



Caring for Your Employees: Fostering Positive Emotions in the Digital Workplace

Do you teach your leaders that their employees' emotions matter? New research shows that if you don't, you're failing to recognize one of the greatest factors influencing employee engagement. This white paper describes the research and recommends how to seize this opportunity to ignite engagement, despite the growing challenge of a dispersed, digital workforce.

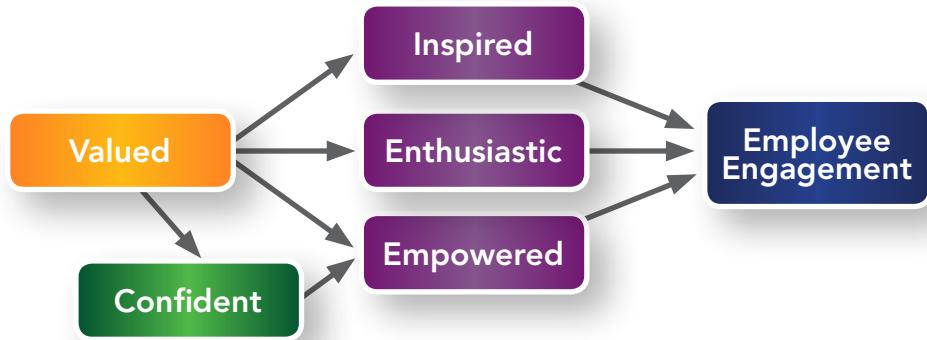


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Strategies for recruiting employees and keeping them engaged have long been based around practical rewards like pay increases, bonuses or flexible working hours, attempting to cater to employees' rational, business side. But this approach often leaves out a key consideration which informs every human action: our emotional connection to one another. Whether part of a traditional or virtual team, feelings-based personal relationships in the workplace have the greatest impact on employee engagement. When employees connect to their immediate supervisor in this way, they become more engaged with their role, working more effectively, staying with the company long-term, and acting as ambassadors for their organization.

A study by Dale Carnegie Training and MSW Research explored the typical emotions associated with the workplace. MSW utilized its EMO*Dynamics battery: 28 positive and negative emotions proven to be important in consumer decision-making. This groundbreaking nationwide survey of 1,500 employees found that 5 of these 28 emotions positively affected their level of engagement, while 12 provoked disengagement.

The Power of Positive Emotions



Experiencing positive emotions at work is critical for employee engagement. Research indicates that people become engaged when they feel:

- Valued
- Confident
- Inspired
- Enthused
- Empowered

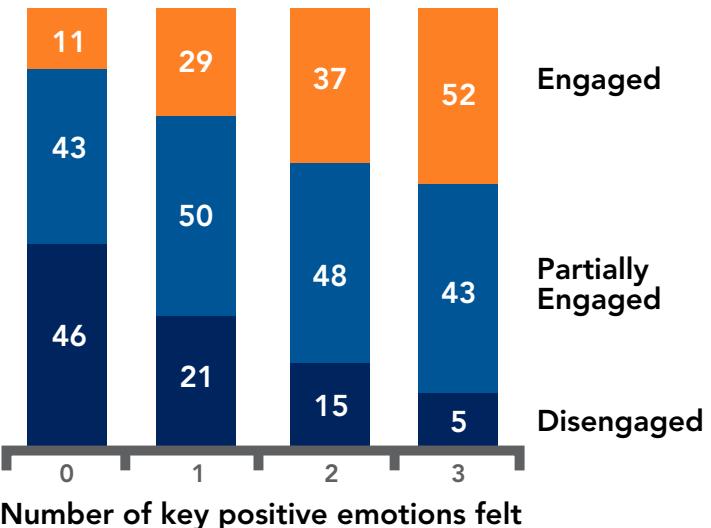
What is the major driver for engaged achievement? Of those surveyed, 46 percent report it's feeling valued. However, feeling valued by itself does not generate engagement; instead it acts as a springboard for other positive emotions. Employees who feel both valued and confident become enthusiastic and make more strategic decisions about their work, which inspires them to try harder. Excited and enthusiastic employees care about the organization where they work and want to further its goals. For them, it's more than just collecting a paycheck or seeking a promotion.

Regardless of their role, all employees will at some point ask themselves these emotional response questions:

- Do I feel I am valued?
- Do I value the organization where I work?
- Do I feel I belong?

Answers to these questions are critical to employee engagement. Employees want to be part of something bigger than themselves, something they can be proud of. Feeling pride in their work invigorates employees. They look forward to their work, and they are more willing to put in extra effort to make the organization a success. In short, they are engaged.

