![15five logo]

Engage to Excel

15Five's Employee Engagement Playbook

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Introduction

Are you ready to unlock the secret to driving success in today's fiercely competitive business landscape? Brace yourself, because we're about to reveal why employee engagement is the game-changer you've been overlooking. It's not just about creating a happy workplace; it's about achieving tangible results that will make your other executives sit up and take notice.

In this dynamic playbook, we'll tackle the pressing question: "Why should I care about employee engagement, and equally as important, why should other executives, like the CFO, care?" We understand the temptation to put engagement on the back burner, but the truth is that neglecting employee engagement could be a costly mistake that jeopardizes your organization's success.

Picture this scenario: a complex labor market, high levels of economic uncertainty, and burnt-out employees who are one step away from seeking opportunities elsewhere, or living in fear that they're about to be laid off. The consequences are dire—a decline in productivity, skyrocketing turnover rates, and mounting costs to recruit and train new hires. All of this is taking a toll on employees and their engagement levels. A **Gallup report** revealed that employee engagement levels took a step backward in the US in 2022, with the number of actively disengaged employees rising significantly to 18%.

Can your organization afford to ignore these risks? Regardless of where you work, the answer is most likely no. The current moment demands adaptability and resilience — and an investment in improving employee engagement. Engaged employees are your most valuable asset—they're innovative, loyal, and committed to achieving exceptional results. By fostering a culture of engagement, you'll unleash their full potential and create a competitive advantage that sets your organization apart.

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In this playbook, we'll not only explore the undeniable benefits of employee engagement but also provide you with actionable strategies to move from engagement insights to outcomes and ignite lasting change.

Definition of Employee Engagement

Before we start, let's define employee engagement.

> **Employee Engagement:** An employee's intellectual and emotional connection with their employer, demonstrated by their motivation and commitment to positively impact the business's vision and goals.

Satisfaction vs. Engagement: What's the Difference?

As an HR leader, it's crucial that you recognize the difference between measuring employee satisfaction and measuring employee engagement. Many leaders conflate the two, thinking that a satisfied employee is the same thing as an engaged employee — and while the two can often overlap, it's not always the case.

Satisfaction focuses on the surface level of how content employees are with their jobs, while engagement digs deeper to truly understand their level of involvement, dedication, and passion within their role. And today's employees want more than simply being happy in their roles. Today's employees are seeking fulfillment, growth, and purpose in their work — according to research by **McKinsey**, 70% of employees say that their personal sense of purpose is defined by their work, and therefore, when that work feels meaningful, they are more likely to perform better and be committed to their job. And when they perform better, the business does better. It's a win-win for everyone.

That's why it is so important to make sure that engagement assessments are not just measuring the happiness or stress levels of employees, but going deeper to gain insights into critical **drivers of engagement**, such as role clarity, psychological safety, and meaning (we'll go more in-depth on drivers of engagement later). By measuring and understanding such drivers of engagement, HR leaders can gain a deeper understanding of what truly engages employees, and tailor programs and initiatives to meet their needs.

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*Bain & Company
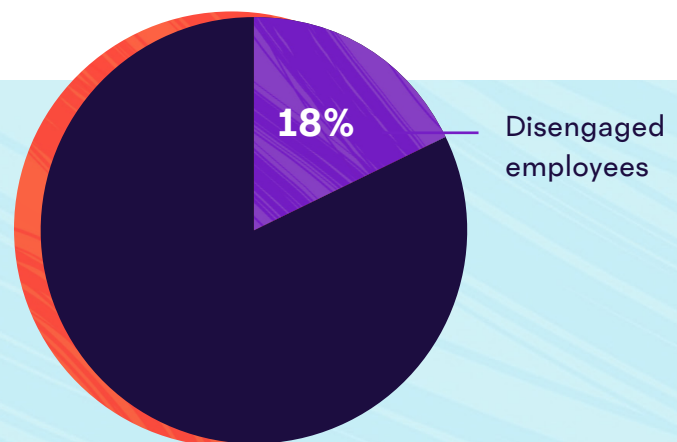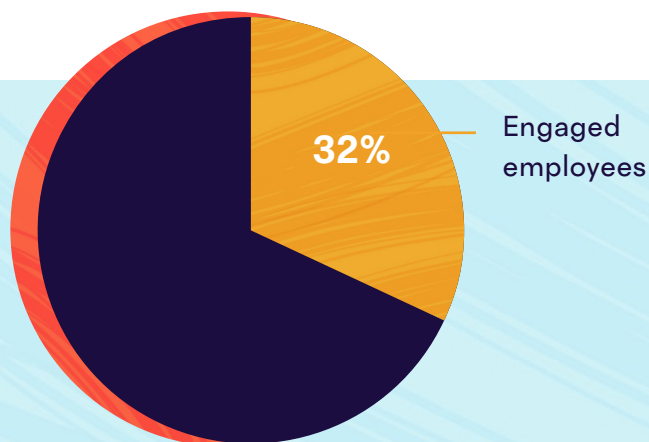
I. Why Employee Engagement Matters

Why does employee engagement even matter?

Just when we thought we were making progress on employee engagement, the aforementioned **Gallup report** revealed that employee engagement levels took a step backward in the US in 2022. The study unveiled that while the number of engaged workers remained steady at 32% in 2022, the number of actively disengaged employees rose significantly to 18%. This concerning trend reminds us that despite overcoming some of the pandemic-related challenges of the early 2020s, we must remain vigilant in prioritizing the well-being of our employees, both personally and professionally.

It's thus crucial to address the underlying issues that are causing disengagement within organizations. This involves tackling structural, operational, and cultural factors that contribute to disengagement. By focusing on these areas, HR leaders can lay the foundation for a new and improved employee experience. This benefits not only the talented workforce but the bottom line of the company as a whole.

Why We Need a Renewed Focus on Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, and the need to sustain and improve it, is not a new topic. But we'd be remiss if we told you that the playbook for the best ways to measure and improve employee engagement that was used 20 years ago was still relevant today. The workplace looks quite different today than it did even 5 years ago — and thus, employee engagement measurement and improvement must look different as well.

But let's start with the why first. Why is it incredibly important for organizations to place increased focus on measuring and improving employee engagement right now?

GALLUP REPORT

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE US IN 2022

32% Engaged employees

18% Disengaged employees

The Complex Labor Market Has Companies Scrambling

The current labor market is complex and has left companies scrambling to attract and retain top talent. Furthermore, the pandemic and the subsequent changes in the way we work have only intensified this desire for greater flexibility and control in our career choices.

According to **SHRM**, maintaining employee morale has been a significant challenge for two-thirds of employers since the onset of Covid-19. This struggle becomes even more pronounced for companies with 500 or more employees.

The demand for highly skilled individuals has created a fierce battle among organizations to attract and retain the best candidates. Companies are being forced to up their game and offer compelling incentives, benefits, and work environments to stand out from the crowd. This new reality requires strategic and proactive approaches to talent acquisition, employee engagement, and organizational culture. As companies navigate this challenging labor market, they must be prepared to adapt and evolve their recruitment and retention strategies to remain competitive and secure the talent needed for success. And a crucial part of retaining talent, especially top talent, is increasing employee engagement levels.

