

## ENHANCING THE LEVEL OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT GUIDE



This discussion guide is designed to help you as a manager recognize, build and foster engagement on your team. This is not intended to be a one-time use discussion guide, but instead is designed to be a resource for continued conversations to boost engagement.

### As leaders

We are responsible for fostering individual and team engagement. It is important we check-in on our own well-being to keep a calm, positive mindset when we approach these conversations, which will cast the tone and set the example for our teams. When we choose to prioritize kindness, compassion, and empathy when engaging with employees, we show that we are committed to their well-being and success.<sup>[1]</sup> When employees believe that their managers care about them personally and demonstrate this, it will build trust and add to a positive work environment.<sup>[2]</sup>

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/robdube/2019/12/09/how-kindness--compassion-can-reduce-company-turnover/#5335bc522845>

<sup>[2]</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/leadership/from-a-room-called-fear-to-a-room-called-hope-a-leadership-agenda-for-troubled-times#>

### During challenging times

Managers need to understand the thoughts, feelings, and state-of-mind of their employees, keeping in mind that each employee will be in a different place.

1. Begin by understanding the continuum of change and engagement employees are likely experiencing, particularly during times of uncertainty.
2. Once you understand your team's personal state of engagement, section 2 is designed to help you have conversations with your employees to re-engage them in their work, accomplishments, and career, and navigate them through change.
3. In addition to these engagement conversations, section 3 provides information on ways to re-engage your team.

## Employee Engagement Defined

Employee engagement is an approach at workplaces that motivates employees to stay committed to their organizational goals and to do their best at work. It can broadly be defined as the extent to which employees are invested in their job and put in the amount of effort that is needed to get a job done. Engaged employees are more motivated and productive than their counterparts.

## Factors that Influence Employee Engagement

Deloitte’s years of research and experience with hundreds of organizations suggests that five main indices and underlying attributes work together to drive employee engagement.

Trust in leadership 	Supportive management 	Meaningful work 	Positive work environment 	Growth opportunity 
Mission and purpose	Clear and transparent goals	Autonomy	Flexible work environment	Training and support on the job
Continuous investment in people	Coaching	Diverse teams	Respectful workplace	Facilitated talent mobility
Transparency and honesty	Investment in development of managers	Empowered teams	Culture of recognition	Self-directed, dynamic learning
Inspiration	Aligned performance management	Time for slack	Fair, inclusive, diverse work environment	High-impact learning culture
<b>Cross-organization collaboration and communication</b>				

Source: based on Berson by Deloitte model

## The Impact of Employee Engagement on the Organization

Most organizations focus on their deadlines and getting work done instead of focusing on the level of employee engagement in their organization. They tend to forget that it is also important for employees to be enthusiastic about what they are doing. One engaged employee can contribute a lot more to organizational productivity than ten disengaged employees. Here's how employee engagement can have a positive impact on your organization.

### SATISFIED AND ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

Employee engagement is one of the many ways to boost employee job satisfaction. Engaged employees are more satisfied with their jobs than the others. Focusing on employee engagement helps you create a positive workplace culture that drives organizational success. When employees are satisfied with their job responsibilities, they put extra effort into what they are doing and improve their overall performance.

### BETTER EMPLOYEE RETENTION & TALENT ACQUISITION

It is a known fact that the more an organization focuses on its employees' happiness and satisfaction, the more loyal the employees are to the organization. When your organization focuses on employee engagement and satisfaction, it not only attracts quality talent for your team but also helps you retain your existing employees better.

