7 Drivers

of

Employee Engagement

Contents

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Introduction

Most of us now realize that people create the real value in every company—and the better your people are, the better your business performs. So why have CEOs repeatedly declared that their greatest challenge is human capital?[1]

Some might say it's because we're in a heated war for talent. Quality candidates are scarce, and companies must mount an aggressive offense if they hope to bring those star employees on board. But in reality, CEOs know there's more to the game than playing offense. Maintaining a strong, productive workforce requires us to play defense, too, by working to retain employees once they're hired, and by truly engaging them and optimizing their value.

Unfortunately, defense isn't something we're very good at. In fact, a recent Gallup poll revealed that less than a third of employees today are engaged with their work and their companies. Even worse, 18% of employees are actively *disengaged*.[2] Clearly, we need help figuring out how to connect with our people—not just after they are hired, but while we are hiring them—so we can foster the kind of engaged relationships that generate long-term value.

In this eBook, we'll reveal seven key drivers proven to build and amplify employee engagement, from the time candidates interview to long after they join the team.

Take a look now to:

- Learn how strategic alignment between companies and their employees—or the lack thereof—can greatly impact productivity.

- See why "gamification" at work can help ignite employee passion.

- Get tips on measuring how engagement improves over time.

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Driver #1: Purpose Alignment

Inspire employees with a cause that makes a connection.

What it means:
In his bestselling book *Start with Why*, author Simon Sinek explains that conventional companies lead from the outside in. In other words, they have an idea for a business, they build products, and then they worry about the purpose behind it all. Sinek argues that truly remarkable and inspirational companies work from the inside out. They start with the why of the business—its mission and core values—and proceed from there. And in doing so, everything they build afterward, including the workforce, naturally becomes aligned with and inspired by that purpose.
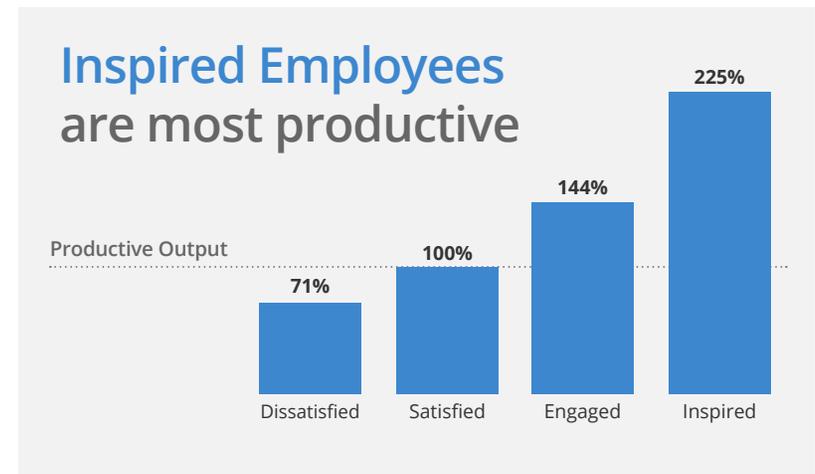
Why it matters:
In order to become engaged with the work they do and the place in which they work, employees must feel drawn to a purpose. That's human nature. A person who is inspired by a cause—and whose job centers around furthering that cause—has an intrinsic desire to succeed, and therefore becomes more productive. Conversely, when employees don't feel that their work contributes to a higher cause, they'll tend to put less effort into what they do.

How to make it happen:
- **Don't just talk about your vision for the future**. When you're communicating your company story, whether one-on-one or to the company at large, be sure you also talk about where you started and how far you've come already.

- **Be aware when things threaten to kill progress inertia**. It's natural for momentum to stall when the path becomes unclear, or when visible progress slows—so be sure your managers are trained on how to remedy the situation. Restate and refocus on the objectives at hand if necessary. Be sure employees have a clear plan of attack when they aren't sure how to continue work on a project. And if a task is simply too large to tackle, and moving forward is difficult, break it down into smaller and more manageable chunks.

Inspired Employees are most productive

Productive Output

Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Engaged	Inspired
71%	100%	144%	225%

Source: Bain & Company and EIU Research, 2015

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Driver #2: Progress Inertia
People in motion tend to stay in motion.

What it means:
You know Newton's law—that objects in motion tend to stay in motion, and objects at rest tend to stay at rest. People work the same way. When we're not contributing effectively, it's easy to continue doing nothing. But when we're achieving something and making progress, inertia still applies: We're driven to continue that forward motion.