Perks Don't Work — Culture Is Key

A couple of years ago, the focus for recruiters was on attracting young professionals with trendy perks like free snacks or nap pods. However, with the increase in remote work, these office-based perks have lost their appeal as recruitment tools. In reality, these perks never had a significant impact on candidates' decision-making process. Candidates are not going to choose a company or choose to **stay** at a company based on pet insurance; what truly matters to them is the company culture.

More specifically, employees today desire to be engaged in their work and are seeking a sense of meaning and purpose. Even before the pandemic, **Glassdoor's Mission & Culture Survey** revealed that 77% of adults across the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Germany consider a company's culture before applying for a job, while 79% consider the company's mission and purpose. Moreover, over half of the survey respondents indicated that company culture holds more importance than salary when it comes to job satisfaction. This means that potential new hires are more likely to prioritize the kind of culture a company offers over the monetary value mentioned in their offer letter.

To successfully attract top talent and keep them engaged, HR leaders must prioritize cultivating a positive and meaningful company culture. Candidates are seeking workplaces where they can find fulfillment, engagement, and a sense of purpose in their work.

Adaptability Wins in Times of Change

Sure, most of us need a paycheck and good health benefits — that is still important. But if we're fortunate enough to be choosy about the type of work we do to earn our living, we're going to look for an employer that fills our cup and helps us reach our potential. That's why it's so crucial for employers today to have a keen focus on connecting employees to work that energizes them and lights them up. Doing so isn't just good for the employees — it's beneficial for the company too. **Bain & Company** found that engaged staff is 44% more productive than "satisfied" staff.

And high levels of engagement become extra important during times of change and upheaval. Engaged employees are more likely to embrace change, adapt to new circumstances, and remain resilient in the face of challenges. Their sense of commitment and ownership fosters a proactive attitude, allowing them to navigate uncertainties with a problem-solving mindset. They become valuable assets in times of change, as their high levels of motivation and productivity help drive the organization forward.

Engaged employees are more likely to contribute innovative ideas, collaborate effectively, and support their colleagues, creating a positive and supportive work culture even during turbulent times. Ultimately, the dedication and resilience of highly engaged employees not only help companies navigate change successfully but also position them for long-term growth and success.

Benefits of Improving Employee Engagement
Increased Retention

When employees become disengaged, they tend to lose interest and disconnect emotionally from their work. This disconnection often leads to two scenarios: some employees actively start looking for better opportunities and leave as soon as they find them, while others choose to engage in "quiet quitting" by going through the motions while contributing minimally. As Adam Weber, 15Five's SVP of Community, said, "The ideology behind quiet quitting has become popular because workplaces have deprioritized what's important to so many employees when it comes to how, where, and why they work… Workers are no longer willing to feel taken advantage of."

Highly engaged teams, on the other hand, experience a **40% reduction in turnover**. By investing in employee engagement and aligning efforts with the aspects that truly matter to employees, organizations can not only increase the likelihood of employees staying with the company but also inspire them to perform at their best. When employees feel valued, supported, and connected to their work and the organization's purpose, they are motivated to go above and beyond to contribute their skills and talents. Ultimately, prioritizing employee engagement results in improved retention rates and a workforce that is dedicated to achieving success together.

Engaged staff is
44%
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*Bain & Company

Greater Productivity and Bigger Profits

Creating an engaging, motivating, and supportive employee experience not only improves retention but also leads to greater productivity and bigger profits. When employees are provided with the necessary tools, processes, and support, they can perform at their best, driving overall productivity within the organization.

Jacob Morgan, author of The Employee Experience Advantage, examined the financial data of hundreds of companies and found that those that invest in employee experience had more than 4 times the profits and 2 times the revenue. And according to **Gallup**, business units in the top quartile of employee engagement had higher productivity and 21% higher profitability. This data underscores the significance of focusing on employee experience as a long-term strategy rather than merely focusing on short-term engagement.

As Jacob Morgan writes, "Looking at the data, it's clear that there is a significant return to organizations that focus on employee experience over the long term, not just engagement in the here and now. Adobe, for instance, has an EVP of customer and employee experience and is making considerable investments in real-time employee feedback programs, beefing up diversity and inclusion efforts, giving employees access to consumer-grade technologies, and building workspaces according to multiple floor plans to accommodate different styles and preferences."

Less Burnout and Better Employee Health

Burnout is not just an exaggerated concept; it is a recognized syndrome by the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, which defines burnout as the result of "chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed," with symptoms including exhaustion, negative feelings towards one's career, and reduced productivity.

Interestingly, many factors that contribute to employee disengagement also serve as the culprits behind burnout. Employees experiencing burnout frequently are **63% more likely to take sick days, 13% less confident in their performance, and half as likely to discuss goals with their managers**. However, organizations can address these issues by focusing on engagement drivers such as capacity, role clarity, and manager relationships. By reducing the stressors that lead to burnout and promoting a healthier work-life balance, companies can help employees avoid burnout and live more fulfilling lives.

Reduction in Absenteeism

A strong correlation exists between employee engagement and a reduction in absenteeism. Research has consistently shown that as engagement levels increase, absenteeism decreases. **One study** found that by implementing engagement strategies, a hospital surgical unit was able to reduce absenteeism among nurses by 27.5%. This is critical in the healthcare field, where patient outcomes rely on a fully-staffed care team.

