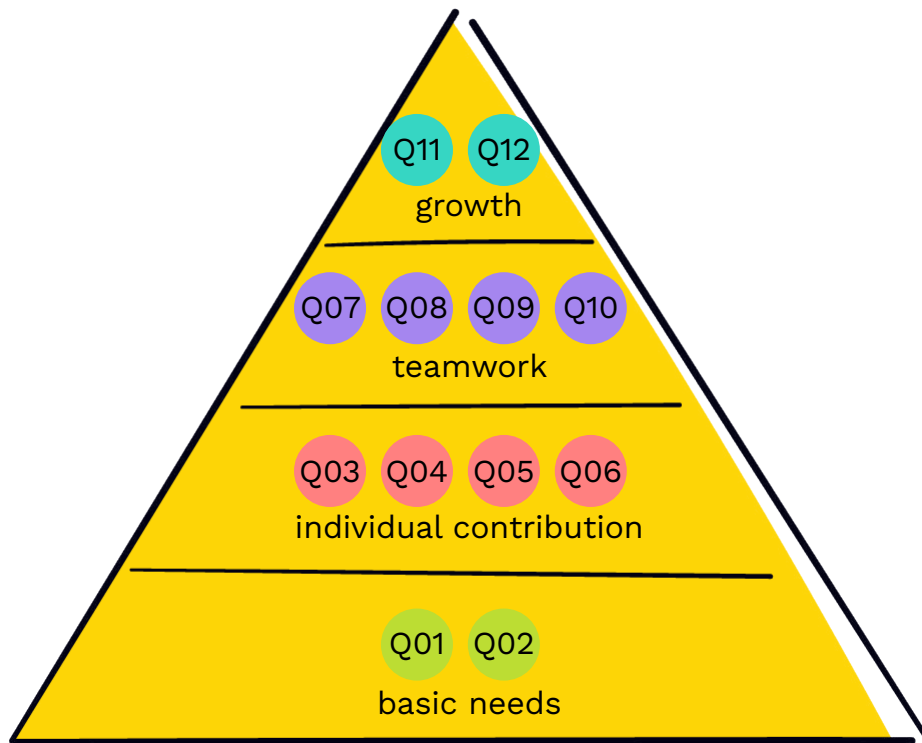
Prediction of future trends



Actionable insights

A great place to start is with **Gallup's Q12 survey**, which consists of **12 carefully crafted questions** that measure the most important elements of employee engagement.

1. Do you know **what is expected** of you at work?
2. Do you have the **materials and equipment** you need to do your job?
3. At work, do you have the **opportunity to do what you do** best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you **received recognition or praise** for doing a good job?
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, **seem to care** as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who **encourages your development**?
7. Do your **opinions count** at work?
8. Does the **mission/purpose of your company** make you feel that your work is important?
9. Are your co-workers committed to doing **quality work**?
10. Do you have a **best friend** at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work told you about your **progress**?
12. During this last year, did you have the **opportunity to work to learn and grow**?



Every individual question is meticulously crafted after more than **30 years of surveying employees**. From primary needs to individual contributions to teamwork and the desire to apply new ideas and make improvements, each question represents a point within the four stages of hierarchy that an employee goes through on their path to engagement.

These engagement questions do a whole lot more than gather information and measure engagement. When paired with developmental manager conversations, **they directly translate into better business outcomes** - time and time again.

