

A Brief Guide to the 12 Elements of Engagement

Q01: I know what is expected of me at work.

Clarity of expectations — perhaps the most basic of employee needs in the workplace — is critical to performance. “Knowing what’s expected” is more than a job description. It is a detailed understanding of how each employee’s activities relate to what everyone else is asked to do, and how those expectations change when circumstances change.

Q02: I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

When managers ask employees to accomplish a goal but do not provide them with the necessary resources, credibility is lost. Great managers identify the needs of each person in relation to the outcomes they are attempting to achieve, and then position resources accordingly. One of the strongest predictors of customer engagement, this element also predicts employee retention, safety and productivity.

Q03: At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.

The most powerful benefit a manager can provide is to place their employees in jobs that allow them to use the best of their natural selves — their talents — as well as their skills and knowledge in order to build and apply strengths.

Q04: In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

The key to effective recognition is that it is honest and based on outcomes that are measurable. The answer to “How much recognition?” is once every seven days. Succeeding on this element is about creating a culture of appreciation. All team members, supervisors and leaders should be involved in and responsible for this. Employees who do not feel adequately recognized are twice as likely to say they will leave their company in the next year.

Q05: My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

A productive workplace is one in which people feel safe — safe enough to experiment, to challenge, to share information and to support each other, and in which team members are prepared to give the manager and the organization the “benefit of the doubt.” None of this can happen if team members do not feel cared about. Relationships are the glue that holds great workplaces together.

Q06: There is someone at work who encourages my development.

In the case of this element, “development” does not mean “promotion.” Encouraging development starts with an understanding of an employee’s unique combination of skills, knowledge and talents, and it requires commitment — from both the manager and the employee.

Q07: At work, my opinions seem to count.

Gallup’s extensive research of successful workgroups has found no significant relationship between compensation and employee engagement or productivity. However, having employees feel that their “opinions count” does correlate to these outcomes. Managers who value an individual’s opinion will benefit more than managers who establish a salary or “price” relationship between an employee and the organization. Team members who give this item high scores feel they have access to channels of communication across different levels or divisions of the organization, and their managers work to maintain those channels.

Q08: The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.

Employees want to believe in what their organization strives to accomplish. This element measures how well an individual identifies with their company's mission. Excellence occurs when people are deeply attached to a sense of purpose in their life. This element focuses on maximizing individual and group contributions by appealing to employees' larger sense of purpose and mission.

Q09: My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.

This element involves a keen awareness of work standards and of team members' performance. However, adherence to high standards cannot be forced; it must be developed and arranged by a talented manager. The best managers foster in their teams an environment of honest and complete communication, an understanding of each other's work, and respect for each other's efforts and results.

Q10: I have a best friend at work.

Gallup's research indicates that workplaces in which employees report having a "best friend" are safer and more efficient than workplaces with fewer best friends. People would rather build bridges than walls around themselves. This element deals with optimizing group contributions by enhancing the quality of relationships between employees in the workplace, in turn nurturing trust and emotional loyalty.

Q11: In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

Formal performance appraisals and progress discussions are related, but not synonymous. What is important to employees and to the business is that employees understand how they are doing and where their work is leading. In some ways, this element is a long-term complement to the fourth element of engagement, which focuses on more immediate "recognition and praise." When both the manager and the employee identify a task at which the employee truly excels, they can work together to position the employee to make their greatest contribution to the organization.

Q12: This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

The need to learn and grow is a natural human instinct. This element measures the degree to which an employee feels they are given learning and growth opportunities, such as more efficient ways to do their job. The best managers know an organization's growth depends on employees' capacity to learn. The best teams are never quite satisfied with current ways of doing things. They always strive to find better, more efficient and more innovative ways to work.

Q01. I know what is expected of me at work.

Focus Me

Perhaps the most basic of employee needs in the workplace is knowing what success on the job looks like. Employees need to know what is expected of them at work so that they can commit, deliver and focus on what matters most.

Groups with high scores on this item are more productive, cost-effective, creative and adaptive.

Substantial gains on the first engagement element are often associated with productivity gains of 5% to 10%.



Three Types of Expectations

- 1 **Functional.** The role's tasks, responsibilities and metrics.
- 2 **Emotional.** The expectations of the working environment and the organization.
- 3 **Relational.** The team's collective expectations and expectations of one another.

Q02. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.