### INCREASED EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY

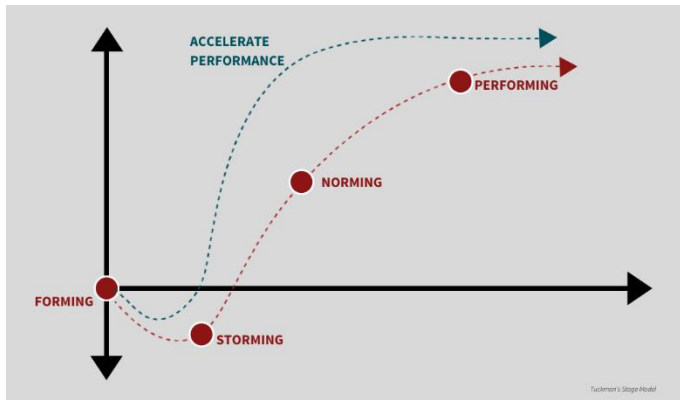
Employee productivity is important to any team. The more productive your employees are, the more successful you'll be as a team, business, or organization. According to Gallup, highly engaged teams are 21% more productive than those with low engagement. Engaged employees are innovative and always have an idea or two about what they can do better. Their quality of being collaborative and enthusiastic towards work, allows them to complete their workplace goals more effectively, which leads to increased workplace productivity.

## SECTION 1:

# UNDERSTANDING THE CONTINUUM OF CHANGE & ENGAGEMENT



See page 2 for icon reference



Teams go through stages of development on their journey as indicated by the Tuckman Model: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing. Similar to the stages of grief, there are phases of change that teams cycle through as exhibited in the Scott & Jaffe Change Model: Denial, Resistance, Exploration, Commitment. In both cases, at pivotal moments of disruption, whether instructed by management or environmentally imposed, even established high performing teams will regress to earlier stages and require a reset.

## Change Acceleration Framework

We usually only think about these models when forming a new team or onboarding a new leader. However, they can also help any individual employee impacted by disruption (lay-off, org restructure, etc.) to anticipate what they might experience in the weeks following a change, within themselves and their environment. The following framework builds on the models in consideration of the current organizational and environmental realities. Help your teams move from surviving to thriving by observing (indicators) what's happening and taking supportive action (accelerators).

STAGE	INDICATORS		ACCELERATORS		
	ACTIVITY	EXAMPLES	ACTION	TEAMS	INDIVIDUALS
reFORM	Denial	Polite, Tentative Anxious, Confused Lack of Understanding Going into Hiding	Inform	Show empathy Establish safety Clarify objectives	Acknowledge the pain Listen deeply Clarify roles
reSTORM	Resistance	Frustrations, Discomfort Personality Conflicts Stuck in the past Challenges to authority Overwhelmed	Support	Rebuild trust Communicate regularly Remain positive Patient and assertive Resolve conflicts quickly	Rebuild relationships Reset expectations Build resilience Coach 'em through it
reNORM	Exploration	Understanding goals Processes and Procedures Appreciation for team Willingness to help	Encourage	Celebrate little successes Promote problem solving Invite ownership Repeat, Reinforce	Focus on Strengths Invite ideas Reassure Invite as role model
rePERFORM	Commitment	Feels easy Self-driving Healthy friction Efficient output	Focus	Monitor Delegation opportunity Tackle new challenges	Recognize Develop new skills Invite as role model
<i>Each stage is building block to the next</i>			<i>Not everyone will be at the same stage at same time</i>		
<i>Ok to reset, but there's no skipping</i>			<i>Be vigilant in helping them to next stage</i>		

Based on the Tuckman model of Development

## SECTION 2:

# SIX DISCUSSIONS TO HAVE TO RE-ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES



The most impactful action you can take is to have ongoing open conversations with your team collectively and with team members individually.

Below are suggested topics and questions to consider discussing with your team. The questions you will choose will vary with the concerns and needs of the team and individuals.

## 1. SUPPORTING THROUGH CRISIS



See page 2 for icon reference

Your team will have questions, concerns, misconceptions, and issues they want to talk about. With the right questions, you can dig into each of these areas effectively and help them (and you) come away relieved that you're on the same page and have a clearer understanding of what's going on. This will help you solidify their trust during a time where trust is otherwise easy to lose.

The problem is, with all the stress and uncertainty, they might not feel like opening up at first. So, you'll often need to guide the conversation where it needs to go to ensure you touch on each of these areas.