Why it matters:
Behavioral psychologists have found that when people sense momentum, when they believe they are part-way to achieving a desirable objective, they gain a deeper feeling of engagement. They believe they're invested in the process, and they need to see it through to completion. In other words, when we see progress, we're more compelled to finish what's begun. At work, therefore, employees who are able to see how much has already been accomplished—on both the company and individual level—will naturally want to increase productivity in order to continue that progress.

How to make it happen:
- **Don't just talk about your vision for the future**. When you're communicating your company story, whether one-on-one or to the company at large, be sure you also talk about where you started and how far you've come already.

- **Be aware when things threaten to kill progress inertia**. It's natural for momentum to stall when the path becomes unclear, or when visible progress slows—so be sure your managers are trained on how to remedy the situation. Restate and refocus on the objectives at hand if necessary. Be sure employees have a clear plan of attack when they aren't sure how to continue work on a project. And if a task is simply too large to tackle, and moving forward is difficult, break it down into smaller and more manageable chunks.

The Power of a Head Start

In a study, two groups were given loyalty cards for a free car wash. Each group had to purchase 8 car washes for the free wash, but one group had a headstart with two stamps already on their cards.

Even though both groups needed to purchase the same number of car washes, the "Buy 10, get 1 Free" group filled out the card much more than the other!

Car   Buy **8** get 1 FREE!

Car   Buy **10** get 1 FREE!

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Driver #3: Task Autonomy
Making your own decisions matters.
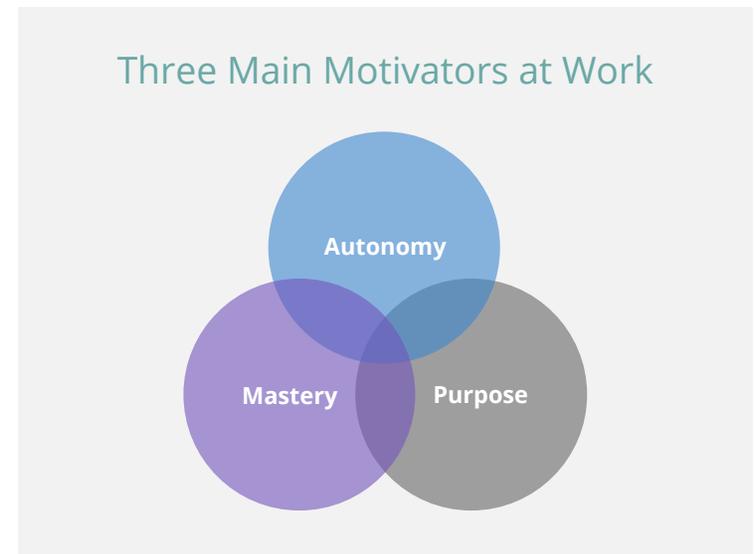
What it means:
Giving employees autonomy over tasks means ensuring that they have control over some aspects of the work that they do. This might mean, for example, that an employee is given the reins on a project from concept through completion—or perhaps just on a component of that project. The amount of control doesn't matter, only that it's there.

Why it matters:
Psychologists have found that people have three main motivators at work: autonomy, mastery, and purpose. We've talked about the purpose element, and we'll get to mastery in a moment. But autonomy is a key part of the equation because it's what gives us that feeling of ownership and accountability. If you own a project, and you're the one held accountable for how it turns out, you're going to devote more of yourself to making sure it's successful. Moreover, when managers place trust in you to get it done right, you'll take pride in knowing that you've earned that trust, and you'll want to live up to the expectation. Autonomy is a powerful incentive to get things done.

How to make it happen:
- **Help managers understand where to draw the line between guidance and micromanagement**. Getting too involved in what an employee is working on will stifle his or her sense of engagement.
- **Give employees opportunities to test their own theories and demonstrate their abilities**. It's okay if they make mistakes—they'll learn from them (hopefully) and grow from the experience. What matters is that you trust them to own something and give it their best shot.

Three Main Motivators at Work

Autonomy

Mastery   Purpose

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Driver #4: Task-to-skill Alignment

Let people do what they do best.

What it means:

Aligning employee tasks with their skills is primarily about ensuring people are in the right jobs. This sounds obvious—but 61% of employees say the reality of what they're required to do in a job differs from the expectations set during the interview process.[3] In other words, aligning tasks to skills starts from the moment we open a job requisition. It involves fully understanding what a job entails, which qualifications are necessary to fulfilling those duties, and—more importantly—what type of person will thrive in that type of position.