For HR leaders, focusing on implementing engagement strategies that promote work-life balance can have a profound impact on reducing absenteeism. Initiatives such as providing increased flexibility in work arrangements, offering remote work options, and granting additional paid time off (PTO) can enable employees to better manage their schedules, leading to a decrease in unnecessary absences. By empowering employees to achieve a healthier balance between their personal and professional lives, organizations foster an environment that supports their well-being and reduces the likelihood of absenteeism. This, in turn, ensures that teams are fully staffed and capable of delivering high-quality work, ultimately benefiting both employees and the organization as a whole.
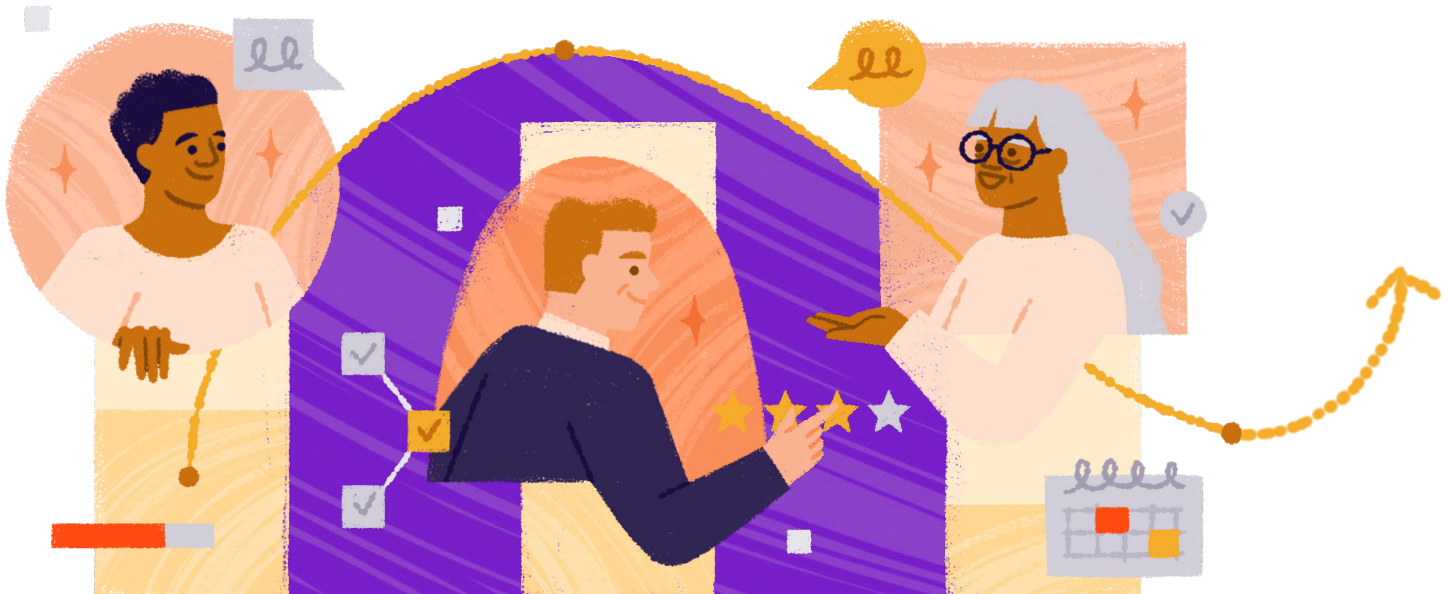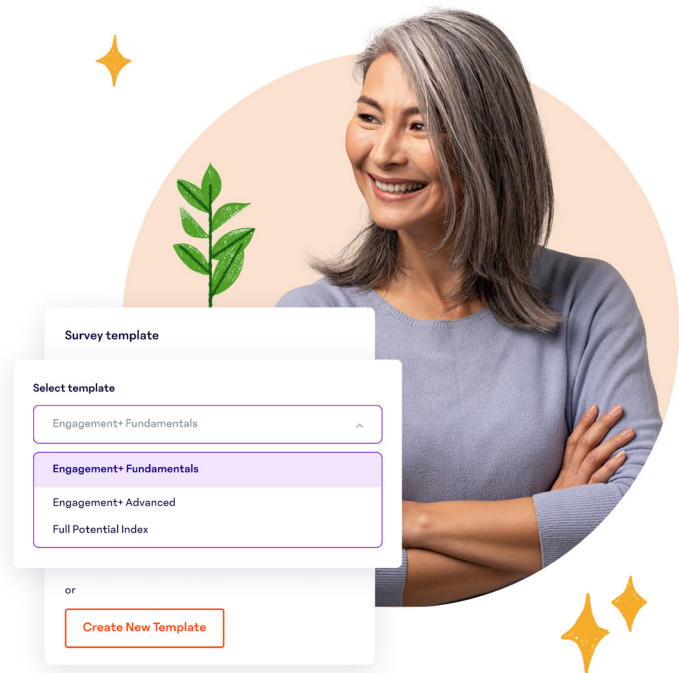
II. How to Measure Employee Engagement

Now that we've covered why it's important to invest in measuring and improving employee engagement, let's get into the nitty-gritty of how to tangibly measure it. Here are some best practices:

Use a Trusted Survey

Using a trusted survey is essential for measuring employee engagement accurately. It ensures reliable data collection, valuable insights, and informed decision-making. A well-designed survey allows organizations to assess engagement levels, identify areas for improvement, and benchmark against industry standards. It provides a solid foundation for implementing targeted strategies to enhance employee engagement and drive organizational success.

4 Key Elements of a Trusted Survey

1. REAL

Ensure that your survey is really getting to the heart of the matter and measuring employee engagement, not just satisfaction. As we covered earlier, employees are working their way up Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and are increasingly desiring more out of work than just being satisfied. Thus, it's important to ensure that your survey is able to go deeper and capture data and insights on various drivers of engagement.

2. VALID

A good engagement survey goes beyond creating a superficial image of a positive work environment. Validity ensures that the survey measures what it intends to measure, providing meaningful insights into employee experiences and sentiments. This is in contrast to surveys and/or "Best Places to Work" type reports that sometimes serve as puff pieces or tools to make things look good on the surface. These rankings may incentivize organizations to prioritize superficial aspects of engagement, rather than genuinely addressing employee concerns.

Additionally, internal employee engagement surveys run the risk of bias and invalidity due to potential concerns about anonymity, fear of repercussions, or lack of trust in the survey process. Engaging an outside vendor or utilizing a trusted tool can provide an objective perspective and create a safer space for employees to express their honest opinions. These external solutions can offer anonymity, and expertise in survey design and analysis, and help ensure the validity and integrity of the data collected.

3. CONFIDENTIAL

Speaking of anonymity, confidentiality is a very important aspect of an effective engagement survey. When employees have the assurance that their responses will be kept confidential, they are more likely to not only participate but to provide honest feedback, knowing that their responses won't lead to any negative consequences.

This confidentiality ensures that the data collected is trustworthy and representative of employees' true sentiments, and enables organizations to make informed decisions based on reliable information. Without confidentiality, engagement surveys risk being biased or incomplete. Employees may be hesitant to express their true opinions, leading to skewed data and a lack of valuable insights.

4. ACTIONABLE

While gathering data on employee engagement is essential, it is equally crucial to translate that data into actionable insights and tangible outcomes. An actionable survey is one that provides specific feedback and identifies areas where meaningful changes can be made to enhance employee engagement and satisfaction. It digs beyond the surface level and allows organizations to address the root causes of disengagement, know how to prioritize initiatives, and then develop targeted strategies for improvement.

Measure Consistently

Beyond the survey itself, an important component of the success of measuring engagement is frequency. Employee engagement should be considered a key business metric, and just as you wouldn't only visit key business metrics once a year, you shouldn't only measure/report on engagement once a year. Consistency also gives you the opportunity to establish a baseline of engagement and then consistently measure against it, and/or track improvements over time.

Start by identifying strategic milestones that align with the organizational calendar where engagement can be measured. For example, if your organization sets and measures new goals or OKRs every quarter, maybe engagement can be measured on a quarterly basis as well. We recommend measuring engagement twice a year, alternating with performance reviews each quarter. In the intervals between those milestones, leverage a tool like 15Five for ongoing measures. The **weekly check-in**, for example, makes it possible for HR leaders and managers to keep the pulse on the areas that are most critical to engagement and performance.

It is crucial to prioritize the necessary administrative tasks behind the scenes to ensure a smooth process of regularly measuring employee engagement. For example, ensure that you always have up-to-date, accurate contact and grouping information for all employees. This ensures that when analyzing survey data, employees are correctly categorized, enabling

a granular examination of engagement at various levels, such as by manager, team, department, and more.