### Ask your team member in a 1:1 meeting:

Start by opening up the conversation with questions like:

- *How are you feeling right now?*
- *What is on your mind?*

After you've warmed things up a bit, consider asking:

- *What can I do to help you feel more confident or comfortable right now?*

## SECTION 2:

# SIX DISCUSSIONS TO HAVE TO RE-ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

## 2. DEMONSTRATING COMPASSION



See page 2 for icon reference

As managers, it is important to demonstrate personal consideration for your team. The idea that feelings should be separated from work is an outdated principle, and frankly, impossible to achieve. Life doesn't pause during the 40+ hours in the workweek, so it's important to understand how employees are really doing. Plus, helping your employees learn to articulate their emotions can lead to healthier relationships, greater wellbeing, and better resilience in and out of work.

During 1-on-1 meetings with your employees, don't forget to share your feelings as well. Research by Harvard Business School professor Jeff Polzer shows the process of building trust starts with vulnerability. Sharing your emotions with employees can help create a safe environment for your people to be honest.

### Ask your team member in a 1:1 meeting:

- *How are you feeling?*
- *Ask how you can help, and don't assume you know what's wanted.*
- *Cultivate a genuine curiosity about the individuals on your team.*
  - *How are you?*
  - *How do you feel your work/life balance is right now?*
  - *What's one thing we could change about work for you that would improve your personal life?*
  - *What are your hobbies? What did you do for fun in the past that you haven't had as much time for lately?*

## 3. CREATING OPPORTUNITIES TO CELEBRATE SUCCESS



See page 2 for icon reference

Never miss an opportunity to let your employees celebrate and even brag a little about all the things that are going well in their role. This also includes the small wins that often get overlooked because they aren't related to top priorities.

Another way you can increase the amount of employee recognition shared between employees is through virtual high-fives and appreciation graphics. Copy the high-five image from [this link](#), or an appreciation image from [this link](#) and send recognition to team members. Additionally, consider developing a "kudos" channel in Slack or a shared Google sheet to track and celebrate wins!

### Ask your team:

- *What's going well in your role? Any wins this week?*

## SECTION 2:

# SIX DISCUSSIONS TO HAVE TO RE-ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

## 4. SURFACING BARRIERS OR CHALLENGES FOR TEAM SOLVING



See page 2 for icon reference

Too often, people feel the only way to approach problems is to resolve them by themselves. Nothing feels better than helping others. Yale Professor, Dr. Laurie Santos' research shows that helping others boosts happiness. Ask team members to surface challenges they're facing with their work/projects and solicit ideas from others. This not only boosts happiness, but it builds stronger team relationships and creates a psychologically safe space for employees to share their issues and work together to solve them.

### Ask your team:

- *What challenges are you facing?*

## 5. SUPPORTING WORK AND CAREER



See page 2 for icon reference

The research of positive psychology is clear: employee satisfaction is a precursor to success and accomplishment, not the other way around. When employees feel fulfilled, they not only come up with better solutions, but their satisfaction also helps to build a culture of high performance and low turnover. Continuously asking these questions will help you understand their engagement levels and send the message that they're valued beyond their performance.

### Ask your team member in a 1:1 meeting:

- *What is your favorite part of your job? Why is that?*
- *What is your least favorite part of your job? Why is that?*
- *When do you feel most productive and motivated when working?*
- *How do you think your work impacts our team and the university?*
- *On a scale of 1-10, how fulfilled are you? Why?*
- *What drives you? What motivates you to do your work each day?*

## SECTION 2:

# SIX DISCUSSIONS TO HAVE TO RE-ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

## 6. BUILDING RAPPORT WHILE WORKING REMOTELY



See page 2 for icon reference

We are in very unusual times with most, if not all, our employees working remotely. Working remotely makes building connections and engaging employees even more difficult. Even a few extra minutes at the beginning or end of every call can help you make a personal connection with them. It will help improve your working relationship and build trust over time.

### Ask your team:

- *What helps you feel connected to others while we all work remotely?*
- *Do you feel like we have opportunities for “water cooler” type discussions with the team to help you spur on ideas?*
- *What about our team/organization/Stanford do you want to learn more about?*
- *How well do you feel you know your coworkers?*
- *When you have a creative idea or epiphany, what do you do with it? (The kinds of things that would get openly discussed in an office could be missing!)*

One on ones are a great opportunity to build rapport with remote employees, so you need to make them count. For that reason, one on ones with remote employees should tend to be longer. For one, give yourself more time for small talk. One on ones are your only time to learn about your remote employees on a personal level, which is important given they tend to have more feelings of loneliness according to researchers.

