

Employee Engagement Bulletin 2025

The GCC Businesses' Employee Engagement Gap: A Strategic Imperative for Regional Leadership



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The GCC Businesses Employee Engagement Gap: A Strategic Imperative for Regional Leadership

While leading organizations in The US and Europe have demonstrated a clear link between employee engagement and competitive advantage – The GCC market is still navigating the adoption of these critical platforms. **This presents not a crisis, but a significant strategic opportunity.** By proactively addressing the engagement gap, companies can position themselves for regional leadership and sustainable growth.

The GCC's ambitious government initiatives, such as Saudi Vision 2030 and the UAE's digital strategies, are driving unprecedented transformation. To fully realize the potential of these initiatives, **companies must invest in their human capital.**

Contemporary employee engagement practices and solutions provide the tools to build a highly motivated, productive, and adaptable workforce, perfectly aligned with the region's forward-thinking vision.

By strategically implementing these solutions, your company has all the opportunity to:

- ♦ **Enhance talent retention**, a key pillar for achieving the goals outlined in regional visions;
- ♦ **Boost innovation and collaboration**, essential for driving digital transformation;
- ♦ **Improve overall productivity**, aligning with the region's focus on economic diversification.

This is not simply about keeping pace; it's about leveraging a proven strategy to accelerate **your progress and secure your place as a leader in the digital age.**

Companies addressing the engagement gap not only improve their business stance, but contribute to the **realization of the nation's ambitious goals.**

We, Teal HR team, invite you to join us in this endeavor!

Learn more about
Teal HR



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Beyond Surveys: How Premier Inn Middle East Built Real Engagement

Author: Kathy Sorenson, Director of People and Culture at Premier Inn Hotels

Employee engagement is often misunderstood as a collection of fun perks – pizza parties, casual Fridays, or team-building events. While these can contribute to a positive workplace, real engagement is about something deeper: a workplace culture where team members feel valued, heard, and motivated to contribute. At Premier Inn Middle East, we've built an approach that is focused, actionable, and manager-driven.

We previously relied on a large, complex, consultant-driven survey – a 50-question annual exercise that provided plenty of data but lacked focus, making it difficult to drive meaningful change. The sheer number of questions diluted priorities, and by the time results were analysed and shared, the opportunity for real change had often passed.

We didn't want just another engagement survey — we wanted something that would make a real difference.

Keeping Engagement Focused and Actionable

After reviewing engagement models, and our own business needs, we knew our approach had to be clear, easy to implement, and genuinely useful for everyone. We focused on four strong, easy-to-remember pillars – Satisfaction, Happiness, Motivation, and Leadership – ensuring we didn't overwhelm team

members with endless questions. We carefully selected three or four questions per pillar, recognising that surveys can't provide all the answers but supported in identifying areas to focus support and celebrate what's going well. We debated running it once, twice, or quarterly but settled on twice a year – frequent enough to measure change but realistic for implementation.

Our new, simple yet powerful framework allows us to track engagement meaningfully and take action at the right time – without survey fatigue or unnecessary complexity.

- ♦ **Four key pillars:** Satisfaction, Happiness, Motivation, and Leadership – the essentials that shape how team members experience their work;
- ♦ **No survey fatigue:** Focused, targeted questions ensure feedback is meaningful;
- ♦ **Twice a year, not once:** Measuring engagement every six months maintains momentum and tracks progress effectively;
- ♦ **Action, not just insight:** Data is only useful if it leads to change. Our managers take results seriously, using them to drive real conversations and improvements.

Why Having Pillars Matters in Engagement

At Premier Inn Middle East, we believe that engagement must be structured around clear, meaningful pillars to create lasting impact. Without a defined focus, engagement efforts can become scattered. Our approach ensures that team members' experiences are measured holistically and that's why our engagement pillars include everything that truly matters:

- ♦ **Satisfaction:** The foundation of engagement. If team members do not feel they are paid fairly, have the tools they need, or are properly trained, engagement cannot exist. Satisfaction ensures that basic workplace needs are met, setting the stage for deeper engagement.
- ♦ **Happiness:** A workplace should foster trust, fairness, and inclusion. Happiness comes from feeling valued, experiencing work-life balance, and being part of a supportive environment.
- ♦ **Motivation:** People thrive when they see progress. Recognising effort, providing learning opportunities, and enabling career growth keep team members engaged and driven.
- ♦ **Leadership:** The pillar that ties everything together. Engagement flourishes when leaders communicate clearly, act with integrity, and create an environment where team members feel heard and supported.

This holistic approach sets us apart – many engagement surveys focus only on morale or team dynamics, but we measure the full experience of being part of Premier Inn Middle East.

Turn Insights Into Impact

The most important part is holding ourselves accountable. Engagement isn't just an HR initiative; it's tied directly to leadership performance, with KPIs ensuring that survey results lead to meaningful action and continuous improvement.



Image source: mena.premierinn.com

Our One Pulse One Heartbeat programme recently won Best Employee-Driven Business Change at the Employee Happiness Awards 2024. This recognition and our results truly reflect how we've shifted engagement from being a data collecting tick box to a culture-driven movement.

Our approach works because:

- ♦ **We act on feedback, not just collect it:** Engagement results are linked to KPIs, ensuring accountability at all levels. We use the results to drive great conversations where Team members' voices shape decision-making and drive improvements that matter.
- ♦ **We run the survey twice a year to enable action:** Measuring engagement every six months ensures that improvements happen in real time, allowing us to track progress, respond proactively, and make engagement a continuous driver of success.

What Can You Do to Make Engagement Meaningful

If you're looking to build a more impactful engagement strategy, here are some key takeaways from our approach at Premier Inn Middle East:

- ♦ **Keep it simple and actionable** – Short, focused surveys are more effective than long, complex ones.
- ♦ **Measure engagement more than once a year** – Frequent check-ins allow for real-time response and adaptation.
- ♦ **Tie engagement to leadership accountability** – When managers are measured on engagement KPIs, it ensures feedback leads to action.
- ♦ **Act on feedback, don't just collect it** – Engagement should be a cycle of listening, acting, and improving – not just a survey exercise.
- ♦ **Recognise that satisfaction is the entry point** – If basic needs like pay fairness, resources, and training aren't met, engagement efforts won't take hold.
- ♦ **Avoid meaningless pulse checks** – Daily check-ins with smiley faces may not solve real issues and contribute to survey fatigue.