Next, consider automating or scheduling reminders and notifications, both for the administrators responsible for managing the engagement survey and for the employees who will be participating. By automating these reminders and notifications, you can ensure that important deadlines and milestones are not overlooked. Admins can set up automated reminders to notify employees about upcoming survey launches, submission deadlines, and any crucial updates or changes. This helps to keep everyone informed and engaged throughout the survey process. By utilizing automation and scheduling, you streamline the communication process, improve survey participation rates, and maintain an efficient and organized engagement survey system.

Consider establishing a dedicated help desk and/or FAQ resource where employees can turn for support during the engagement survey process. Implementing such a support system can provide employees with a centralized place to seek guidance and find answers to any questions they may have. This initiative will not only enhance the engagement survey experience but also foster a greater sense of trust and transparency within the organization. Employees can rely on this resource, knowing that their concerns will be addressed promptly and effectively.
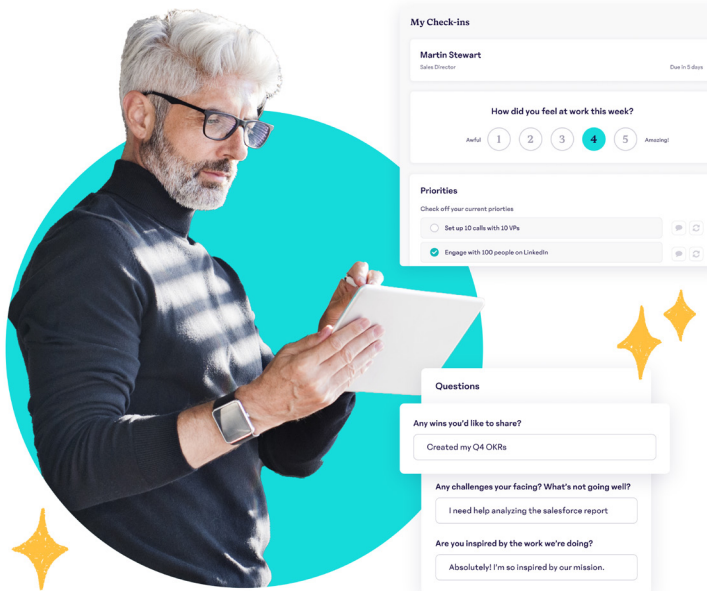
Focus on Key Engagement Drivers

Drivers allow you to go beyond just measuring employee satisfaction, so you can create an environment where employees can engage with their work and help identify weaknesses to address.

Through our work with academic experts, executive leaders, and HR veterans, 15Five has pioneered a new method for **measuring employee engagement** — one that's grounded in 17 employee engagement drivers such as purpose, autonomy, and shared values.

Each of these drivers quantifies the presence or absence of a workplace quality that impacts engagement. Every time an employee engagement survey is used to collect feedback, these are the underlying components we're measuring. But the process doesn't end there. The 17 drivers are also measured within the context of "spheres of experience." One of four key areas — work experience, leadership, manager, or coworkers — is displayed before each survey question to let employees know what they should be thinking about when responding.

By using this method to measure engagement, we're able to give people leaders an accurate understanding of their organization's strengths and weaknesses at any given time. Leadership can then use this data to identify areas for improvement and make changes that will help shape company culture in positive ways.

In 15Five's engagement surveys, employees report how much they agree or disagree with survey statements related to each driver. Employees' average responses to the statements for each driver are compared to an indexed average of responses from our database. This produces the driver scores:

High driver scores (0 to +4) are displayed in blue and show that those drivers are strong in the work environment.

Low driver scores (-4 to 0) are displayed in red/orange and show that those drivers could be better supported.

The score and Influence for each driver help organizations determine what is contributing to engagement and what can be acted on to improve engagement.

The 17 drivers that 15Five uses to measure engagement are:

- Autonomy
- Capacity
- Coworker Relationships
- Fairness
- Feedback
- Goal Support
- Leader Availability
- Leader Integrity
- Manager
- Meaning
- Professional Development
- Psychological Safety
- Purpose
- Rest
- Role Clarity
- Shared Values
- Utilization

To read a more in-depth explanation of each driver and how it is measured, <u>visit this article</u> ▶

Drivers of Engagement

🎯	Purpose	▲ 0.6	
💬	Feedback	▼ 0.1	
🚩	Goal Support	▲ 0.4	
🏛	Professional Dev.	▼ 0.3	

Involve the Entire Organization

Successfully measuring and improving employee engagement is a team effort that requires active participation from all levels, departments and teams, from senior leadership to managers to individual contributors. Here are some tips for making the most of each stakeholder's role in driving employee engagement.

Align Senior Leadership

Senior leaders are responsible for shaping the organization's cultures, values, and strategic direction, and their alignment and active participation in the engagement measurement and improvement process is crucial. First, it demonstrates a clear commitment to fostering a positive and engaging work environment for all employees. Furthermore, senior leaders can and should play a crucial role in identifying organizational-level trends and themes that emerge in the analysis of engagement data. They can use these insights to identify areas of strength as well as areas of opportunity for improvement, and then make informed decisions and develop targeted action plans to address specific engagement issues.

One great way to cement alignment from senior leadership is to advocate for employee engagement metrics to be included as key performance indicators (KPIs) in the regular reporting of the executive team. This not only demonstrates a commitment to prioritizing employee well-being and satisfaction, but it also highlights the understanding that engaged employees contribute to the overall success of the organization. When employee engagement metrics become a part of the executive team's KPIs, it creates a shared accountability for driving engagement initiatives and encourages a culture of continuous improvement in this critical area.

Empower Managers

Managers play a crucial role in employee engagement measurement and improvement because they serve as the direct link between senior leadership and their team members, making them the real change agents for driving engagement within the organization.

Thus, managers should be able to review the engagement data for their teams so they can gain invaluable insights into areas where improvement is

needed, identify trends, address concerns, and tailor their leadership approach to improve engagement within their team.

HR leaders should invest resources into training and empowering managers to use engagement data as leverage for opening up meaningful discussions between managers and their direct reports. Such open dialogue allows managers to address concerns, offer support, and collaborate with their team members to develop action plans for improvement. You don't want your managers to navigate making these changes alone, and it may even be worthwhile to offer hands-on coaching to guide them through the process. A good engagement coach will work with each manager to strengthen their team dynamics and make any necessary adjustments.

Involve Employees

Involving employees in measuring and improving employee engagement is crucial for creating a culture of ownership and empowerment. To begin, organizations should prioritize transparency and communication, ensuring that employees are aware of the purpose and goals of the engagement survey. By clearly explaining how their feedback will be used and the positive impact it can have, employees are more likely to participate and provide honest insights

actively. Running engagement surveys but failing to communicate the results or subsequent action plans to employees can contribute to a sense of distrust in leadership.

