

How to improve employee morale and job satisfaction



Lindsay sings along with the radio as she drives into work. Today is Tuesday, one of the two days she commutes to the office each week under the hybrid arrangement her company offers. She's excited about the baby shower being held for a colleague at lunchtime. Lindsay enjoys talking to her co-workers, and cake makes everyone smile. She pulls into her premium parking place, a perk she received for the month for winning the contest to design a new company t-shirt.

Grabbing her phone, Lindsay notices a text from her friend Alyssa. Alyssa states that she called in sick to her office today. She's not really ill but just needs a day away from the nasty politics going on in her workplace. Alyssa half-heartedly jokes that she's glad she isn't sick because her stupid insurance probably wouldn't cover the doctor's visit. Lindsay texts back that she'll call her tonight and makes a mental note to tell her friend about the job opening in her organization's marketing department.

Without a doubt, employees vary considerably in their contentment level. For employers, the temptation exists to see these differences as a worker's problem. However, failure to monitor employee morale and job satisfaction can have severe repercussions for your company.

Here, we look at why smart employers keep employee morale, employee engagement, and job satisfaction top of mind and how to improve these things at your establishment.

The importance of employee happiness

A variety of terms get thrown around when talking about how workers feel about the job they perform and the work environment in which they do it. "Employee morale" generally refers to the emotions and attitudes

workers hold about their workplace. If you visited a place with positive employee morale, you would likely say the atmosphere seems upbeat.

Another term, “employee engagement,” describes the level of commitment and passion workers bring to their position. Engaged team members want to do their best so that the organization can prosper and grow; they feel a sense of purpose and a connection to the big picture.

A third term, “employee satisfaction,” reveals the contentment with the job one is in. The worker finds the role sufficient based on the adequacy of factors such as pay, employee benefits, hours, location, flexibility, work-life balance, and job security. Job satisfaction often leads to other types of satisfaction in one’s life, such as comfort in knowing a steady paycheck exists to pay the bills or that the short commute home leaves plenty of the evening free.

Although the shades of meaning among these phrases differ, they all contribute to the same basic notion of concern for employee well-being. Why does employee happiness matter?

Companies that put a premium on it reap benefits such as:

Low employee turnover

Satisfied workers stay put. They are not always on the lookout for their next job. Every smart human resources department knows that maintaining good employee retention rates is preferable to spending time and money trying to fill vacated roles.

Reduced absenteeism

Like Alyssa in the opening, workers experiencing burnout or low employee morale often call in sick. By contrast, a positive work culture makes people want to show up.

Better output

Motivated workers go the extra mile. They often exhibit greater employee productivity and turn in higher-quality work.

Initiative

Engaged employees care about making the company better. They offer suggestions and innovative ideas. They take the lead in improving operations and pleasing customers.

Improved teamwork

When team members like one another, they are more willing to help each other out. They also communicate more regularly and effectively.

Enhanced reputation



Whether online or in-person, employees talk! As Lindsay's attitude demonstrates, happy employees make wonderful brand ambassadors. They refer their friends, talk positively about company culture on social media and employer review sites, and contribute to an appealing atmosphere attractive to both clients and prospective job candidates alike.

Strategies to improve employee engagement, morale, and satisfaction

No one-size-fits-all formula exists to make employees happy, but possibilities abound to develop engaged employees, boost employee morale, and increase employee job satisfaction.

Strategies to try include:

Evaluate pay scale and benefits.

Perhaps nothing leads to job frustration more than feeling like you are not being paid what you're worth. Thus, employers need to take a hard, honest look at compensation at their company. Is it in line with market conditions for your industry and region? Do you invest so much in luring top talent that you neglect to pay existing staff what they deserve? Addressing these matters can have a huge impact.

Likewise, examine benefits. Employees want to feel confident that their medical insurance will cover their needs and those of their families. They desire the security of a retirement account or pension plan. If your business cannot provide such things, workers may very well look for a place that can.