By applying these principles, you can move beyond surveys and create a culture where team members feel truly connected, valued, and empowered.

Engagement is a Commitment, Not a Campaign

At Premier Inn Middle East, engagement isn't just an annual event – it's a commitment. It is embedded into leadership accountability, making it a core responsibility for every leader in our business. We're creating a workplace where team members feel connected, supported, and valued. Our focus on Satisfaction, Happiness, Motivation, and Leadership ensures that engagement is more than just a survey – it's part of how we work every day.

By focusing on the fundamentals, empowering managers, and keeping engagement simple but impactful, we've created a workplace where team members don't just work – they thrive.



Kathy Sorenson
Director of People and
Culture at Premier Inn Hotels

About Author

I'm Kathy Sorenson, Director of People and Culture at Premier Inn Middle East. With nearly 30 years of experience, I'm passionate about creating workplaces where team members feel valued, heard, and empowered.

I've led the transformation of our engagement strategy, moving from complex, consultant-led surveys to a streamlined, action-driven approach. My focus is on ensuring engagement isn't just measured – it's acted upon. I've spoken

at industry-leading HR conferences and built strategies that turn engagement into a real driver of business success. Because at the end of the day, engagement isn't about surveys – it's about making work meaningful.

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Based On a True-Life Story: How You Can Keep Your Employees Engaged While Working Across Cultures!

Author: Özge Korkmaz, Chief Human Resources Officer at Sipay

I've been working internationally since 2013 and even our lives is full of AI discussions nowadays, people, cultures, emotions, behaviors and habits still stand there and define our satisfaction level in the workplace.

Clarifying what “**engagement**” is might guide the way at that point. For me, **engagement** is a sentiment that keeps you in the organization full of satisfaction for what you do. And feeling happy to be there and contributing to the company's vision and goal every day. Engagement is a both side topic which feeds employees and the organization simultaneously.

Considering the definition above, how can you keep people engaged while you have different generations, genders, nationalities, personalities, and expectations in the workplace? After the pandemic, our employees are not even in the same place anymore and do not share the same atmosphere and office most of the time.

The first thing at this stage is creating a **company culture** which embraces everyone as themselves no matter what their differences are. Never dictate a culture that has been created by consultants or the company's top management; culture comes from the employees, because **the company is its people**. HR can set the rules of the game, the workplace strategies and the great rewards and benefits schemes for employees, but the creators of the culture

itself are always the people who put their mental and physical energy into the organization every day.

The second item on the list is giving **psychological safety** to your team to allow them to express what they are thinking. Listen to your employees whenever you see an opportunity to do so. Understanding the expectations and shaping your People and Culture strategies, accordingly, gives you the biggest power for engagement. On the other hand, creating the right tools for transparent and sustainable communication between employees is also crucial for the engagement. We need to keep that in mind, miscommunication or lack of communication in the workplace always creates gossip culture which brings toxic environment afterwards.

While I was working for JLL I was responsible for twenty-four countries throughout Europe and the Middle East and Africa. We were running pulse surveys regularly, then it became global level, and I took responsibility to do the same thing for eighty countries. At that point, the story became more meaningful to me, because I had another understanding about how people would like to see similar things in the workplace even though they live and work in completely different countries and cultures while they were coming from dissimilar backgrounds. Of course, we have specific issues or sensitivities



Image source: Freepik.com

for the regions. Nevertheless, the lesson I learned from this experience is that **people live for three things: being loved, being recognized, and self-realization.**

So, we need to give our employees some space to fulfil themselves because the research shows us that the biggest reason for the depression is the not using people's own potential. Everyone comes into this world with a talent, and we need to assess our people for what they are gifted. I am not talking about the standard Talent Review process or 9-Box Grid exercise which we conduct as a habit each year depending on Human Resources theory. The thing that I would like to emphasize here is finding their ambitions or the thing they are enthusiastic or passionate about and supporting them with budget, free time, and anything else you can provide.

The other dimension that we need to consider is recognition. I remember that how people filled out the nomination forms for being selected to the "star of the quarter program" when I was leading Human Resources strategy for Assets Group in Qatar. The programme was set up to recognize employees who had gone beyond and were recognized by their peers and managers. Each time I shook hands with an employee who had been recognized as a star, I saw the **sparkle in their eyes** and the joy they radiated. People think that only money makes people happy, but I am afraid that is not true. Sometimes a simple 'thank you' or 'appreciation' can make a person more engaged.

As I mentioned earlier, I have spent half of my career working with people from different backgrounds and I have always felt fortunate to be surrounded by the diversity that inspires me. When I first arrived in London to work permanently for my company's London office, I noticed that the short lunch break was not a long break to socialize, on the contrary in my Mediterranean country. In Istanbul, lunchtime is always an opportunity for employees to see each other, chat and get to know each other. They ate their sandwiches on their desks and then went straight back to work, which I found a bit boring at first. I thought, I am a human being, and I need to socialize at the end of the day. Then I left the office, which is in Soho, on the first day and saw people having fun together in famous British pubs after intense working hours, regardless of their titles, roles etc... I got used to it quickly and it was a great part of being a global organization. Helping people understand where they are when they join an organization, the culture of the country

or company, has been a golden key in my pocket ever since. And we should never forget that having fun should be another part of being human and we can never ignore that even our employees live in different geographies, time zones and cultures. Technology gives us this opportunity and I am always grateful to the friends around the world that working life has given me, I hope that this gives the gist of my **being loved** attitude part of the engagement discussion.