Beyond large-scale engagement surveys, organizations can establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback and dialogue with employees. This can be done through regular pulse surveys, focus groups, or feedback sessions where employees can share their thoughts, concerns, and suggestions for improving engagement. Actively listening to employee feedback not only demonstrates that their opinions are valued but also provides valuable information to identify areas for improvement.

Finally, actually involve employees in the decision-making process when determining how to translate employee engagement insights into outcomes. Take a collaborative approach by forming cross-functional teams or committees to address specific engagement challenges and/or solutions. By actively involving employees in the measurement and improvement of engagement, organizations foster a sense of ownership, engagement, and alignment, leading to a more motivated and satisfied workforce.

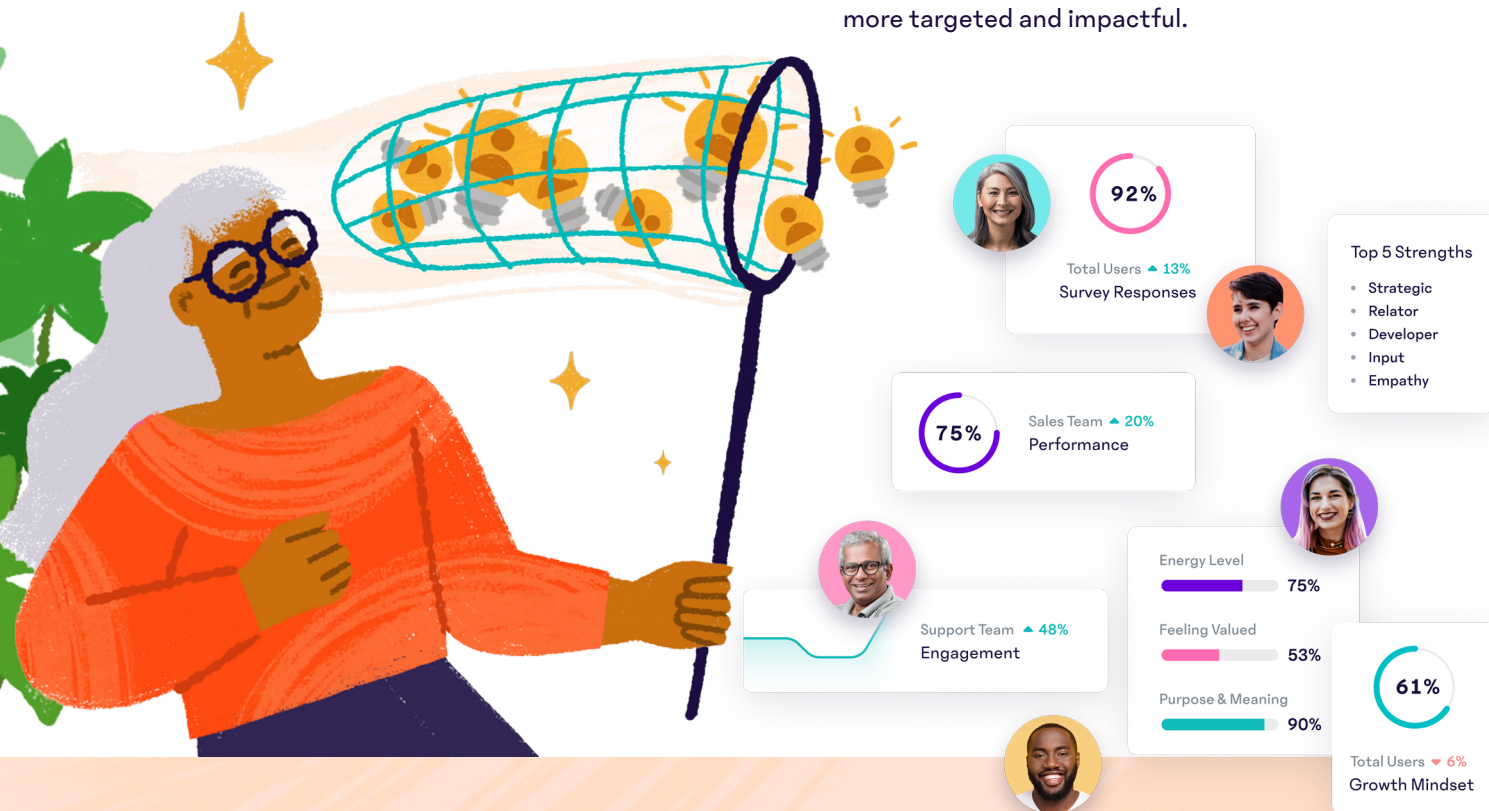# III. From Insights to Action: How to Act Upon Engagement Survey Data

Gathering data through an engagement survey is just the beginning; the real value lies in how organizations effectively use that data to drive positive change.

But many companies fail to see this step through. **Research from Qualtrics** found that while 92% of employees believe it is important that their company listens to their feedback, only 7% say their company acts on feedback really well. Therefore, it is vital to demonstrate to employees that management is actively listening and responding to feedback right away. Furthermore, it's essential to continue measuring and acting on feedback every quarter. By gradually prioritizing the most impactful initiatives, you can create genuine and sustainable changes that will lead to a more engaged workforce.

In this section, we will cover best practices for moving from insights to action, ensuring that your engagement survey becomes a catalyst for positive transformation within your organization.

Examine the Data

Once you've received the results of your employee engagement survey, the next crucial step is to extract key insights that will guide your actions. While it might be tempting to tackle all areas of improvement simultaneously, a more effective approach is to prioritize a few low points of engagement each quarter. By focusing on specific areas, you can allocate resources and attention where they are most needed, making your efforts more targeted and impactful.

92%
Total Users ▲ 13%
Survey Responses

Top 5 Strengths
- Strategic
- Relator
- Developer
- Input
- Empathy

75%
Sales Team ▲ 20%
Performance

Support Team ▲ 48%
Engagement

Energy Level 75%
Feeling Valued 53%
Purpose & Meaning 90%

61%
Total Users ▼ 6%
Growth Mindset

In addition, it's essential to drill down into specific teams or departments. This allows you to uncover valuable insights about how individual team leaders are operating and identify best practices that can be shared across the organization. Additionally, analyzing employee engagement metrics by tenure and job role can reveal relationships that may have been overlooked, providing further clarity on areas that require attention.

By getting strategic with analyzing the survey data and narrowing your focus, you can develop a comprehensive action plan that addresses the most critical aspects of employee engagement. This approach ensures that your efforts are well-directed, maximizing the potential for positive change.

By aligning your engagement initiatives with long-term business goals, you ensure that your efforts have a direct and meaningful impact on the organization as a whole. Consider the key areas where increased engagement can drive desired outcomes, such as productivity, customer satisfaction, innovation, or employee retention.

When you link engagement initiatives to business outcomes, you create a compelling case for continued investment and garner support from senior leadership and stakeholders — which is key. This approach not only provides a strategic framework for your actions but also allows you to measure the success of your engagement efforts in terms of their impact on the broader goals of the organization.

