

Unlocking the power of employee happiness: what top employees seek from the workplace today

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In the age of Big Data and omnipresent analytics, the psychology of the workplace sometimes takes a backseat to performance indicators and efficiency metrics. But if your company is not focused on workplace happiness, culture and employee engagement, it should be. According to a *Gallup poll* conducted between 2014 and 2015, the US economy loses \$450 and 550bn each year because of the lagging productivity levels of unhappy employees. Employee turnover costs employers between 100 and 300 per cent of the former employee's base salary. This is not a small problem, yet many companies today treat employee happiness as something to deal with when they have time, but, oftentimes, that is too late.

I think it is fair to say that most businesses and leaders understand the bottom-line impact of having engaged and happy employees, yet many organizations fall prey to the temptation to focus on the analytics, the results around productivity and efficiency, sales and profit first rather than starting at the source: a lack of connected, driven, engaged and happy employees who want to give more than you could ever ask of them.

How can employers begin working toward creating more engaged employees?

To answer that, we surveyed hundreds of employees from fast-growing startups to retailers to established brands and enterprise and asked what they want from their employer to be engaged in their work and the organization.

What we *found* was that employees expect more from their work, companies and leaders these days ([Figure 1](#)). To truly drive employee engagement, leaders must look beyond pay and hone in on core human needs such as personal connections, a sense of purpose and recognition for great work.

Turns out employees love hanging with each other!

Company Experiences (e.g. happy hour, mentoring, group yoga) lead to higher levels of engagement at work.

Employees want to be invested in their environments and in each other. Feeling connected and breaking down barriers is a huge part of an engaged workforce. These deeper level connections prompt people to produce better quality work for the benefit of their team, stick around longer because of loyalty to each other and the company and give a level of effort that you only see when you actually care about the people and the place involved.

Figure 1 Linking micro-level strategies and actions to system-level regional resilience



Building walls only blocks relationships!

The majority of the people surveyed express that "great coworkers" had the greatest impact on their work in the last six months.

In fact, 67 per cent of respondents expressed that connections to their coworkers and team collaboration on projects are the strongest factors that lead to their deeper sense of engagement at work. And more engagement equals more productivity and less turnover. Great co-workers have the power to make biggest impact on workplace satisfaction.

No one wants to underperform, so help them help you!

The majority of people expressed real-time feedback was more valuable to them and their performance than a bi-annual performance review.

Employees are now more sentimental, hyper-connected individuals that crave communication, collaboration and real-time connectivity to feel engaged and motivated within a company. Underestimating someone's need for regular feedback and its impact on performance will come back to haunt you in the form of low performance and less engagement among the team. To prioritize feedback and appreciation often will lead to happier people who often exceed expectations in the workplace.

We want to see and feel the impact we have on others.

Employees want to see and feel the impact they have on others more

than getting something for themselves. It is not about what you get, it is about what you give.

The majority of the people who took this survey said they feel it is more rewarding to have the ability to donate a \$10 gift card to a co-worker rather than receive one from management. Giving them an opportunity to use real-time tools to share praise is key and giving them access to a flexible reward system is key to meeting this goal. Waiting for rewards to be doled out from the top-down may prove to be more frustrating than it is worth, so open up the gates and let your employees do the recognizing and rewarding.

Turns out it is NOT all about the Benjamin's.

"More money" was cited the least in terms of increasing personal engagement to the company.

So, while it is easier to give a blanket pay increase across the board, or end of year bonuses to finally say "thank you", it is not always going to pay off in the long run. Looking at our data and the data from countless workplace studies, it clearly shows that opportunities to live a healthier and more purposeful life and participate in team events carry more weight than an increase in compensation. Good news for everyone, right?

When an organization allows these needs to be met organically and as part of the day-to-day, leaders experience stronger relationships with employees and employees share a deeper passion and engagement for their work, ultimately returning the most amount of value for everyone.