Why it matters:

When we look at productivity surveys, it's easy to see that the most actively disengaged employees are the ones being asked to do things they aren't good at. That disengagement comes from not being challenged, to be sure, but it also comes when we feel like we aren't contributing. The more people feel like their work contributes to something, and that they're making a difference because they're good at what they're doing, the more they feel engaged. There's a sweet spot where competency, opportunity, and passion come together—and when employees are put in jobs that ignite that sweet spot, they're going to be massively productive. They'll be in a state of flow, or in "the zone," when they are so focused on their work that they don't even notice the passing of time. This is where employees generate the most value for the company, and for themselves.

How to make it happen:

- **Start at the beginning, during the interview process**. Ask the right questions, so you can identify what candidates do well and what they are passionate about. And make sure you're up front about what a job requires in terms of skills and personality.

- **Teach managers, recruiters, interviewers to find the sweet spot for their candidates and employees**. Find out what motivates people, so you can engage them appropriately. Make sure that the tasks of a specific job align to the skills and the passions of the people that are in them. If someone is in a job that doesn't align to what they do best, look into ways to move them to maximize their value. At the same time, work to fill that position with someone who is a better fit.

"61% of employees say the reality of what they're required to do in a job differs from the expectations set during the interview process."

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Driver #5: Rewards & Recognition
Put the power of gamification to work.

What it means:
Humans are hard-wired neurologically to crave rewards, which activate the limbic brain, spur a rush of dopamine, and compel us to repeat rewarding behaviors. This is the essence of addictive behavior—but it can be used to your advantage in the workplace. Just as gifted game designers know how to drive users to crave the next level of a game, we can enact reward and recognition programs at work that drive employees to continue their successful actions.

Why it matters:
Gamification at work engages employees and motivates them to stick around. According to Bersin by Deloitte, "Organizations with recognition programs that are highly effective at improving employee engagement had 31% lower voluntary turnover than their peers."[4] People want to stay where they are rewarded for their efforts. Unfortunately, research by BambooHR shows that 52% of employees aren't satisfied with the recognition they receive, and 39% don't feel appreciated at all . If companies don't work to pull those numbers up, they will have a much harder time retaining valuable workers.

"Organizations with recognition programs that are highly effective at improving employee engagement had 31% lower voluntary turnover than their peers."

- Bersin by Deloitte

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Driver #6: Friends at Work

Cultivate social relationships of value.

What it means:

First off, work doesn't need to be high school. You don't want exclusive cliques that leave some folks feeling left out. You want the workplace to be an enjoyable environment for everyone, and social relationships play a huge role in whether or not you can achieve that objective.

Why it matters:

Camaraderie can have a tremendous impact on both productivity and turnover. 56% of new hires feel that having a buddy or mentor would help them become more productive faster.[6] Likewise, 17% of employees who left a job in first 6 months said a friendly smile or helpful coworker would have made a difference.[7] This might explain why employee referrals are five times more likely to be hired than candidates found through any other source.[8] People like to work with people they know and respect.

How to make it happen:

- **Make sure your employees know how valuable their referrals are**—**and encourage them to keep referring**. Communicate regularly about what jobs are open and what makes an ideal candidate. And keep employees updated about their referrals' progress in the application process.

- **Cultivate friendly relationships as a regular part of the onboarding process**. Consider asking new hires to complete personal questionnaires about their hobbies, travel destinations, or favorite restaurants. Sharing that information and facilitating introductions between like-minded employees can jumpstart initial conversations and encourage stronger personal relationships.

*"...employee referrals are **five times** more likely to be hired than candidates found through any other source."*

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Driver #7: Common Enemy

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

What it means:

We're not talking about uniting co-workers against another co-worker. The common enemy in the workplace should be something that threatens your company's ability to be the best. Maybe that's a certain competitor that's close at your heels, or a difficult record you're trying to break. The goal is to feel united as a team against this overarching threat.

Why it matters:

This goes back to the idea of gamification at work. When we're unified against an enemy, and we feel there's some kind of scorecard where we can track wins and losses, we're more motivated to work hard. We naturally put greater emotion and energy into everything we do—because we want to win the game. In addition, uniting against an external threat suppresses the urge to create internal battles. Early on in his Apple days, Steve Jobs rallied his employees against the common enemy of IBM, and as a result, internal political issues declined substantially. It makes sense: If the enemy of my enemy is my friend, and we all have a common enemy, then we are all friends.

How to make it happen:

- Figure out who your common enemy will be, and create a plan to unite your employees around this foe. How will you "keep score" in the fight? Make sure your battle is realistic and that you have numerous progress checks.

- Keep the game alive. Be sure you update employees on how you're doing—are you winning? Are you down a few points? What's the strategy for your comeback? Even if you're losing, the drive to beat the enemy is an incredible motivator. And don't forget the rewards for progress along the way!