I wish everyone to find their dream organization to feel engaged, because according to Harvard Business Review we know that engagement makes people feel happy, happiness creates productivity at the end it's a win for both employees and employers.



Özge Korkmaz
CHRO at Sipay

About Author

With more than 20 years of HR experience, she has worked in various positions in companies such as Mudo, Sabancı Group, Daikin, Cigna, JLL, Assets Group and Sipay.

In the last decade, she worked for JLL in regional roles as Talent Management Director for EMEAT, and also worked as JLL EMEAT DEI Program Director in London. She worked as an HR Director for Assets Group in Doha, Qatar as a part of ex-

committee. She joined Sipay as Chief Human Resources Officer in December 2024.

She holds a BA in Labour Economics and an MA in Organizational Psychology. She has been working as a lecturer, HR consultant and ICF coach since 2017.

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Employee Engagement Unleashed – Driving Meaning & Purpose at Work

Author: Nasrin Qurashi, Founder at 8 Fold HR Consultancy

What many organizations will agree with now is that there is a **noticeable shift happening in the workplace**, with employees increasingly seeking meaning and purpose in their work. I strongly believe that they are no longer content with simply going through the motions; rather, they want to feel that their contributions are making a real difference. This desire to be part of something bigger than themselves is driving the rise of corporate social responsibility initiatives, employee well-being programs, and a greater focus on mental health support within organizations. **Employees thrive when they align their personal values with the mission of their organization**, leading to increased engagement, productivity, and overall satisfaction.

From my personal experience as an HR leader, the current trend highlights the importance for employees to **feel a sense of purpose in their work**. They seek to contribute to a mission that aligns with their personal values, emphasizing the significance of corporate social responsibility, employee well-being programs, and mental health initiatives. **Recognizing and adapting to this shift enhances an organization's ability to attract and retain top talent**. However, some companies struggle to effectively convey their mission and values, creating a gap between employee expectations and organizational goals.

I have always encouraged that **HR leaders should integrate purpose into the workplace**. An organization's mission and values should not be mere slogans but active principles shaping daily operations. **Workshops and training can help communicate the company's mission**, enabling employees to see the significance of their roles in achieving overarching objectives.

Furthermore, to foster a sense of belonging and significance, it is crucial to provide employees with opportunities to **align their personal values with the organization's mission**. HR can achieve this by encouraging employees to share their stories and experiences that resonate with the company's purpose. By highlighting these connections, **a deeper sense of camaraderie is cultivated**, leading to a more engaged and motivated workforce.

I highly recommend that to bridge the gap between an organization's purpose and what makes employees feel fulfilled, **employees must see the real impact of their work**. That's where HR leaders come in – driving engagement through recognition programs that celebrate both individual and team victories aligned with the company's mission. **Spotlighting standout moments where employees go above and beyond reinforces their impact on the organization's success**.

I always emphasize that **fostering a culture of feedback** is crucial for creating a sense of purpose in the workplace. Regular check-ins and constructive feedback allow employees to see how their work contributes to the mission and identify ways to make a more meaningful impact. **HR can support this by training managers to deliver feedback that inspires and motivates employees.**

Let us not ignore the fact that **structuring a strong sense of community in the workplace is vital** for cultivating a sense of purpose among employees. HR professionals can implement various tactics such as team-building exercises, volunteering events, or social responsibility initiatives that resonate with the organization's core values. **These efforts strengthen camaraderie and reinforce a shared commitment to company goals.**

As I have navigated this evolving landscape in recent years, I have come to realize that it's vital to **stay connected to the evolving expectations of the workforce.** Gathering employee feedback through surveys, focus groups, and individual conversations offers valuable insights into their desires for purpose and significance. **By actively discussing values and purpose, HR can better understand workforce needs and take proactive steps to meet them.**

I would conclude that **embracing the trend towards purpose and meaning** gives HR leaders a significant opportunity to transform the workplace. By aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals, fostering open communication, and promoting well-being, a space can be created where employees feel connected, engaged, and motivated. **Prioritizing purpose creates a win-win for both employees and the organization.** As HR leaders, it is our responsibility to champion this journey towards a more purpose-driven workplace.



Nasrin Qurashi
Founder at 8 Fold
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About Author

After over 15 years of experience in human resources leadership, I have honed my skills in every aspect of HR management. Throughout my career, I have led diverse teams through periods of change and growth, always striving to create an inclusive and supportive work environment. My strong communication skills and emotional intelligence have enabled me to build strong relationships with employees at all levels of the organization.

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The Impact of Leadership on Employee Engagement

Author: Yusra Alghamdi, HR Team Leader at Jumeirah Jabal Omar Makkah

Employee engagement has become a major focus for organizations, and for good reason. Engaged employees are more motivated, productive, and committed to their work. But what truly drives engagement? While several factors contribute, one of the most critical is leadership. The way leaders communicate, support, and empower their teams directly influences how employees feel about their work and their workplace.

Communication: Setting the Foundation for Engagement

At the heart of great leadership is clear and open communication. Employees want to understand their company's vision, their role within it, and how their work makes a difference. When leaders effectively communicate goals and expectations, employees are more likely to feel aligned with the bigger picture.

But communication isn't just about talking – it's also about listening. Encouraging open dialogue, welcoming feedback, and creating a space where employees feel heard can significantly boost engagement. A simple habit like regular check-ins or town hall meetings can go a long way in making employees feel valued and included.

The Role of Empathy in Leadership

Beyond communication, one of the most powerful leadership traits is empathy. Leaders who genuinely care about their team's well-being build stronger relationships and foster trust. Employees who feel supported are more likely to stay engaged and motivated.

A study by Catalyst found that 76% of employees with highly empathetic leaders are engaged at work, compared to only 32% with less empathetic leadership. This shows that engagement isn't just about performance metrics – it's about how employees feel. Small gestures, such as acknowledging challenges, offering flexibility, or simply checking in on employees' well-being, can make a big difference.

Fostering a Culture of Inclusion and Collaboration

A workplace where people feel included and valued naturally leads to higher engagement. When leaders actively promote inclusivity and collaboration, employees feel a sense of belonging, which fuels motivation and innovation.