Start with Business Outcomes

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: employee engagement metrics should not exist in a vacuum; they should be considered key business metrics. And thus, when considering how to translate engagement insights into outcomes and deciding what to prioritize, it is crucial to consider the overall business outcomes your organization is aiming to achieve.

Focus on Small Improvements

When translating engagement survey results into meaningful outcomes, it's essential to embrace the power of small improvements. Rather than attempting to address all areas of concern at once, focusing on incremental changes allows for a more manageable and targeted approach. By breaking down the improvement process into smaller,
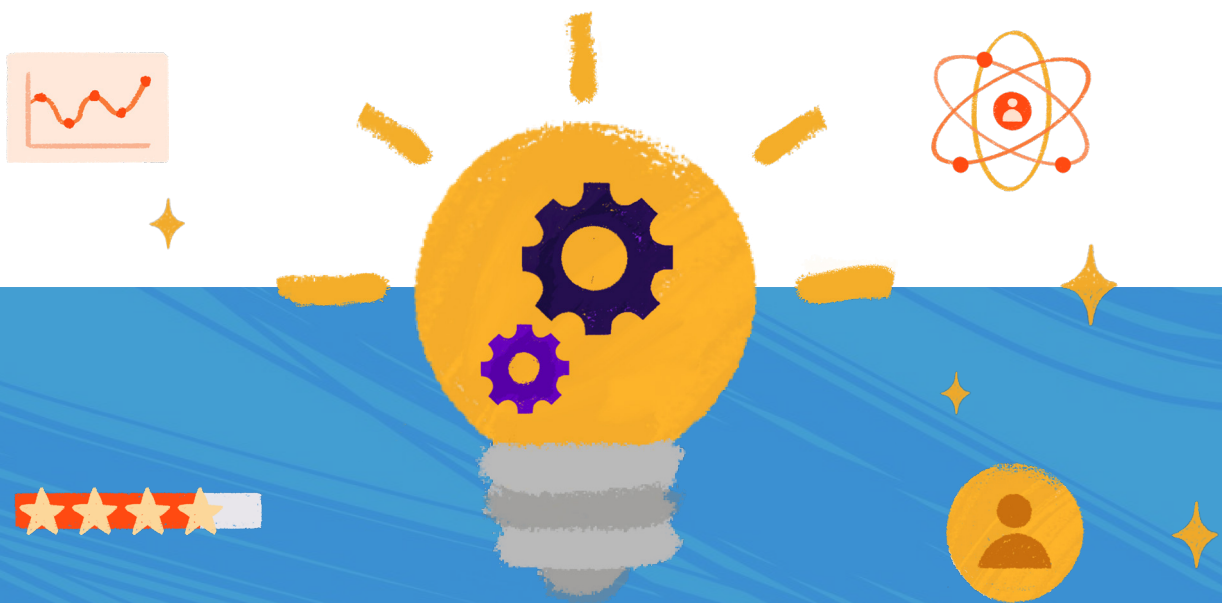
achievable steps, you create a sense of momentum and build confidence in your ability to drive positive change.

Implement a cycle of measuring, acting, measuring, acting — a cycle that fuels continuous improvement while enabling you to assess the impact of your actions, refine strategies, and make informed decisions based on real-time feedback and results. With this iterative approach, you can identify what works, pinpoint what doesn't, and make data-driven adjustments along the path of building a truly engaged workplace.

Make It a Team Effort

Transforming engagement insights into meaningful outcomes and building a truly engaged workforce is a collective effort that requires all hands on deck.

One crucial aspect is self-guided learning, empowering employees to take ownership of their development and growth. By providing resources, tools, and opportunities for self-directed learning, employees can enhance their skills, knowledge, and engagement, contributing to their own personal and professional success.

Creating a shared community is another vital component. By fostering a culture of collaboration, open communication, and knowledge sharing, employees can connect with one another, exchange ideas, and learn from different perspectives. This sense of community cultivates a supportive environment where employees feel valued, heard, and empowered, leading to increased engagement and a stronger sense of belonging.

Finally, consider the value of bringing in expert advisors and professional coaches, who can play a significant role in guiding individuals and teams towards engagement outcomes. These experts provide guidance, mentorship, and tailored support to help employees identify areas for improvement, develop effective strategies, and navigate challenges along the way. Their expertise and insights offer valuable perspectives that contribute to improved levels of individual and organizational engagement and growth.

Communicate Progress

By explaining to employees why the survey was conducted and emphasizing the importance of employee feedback, you can create a sense of purpose and demonstrate that their opinions are valued. Sharing the learnings from the survey openly and transparently helps to foster a culture of trust and collaboration.

Honesty is key. Be candid about the areas identified for improvement and the challenges that may arise along the way. This authenticity builds credibility and shows employees that their concerns are being taken seriously. Additionally, by openly acknowledging areas that require attention, you create an environment where employees feel safe to share their perspectives and ideas for improvement.

Vulnerably discussing challenges is important, but so is celebrating progress. Regularly updating employees on the actions being taken and highlighting the positive changes that are occurring reinforces their confidence in the organization's commitment to their engagement and well-being. Recognize milestones, share success stories, and express gratitude for their contributions. This celebration not only reinforces a positive company culture but also motivates employees to stay engaged and continue their active participation in the improvement process.

IV. Beyond the Survey: Creating a Truly Engaged Workplace

Up until this point, we've discussed primarily the reactive elements of building an engaged workforce — measuring engagement, and taking steps to improve it based on the results.

However, being reactive is only part of the solution. What's equally, if not more, important is adopting a proactive approach by implementing strategies, systems, and structures that foster a highly engaged workforce. By establishing this solid foundation, you can prevent engagement issues from arising in the first place. So, keep reading to discover best practices that will help you create a workforce that is truly engaged.

Understand Leadership's Role in Fostering Engagement

Recognizing and rewarding employee achievements is a powerful driver of high organizational engagement. Recognition not only boosts individual morale but also fosters a positive and supportive work environment where employees feel motivated to go above and beyond. Moreover, rewards, whether in the form of financial incentives, promotions, or non-monetary perks, demonstrate that the organization values and invests in its employees' growth and success. This, in turn, enhances job satisfaction and commitment, as employees are more likely to feel a sense of loyalty and dedication to an organization that recognizes their achievements.

By incorporating a culture of recognition and rewards, organizations can create a virtuous cycle of engagement, where employees feel motivated, appreciated, and inspired to consistently perform at their best.

Beyond increased engagement, some benefits of gratitude in the workplace include:

- **Higher productivity:** When employees feel celebrated and valued, they're more excited to work.
- **Better retention:** A positive recognition strategy boosts morale and breeds loyalty.
- **Greater motivation:** Regular appreciation gives people fresh purpose and momentum.
- **More satisfied customers:** Employees who are openly praised earn higher loyalty and satisfaction scores.
- **Stronger connections:** Remote teams feel more connected when positive feedback rolls in.

