



Forget about engagement;
let's talk about

GREAT DAYS AT WORK...

PREPARED BY



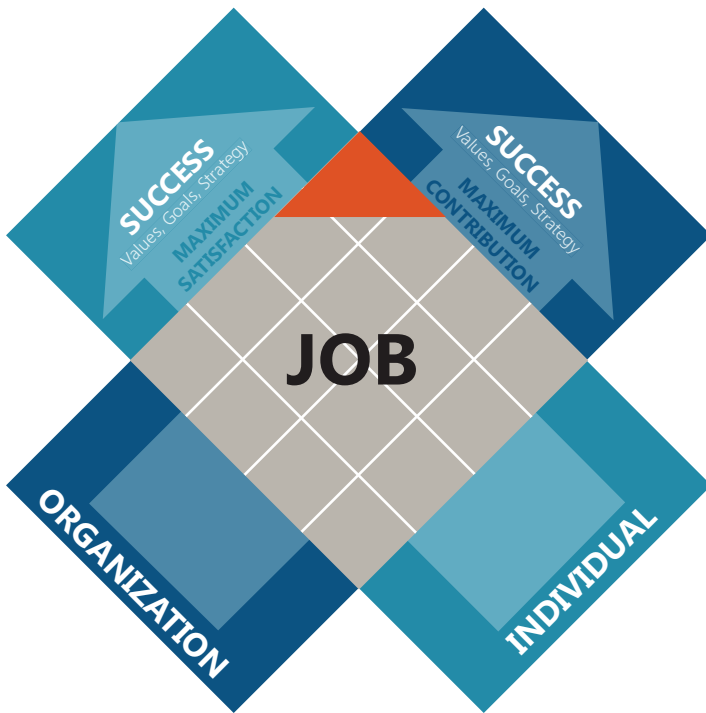
Your workforce transformation partner™

What does engagement mean? And what exactly does an engaged employee look like? There are many different conceptual frameworks used to describe engagement (more about that later). You've probably heard a lot about performance, discretionary effort, culture, leadership, etc. – the list goes on and on. A good number of these things are indeed very important.

But before jumping into the concepts and numbers, first think about what engagement feels like. Have you ever had a great day at work? You know what kind of day that is – it was a day that you were happy to be at work, everything was going right. Can you think of the details of that day? Wait, don't tell me. Did you complete an important task on a current project? Did you get to work on something that you enjoy doing? Did you get to bring your unique set of talents to the table? Did you do work that contributed to something bigger than yourself?

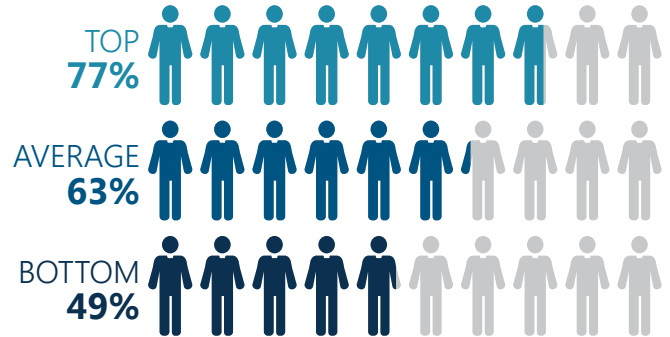
A pragmatic approach to engagement

If you ever had a great day at work, then you've had an engaged day at work. The GP Strategies® model of employee engagement is pragmatic: an engaged organization is one where employees reach maximum job satisfaction while at the same time make a significant contribution to the goals of their team and the organization as a whole. True engagement happens when there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and the employee, an alignment between what the organization needs (maximum contribution), and what their employees want (maximum satisfaction). While engagement is an individualized equation, with each employee having their own unique drivers of satisfaction and barriers to performance, it requires the dedication and work of all members of the organization – Individuals, Managers, and Executives – to make it a reality.



We know that highly engaged organizations look different from the rest. According to our research, 63% of employees on average are engaged, but 77% of employees in the best organizations are engaged. The lowest scoring organizations have under half (49%) of their employee population who are engaged.

% of Engaged Employees



This paper will explore what distinguishes highly engaged organizations from organizations with average and low levels of engagement, as defined on the two main axes of the GP Strategies' employee engagement model – satisfaction and contribution. By examining the factors that impact engagement and the role of each member in the organization (from executive to individual contributor), we will be able to determine what actions and behaviors differentiate highly engaged organizations from the rest.

Contribution

Performance is at the heart of what engagement is and what it means for the organization – engaged employees perform at superior levels compared to other employees. But performing at the highest level is different from putting in a lot of hours on the job. Many factors influence an employee's ability to contribute to the organization's mission, and measuring this is more complex than simply looking at time put in at the office. Factors at the Individual, Manager, and Executive level all influence and impact employees' ability to perform at the highest levels. And there are specific actions that we can identify as having an impact on engagement and where highly engaged organizations excel.

RESEARCH REPORT: Forget about engagement; let's talk about great days at work...

