

Improve Employee Engagement with These 6 Questions

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Gone are the days of the complacent worker who is content with doing the same job year after year regardless of perils in the status quo. Today, most people expect more from the organizations that employ them, and rightfully so.

That's why over the last 30 years, organizational researchers have put a lot of focus on studying employee engagement. More recently, that focus has evolved into the study of employee happiness, as we see more and more research that shows the link between employee engagement and organizational success. As the world continues to learn more about human psychology and happiness, leaders are realizing that supporting individuals in their pursuit of job satisfaction is not only a sound business decision, but also an ethical and moral one.

So, how can you ensure that your employees are engaged and happy with their roles at your company? You can start by asking questions.

Ask These Six Important Questions

From a business standpoint, asking the right questions allows you to discover problems and nip them in the bud early on. From an ethical perspective, it can help you support your employees and satisfy their fundamental needs and goals.

You probably have seen a variety of employee engagement surveys and 360-degree interview approaches, but every leader should start by asking their employees these six questions. They address two dimensions from each of three significant categories: support, clarity, and conflict. Use these questions to obtain information that can help optimize your organizational culture, leadership, and ultimately, your bottom line.

1. Organizational Support

Is there anything you need from the organization to be successful in your role? Anything you need more or less of?

2. Leader Support

Is there anything you need from me? Anything I could be doing differently that would be helpful to you?

3. Role Clarity

Is there anything unclear about your role? Anything you need clarity or direction on?

4. Career Clarity

*Do you still have a vision for how this role will help get you to your goals?
Anything you want to discuss or brainstorm on?*

5. Task Conflict

Is there anything about your current role that is aggravating or bothersome? Is there anything you would like to do that you are not currently doing?

6. Team Conflict

Is there anyone with whom you are experiencing some challenges? Anyone a little difficult to work with at the moment?

How to Get Started

To tackle any issues before they grow into more difficult pitfalls, you may want to have monthly one-on-one check-ins with your direct reports. Ideally, you should have these meetings over the phone or in-person—rather than via email, as many employees may be reluctant to respond honestly in writing.

If you do not have time to check-in with everyone, you might want to think about creating an "employee engagement leadership team" and assign each leader a small group of individuals to check in with every month. Ideally, the leadership team members should be tenured employees that the rest of your staff trusts, and who will create a report for you after each check-in. While you should read these reports in their entirety, you may also want to have the engagement team leaders' flag critical issues, so you do not miss them.

During the interviews, it is important that you, as the leader, create and model an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality. Employees answering these questions need to feel confident that nothing they say will come back to haunt them later on. Rather, they should see these check-ins as spaces for curiosity, care, and creativity. If you designate others to conduct the interviews, stress the importance of strict confidentiality, and ensure that they know how to handle personal, sensitive information appropriately.

Using the Information to Improve Your Company

Remember, gathering the information is just the start. Once you have it, you need to decide what you will do with it. Resist the urge to sit on important data. Ignoring such information can lead to a whole host of logistical, financial, and potentially even legal challenges down the road. This is especially true when it comes to your employees. After all, where would you or the organization be without your loyal, hard-working staff? And when you look after your employees, they are more likely to be invested in and look after your company's success.