## Step 2:

# Turn The Great Resignation to great re-engagement

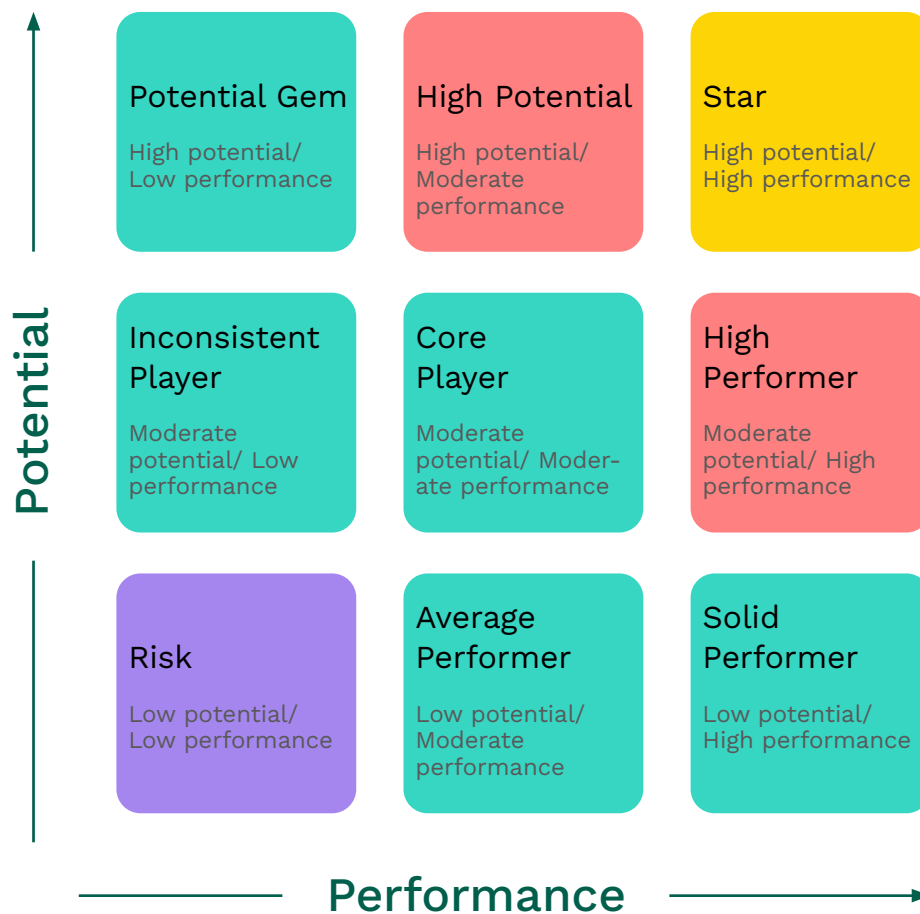
Over a decade ago, Zappos, an online retailer headquartered in Las Vegas, rose to fame when they spearheaded the “pay-to-quit” concept. This entailed a bonus for those employees who quit their jobs. Although it sounds bizarre, the ideology behind it makes it justifiable.

Zappos believed the company would be better off without employees who weren’t dedicated to their work, values, and mission. Tony Hsieh, the former CEO, perfectly captures this in his book *Delivering Happiness*. He said that the goal of Zappos is for employees to think of **their work not as a career or job but as a calling**.

Fast-forward to now, the pandemic is organically doing what Zappos and other businesses have done artificially - prodding employees to ask themselves **whether their companies and jobs are the right fit**, and if not, causing them to make changes.

## The Great Resignation is an opportunity for #TheGreatReengagement.

It's a call to action for HRs - for you to start investing in your star players. This is how you can do it with the **9-Box Performance Model**.



What is it? The tool helps with **succession planning**. As an HR, you can quickly identify leaders and strategically prepare employees for future roles. The framework, literally, determines an employee's future within an organization and encourages managers and leaders to evaluate employees on two factors:

1. **Their past performance**
2. **An estimation of their future potential**



After you determine an individual's position on the grid, decision-makers can establish how and where to invest their efforts:

**Identify** individuals who consistently underperform. You can show interest to offer a position that's better aligned or opt for termination.

**Support** employees, so they can increase potential or improve performance and move up on the grid.

**Recognize** high performers for their excellent results.

The purpose of a 9-box is also to aid organizations in planning better for future prospects.

## How to use the tool?

**The vertical axis signifies potential while the horizontal axis displays performance.** When an employee falls higher on the grid, it exhibits that they have more potential. The farther they move away from the vertical axis, the better their performance. The star performers are ones in the top right corner. **They perform well as well as exhibit tremendous potential to grow.**

Conversely, those on the bottom left are low performers who have little to no potential to advance in their careers or role.

As stated, **this is a tool for succession planning**. When you plot potential and performance on the grid and evaluate employees, succession planning takes over. You can **shortlist those individuals who fall in the top right box for succession** while not those in the bottom left. You can either reassess or remove them from your organization.