Free Me From Unnecessary Stress

Nothing is more frustrating than feeling as if you want to do a good job at work but don't have the right equipment to do so. When employees lack the means to do their work well, frustration with their inability quickly follows, as does anger with the manager or organization for placing them in such a difficult spot.

On average, only one in three workers strongly agree that they have told their manager the one thing they need most to get their work done and why.

Managers with bottom-quartile performance on this measure average 20% to 40% higher employee attrition than their top-quartile peers. This represents millions of dollars in direct and indirect turnover costs.



Three Material and Emotional Needs

- 1 Hardware.** The tangible tools and equipment necessary to do the work.
- 2 Software.** The systems and processes in place (including access to information) that maximize productivity.
- 3 Humanware.** Appropriate staffing and the acceptable handling of equipment requests.

Q03. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.

Know Me

The most powerful benefit a manager can provide employees is to place them in roles that allow them to apply the best of their natural selves — their talents — as well as their skills and knowledge every day.

Regardless of role, having the opportunity to develop one's strengths is more important to success than the description of the role, a title or even pay. Managers whose employees' talents are aligned with their job demands have more sales, greater profits, fewer unscheduled absences and lower employee turnover.

People who focus on using their strengths are six times as likely to be engaged in their jobs.

People who receive feedback on their strengths have 7.8% greater productivity.



Three Ways to Help an Employee Appreciate and Use Their Strengths

- 1 Name It!** Help each person gain awareness of and keep in mind their individual talents and strengths.
- 2 Claim It!** Help each team member appreciate the value and opportunities their talents and strengths offer.
- 3 Aim It!** Help each team member intentionally invest in the development of their talents and strengths.

Q04. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

Help Me See My Value

This element of engagement may represent one of the greatest lost opportunities for managers. Employees rely on praise and recognition to better understand their manager's expectations and values. Praise and recognition are tools that managers can use to communicate what is important and help an employee see their value.

Gallup's research shows that managers who do not use the power of positive feedback hamper their own managerial effectiveness and diminish the power of their employees and teams.

Globally, in the typical workgroup Gallup has studied, about one in four employees strongly agree that they have received recognition for doing good work in the past seven days.

Employees who are not adequately recognized at work are twice as likely to say they'll quit in the next year.



Three Attributes of Effective Recognition

- 1 **Authentic Recognition** that feels genuine, real and heartfelt.
- 2 **Meaningful Praise** that highlights the value of the work and the person doing it.
- 3 **Motivating Recognition** that taps into what matters most to the individual.

Q05. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

Care About Me

Employees need to know that they are more than just a number. They need to know that someone is concerned about them as people first and as employees second.

Gallup's research indicates that employees don't leave companies; they leave managers and supervisors. Great managers know that putting the right people in the right roles is not enough. They are aware of their employees' needs and manage with each person's engagement in mind.

When Gallup asked employees what they were thinking about when they responded to this item, employees used words like acceptance, trust, fairness, consistency, understanding and authenticity.



Three Aspects of a Caring Work Environment

- 1 **Valued.** Each person feels like a valued member of the team and organization.
- 2 **Genuine.** Each person believes that their supervisor or manager takes a personal interest in them.
- 3 **Respected.** Employees treat one another with respect.

Q06. There is someone at work who encourages my development.

Help Me Grow

Human beings cannot be successful alone. We learn more, apply what we learn faster, and grow and develop all in response to others. Given this, we know that employees need a manager who encourages their development.

Each employee needs help navigating the course of their career. At times, employees need sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and visibility, and challenging work assignments. At other times, employees look for counseling, friendship, and acceptance and confirmation that they are doing well.

Less than 1% of employees who report having someone at work who encourages their development are actively disengaged.

Less than 1% of those who have no mentor are able to achieve real engagement with their employer through the other 11 elements of engagement.



Three Ways to Encourage Development

- 1 Individualized.** Customized for each team member and consistent with their current role.
- 2 Intentional.** Directed and purposeful for each person.
- 3 Ongoing.** Continuous process throughout each person's work life cycle (from onboarding to promotion).

Q07. At work, my opinions seem to count.

Hear Me

This element of engagement can be viewed as an employee's "internal stock price." It measures the sense of value that employees put on their work and their organization.

Employees want to feel valued. They want to know that their input is important and that they are making a significant contribution and a difference to their work environment. This feeling creates a greater sense of inclusion among workers and reinforces their self-worth.