Google's research project, Project Aristotle, found that the highest-performing teams have something in common: psychological safety. When employees feel safe to express their

ideas, take risks, and contribute without fear of judgment, engagement levels soar. Leaders play a key role in fostering this culture by encouraging different perspectives, recognizing contributions, and leading by example.

Recognition and Growth: Keeping Employees Motivated

Recognition and growth opportunities are two of the strongest drivers of engagement. Employees who feel appreciated and empowered are more likely to be committed to their work. Leaders can cultivate this by:

- ◇ Recognizing efforts through regular feedback and appreciation.
- ◇ Offering career development opportunities like mentorship or leadership training.
- ◇ Trusting employees with meaningful tasks that give them a sense of ownership.

According to research by O.C. Tanner, 79% of employees who receive strong recognition feel a sense of purpose in their work, which directly impacts engagement and retention. A simple "thank you" or acknowledgment of hard work can go a long way in boosting morale.

Leading by Example: The Power of Authentic Leadership

Leaders set the tone for the workplace. Employees observe not just what leaders say but how they act. A leader who promotes work-life balance but constantly sends emails late at night might unintentionally create pressure for employees to do the same.

Authenticity is key – leaders who are transparent, accountable, and lead

with integrity naturally inspire trust and engagement. By modeling the values they expect from their teams, leaders create a culture where employees feel motivated to give their best.

Conclusion: Leadership as the Driving Force of Engagement

Employee engagement isn't just about perks or policies – it's about people. The way leaders communicate, show empathy, foster inclusivity, recognize contributions, and lead by example directly shapes the workplace experience. Organizations that prioritize strong, people-focused leadership create teams that are not only engaged but also resilient and driven.



Yusra Alghamdi
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About Author

I'm Yusra Alghamdi, an HR Team Leader with a passion for employee engagement, recruitment, and HR operations. I focus on creating a positive work environment, optimizing processes, and ensuring HR strategies align with business goals. My goal is to enhance workplace culture and drive organizational success.

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Call to Action: A Leadership Check-In

Author: Yusra Alghamdi, HR Team Leader at Jumeirah Jabal Omar Makkah

Whether you're a seasoned leader or just stepping into a management role, take a moment to reflect:

- ♦ Are you clearly communicating your vision and expectations?
- ♦ Do you actively listen and support your team?
- ♦ Are you fostering an inclusive and collaborative culture?
- ♦ Does your actions align with the values you promote?

Great leadership isn't about having all the answers – it's about continuously learning, adapting, and putting people first. Small changes in leadership approach can create a lasting impact on employee engagement and overall workplace success.



Adoption of Flexible and Hybrid Work Models: A McGregor Theory X and Theory Y Perspective with a review of the ROWE model implementation

Author: Giorgio Davidoni, Former AVP Human Resources at Eli Lilly and Company

Recent decisions by several high-profile U.S. corporations to revert to full-time in-office work policies have sparked significant debate within the human resources community. These moves, often justified by traditional notions of productivity and control, stand in stark contrast to the evolving expectations of today's workforce. In a rapidly changing business environment – one in which remote and hybrid work models have proven not only effective but transformative – a return to rigid, full-time office mandates appears both outdated and counterproductive.

Douglas McGregor's seminal theories, introduced in the 1960s, offer a compelling lens through which to examine these trends. McGregor posited two contrasting management philosophies: Theory X and Theory Y. Theory X assumes that employees inherently dislike work, are unmotivated, and require strict supervision and rigid controls to perform effectively. Conversely, Theory Y contends that work is as natural as play or rest when the environment is supportive; employees are self-motivated, enjoy taking responsibility, and flourish when granted autonomy. In today's flexible and digital-first era, the evidence increasingly supports a Theory Y approach.

This article challenges the full-time office mandate by demonstrating how flexible and hybrid work models – exemplified by the Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE) – offer a people-centric, Theory Y

approach that benefits both employees and organizations. It provides practical strategies, real-world examples, and a balanced analysis of the pros and cons of these modern HR practices.

The Evolution to Flexible and Hybrid Work Models

The post-pandemic landscape forced organizations worldwide to reevaluate traditional work practices. Remote work was adopted out of necessity, but its benefits soon became evident. Employees enjoyed improved work-life balance, reduced commuting stress, and greater flexibility, while companies benefited from lower overhead costs and access to a broader talent pool. As organizations began transitioning to hybrid models – where staff split their time between remote and in-office work – the emphasis shifted from time tracking to outcomes. This evolution aligns closely with Theory Y principles, which hold that when employees are trusted and given autonomy, they perform at higher levels and drive innovation.

The ROWE Model

One of the most illustrative examples of a Theory Y-driven initiative is the Results-Only Work Environment (ROWE). Developed in the early 2000s by Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson at Best Buy,

ROWE represents a radical departure from traditional work models. Instead of focusing on when or where work is done, ROWE evaluates employees solely on the results they produce. Under ROWE, employees enjoy complete autonomy over their schedules and work locations, as long as they meet clearly defined performance targets.

Core Principles of ROWE include:

- ♦ **Autonomy:** Employees set their own schedules and work environments, which enables them to balance personal responsibilities with professional objectives;
- ♦ **Outcome-Based Measurement:** Instead of tracking clocked hours, performance is measured by clearly defined key performance indicators (KPIs) and deliverable benchmarks;
- ♦ **Elimination of Micromanagement:** Managers shift from constant oversight to providing strategic guidance and support, fostering a culture of trust and innovation;
- ♦ **Enhanced Flexibility:** Employees are free to work during their peak productivity periods, regardless of traditional office hours, which leads to a better work-life balance.



Cali Ressler and Jody Thompson, developers of ROWE model
Image source: gorowe.com

Practical Strategies for Implementing Flexible and Hybrid Work Models

Drawing from the principles of ROWE and Theory Y, organizations can implement several practical strategies to enhance employee engagement:

1. Cultivating a Culture of Trust and Autonomy

Example: A digital marketing agency might implement a ROWE framework by setting clear campaign performance metrics instead of mandating fixed office hours.