Clear Priorities: At the Individual level, one of the most significant indicators of an employee's ability to achieve maximum contribution is alignment – whether or not employees are **clear on their immediate work priorities over the next 3-6 months**. If an employee is working hard but without a clear understanding of what needs to be accomplished, valuable time and talent will be wasted on work that does not drive business results. Results on this question tend to be high regardless of the type of organization studied. Organizations with the highest levels of engagement report even higher levels of alignment (92%), while a little less than three quarters of employees with the lowest levels of engagement responded favorably to this item (72%). Despite the favorable results on this item, it does beg the question of how to move the remaining employees who did not respond favorably. How do you help the remaining 28% in **low engagement** companies to get better clarity on what they need to do? Keep in mind when examining alignment that it is not solely the responsibility of the employee. Manager behaviors impact employees' ability to recognize and act on their work priorities.

Regular Feedback: The most common and influential manager behavior to achieve greater clarity on work priorities is **regular performance-based feedback**. While the majority of respondents feel that they know what they need to get done, far fewer agree that they get the feedback they need from their manager. The graphs below indicate the gap between having alignment on work priorities and receiving feedback from the manager.

The data indicates that employees are more commonly aligned on their immediate work priorities than receiving feedback from their manager, with highest levels of feedback occurring in highly engaged organizations. Providing feedback can be a daunting task for managers, many of whom have not been equipped to do so. GP Strategies' research into feedback has uncovered that this essential activity is more likely to occur when there is an organizational belief in the value of feedback and when

senior leaders model this behavior by having regular coaching conversations with the managers who report to them.¹

The Role Senior Leaders Play: Manager and employee behavior alone are not enough. Leaders at the highest level play a crucial role in creating and maintaining an environment that facilitates and supports contribution. However, the average American worker agrees only a little over half of the time when asked if their **senior leaders have created an environment where their performance can thrive** (55%), compared to 75% of employees in highly engaged organizations.

Access to Resources: What does a high-performing environment look like and what are the steps that senior leaders need to take in order to establish this? The strategic position of senior leaders puts them in a unique situation where they have the opportunity to remove barriers to contribution through the articulation of organizational goals and strategy, even more concretely through funding and employee investment. A little over half of employees in average organizations agree that they have **the training and resources to do a good job**, compared to 75% of employees in highly engaged organizations and just 40% of employees in organizations with the lowest levels of engagement. The most highly engaged organizations have an equally favorable view on the allocation of resources and training and leaders' ability to create a high-performing culture.

Contribution plays a crucial role in engagement, but it is impossible to reach sustainable maximum contribution without achieving maximum satisfaction. Examining the factors that impact employee satisfaction and the subtle way satisfaction influences contribution will provide a thorough view of what truly drives employee engagement.

¹ GP Strategies, The Coaching Conundrum 2016, Coaching in the post-performance-assessment era

Clear on work priorities



Create high performance environment



Manager provides regular feedback



Training and resources

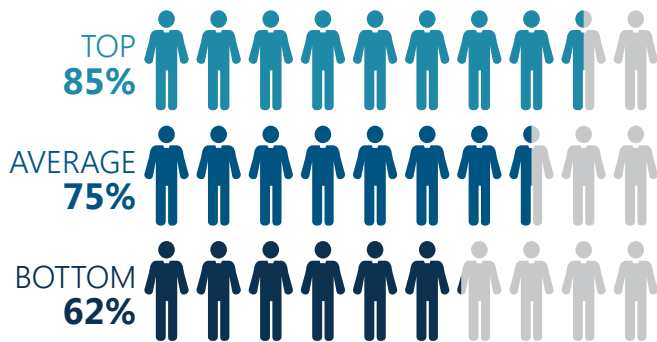


Satisfaction

Engagement isn't just about what the organization gets from their employees; of equal importance are the factors that energize and motivate employees to give their best work and discretionary effort, in other words what allows them to achieve maximum satisfaction.

We observed a 23-point range between highly engaged organizations and those with the lowest levels of engagement on the question "more often than not, I am satisfied to work here." How can the gap between highly engaged organizations and average or low scoring organizations be explained? What do great organizations do differently to drive employee satisfaction?

"I am satisfied to work here"



Satisfaction is an individualized equation. The factors that influence satisfaction look different for different people. For some employees, job conditions are the determining factor. For others, relationships with colleagues or the manager are paramount. Satisfaction varies from employee to employee, as each individual brings his or her own unique set of aspirations, values, and life circumstances to the job. However, our research shows that one factor above all else plays a determining role in employee satisfaction – job fit. Job fit speaks to the degree to which the work is suited to the individual performing it.

Liking the Work You Do: The foundation for job fit, first and foremost, is liking the work you do. Enjoying what we do is a critical component of being satisfied. How could anyone be satisfied and engaged at work if they don't like what they do on a daily basis? Highly engaged organizations do a better job at aligning employee interests with the work performed. 93% of employees in highly engaged organizations agree that they like the work they do compared to an average of 86%, and 76% in organizations with the lowest levels of engagement.

More than "Just a Job": But liking the work alone does not determine job fit. One can like the work without ever feeling like what they do is **more than just a job**. Feeling like the work is more than "just a job" speaks to the degree to which the work performed gives the employee a sense of purpose. In organizations with the highest levels of engagement, the data shows that the work is often more meaningful and purpose driven, with 88% of employees who agree that the work they do is more than just a job.

