



The Managerial Edge: How Engaged Managers Engage Their Employees in Times of Crisis

With 70 percent of US workers disengaged from their jobs, the American workplace has some work to do, especially during this time of economic uncertainty. The simple truth is employee disengagement costs money—serious money. In fact, disengaged employees cost the US economy up to \$605 billion per year—not exactly pocket change. Now more than ever, companies need *engaged* employees to keep their businesses afloat, save money, and discover the solutions needed to navigate our current crisis.

So, what can organizations do to boost engagement during challenging times?

They need to consider the role managers play in engagement. Beyond selecting the right individual for the right managerial role, organizations need to equip managers with the resources and tools they need to create an environment where employee engagement thrives. Organizations also need to engage managers so that managers can, in turn, engage their employees.

So, what can organizations do to engage managers? What can managers do to boost engagement in times of crisis? And how can PXT Select™ help? Let's find out.

How Do Managers Influence Engagement?

We've heard it before—people leave their managers, *not* necessarily their jobs. According to Gallup's [State of the American Manager report](#), a manager is the primary factor that determines an employee's level of engagement and performance. Gallup also states that *one in two* employees have left a job to get away from a manager and improve their overall life at some point in their career.

But are managers to blame *entirely* for the problem of employee disengagement? We argue they're not.

While managers try and fail to engage their employees, many of these same managers struggle to engage *themselves* in their work. And that's not necessarily their fault either. As Gallup notes in their report, only *ten percent* of the workforce has the skills and talents to succeed in managerial roles.

So, why do so many companies select the wrong individuals as managers?

According to Gallup's reasoning,

Companies use outdated notions of succession to put people in these [manager] roles: They base hiring and promotion decisions on individuals' past experience or tenure, or they give them the manager job as a 'reward' for their performance in a completely separate role.

As Gallup describes the situation, companies waste time, energy, and resources as they try to conform talented people to the roles their talents just don't match up with. For as much as *employee* disengagement costs, *manager* disengagement costs the US economy anywhere from \$319 to \$398 billion *per year*.

Engaging the Manager Comes First

If companies want to use effective management to engage their employees, Gallup recommends first selecting the right talent for managerial roles. PXT Select makes this process easy. With the PXT Select assessment, organizations can gather information on managerial candidates to compare their Thinking Styles, Behavioral Traits, and Motivational Interests to that of the ideal manager. If a candidate falls within the ideal range of Assertiveness, Sociability, Independence, Verbal Skill, Numerical Ability, and so on compared to the Performance Model, then an organization knows with a sense of confidence that the talents of the candidate match up with the needs of the organization.

If you select the right talent for a managerial role—someone who fits the benchmark model and has the characteristics of an effective manager—then you get a manager who will naturally excel at supporting and engaging employees.

So, what can the right manager do to drive employee engagement?

Managers COACH

For managers to optimize their employees' experience and full potential, they need to switch their mindset from "boss" to "coach."

Traditional bosses use authority, reward, and punishment to get what they want. Many bosses focus so intensely on meeting organizational goals that they forget about the needs of their employees. Feeling unsupported, discouraged, and, in some cases, afraid of punishment from their own bosses, many employees disengage from their work or leave their jobs. No one wants to work in a constant state of fear, especially during a crisis when fear and stress run high enough on their own. Fear doesn't inspire loyalty or produce quality work. Simply put, your company can't afford to use fear. It needs loyal and productive employees now more than ever.

On the other hand, managers who act as coaches understand that management is about developing a partnership—a trusting and respectful relationship of mutual benefit. In these relationships, workers perform at higher levels thanks to the support of managers who involve themselves directly in the learning and development process.

[Joseph Weintraub](#), an organizational psychologist who focuses on individual and organizational effectiveness, describes this type of relationship best when he writes, "Coaching is an ongoing dialogue with the goal of increasing learning and improving one's ability to perform effectively now and in the future." In essence, encouragement, partnership, and direct support go much further than reward, punishment, lack of attention, and overbearing authority.