Pros:

- ♦ Increases intrinsic motivation and accountability;
- ♦ Encourages creative problem solving and innovation;
- ♦ Enhances job satisfaction through flexible scheduling.

Cons:

- ♦ Defining clear and objective performance metrics can be challenging;
- ♦ Managers must transition from micromanagement to coaching – a significant cultural shift;
- ♦ Without boundaries, there is a risk of employees overextending work hours.

2. Investing in Robust Communication and Collaboration Tools

Example: A global consulting firm might deploy integrated platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Trello to support seamless collaboration across remote and in-office teams.

Pros:

- ♦ Facilitates real-time communication and project tracking;

- ◇ Enhances transparency and accountability with digital dashboards;
- ◇ Provides flexibility by allowing access to resources from any location.

Cons:

- ◇ Over-reliance on digital tools can lead to virtual meeting fatigue;
- ◇ Cybersecurity concerns require continuous investment and monitoring;
- ◇ Some employees may experience a steep learning curve when adopting new technologies.

3. Redesigning Physical Workspaces to Complement Remote Work

Example: A financial services firm might transform its traditional office into dynamic collaboration hubs featuring open meeting areas, breakout zones, and innovation labs for in-person team activities.

Pros:

- ◇ Encourages spontaneous collaboration and creative brainstorming;
- ◇ Optimizes the use of physical space through flexible seating and shared areas;
- ◇ Enhances the company's image, attracting top talent.

Cons:

- ◇ Requires significant initial capital investment;
- ◇ Risk of underutilization if the majority of employees work remotely;
- ◇ Employees may need time to adapt to less structured, modern work environments.

4. Enhancing Employee Support and Development Programs

Example: A multinational retailer could launch a digital learning platform that

offers on-demand training modules, virtual coaching, and regular career development check-ins to align personal growth with organizational goals.

Pros:

- ◇ Promotes continuous learning and upskilling;
- ◇ Signals that the company invests in its workforce, boosting engagement;
- ◇ Empowers employees to take control of their career trajectories.

Cons:

- ◇ Implementation can be resource-intensive and costly;
- ◇ Participation levels may vary across the organization;
- ◇ Measuring the direct impact on performance can be challenging.

5. Prioritizing Work-Life Balance and Well-Being

Example: A tech startup might introduce "no-meeting days", flexible work hours, and wellness programs – such as mindfulness apps and virtual counseling – to help employees maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life.

Pros:

- ◇ Reduces burnout and stress, leading to improved productivity;
- ◇ Enhances employee loyalty and job satisfaction by valuing personal well-being;
- ◇ Contributes to a supportive and positive workplace culture.

Cons:

- ◇ Guidelines must be clearly defined to prevent inconsistent usage;
- ◇ Balancing diverse needs may complicate scheduling;
- ◇ Ongoing programs require continual financial and administrative support.

6. Implementing Flexible Scheduling and Remote Work Models

Example: A multinational consulting firm might allow employees to choose their remote and in-office days while maintaining “core hours” for team collaboration.

Pros:

- ◇ Provides enhanced autonomy and flexibility;
- ◇ Expands the talent pool by removing geographic restrictions;
- ◇ Can result in cost savings due to reduced office space requirements.

Cons:

- ◇ Coordinating across variable schedules may challenge team coherence;
- ◇ Remote employees might experience isolation without proper integration strategies;
- ◇ Not all roles are suited to remote work, potentially creating perceptions of inequality.

Conclusion

The shift toward flexible and hybrid work models marks a pivotal evolution in modern workforce management. By adopting a Theory Y-oriented approach – exemplified by initiatives like ROWE – companies empower employees to focus on results rather than adhering to rigid, time-bound processes. Practical strategies, from cultivating trust and investing in digital collaboration tools to redesigning office spaces, enhancing development programs, and prioritizing work-life balance, demonstrate tangible benefits in terms of productivity, engagement, and overall job satisfaction.



Giorgio Davidoni
Former AVP Human Resources
at Eli Lilly and Company

About Author

Over the span of my 30-year career in Human Resources (Electrolux and Eli Lilly), my professional journey has encompassed diverse business landscapes in Europe, USA, China, Middle East, South Asia, Africa, India and Turkey.

My consultancy company name is “Simply HR”. This because I think that too many times in business, we overcomplicate things. In my programs, I collect the principles, tools, and techniques that have underpinned my daily work in Human Resources Management.

My consultancy services are in the following areas: Human Resources Management – People Strategy – Career Development – Talent Management – Organizational Capabilities – Human Resources Capabilities and Competencies – Organizational productivity.

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Employee's Departure: The Art of "Exit Without Tears"

Author: Abdul Ghaffar, Director of Talent Development at Advance Growth Academy

Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of modern workplaces, employee turnover is inevitable. However, how organizations handle departures can profoundly impact their culture, reputation, and long-term success. An **"Exit Without Tears"** approach emphasizes dignity, professionalism, and empathy when parting ways with employees, ensuring a smooth transition for both parties involved. In this article, we delve into the significance of "Exit Without Tears" and explore strategies for implementing this approach effectively.

In today's competitive business world, a respectful, reputable and reliable cultures play a pivotal role in any organization to be recognized as corporate culture. One of the most important HR processes in the company is "off boarding". So, organizations must recognize the significance of departure as most critical moment in the employee lifecycle. An **"Exit Without Tears"** approach not only safeguards the dignity and well-being of departing employees but also reflects positively on the organization's culture, values, and reputation. By prioritizing clear communication, empathetic support, fair treatment, knowledge transfer, continued engagement, and feedback-driven improvement, organizations can navigate departures with grace and integrity, fostering a culture of respect, trust, and resilience. In doing so, they lay the foundation for sustained success,

employee satisfaction, and positive employer branding in the long run. In some companies, the process is very tiring and troublesome. Sometimes, out going employees feel that the decision of joining this company was his/her mistake while he/she has given an enough period of his/her life to the company. It's just because the exit process is not smooth and simple. The Six Sigma Process must be applied at this juncture to simplify the process.