Here is how to go about it:

- **Step 1: Define** the building blocks of the 9-box model – the what, why, and how
- **Step 2: Customize** it to your organization's requisites
- **Step 3: Plot the result** of the assessment and the identification process
- **Step 4: Start** the development journey

Senior management can use this information to **implement strategies to keep people engaged and motivated in their roles** – especially if the majority of people are clustered towards the middle and the bottom of the 9-box grid.

### Step 3:

## Focus on outcomes

Imagine you're going somewhere new and you use Google Maps for directions. Maps show you 3 different route options - 30 minutes, 38 minutes, and 40 minutes. Which one do you pick? Without a doubt, the most efficient, right?

That's essentially what an **outcome-focused mindset** is. Without a destination, you wouldn't have been able to figure out the best way to reach it. Similarly, when you set goals for your projects and organization, you pave an efficient and clear path to forge ahead and achieve them.

**Don't let outcome confuse you with output.** They're two very similar terms with very different meanings.

The “what” of activities and actions are outputs, whereas the “why” or the reason you chose those activities or actions are outcomes.



**Output -**

New employee  
engagement plan



**Outcome -**

Increase employee  
engagement by 10% YoY



## Output -

- The things we do
- Deliverables, projects, etc, that help us to work towards our goals
- We hope it brings success but doesn't guarantee it
- Might change if it doesn't bring results



## Outcome -

- The results I hope to get after doing something
- Measurable results defined as success of the goal
- Shows the success loud and clear!
- Stays the same until achieved

While they go hand-in-hand - outcomes don't happen without output, however, **outcomes have a great impact on your customers, mission, and company.**

With employee engagement, the **Aon Hewitt employee engagement model** brings business outcomes into the equation. It connects the dots between business targets and engagement drivers by adding a middleman: engagement outcomes. These are essentially goalposts to help leaders gauge the level of engagement.

According to the model, organizations should aim for three engagement outcomes:



**Say - Engaged employees become your company's ambassadors.** Their enthusiasm shines through positively when they talk about the organization, both externally and internally.



**Stay - Have you ever thought about the fact that employees want to stay with a company?** More than just a paycheck, they're there because they feel satisfied with the work, connected to the people, and loyal to the organization.



**Strive - Engaged employees strive to go the extra mile and do their best work for the organization.** Because they feel invested, inspired, and motivated, they contribute above and beyond what's needed.

To achieve the desired engagement and business outcomes, companies need to fine-tune drivers. Hewitt categorizes them into **foundations and differentiators**.

**Foundational** ones are core company elements that you need for engagement.

- **The work** - The work employees do must be challenging and tailored to drive engagement. At the same time, giving them the right resources will help deliver their best performance. Give them mentally stimulating tasks and encourage autonomy and collaboration.
- **Company practices** - How an organization operates on a day-to-day basis like support toward employees, inclusion efforts, staffing tools, communication, etc. sets the foundation for employees to stay and strive. Evaluate and update these with a mind toward what is best for your people.
- **Basic needs** - Basic needs of employees are good work-life balance, a competitive salary, job security, etc., and fulfilling these needs improves retention. When basic needs are taken care of, employees engage with your organization on a higher level.

The **differentiating** drivers are factors that set you apart from your competitors and make your company a place people want to work at and feel proud of working for. They contribute to your employees' staying, striving, and saying good things about your company.

- **Performance** - Recognition is an essential part of engagement. When an employee is recognized, they know their contributions matter leading them to stay and strive. As a company, you need to **create learning and development programs, a culture of recognition**, and more career opportunities to drive higher engagement.
- **Leadership** - Leaders play a vital role in engagement. As a leader, you must **actively involve yourself** in your employees' lives, pay attention to their feedback, and commit to a better experience. This leads them to say, stay and strive.
- **Brand** - The way your organization is perceived is not important only for customers but employees as well. When you build **a strong company reputation and a positive work environment**, you encourage the "say" engagement outcome.



When you **refine and adjust these drivers of engagement and follow this model**, as a business you can consistently achieve the desired engagement outcomes and improve overall employee engagement.

Remember, the first step is to address the needs of your workforce and parallelly create opportunities for them to thrive. You'll then succeed at employee engagement.



## Step 4:

# Quality managers make a world of a difference

“I’d rather interview 50 people and not hire anyone than hire the wrong person.”

- Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon

Amazon is obsessed with hiring the right people.

This obsession to **hire only the crème de la crème** has helped the organization survive the 2000 dot-com crash where the NASDAQ fell by 78% and innumerable hot-shot startups filed for bankruptcy and vanished. While Amazon has seen tremendous growth ever since!

Of course, you’re thinking that all organizations look to hire the best. What’s so different about Amazon? **The idea of “bar raisers” is what makes them different.**

## “Bar raisers”

Amazon has a bunch of significant cultural values like **customer obsession, a high bar for talent, ownership, innovation, etc.** Bezos felt that every new hire should bring this with them. Thus, he introduced the “bar raiser.”

The bar raiser is like the final hurdle in Amazon's interview process. Basically, an existing Amazon employee is selected through lengthy training and a nomination process. **They become evaluators who run the final interview as well as make the final judgment of hiring.** They're put in place so as to ensure the hiring manager isn't hiring anyone too quickly for short-term gain or a below-average candidate.

Although it sounds quite extreme, it's one way Amazon makes sure their hiring standards never slip.

**So how do you follow the steps of Amazon and raise your own hiring bar?**

We're not asking you to go the whole nine yards and refactor bar raisers into your hiring process. You can make minor, actionable tweaks instead.

1. Rather than hiring someone who merely fits your culture, look for people that add to your culture. This way, every member on a team brings something different to the table and when they approach business problems, **they come up with clutter-breaking solutions** from all directions.
2. Look for intellectual horsepower and curiosity. They're indicators that a candidate can **grow beyond their current set of skills** and become a leader in your organization.

3. Align your recruiting team around the **goal of hiring the right person**, not just hiring quickly.

Because of a time crunch or urgency, don't compromise on your hiring bar.

4. Diversify assessment. If bar raisers are something you cannot implement, try something else. For instance, a presentation to stakeholders. The idea is to go beyond standard interviews and resume reviews and dig deeper into a candidate. You can do this by **work simulations, cognitive tests, or personality evaluations** to help predict success.

5. Put everyone through a trial period and also **offer ample training and learning** to improve skills and knowledge.

6. Take into consideration both technical and soft skills. You need to realize that **management has more to do with character than knowledge**. Also, promote based on a level of aptitude and interest in people skills.

7. When a new hire or an existing manager isn't fitting in, **quickly take action**. Transfer them to a new position at the earliest.

Let's flip the switch from the hiring talk to employee engagement.

Ultimately, **managers or “middle management” are the ones who're doing all the groundwork.** They work with employees on a daily basis, develop strategies, and execute plans. They determine how an employee experiences and expresses the employee-organization relationship. So, it's critical to cherry-pick the right team of superheroes for your organization.

**Employees who trust their managers will stay with the company have better morale,** which translates to enhanced productivity, efficiency, and engagement.



## Step 5:

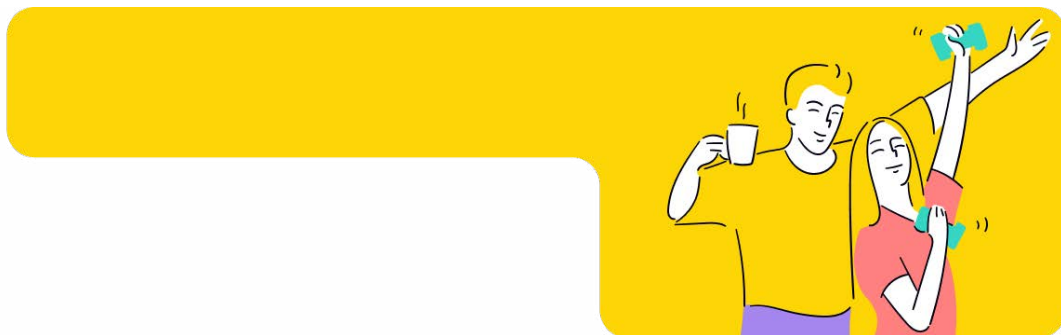
# Unlock wellness - the door to thriving employees

A pool table at work and free beers over the weekend definitely create a positive work environment. But do they really contribute toward employee engagement?

