

# 6 Steps to Engagement

How to Move Beyond the Buzzword

**Happy Path**

Crazy Simple, Focused , and Affordable Career Pathing Software



# Hello Engagement!



## “Engagement.” A big buzzword. But what does it really mean?

We talk with employers all the time about “engagement.” Most of the time, what they really mean is employee enthusiasm, performance, and—ultimately—productivity. And the truth is simple: engaged employees feel valued. When people feel valued, they show up differently. They contribute more, perform better, and they’re far more likely to stay.

Research backs that up. According to Aon Hewitt, top employers outperform the average company in engagement—by roughly 20%. That means they have significantly more employees who feel energized by their work, invested in the company’s future, and confident about their own future inside the organization.

And yet, we’re in the middle of an engagement crisis.

A Gallup poll found that **only 31.5% of workers report being engaged at work**. A LinkedIn survey showed

one in four employees are actively searching for a new job. And the Human Capital Institute reports that **70% of companies say they have weak talent pipelines**. Taken together, these numbers point to a costly reality: lost productivity, higher turnover, and a constant cycle of hiring and training.

**But it doesn’t have to be this way.**

Employees want to be engaged just as much as employers want engaged employees. The path forward isn’t complicated—but it does require intention. Companies that make progress here consistently focus on a few core behaviors: listening well, leading clearly, and building real, ongoing career conversations.

**AND WHEN YOU BREAK IT DOWN, IT’S SURPRISINGLY DOABLE—ESPECIALLY IF YOU FOLLOW THE SIX STEPS ON THE NEXT FEW PAGES.**

# 1

## Understand What Motivates Your Workforce



*Employee engagement isn't just about a particular job, but about the company's culture, values and opportunities for growth.*

### Get to the heart of what drives employees

The single best move a company can make to improve employee engagement is to listen—then act on what you learn. Use surveys, small-group conversations, or one-on-ones to ask honest questions and invite honest answers: What do you love about the company? About your role? What frustrates you? What would you change? Too often, organizations don't ask until it's too late. And research shows engagement isn't just about the job—it's also about culture, values, and real opportunities to grow.

# 2

## Be Clear on What Skills & Competencies are Valued



*Company leaders must provide employees with insights into their position within the company and also clearly communicate how to advance that position.*

### Engagement starts with a visible future

Employees want to be engaged. They want to continue working with their employers. They want to feel as though they matter. To encourage those natural inclinations, company leaders must provide employees with insights into their position within the company and also clearly communicate how to advance that position. Are there skills and competencies the employee can acquire that can help him or her move up or over? Create clear visuals/maps on how to move from A to B, B to C and beyond to help that employee have direction and feel a sense of control over his or her future.

# 3

## Offer Training & Learning that Supports Advancement



*It's up to company leaders to support that learning.*

### Support learning for your employees

Once employees understand what skills and training will help them advance, leaders need to make that learning possible. Support can look like tuition assistance, internal training programs, certification reimbursement, MOOCs, mentoring, and stretch opportunities. When you invest in development, you're not just boosting engagement—you're building your talent pipeline and strengthening the long-term future of your company.

# 4

## Focus on Employees that Pursue Training



*Employees that want to develop their skills add value to the company.*

### **Your best employees want to take advantage of training and education**

Not everyone will pursue tuition reimbursement or spend a day in a workshop—but your highest performers often will. They're the ones who pay attention to clear maps that say, "Build skill A, and you can move to role B." Offering development opportunities helps you identify employees who are willing to invest their own time and energy to grow, while increasing their value to the company. And when motivated people can see a future with you, your organization becomes "sticky"—and they're far less likely to leave.

# 5

## Provide an Outside Advisor to Talk about Advancement



*It's helpful to bring in an unbiased career advisor who understands the company's growth goals and can talk with the employee about the skills he or she needs to move vertically or horizontally to a new position.*

### Create a safe environment for employees

Too often, employees feel stuck—but don't feel safe saying it out loud. They may want to explore a new role or department, yet worry it will look disloyal or put their current position at risk. One way to reduce that fear is to offer an unbiased career advisor/coach who understands the company's growth goals and can help employees talk through options, identify the skills they need, and plan a realistic next step—whether that's vertical growth or a lateral move. Without that safe space, companies risk losing talented people entirely. Research from Sinclair Community College shows that students who received a learning plan were 3.4x more likely to stay in college and twice as likely to earn a degree.

# 6

## Develop Strong Leaders from the Ground up



*Employees want to feel confident that their workplace is an environment where they can build their career which is why developing your entry-level and mid-level workforce is just as important as developing your high potentials.*

### Employees want strong leaders

Employees are far more likely to stay engaged when they believe in the leadership around them. That doesn't just mean investing in "high potentials"—it means developing entry- and mid-level leaders, too, because they shape the daily employee experience. People want to feel like the company is going somewhere, and that they're building their career in a place with direction. They're looking for leaders who understand the business, communicate a clear vision, and show real support and compassion for their teams. When that leadership isn't present, even great employees won't stick around.

# Happy Path

Let's partner and start building an engaged workforce

Happy Path was built for this exact moment: when your team wants engagement and retention—but doesn't have time for a massive transformation.

Simply put, Happy Path helps employees explore roles, discover well-aligned paths, self-assess against a competency model, and turn skill gaps into clear next steps.

It makes career growth visible, usable, and easy to sustain—without enterprise bloat.

## Want to see what career clarity could look like in 2026?

Let's set up a quick Happy Path demo and talk about your goals.

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