### Ask your team member in a 1:1 meeting:

- *What has been your favorite part about working remotely? (Understand what drives them.)*
- *What were the most challenging and surprising things you’ve experienced while working remotely? What creative solutions have you come up with to tackle these surprises?*
- *What’s the most challenging for you in your daily work routine?*



## SECTION 3:

# ADDITIONAL ACTIONS TO ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

As you engage in discussions with your team members, you may find yourself wondering what more you can do to help employees regain their energy and passion. Given the degree of uncertainty created by so much disruption, one of the ways you can help employees reclaim a sense of control is to empower them with greater autonomy and agency in their work and life. Providing even small opportunities for them to influence the direction of the team and exercise more decision-making power over their work can increase resilience and productivity.

“Simply giving employees a sense of agency - a feeling that they are in control, that they have genuine decision-making authority - can radically increase how much energy and focus they bring to their jobs.”

Charles Duhigg

The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business



Increased autonomy does not work for every situation, so take care to balance opportunities for autonomy with compassion and support, particularly for employees who are feeling more overwhelmed or struggling in their tasks. Still, increasing autonomy, even temporarily, can demonstrate that you trust your team’s abilities and that their input is valuable as we all strive to establish new norms of working.

Here are some areas in which you can engage your team to promote agency and autonomy. These prompts can be used in a group setting or in individual 1:1’s.

## 1. INVOLVE THEM IN THE DECISION MAKING



See page 2 for icon reference

### Priority Setting

Ask your team:

- *What should be our top priorities as we move forward?*
- *What issues are most urgent to address?*
- *If you could reprioritize your/our work, what changes would you make?*

### Project Assignments

Ask your team:

- *What are you most interested in working on right now?*
- *What projects/tasks would you prefer to focus on?*

## SECTION 3:

# ADDITIONAL ACTIONS TO ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

## Meetings

### Ask your team:

- *How often do you want to meet right now?*
- *Would you add or change anything in the agenda or format?*
- *What do we need to spend more (or less) time on?*

## Hiring

### Ask your team:

- *What skills are needed on this team?*
- *What qualities do you think are most important for this role and our team culture?*
- *Are there any changes you would recommend for our hiring process?*

## 2. PROVIDE ENHANCED FLEXIBILITY FOR WHEN AND HOW THEY COMPLETE THEIR WORK



*See page 2 for icon reference*

## Work/Life Schedules

### Ask your team:

- *Is your current schedule supporting your needs in work and life?*
- *Are there adjustments we could make that would improve your experience and success?*

## Work Styles

### Ask your team:

- *How do you like to organize your workday?*
- *How do you prefer to be interrupted?*
- *Are there any changes you would suggest for how we share information and collaborate?*

## 3. SUPPORT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT AND CAREERS



*See page 2 for icon reference*

## Foster Development Opportunities

### Ask your team:

- *What tools or resources are most helpful in your daily work? Is there anything missing?*
- *Are there any learning opportunities you'd like to pursue?*
- *Would you like to create a development plan?*

## SECTION 3:

# ADDITIONAL ACTIONS TO ENGAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES

## 4. PROMOTE COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK (*bi-directional*)



See page 2 for icon reference

### Expectations and Alignment

Ask your team:

- *Are the expectations of your job/assignments clear?*
- *What can we do to improve communications within the team and dept./unit?*
- *What information would you like to hear more about?*

### Recognition and Support

Ask your team:

- *How do you prefer to be recognized?*
- *How and I doing as a manager in supporting recognition within our team?*
- *What can we do differently to adapt recognition to a remote environment?*

## In Summary

By giving employees enhanced autonomy and control over their workday, you can increase their capacity to move through uncertainty with renewed energy and focus. Even when teams experience disruption, you can foster employee success, development and engagement through compassion and trust.