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Don't Forget: Measure & Adapt

As with every undertaking in business, metrics matter. You need a way to take the pulse of your organization and understand the level at which your employees are engaged—both as a whole, and by department. And you need to measure these engagement levels regularly, so you know where you're improving and where you still need work.

One of the best ways to track engagement is through an Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS). Periodically send out a question to the entire organization, as well as to each department, to gauge their feelings. For example, you might ask, "On a scale of 1-10, how likely are you right now to recommend our company to someone?" Or simply, "How engaged are you with your work right now, on a scale of 1-10?"
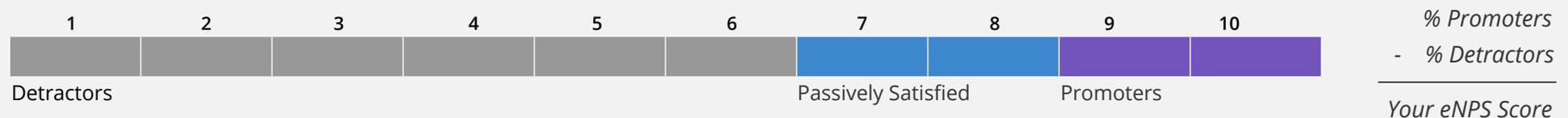
Typically, we rank scores as follows:

- People who respond with **9-10 are your promoters**. They're engaged and willing to promote the company.

- People indicating **7-8 are passively satisfied**. They aren't at maximum engagement, but they're likely to be productive employees.

- Anyone scoring **1-6 is a detractor**. These are people who are most likely to complain about what they're doing or the company as a whole.

Calculate: eNPS = % promoters - % detractors

If you regularly conduct these surveys and calculate your eNPS as a company and by department, you'll be able to track employee engagement and see specifically where you might want to focus upcoming efforts. You'll also be able to see which managers might need additional leadership training, or if it's worth going back and uniting people around a purpose again. Only if you track these changes over time will you know what work is still necessary and where.

Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Detractors   Passively Satisfied   Promoters

% Promoters
- % Detractors

Your eNPS Score

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Conclusion

Human Resources, and in fact the entire business of managing human capital, is extremely important right now. The reason is clear: Without a strong workforce, companies can't succeed. The challenge is in fortifying that workforce with qualified new talent while still retaining and engaging the talent you already have. The best HR departments, therefore, view employee engagement as a continuous cycle that starts before people are hired, accelerates as they are onboarded, and persists throughout an employee's tenure. By empowering HR organizations with the right tools and technology to take this long-term, holistic approach, companies can more effectively and strategically optimize the value of their greatest assets: their people.

For more information on how you can improve employee engagement at your company, visit www.jobvite.com or www.bamboohr.com.

1   https://www.conference-board.org/retrievefilecfm?filename=TCB_R-1537-14-RR1.pdf&type=subsite

2   http://www.gallup.com/poll/181289/majority-employees-not-engaged-despite-gains-2014.aspx

3   https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/popular-topics/hr-stats.htm

4   http://www.bersin.com/Practice/Subject.aspx?s=Rewards-@-Recognition

5   http://www.shrm.org/hrdisciplines/staffingmanagement/articles/pages/onboarding-key-retaining-engaging-talent.aspx

6   Jobvite, 2015 Recruiter Nation Study, Page 7

7   BambooHR Survey

8   Jobvite, 2015 Recruiter Nation Study, Page 4

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About Jobvite

Jobvite helps companies stay one step ahead of the competitive job market by helping them hire top talent easily, efficiently, and effectively. Our comprehensive and analytics-driven recruiting platform accelerates recruiting with an easy-to-use Applicant Tracking System (ATS), social recruiting capabilities, mobile-optimized branded career sites, a recruiting branding solution, on-demand video screening, advanced analytics, and seamless integration with HR systems. Focused exclusively on recruiting software since 2006, with offices in San Mateo and London, Jobvite was the first to deliver social recruiting, native video interviewing, advanced scheduling, and CRM. Jobvite has thousands of customers including LinkedIn, Twitter, Schneider Electric, and Gamesys, and was named a leader in the "Forrester Wave for Talent Acquisition, Q3 2015." To learn more and request a free demo, visit www.jobvite.com or follow us on Twitter @Jobvite.

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BambooHR is the number one HR software for small and medium sized businesses. BambooHR's cloud-based system has beautifully designed, intuitive features including an applicant tracking system (ATS), onboarding with electronic signatures, automated time-off tracking, and innovative performance management. This gives HR managers more time for meaningful work, executives get accurate, timely reports, and employees can self-service their time off using a convenient mobile app. Clients include many industry leaders like Stance, Soundcloud, and FanDuel among thousands of others in over 80 countries worldwide.

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