Understanding "Exit Without Tears"

"Exit Without Tears" encapsulates the idea of departing an employee from an organization in a manner that is respectful, empathetic, and devoid of unnecessary conflict or distress. It goes beyond mere procedural formalities to prioritize the emotional well-being, dignity, and professional reputation of departing employees. From clear communication and fair treatment to seamless handovers and continued support, an "Exit Without Tears" approach aims to uphold the organization's values and foster positive relationships with employees, even during their departure.

The Importance of "Exit Without Tears"

- 1. Preserving Professional Reputation:**
An employee's departure can leave a lasting impression on their

professional reputation. By ensuring a respectful and dignified exit process, organizations demonstrate their commitment to ethical conduct and employee welfare, enhancing the departing employee's reputation and preserving their relationship with the organization.

2. Sustaining Employee Morale:

A well-managed departure reinforces a culture of trust, fairness, and transparency within the organization. Employees who witness colleagues being treated with respect during their exit are more likely to feel valued and secure in their own roles, leading to higher morale and job satisfaction among the remaining workforce.

3. Strengthening Employer Branding:

How an organization handles departures speaks volumes about its values and culture. Positive experiences during exits contribute to a favorable employer brand, attracting top talent and improving employee retention. Conversely, mishandled departures can tarnish the organization's reputation and deter potential candidates from joining.

4. Retaining Institutional Knowledge:

Departing employees often possess valuable knowledge, skills, and insights accumulated during their tenure. A seamless transition ensures the transfer of this institutional knowledge to remaining employees or successors, minimizing disruptions to operations and preserving organizational continuity.

insurance or transition pay where feasible;

- ♦ **Encourage Positive Departures:** Celebrate an employee's contributions through farewell events or recognition programs;
- ♦ **Stay Connected:** Keep former employees engaged through professional networks and mentorship opportunities.

Conclusion

The real success of a company lies not only in its ability to attract and retain talent but also in its approach to farewell departing employees. An "Exit Without Tears" signifies more than just a smooth departure; it symbolizes the company's commitment to its employees' well-being, dignity, and professional growth. By prioritizing easy clearance, offering extra support, additional payoffs, medical insurance, and leveraging the collaborative efforts of HR and accounts departments, organizations can cultivate a culture of respect, loyalty, and mutual appreciation, thus laying the foundation for sustained success and positive employer branding.



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Abdul Ghaffar is a dynamic Learning & Development expert with a proven track record in designing, delivering, and managing impactful training programs. With expertise in corporate training, Lean Six Sigma, and an author, he enhances workforce performance through innovative learning strategies, ensuring business growth and professional excellence across diverse industries through a program i.e., Employee Retention & Development Program.

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Additional Best Practices for "Exit Without Tears"

- ♦ **Simplify the Offboarding Process:** Implement Six Sigma principles to eliminate unnecessary steps and reduce inefficiencies;
- ♦ **Offer Extra Support:** Provide departing employees with extended medical

Employee Engagement: The Game Changer for Productivity and Retention

Author: Rehab Hedayet, Senior HR Manager at Alghanim Industries

Employee engagement isn't just an HR initiative or a corporate buzzword, it's a business strategy that directly impacts productivity, retention, and overall company performance. Organizations that cultivate an engaged workforce see employees who bring their best selves to work, collaborate effectively, and contribute to business growth. On the other hand, disengagement leads to absenteeism, high turnover, and a lack of innovation.

The challenge, however, is that engagement isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. It requires intentional efforts, tailored strategies, and a leadership mindset that prioritizes people. So, what's the real impact of engagement, and how can companies foster a culture that keeps employees motivated and committed?

This article dives into how fostering an engaging culture can yield remarkable benefits, enhance productivity, and establish a strong competitive edge.

The Ripple Effect of Engagement

When employees are engaged, the impact goes far beyond their individual performance. Engaged employees are motivated, committed, and aligned with organizational goals. Research shows that companies with highly engaged teams experience better productivity, higher profitability, and lower employee turnover.

A Gallup study found that organizations with high engagement levels experience

41% lower absenteeism and 59% less turnover in low-turnover industries. The logic is simple; when employees feel valued, recognized, and connected to their work, they are far more likely to stay committed and show up with enthusiasm.

Beyond these numbers, engagement also influences innovation, customer satisfaction, and even employer branding. When employees feel aligned with an organization's mission and values, they naturally become brand advocates, strengthening the company's reputation both internally and externally. Simply, it's a Win-Win!

Contemporary Practices in Employee Engagement

While traditional methods like compensation and benefits remain important, modern engagement strategies focus on holistic well-being, purpose-driven work, and continuous development. Some of the most effective contemporary engagement practices include:

1. **Flexible Work Models** – The pandemic reshaped workplace expectations, and today's employees seek flexibility in how and where they work. Companies that offer hybrid work models or four-day work weeks have seen a hike in their engagement levels.
2. **Personalized Learning & Development** – Career development is a top driver



Image Source: Freepik

of engagement. Companies investing in tailored learning paths, leadership coaching, and skill development are building a workforce that feels empowered and future ready.

3. Employee Recognition & Appreciation –

A simple “thank you” can go a long way, but structured recognition programs amplify the impact. Many companies now leverage AI-driven tools to provide real-time recognition, ensuring that contributions are acknowledged promptly and meaningfully.

4. **Purpose-Driven Culture** – Employees today want more than a paycheck, they seek purpose. Employees are more engaged when they understand the broader impact of their roles. Organizations that align their mission and values with meaningful work inspire deeper commitment from their workforce. Companies like Unilever and Patagonia have successfully linked

their corporate goals with sustainability and social impact, creating a strong emotional connection with employees.