There's a reason why **High Fives** — which allows employees to appreciate other employees and share the impact they've had — is one of 15Five's most popular features. They help promote a culture of gratitude and recognition that can be felt by in-office and remote employees alike.
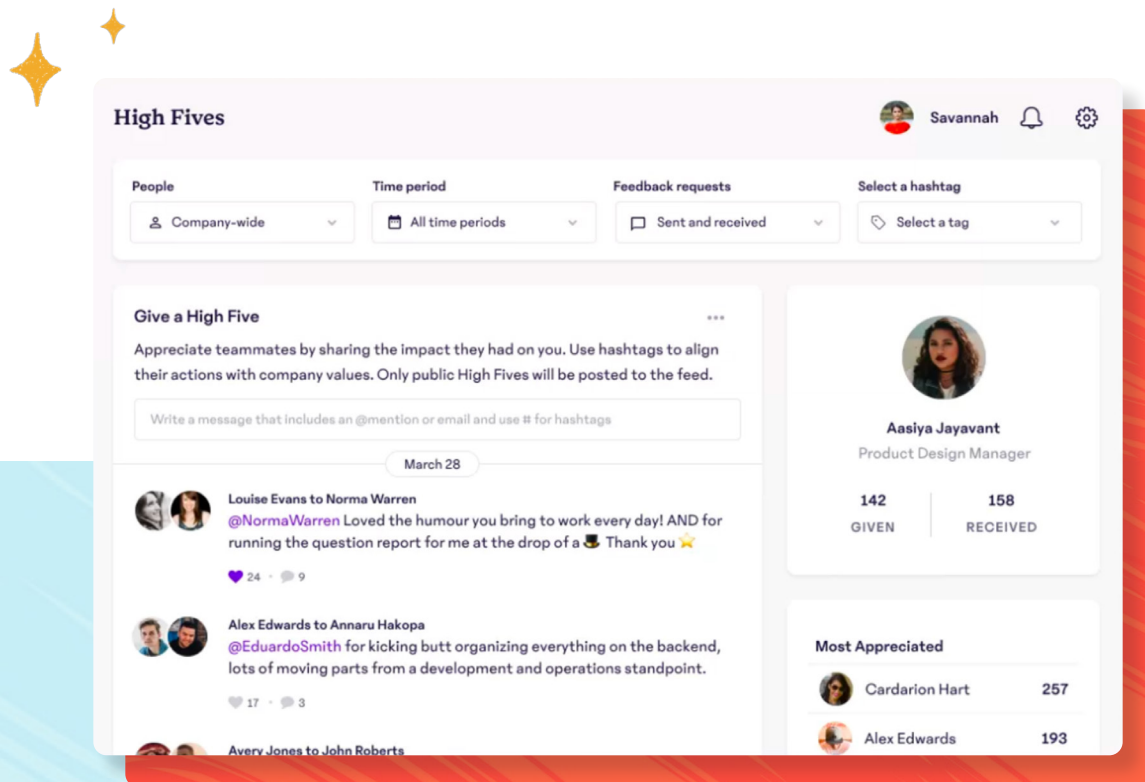
Want to learn more about strengthening employee recognition in your organization?

Get The Ultimate Guide to Gratitude in the Workplace.

Get the Guide

Provide Growth and Development Opportunities

When employees have access to growth and development opportunities, they feel valued and supported in their professional growth. In fact, research has demonstrated that 94% of employees would stay at a company longer if it invested in their career. Providing such opportunities signals that the organization is invested in their long-term success and is willing to invest in their skills and knowledge.

This not only enhances employee engagement but also promotes a sense of empowerment and motivation to continuously improve and excel in their roles. As Deloitte found, organizations with a strong learning culture are 92% more likely to develop novel products and processes, 52% more productive, 56% more likely to be the first to market with their products and services, and 17% more profitable than their peers.
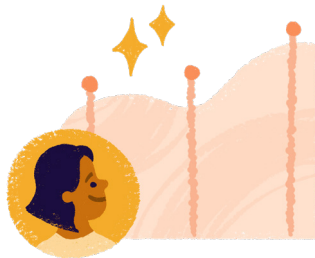
Foster Work-Life Balance

In today's fast-paced and demanding work environments, employees often face competing priorities between their professional and personal lives. Lack of work-life balance and subsequent burnout can greatly impact employee performance — research from Deloitte confirms this, with 91% of respondents stating that having an unmanageable amount of stress or frustration negatively impacts the quality of their work. The same research also found that 70% of professionals feel their employers are not doing enough to prevent or alleviate burnout within their organization.
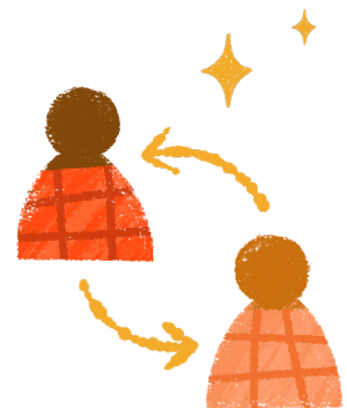
When organizations prioritize work-life balance, they acknowledge the importance of employees' overall well-being and recognize that a healthy balance between work and personal life leads to increased job satisfaction and engagement. Organizations can do this by implementing policies and practices that support work-life balance, such as flexible time off, remote work options, and clear boundaries around work hours. It is also crucial that senior leadership models the importance of work-life balance and sets a good example that gives employees permission to also cultivate a good work-life balance.

Prioritize Continuous Feedback and Improvement Cycles

The importance of prioritizing continuous feedback and improvement cycles cannot be overstated when it comes to building a highly engaged workforce. Traditional performance management practices that rely on annual or infrequent reviews are no longer sufficient in today's dynamic work environment. To foster engagement, organizations need to establish a culture of ongoing feedback and continuous improvement.

But how? Beyond continually measuring employee engagement and taking steps to improve it, here are some ways to bake continuous feedback and improvement into your workplace culture:

Regular Check-ins and 1-on-1s

Using an asynchronous check-in tool like 15Five's Check-ins can enable managers to gain visibility into the progress employees are making on their goals, and allows employees to voice concerns or roadblocks they are encountering, so their managers can support them earlier, and before it's too late to keep them at your organization.

A Universal Goal Setting Methodology

Without goal clarity, your people are basically walking around aimlessly. They may be "moving needles," but without your vision as a leader, they cannot possibly hope to contribute in a meaningful way to a prosperous quarter or year for your company. And this lack of clarity can lead to them feeling disengaged, or like the work they are doing is not having a true impact.

That's why it is so important to operationalize goal setting and tracking. At 15Five, we use the **OKR methodology**. Whatever goal setting methodology you use, goals should be set 2-4 times per year (ideally, on a quarterly basis) and progress on said goals should be monitored via check-ins and 1-on-1 meetings between managers and their direct reports. Ensuring not only that there is clarity around goals, but also that there is a clear line of communication between managers and employees about goals, will imbue employees with a much greater sense of efficacy and purpose, leading to higher engagement.

With **15Five's OKR tool**, leaders can clarify the company objectives and charge everyone's work with purpose. Managers can then help their team members to set individual goals that are connected to company OKRs, and track progress on those OKRs regularly.