So, how do engaged managers COACH their teams to success? They take the following steps:

C: Capitalize on strengths—Managers develop and leverage peoples' *existing* talents and skills rather than focusing too much on improving weaknesses. During a crisis, you must make use of *every* existing resource you have at your disposal. The biggest resource you have (at any point) is the people that make up your organization. Get to know them *and* their strengths. Put those strengths to work and let them shine.

O: Opportunity—Through succession planning and career pathing, managers work with employees to create opportunities for advancement. If people see they can grow with a company, they're more likely to stay on board as they pursue that opportunity.

A: Align daily priorities—Managers provide clarity for individuals in their work and align individual work with organizational goals. With so many variables up in the air as people work remotely, communication takes on an added degree of difficulty. Managers must work even harder to communicate and keep people on track and focused on their work.

C: Clarify expectations—Managers clarify expectations so that individuals understand them. Again, that’s especially important when people are working remotely. As work conditions shift, expectations around work are also shifting. Employees need to know about these expectations to stay focused.

H: Humanize relationships (and prioritize inclusivity)—Engaged managers care about their people—people they know have lives and concerns outside of work. They build solid, trusting relationships, welcome ongoing feedback and perspectives, recognize efforts and achievements, and care about the wellbeing and work-life balance of the individuals they manage. If people feel distracted by the uncertainty in their home lives, they’re not going to perform well. Engaged managers realize this truth and give employees space, freedom, and flexibility to deal with responsibilities and priorities outside of work.

How Can PXT™ Select Help?

Engaging an individual contributor towards success starts on their first day of the job by giving them a proper onboarding experience. These are the moments where managers need to shine. By the time they finish onboarding their new team members, managers should make sure their new employees understand the requirements of the job and what’s expected of them to perform the role successfully.

Data from the PXT Select assessment allows managers to make the onboarding process easier, more informed, and more productive for their employees from day one. Assessments give managers insight beyond what they could find from an employee’s resume, interview, or even performance reviews (in the case of an incumbent employee). PXT Select helps managers understand an individual’s natural tendencies and how to maximize their strengths to help them perform at their fullest potential. Seeing what’s below the surface allows managers and employees to build a solid foundation for effective and frequent feedback conversations.

Measuring people across 20 different traits can be enlightening for a manager. Does their employee tend to work at a steady pace or an urgent pace? Are they more collaborative or independent? A manager, for instance, might notice from the PXT Select Comprehensive Selection Report that one of their employees works at a steadier tempo and does best with routine. Knowing that, the manager could have a conversation with their employee about how to best leverage that trait if that’s what the role requires. Or, if the organization requires a quicker pace, the manager might have a development conversation with the employee so they can challenge themselves to work faster. Knowing the employee’s natural speed, in this case, helps the manager and employee set realistic expectations and map out an effective plan for growth.

This Is What It's All About

By understanding each other's cognitive and behavioral traits, managers and employees can nurture healthy relationships, work together more effectively, and address challenges productively during crises. Assessment data can also help managers and employees discuss goals and aspirations and set the foundation for managers to support employees in their development. For example, managers might use this information to help individuals discover other roles within the organization that they're a good fit for as they look to take on more responsibility and new challenges.

If you're looking for a proven talent solution that helps individuals and managers engage with their work and engage each other, talk to us. We'd love to show you what PXT Select can do to help you engage employees in your organization. After helping thousands of organizations across nearly every industry engage their employees, we know a thing or two about how it's done.

So, let's talk solutions.

For more information on how PXT Select can help your organization select and engage great talent, contact us @ info@livetolearninc.com

Source: PXT Select™: A Wiley Brand

Live to Learn is a Diamond Award winning Authorized Partner of Everything DiSC®, The Five Behaviors of a Cohesive Team™ and PXT Select™.