5. Mental Health & Well-being Initiatives

– Burnout is a major engagement killer. Companies that prioritize employee well-being through mental health resources, wellness programs, and work-life balance initiatives see a direct correlation with increased motivation and retention.

6. Open & Transparent Communication –

Leaders who genuinely listen and share information transparently foster trust. Team members feel more involved and valued when they know their voices matter.

Building an Engaging Culture

Creating an engaging workplace culture is not about quick fixes. It requires a consistent and holistic effort across leadership, policies, and daily practices

- ♦ **Leadership Commitment** – Leaders, in particular, play a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture. When leaders actively demonstrate engagement through empathy, transparency, and fairness, it sets the tone for the rest of the organization.
- ♦ **Inclusive Practices** – Diversity and inclusion initiatives create a sense of belonging. An inclusive workplace fosters innovation and ensures every employee feels valued, regardless of their background.
- ♦ **Continuous Feedback Loop** – Regular engagement surveys and action plans ensure that initiatives remain relevant and effective. Companies that actively listen and implement meaningful changes based on employee input cultivate a workforce that feels respected and valued.
- ♦ **Employee-Centric Policies** – Policies that prioritize employees whether through enhanced parental leave, wellness programs, or work-life balance initiatives show that an organization values its people.

The Bigger Picture

Employee engagement is not a one-time initiative, it's an ongoing commitment that requires leadership buy-in, cultural alignment, and a deep understanding of what motivates employees. Organizations that invest in engagement strategies see significant gains in productivity, retention, and overall business performance.

The workplace is evolving, and so are employee expectations. Companies that prioritize engagement – through flexibility, recognition, meaningful work, and a people-first culture – will not only attract top talent but also retain a workforce that is committed, energized, and ready to drive success.

At the end of the day, the question isn't whether organizations should focus on engagement, it's whether they can afford not to.



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Rehab Hedayet, an HR leader with 22+ years of experience, specializes in Retail, F&B, and FMCG. She excels in workforce planning, compensation, and aligning HR strategies with business goals. Recently appointed Senior Manager – Learning & Development, she fosters employee engagement while optimizing organizational performance in today's evolving HR landscape.

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The Role of Managerial Coaching in Enhancing Employee Performance

Author: Betül Çetin, Human Resources Director at Talay Logistics

Managerial coaching has emerged as a crucial tool for fostering employee growth, enhancing performance, and improving workplace engagement. Unlike traditional managerial approaches that focus on supervision and task delegation, coaching-oriented leadership emphasizes guidance, feedback, and empowerment. This article explores the significance of managerial coaching, its impact on employee performance, and practical strategies for integrating coaching into leadership practices.

In today's dynamic and competitive business environment, organizations must continuously invest in employee development to maintain productivity and innovation. Traditional leadership models, centered on authority and directive management, are increasingly being replaced by coaching-based leadership. This shift acknowledges that employees perform best when they receive continuous guidance, constructive feedback, and opportunities for professional growth. Managerial coaching is not merely an add-on to leadership; it is an essential component for driving employee engagement and performance.

Managerial Coaching vs. Traditional Leadership

Traditional managers often focus on task delegation, evaluation, and hierarchical control. In contrast, coaching-oriented managers prioritize:

- ♦ **Guidance over control:** Encouraging employees to find solutions rather than dictating them.
- ♦ **Developmental feedback:** Providing constructive feedback aimed at professional growth.
- ♦ **Empowerment:** Trusting employees to take ownership of their roles and decisions.
- ♦ **Active listening and support:** Creating an open communication channel to understand employees' needs and concerns.

Impact of Managerial Coaching on Employee Performance

1. **Increased Engagement and Motivation** – Employees who receive coaching from their managers tend to exhibit higher levels of motivation. Coaching fosters a sense of purpose, making employees feel valued and appreciated.
2. **Enhanced Skill Development** – Coaching encourages continuous learning and skills enhancement, leading to improved job performance and career progression.
3. **Improved Problem-Solving and Decision-Making** – Rather than providing direct solutions, coaching helps employees develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which enhances their decision-making capabilities.

4. **Higher Retention Rates** – Employees who feel supported in their professional growth are more likely to remain with an organization, reducing turnover and associated costs.
5. **Stronger Team Collaboration** – Coaching promotes a culture of collaboration and knowledge-sharing, strengthening team dynamics and overall organizational performance.

Implementing Managerial Coaching Effectively

For managerial coaching to be effective, leaders must adopt structured coaching practices:

- ♦ **Set Clear Goals:** Align coaching conversations with employee career aspirations and organizational objectives.
- ♦ **Adopt a Growth Mindset:** Encourage continuous learning and resilience in the face of challenges.
- ♦ **Utilize Active Listening:** Managers should listen attentively, ask open-ended questions, and provide feedback tailored to individual employees.
- ♦ **Encourage Self-Reflection:** Employees should be guided to evaluate their own performance and identify areas for improvement.
- ♦ **Provide Regular Feedback:** Ongoing feedback fosters a culture of trust and development rather than fear and anxiety.
- ♦ **Develop a Coaching Culture:** Organizations should integrate coaching principles into leadership development programs to ensure widespread adoption.

Conclusion

Managerial coaching is an indispensable component of modern leadership, fostering a high-performance work culture that benefits both employees and organizations. By shifting from traditional directive management to a coaching-based approach, leaders can drive engagement, skill development, and overall productivity. As organizations continue to navigate the complexities of the modern business environment, embedding coaching in managerial practices will remain a key driver of sustainable success.



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Betül Çetin is an experienced HR Director and certified executive coach, specializing in leadership development, employee engagement, and career growth. Passionate about coaching-driven management, Betül Çetin actively shares insights on LinkedIn and professional platforms, helping organizations build high-performance cultures and empowering individuals to reach their full potential.

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Employee Engagement in the GCC: A Focus on Employee Journey

Author: Jaymi Almonte, Head of Employee Experience at Moove

When I think about what truly makes a workplace thrive, I always come back to one key concept: employee engagement. Employee engagement is not simply about ensuring employees are content; it is about fostering a dynamic environment where individuals feel valued, heard and motivated to contribute their best work. This sense of value and purpose ignites a spark in employees, driving them to go above and beyond, to innovate and to truly commit themselves to the company's mission.