Employees are more likely to perform at higher levels when they feel like the work they do is more than just a job, which is why this particular item drives not only satisfaction but discretionary effort and contribution as well.

Like their work



Think of their work as more than just a job



The Importance of Manager Relationships: It may appear as though individual contributors are solely responsible for determining if their work aligns with their unique interests and gives them a sense of purpose. However, managers and senior leaders can still play a role in helping employees articulate these two key elements of job fit and satisfaction. For managers, understanding what employees enjoy doing and what motivates them comes down to **building solid and personalized relationships**. When managers have relationships with their employees, they are better equipped to understand their areas of professional interest and identify appropriate opportunities for them. The quality of relationships with the direct manager varies within the organizations studied, with a 21 point gap between organizations with the most highly engaged workforce and those with the lowest levels of engagement.

Have strong working relationship with manager



Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose



Understand How I Fit Into the Big Picture: Senior leaders on the other hand, are in a unique position to instill the work being done in the organization with a sense of meaning by **regularly linking the work of the organization and each individual employee to a larger purpose**, i.e. communicating the overall vision, goals and strategy of the organization to all employees regularly. Clearly connecting the work being done with the larger mission of the organization transforms even the most mundane of tasks into substantial and meaningful contributions to the organization. We observed a 27 point range between highly engaged organizations, 80%, and those with the lowest levels of engagement, 53%, on the ability of the leader to link the work to a larger purpose.

Have opportunities to grow and develop in their position



Have career opportunities in their organization



Identifying Growth Opportunities: Finally, when thinking about job fit it is important to consider professional growth opportunities that are available to employees. Professional growth can mean both vertical and horizontal growth within the organization. When potential for vertical growth through promotion and career advancement exists in the organization, employees can project themselves into the future with the organization and see the alignment between their personal path to success and the organization's success. Horizontal growth through training and stretch assignments allow employees to expand their knowledge and skill set, preparing them for the next steps in their career or satisfying a desire for growth when there are little opportunities to move up the ladder in the organization.

On average, employees perceive opportunities for growth within their current job position six points more favorably than having career opportunities. On questions related to professional growth, there is a particularly large gap between organizations with the highest and lowest levels of engagement regarding opportunities for growth (30 pt. gap) and career (31 pt. gap)

Conclusion

The data shows that organizations with the highest levels of engagement look different in terms of the key factors that impact satisfaction and contribution. Highly engaged organizations rely on behaviors and actions at the Individual, Manager, and Executive levels to create a working environment that supports maximum contribution and maximum satisfaction.

Now that you know the specific factors and behaviors that distinguish highly engaged organizations, how can you begin to make engagement part of your organizational culture? Our work with clients who are dedicated to make a difference on engagement shows a clear three-step strategy to put into place – first measure, then commit, and finally act.

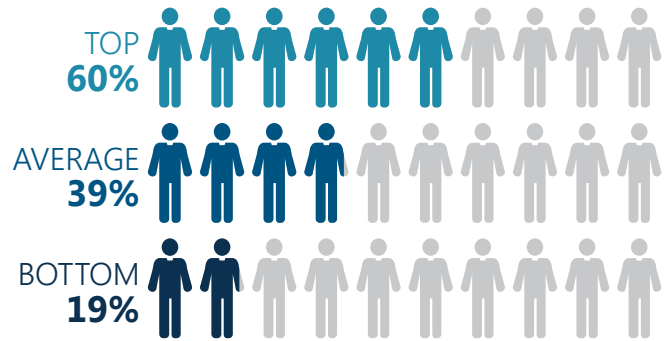
Assess: The first step in creating an engaged organization is implementing a measurement strategy. How can you address engagement if you don't know what the current state of engagement is within your organization? Using an engagement survey as a diagnostic tool to regularly assess your organization's engagement levels will provide you with insights on where to most strategically direct your attention, energy, and resources.

Commit: But making engagement part of the fabric of your organization does not end with assessment. At the end of the assessment cycle, it is crucial to demonstrate the organization's commitment to engagement by sharing survey results and setting expectations for what is to come – continued dialogue and the articulation of a strategy to address the results.

Take Action: Finally, you need to act on the results, by equipping employees at all levels (from executives down to individual contributors), with the tools they need to manage and take control of engagement.

This final step, while the most significant, is probably the most difficult one for many organizations. On average, the majority of employees do not respond favorably when asked if they think taking a survey will result in changes to the organization. However, employees in highly engaged organizations are three times as likely as employees in organizations with the lowest levels of engagement to agree that change will result from the survey.

Believe real change will come from the survey



Our research and extensive work with clients demonstrate just how important it is to act on survey results. Inaction only drives dissatisfaction and leads to lower levels of engagement within your organization.

Now that you know what great organizations do, what is stopping you from creating a highly engaged workforce? It's time to stop talking about average and start talking about how to create more great days at work! ■

The research in this report reflects analysis of more than 1.2 million people from more than 425 companies from a wide range of industries with a large majority living in North America.