On average, fewer than one in five workers strongly agree that they receive meaningful feedback when they make a suggestion about improving performance. Improving the proportion of employees who rate this item highly can substantially affect customer ratings, productivity, employee retention, safety and profitability.



Three Ways to Create a Culture of Idea Sharing

- 1 **Accepting.** Be open to each team member's opinions and feedback.
- 2 **Proactive.** Regularly contact others to get their opinions.
- 3 **Responsive.** Provide feedback on opinions you solicited.

Q08. The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.

Help Me See My Importance

Employees want to believe in what their employer does. Excellent performance occurs when people are deeply attached to a sense of purpose in their lives. When employees feel that their job is important, they want to do more of it.

At a fundamental level, we all need something to do — and ideally, this is something that we believe in and look forward to doing at work every day.

When people believe in what their employer does and feel a connection between their work and their personal mission, they are more likely to stay with the organization and feel like they are an integral part of something bigger than themselves.

In Gallup's database, 25% or more of workers in retail trades, financial services and chemical manufacturing strongly agree that the purpose of their company makes them feel their job is important.



Three Important Things to Focus on

- 1 **Take It Seriously.** Create a shared mission that guides the team's actions and decisions.
- 2 **Do What Is Right.** Mission, vision and values inform thoughts, actions and behaviors. Your employees will feel successful when they experience a sense of purpose every day.
- 3 **Be the Torchbearer.** Bring the company's mission or purpose to life.

Q09. My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.

Help Me Feel Proud

Trusting that one's coworkers share a commitment to quality is vital to excellent team performance. All employees need to be in an environment where there is mutual trust and respect for one another's efforts and results. This starts with a deep awareness of work standards and team expectations.

By a 6-to-1 margin, people are more upset with a colleague who has the ability but doesn't try than a colleague who tries hard but doesn't have much ability.



Three Important Things to Focus on

- 1 Culture.** Quality is a priority in the organization, and standards are upheld at all levels.
- 2 Individual Commitment.** Individuals take responsibility for their actions and deliver the highest quality standards.
- 3 Team Commitment.** Teams feel comfortable questioning, confronting and being vigilant about what's right.

Q10. I have a best friend at work.

Help Me Build Mutual Trust

Throughout our lives, we spend a lot of time at work. Accordingly, we instinctively look to develop friendships at work in which we feel respected and trusted. Going a step further and having a best friend at work can help employees feel more engaged — and with best friends, teams will be more likely to see a positive impact on business results. It's simple: People with friends at work are happier at work.

The **best** predictor of having higher wellbeing and engagement at work is not what people are doing — it's whom they are with.

Without a best friend at work, the chances of being engaged in your job are one in 12.



Three Characteristics of a Well-Connected Team

- 1 **Trust.** Confidence in one another's reliability and dependability.
- 2 **Teamwork.** Appreciation of one another's talents and strengths; can tackle challenges together.
- 3 **Emotional Loyalty.** Loyalty to the team is passionate, expressive and deep-seated.

Q11. In the last six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.

Help Me Review My Contributions

Few things are more important to an employee than knowing that they are progressing at work. Feedback is vital and beneficial to both an employer and an employee.

The best managers recognize that honest, positive and constructive performance feedback provides time to discuss an employee's progress and growth. Feedback can help employees understand themselves better and give them a clear perspective on how their contributions make a difference to the organization.

One in three employees in Gallup's global database strongly agree that someone has talked with them about their progress in the last six months.



Three Characteristics of the Most Effective Performance Feedback

- 1 **Strengths-Based.** Focus on improving strengths and managing weaknesses.
- 2 **Engagement-Focused.** Ensure that your employees' workplace needs are met.
- 3 **Performance-Oriented.** Concentrate on making sure that performance outcomes are clear and objective.

Q12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Challenge Me

The desire to learn and grow is a basic human need. One way employees can learn and grow is to find more efficient ways to do their jobs. The best teams are never quite satisfied with their work. They always strive to find better, more productive ways to work. And where there is growth, there is innovation.

Employees who have an opportunity to learn and grow at work are twice as likely as those on the other end of the scale to say they will spend their career with their company.



Three Ways to Challenge Employees to Learn and Grow

- 1 **Continuous.** An environment that encourages continuous learning.
- 2 **Expanding.** Short-term “stretch” goals that motivate employees to expand their current knowledge or skill set.
- 3 **Aspirational.** Career-oriented development plans that align with each person’s strengths and aspirations.