**They don't!**

They're nice gestures, but they don't play a part in improving employee wellbeing either. **Health and wellbeing are an integral part of employee engagement.** Just like you cannot separate the mind from the body, you cannot separate wellbeing from work life.

The Harvard Business Review found that, on average, employers who invest in comprehensive group health insurance along with wellness and wellbeing initiatives saw a nearly **3 to 1 return in money invested.**



In Gallup's 2021 report, you can find some insightful information into factors that affect employee engagement, including well-being. **Well-being is not just physical** but includes several other aspects.



Thriving employees report high levels of satisfaction in all these areas. **People feel good at work when they feel psychologically safe, happy, and healthy.** As a result, they are less likely to experience burnout and thus, are more engaged.

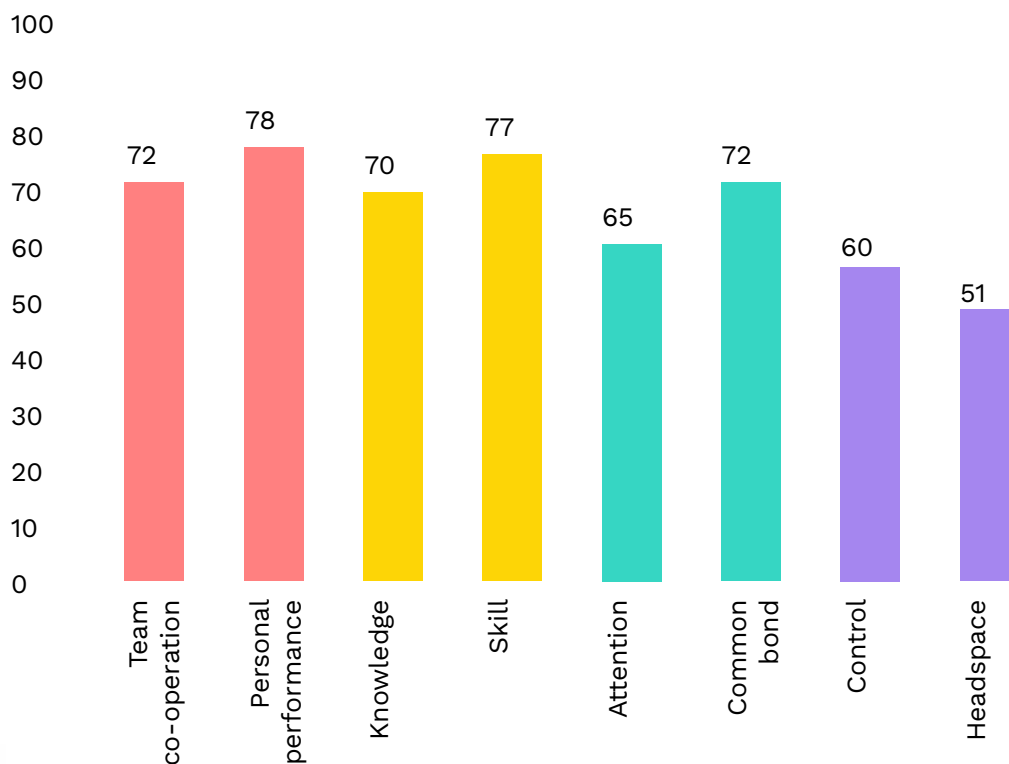
No matter what industry your business caters to, employee wellness is something you mustn't brush aside or knockback on. **Only when you prioritize the wellness and wellbeing of employees will engagement eventuate.** Therefore, start acknowledging it as a core value and don't let it take a back seat.

A few ideas to kick start employee wellbeing are:

- **Investing in good comprehensive group health insurance** for employees along with added benefits like mental health and telehealth benefits.
- **Encourage flexible schedules** and better work-life balance
- **Offer opportunities for professional development** that align with employees' needs, wants, and strengths.
- **Make financial resources available**, such as easy access to workshops on money management or a financial planner.
- **Help employees get to know one another** by setting up initiatives like a buddy program, mentorship, or an informal club.
- **Promote a lifestyle change by offering rewards for being fit**, completing 10,000 steps, visiting the gym more than thrice a week, etc.

At the end of the day, employees want:

- A healthy work-life balance
- A deep social connection with colleagues
- A deeper understanding of their role in the business
- To feel valued and appreciated







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