The level of engagement increases dramatically with the number of key positive emotions (inspired, enthusiastic, empowered, confident or valued) employees feel. Seventy percent of all employees surveyed felt at least one of these five key positive emotions. 12% felt three of them. Among this latter group, only 5% were disengaged, while 21% of those who experienced only one key positive emotion felt disengaged. And what about those employees who did not report feeling valued, confident, inspired, enthused, or empowered? 46% of them were disengaged.



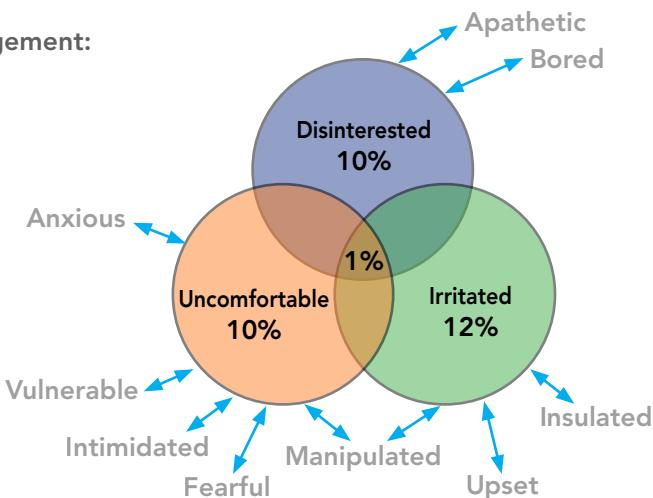
Engagement is more than being happy with one's work; in fact, happiness does not greatly impact engagement. Rather, engagement is demonstrated by how personally connected and committed employees feel toward their organization. Employees who recommend their organization as an employer or place to do business are typically engaged.

The Toxic Effect of Negative Emotions

Not surprisingly, negative emotions negatively affect employee engagement. Employees who feel negative emotions due to their work become disengaged nearly 10 times more than employees who feel positive ones. The most common root cause of disengagement? The immediate supervisor. Nearly 30 percent of employees feel at least one of 12 significant negative emotions as a result of their interaction with their immediate supervisor. Approximately half of these workers are disengaged, while only 10 percent of them feel engaged. For those who feel positive as a result of their interaction with their supervisor, 52 percent report feeling engaged.

Three core negative emotions drive disengagement:

- Irritation
- Disinterest
- Discomfort



A good supervisor makes employees feel valued and confident, while a poor supervisor irritates people and makes them feel uncomfortable. This is important since it's well established that negative emotions are more contagious than positive ones. Because they are more noticeable, these emotions can spiral from the individual employee to impact co-workers and the organization as a whole, spreading beyond the workplace to clients, potential clients and possible future hires. On virtual teams – where employees still feel the need to communicate their feelings, often through email – this issue can be even more pronounced. Employee "venting" in email or instant messages can easily fall into the inbox of parties who were never meant to read it, creating hard feelings, potential legal issues, and a permanent statement about what could have been a passing opinion. For a dispersed workforce, the role of an engaged, interested supervisor is crucial.

How Supervisors Affect Employee Emotions

Employees tend to personalize their job based on the emotions they feel about the organization's actions as a whole, and about their own supervisor's actions in particular. Research shows that the immediate supervisor figures in as the greatest factor in determining what emotions employees feel at work. Reactions to him or her are responsible for 84 percent of how employees feel about their organization. Out of the 28 key emotions in the study, happiness is the only one driven more by the organization than the immediate supervisor.

Managers who promote positive emotions foster a stronger sense of satisfaction in their employees. They receive the highest satisfaction ratings when they make employees feel inspired, enthusiastic, happy and empowered. Conversely, immediate supervisors who evoke negative emotions in employees or, particularly in the case of dispersed teams, do not make an effort to connect with their employees, earn below average satisfaction ratings. Supervisors whose direct reports feel insulted, upset or irritated by them receive the lowest levels of satisfaction.

How to Engage a Dispersed Workforce

Engaging employees has become more complex in today's highly dispersed, digital workplace. How can managers and HR professionals generate an engaged workforce and equip managers to care for their employees despite this growing challenge?

Dale Carnegie Digital can help. We offer live online programs to develop dispersed workforces anywhere they can access the internet, through a PC, iPad or similar device:

- Engaging 60-minute webinars that provide rich, just-in-time popular content and direction for time-strapped professionals.
- Interactive two- and three-hour workshops that focus on developing a broad range of leadership and interpersonal skills through proven content, skilled instruction and peer collaboration.
- Multi-session online seminars that advance your career through practical application, coaching and collaboration for three hours each week over a four week period.

Our content is designed to help move employees to a higher level of engagement. We can show supervisors how to work with employees to maximize employee potential and create positive esteem within each. It's this esteem, rooted in the supervisor's emotional connection, that bolsters the enthusiasm and sense of pride that only engaged employees possess.



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