In the GCC region, where businesses operate in a unique cultural and economic landscape, employee engagement is not a static concept – it is evolving rapidly. The factors that drive engagement in this region are influenced by a complex interplay of cultural norms, economic conditions and the expectations of a highly diverse workforce. To truly understand and cultivate employee engagement in this dynamic context, we need to start at the very beginning: the employee journey.

An employee's journey in an organization is not just a series of tasks but a complete experience that shapes their motivation, commitment and sense of belonging. It encompasses every interaction an individual has with a company, from the initial recruitment process to their eventual departure. Each stage of this journey presents opportunities to engage employees, to understand their needs and aspirations and to create a workplace experience that fosters a sense of

belonging and purpose. By focusing on the employee journey, companies can build a strong foundation for engagement, creating a workplace culture where employees are not just satisfied but truly invested in the company's success.

Let Me Share With You How...

1. First Impressions Matter: Recruitment and Onboarding

The moment a candidate walks into an interview (or logs onto a virtual one), they begin forming an opinion about the company. I've seen businesses in the GCC go the extra mile to create seamless and welcoming hiring experiences – and it pays off. They invest in AI-powered recruitment tools to ensure a smooth and efficient hiring process. Some are focusing on employer branding to attract top-tier talent while others are adopting gamified onboarding experiences to make the process more interactive and engaging.

A well-structured onboarding program ensures that new employees feel integrated from Day 1. If onboarding is rushed or impersonal, employees start their journey on the wrong foot and engagement levels drop quickly.

2. Creating a Culture of Belonging

Engagement is deeply rooted in the company's culture. In the GCC, diverse workforces bring together employees from different backgrounds which is both a

strength and a challenge. Companies that create a sense of belonging see higher engagement and retention rates.

Consider implementing mentorship programs to help expat employees adjust to a new work environment. Promote a strong community culture, ensuring employees feel part of something bigger than just their job. Build an inclusive workplace that values employee feedback and innovation.

What I've noticed is that when employees feel respected, included and part of a team, their level of commitment to the organization skyrockets.

3. Growth and Development: The Key to Retention

I've spoken to employees who left jobs not because of salary, but because they felt stuck. In the GCC, where career progression is highly valued, employees expect clear development paths and opportunities to upskill. Companies should invest in smart learning hubs and digital learning platforms to provide continuous education and to equip their employees with future ready skills.

Remember, employees who see a clear career path are more likely to stay engaged and contribute meaningfully.

4. Well-being and Work-Life Balance

One of the biggest shifts I've seen in recent years is the growing focus on employee wellbeing. The traditional 9-to-6 office bound mindset is changing especially post pandemic as flexibility becomes a priority.

Some companies in UAE are leading the way in implementing four-day workweeks and remote or hybrid work options where possible. I have also seen businesses focus on work-life balance through family-friendly policies and flexible working hours to accommodate different personal needs and productivity rhythms. While some are enhancing workplace wellness initiatives,

including mental health support and stress management programs.

Keep in mind that employees who feel cared for and supported are more engaged, productive and loyal to their organizations.

5. Recognition and Purpose Driven Work

Employees want to feel that their work matters. In the GCC, where corporate transformation and mega-projects are shaping the future, employees seek purpose driven roles that contribute to a greater mission. Companies are integrating social impact projects into their work, giving employees a sense of purpose beyond profits.

Create a culture of recognition and appreciation. Celebrate employee achievements and recognize their contributions – big or small. Think about real-time recognition platforms where employees can praise each other for accomplishments or better, monetize these recognitions where they can earn points and exchange for vouchers, discount cards, etc.

My Final Thoughts: Making Employee Engagement a Priority

In my experience collaborating with teams across the GCC, I've come to understand that employee engagement is not solely about offering superficial perks or benefits. It's about crafting a workplace experience that is genuinely meaningful and fulfilling for everyone. When organizations take the initiative to invest in every facet of the employee journey – starting from recruitment and onboarding, extending through professional development and growth opportunities, prioritizing employee well-being, and culminating in recognition and appreciation – they cultivate an environment where employees don't

merely show up to work but actively thrive and flourish.

The future of work is human centered, experience driven and engagement focused. Companies that understand and embrace this paradigm shift will not only attract and retain top talent but will also nurture a workforce that is genuinely invested in success. And in a fast-changing world, this is the ultimate competitive advantage – a workforce that is engaged, motivated and committed to achieving shared goals.

By prioritizing the employee experience and investing in the employee journey, companies have the opportunity to create a workplace culture that fosters innovation, productivity and sustainable growth. This not only benefits the employees themselves but also contributes to the overall success and prosperity of the organization and the wider economy.

Now, would you like to connect with me and discuss how your company handles the "employee journey?"



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About Author

Jaymi is a dynamic and results-driven HR leader with 20+ years of progressive experience, driving transformation and operational excellence within complex and multicultural environments for global companies. She is skilled in crafting enriching employee experiences and aligning HR strategies with business goals, fostering a culture of continuous

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Notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight texture and some minor discoloration or shadows, suggesting it's a physical document. The background behind the paper is dark and out of focus.

Notes

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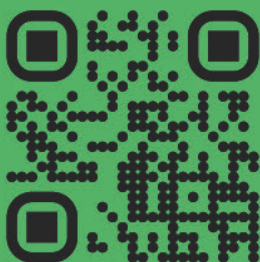
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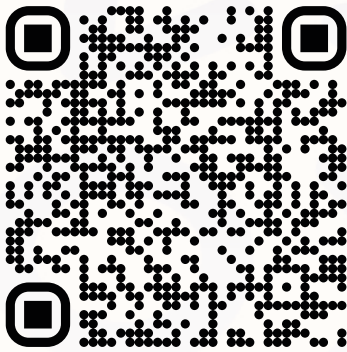


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