In addition to an asynchronous check-in, managers should be holding regular 1-on-1 meetings with their direct reports that go beyond a status update and dive deeper into priorities, challenges, and opportunities for growth.

When done properly, 1-on-1s:

- Empower employees to act autonomously and positively impact the organization
- Help people focus on the right prioritized goals
- Give people space to talk about issues before they become bigger problems
- Allow you to guide and coach your people
- Allow you to recognize and encourage your people in an ongoing way

Using a tool like **15Five's 1-on-1 Tool** helps ensure that every 1-on-1 meeting held is a valuable one. With its guided structure, it makes it easier to focus on priorities, challenges, and progress so everyone is aligned, motivated, and engaged.

Regular Performance Reviews

The performance review is a critical touchpoint between manager and employee. It is a great opportunity to discuss the skills the employee wants to develop by the next review cycle, and how the manager and organization as a whole can support them in doing so. Having these types of conversations more regularly increases the likelihood that employees will feel that working at the organization is supporting their career development — which is crucial to ensuring that they feel engaged at work.

We recommend running two review cycles per year. Why? Because, of course, organizations need a frequent understanding of who is performing above expectations and who isn't, so that proactive steps can be taken. But also, individuals want more frequent feedback, not only to be reminded of their value and contributions, but also to support their career and growth aspirations, and to ensure they're feeling engaged and thriving at work.

Want to learn more about how to design and implement a review process that is fair, efficient, and valuable?

Get 15Five's Performance Review Playbook.

Get the Playbook

## Improving Employee Engagement: A Crucial Outcome For Strategic HR Leaders

HR leaders should prioritize improving employee engagement as one of their key outcomes, alongside reducing regrettable turnover and maximizing employee performance. By focusing on these outcomes, HR and People Ops functions can demonstrate their ability to generate tangible business results, leading to increased credibility and recognition as strategic partners within the organization. When HR leaders are taken more seriously by other executives, they can gain approval for mission-critical HR initiatives that drive significant business impact. This positive cycle solidifies their place at the executive table and amplifies their overall impact, creating a win-win situation for the entire organization.

Want to learn more about these key HR outcomes and how to achieve them?

Get 15Five's HR Outcomes Playbook.

Get the Playbook
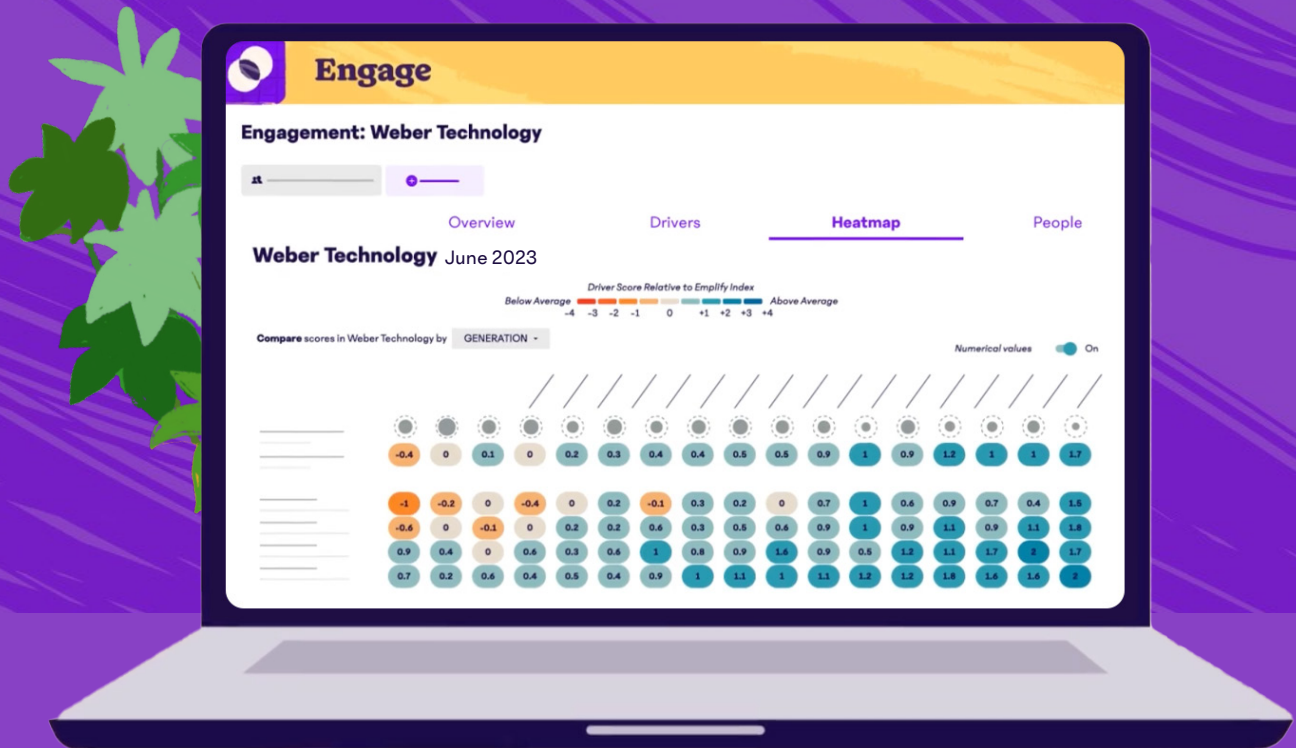
About 15Five's Engage

15Five's Engage is for HR leaders and executives who want to measure employee engagement, quickly find actionable insights, and take steps to drive change.

Engage helps you take your engagement strategy to the next level through a science-backed assessment paired with an insights dashboard that makes it a breeze to collect employee feedback and find insights. With Engage, you can quickly decide where to focus your engagement strategy (down to the specific manager), and dive deeper into specific topics such as burnout, DE&I, and remote work when needed. And with the support of executive advisors and manager coaches, take action to create an engaged and productive culture.

To learn more about how 15Five can help you measure and improve employee engagement at your organization, **contact us to schedule a demo today.**

Congrats! You're on your way to growth

When do you want to accomplish this by?

Start Date

📅 3/1/2022

End Date

📅 6/30/2022

How often would you like to be reminded of this growth area?

Start Date

⏰ Every other week ⌄

Set Another Goal   Done

Want to see the 15Five platform in action?

Request a Demo

15five

About 15Five

15Five is the performance management platform that drives business results. By continuously measuring the indicators of engagement and performance that matter most, 15Five helps HR leaders uncover risks of turnover, poor performance, and ineffective management before they impact the organization. 15Five's approach provides HR with everything they need to achieve their strategic people objectives, and the data to tie those objectives to business outcomes. The platform combines 360° performance reviews, actionable engagement surveys, robust goal & OKR tracking, customizable manager training, and ongoing manager-employee feedback tools like weekly 1-on-1s and check-ins. Together, all of these enable HR leaders to deliver high engagement and performance within the flow of work, and empower their managers to drive change from the bottom up. 15Five is loved by strategic HR leaders, managers, and employees at over 3,500 companies, including Credit Karma, HubSpot, and Pendo.

For more information, visit **www.15Five.com**