Invest in professional development

Spirits sag when workers feel underutilized, bored, or stuck in a dead-end role. Learning new things stimulates the brain and helps them feel more invested in the company. When an employer offers someone development opportunities, it sends a message of worthiness and long-term commitment. Career growth promotes engagement.

Provide more employee feedback

Guesswork makes employees nervous, so let them know how they fare. Positive feedback encourages repeat behavior and actions. Negative, but constructive, feedback helps workers improve. Don't save everything for annual performance reviews. The feedback will just seem like a formality. Rather, meet one-on-one on a routine

basis to keep employee feedback fresh and pertinent.

Give people a say

Workers long for control over when, where, and how they perform their responsibilities. Consider options such as remote work and flexible work schedules. Avoid micromanaging by focusing on results rather than methods. Place decision-making power in the employee's hands as much as possible.

Provide support

People need proper tools to do their jobs. A routinely wonky internet connection or a copier that breaks every two days disheartens employees. Likewise, frustration mounts when workers do not receive the information they need to do their job. Aim to provide decisions, go-aheads, answers to questions, and data in a timely manner.

Act like a leader

To create a positive work environment, managers cannot shun the "tough" stuff. They need to enforce rules across the board, deal with poor performers, put a stop to gossip and other negative behaviors, and display zero tolerance for bullying or harassment. When leaders take their status as role models seriously and create an atmosphere of respect and trust, staff morale soars.

Remind people of their value

Reverse disengagement by connecting what employees do to the company's bottom line. People thrive when they feel they contribute to something important, not merely just perform a job, so explain how tasks fit into overall operations. Sing their praises to others such as clients and upper management.

Show appreciation

Recognize the hard work of an individual or the whole team. Give specific, genuine compliments that demonstrate you notice efforts. Make "thank you" a prominent phrase in your vocabulary. Think your efforts are already sufficient? More than likely, room exists for improvement. A [study](#) commissioned by OGO showed 82% of employed Americans don't feel supervisors recognize them or their contributions enough.

Have fun

A staff pizza party cannot be your organization's only attempt to create satisfied employees. However, as part of an overall effort to improve the employee experience, socialization has merit. When employees build bonds, they have a better time at work, feel more connected to the workplace, and try harder so as not to let their team down. Volunteer as a group, get everyone on Slack to post pictures of their pets, hold a cubicle decorating contest for Halloween, celebrate work anniversaries . . . such events break the monotony of everyday work and build an interesting, unique company culture.

Judging the effectiveness of happiness-boosting efforts

Obviously, workers do not go around wearing signs stating their level of job satisfaction. Employers wishing to determine where moods and attitudes stand need to take measures into their own hands.



Employee surveys are a great start. The act of asking about likes and dislikes in and of itself demonstrates concern and can boost morale. What do people enjoy about their job? What do they find frustrating or in need of improvement? What could be done to promote work-life balance or make workdays more fulfilling? In addition to asking, act on what you learn. Employees feel empowered when their voice carries weight, and they become discouraged when it appears that management is only asking for the sake of asking.

Another tactic is to observe directly. Walk around the workplace. Do people seem happy and engaged? Do they easily and routinely interact with one another? Does everyone bolt the minute the clock turns to quitting time? Examine behavior at staff meetings, too. Do team members contribute ideas, volunteer, and display enthusiasm when presented with new projects? Do they interact with each other before and after, or are they silently absorbed with their phones? Is the atmosphere cordial, or do you sense a divide or the need to step in to resolve conflict?

Also, look to metrics and other sources of information for clues. Where do your retention numbers stand? What do former employees state in exit interviews? What are online job sites saying about the employee experience at your company? When you understand what makes people stay or go, you can work to tout the positive and fix the negative.

Regardless of where your business stands at the present time, remember that improving morale, satisfaction, and engagement is never a one-and-done endeavor. Situations always are changing, so make the evaluation of employee happiness a regular part of your modus operandi.