

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SOLVED

New 75,000-Person Research Study Unveils Findings to Unlock Workforce Potential

- With almost universal awareness about the business benefits of employee engagement, why are employees disengaging in droves?
- New research unveils findings about employee engagement that is stemming this trend in some organizations.
- Critical steps detailed that can help increase employee engagement in an organization.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Business experts have been talking about the need for engaged employees since the early 1990s. While most leaders understand by now that higher engagement leads to real business results—better productivity, reduced turnover, increased revenue and happier customers to name just a few examples—in most companies nothing is changing. Despite this awareness and some admirable work on the part of managers, workers are not more engaged than in past years. On the contrary, they are disengaging in droves.

Job satisfaction and employee engagement have been on a steady decline for an entire generation. According to research from The Conference Board, more than half of all U.S. workers are estimated to be dissatisfied in their jobs—an all-time low. On a global scale, research by The Gallup Organization shows 87 percent of the world's workers are either not engaged in their jobs or have become actively disengaged, a problem Gallup estimates is costing just the U.S. workplace \$450 billion to \$550 billion each year in lost productivity.

This is not only a U.S. but a global crisis, and senior leaders know they must address it. According to a survey of 1,020 CEOs, “human capital” is the number one concern of the world's top business leaders—specifically how they develop, engage and retain their team members.

At The Culture Works, our research teams have surveyed more than 850,000 people globally to learn what makes people the most engaged in their jobs. We have discovered that when individuals are more engaged they generally produce higher quality work and greater outputs. And, as a positive consequence, those happiest in their work are also 150 percent more likely to have a happier life overall.

As we have validated our findings on engagement over the last five years, what has emerged is the proprietary **Motivators Assessment™**, an empirically tested online tool that identifies a person's individual blend of engagement drivers—helping employees and their managers make some relatively small changes in job responsibilities or work situations that create huge boons in engagement. This type of modification is called “job sculpting,” and helps managers diagnose how each team member's specific tasks are (or are not) aligned with his or her engagement drivers, which can lead to increases in morale, commitment, and results.

Disengagement is costing
\$450 billion to \$550 billion
each year in lost productivity

For this white paper, The Culture Works' research team has analyzed the first 75,000 people to complete the Motivators Assessment. Scientifically valid samples are included from the U.S. and Canada, Europe, Australia, Central and South America, and Asia. From this data analysis, the researchers have **identified 3 keys that can help unlock employee engagement**. This paper will explore those findings and provide summary recommendations to help leaders get their people more engaged.

FINDING #1

Engagement Isn't a One-Size-Fits-All Solution

Unfortunately most fixes on engagement are much too simplistic and categorical to help real companies.

With this research, and after two decades of consulting and training within some amazing work cultures, we have come to understand a few things about what makes people most engaged at work. Each individual on this planet is driven by a unique set, or blend, of internal and external drivers. Every employee has a thumbprint-like makeup of what makes him or her most engaged 9-to-5, and those prints vary considerably.

Most employee engagement solutions try to reach a critical mass of people within an organization, but not everyone. They usually include a list of things that are intended to make humans happiest on the job: interesting work, responsibility, autonomy, mastery, purpose, transparent communication, teamwork, trust, empowerment, clarity—and there are even some ideas thrown in now and then like free snacks, ping pong tables or take your parrot to work day.

It's not that any of those ideas are inherently bad, but here's what this new research unveils about some of these commonly-cited concepts:

- Only **31.5%** of working adults are motivated by **Purpose** at work
- Only **30.3%** are motivated by **Autonomy**
- Only **22.5%** are motivated by **Teamwork**

Steven Reiss is a Yale-educated PhD who completed his clinical psychological internship at Harvard Medical School and taught for years at The Ohio State University. He conducted extensive studies of what motivates people and argues that we are individuals to a much greater extent than many experts will admit. "Individuals differ enormously in what makes them happy—for some, competition, win-

ning, and wealth are the greatest sources of happiness, but for others feeling competent and socializing may be more satisfying. You can't say some motivators, like money, are inherently inferior."

Why? Because 9% of people actually are motivated by money. Certainly nowhere near a majority. But for that minority, money is not an inferior motivator; not at all.

The point: Engagement isn't a one-size-fits-all solution.

To move forward, leaders must discard the vague notions of engagement and get to a more granular, individualized level in assessing what drives each of their team members. After all, employees really are all different.

THE 23 MOTIVATORS

Autonomy	Money
Challenge	Ownership
Creativity	Pressure
Developing Others	Prestige
Empathy	Problem Solving
Excelling	Purpose
Excitement	Recognition
Family	Service
Friendship	Social Responsibility
Fun	Teamwork
Impact	Variety
Learning	

Fig. 1a

What The Culture Works research has found are 23 workplace Motivators that can drive engagement levels in each of us in varying degrees (see Fig. 1a). These ideas range from challenge and excelling, to service and teamwork, to fun and empathy, to money and prestige, to creativity and learning. The odds that two people working right next to each other could have the same top 7 motivators (out of 23) in common is more than 1 million-to-1.

Of course there did emerge commonalities in the research. For instance “Money” was most frequently the lowest-ranked motivator in all age groups and geographic regions, while “Making an Impact” was universally the most common top work motivator (68% of people globally are engaged by this idea). Yet again, consider that last statistic. The most common engagement driver is Impact. Helping people understand the Impact they make to the organization could help about two-thirds of your employees become more engaged. That’s encouraging. And yet consider that 32% of people are not very motivated by Impact. An engagement solution that focuses on just one or two general strategies will typically not achieve the high level of engagement that leaders are seeking.

Leaders must begin to understand what motivates each person in their care and stop treating everyone the same.

MANAGER TIP: UNDERSTAND MOTIVATION

As just one best practice, some managers we have studied have interviewed each of their people individually, asking them a few simple questions:

Tell me about your best work experience ever –

Think about a time in your life when you were most engaged at work, you gave extra effort without being asked, you believed your work really made a difference.

Write down a few of those “best-work” specifics –

Why exactly was that your best work experience? What specific assignments did you have? How did your manager act toward you?

Analyze what’s really important to you at work? –

Identify those key concepts that jump out at you from the list as the most motivating to you. What insights do you gain into what’s important to you at work right now? How might we use those ideas in sculpting your job a little to be more motivating and engaging to you?

FINDING #2

Engagement Strategies Must Acknowledge the Unique Motivators of Millennials/Gen Z

By the year 2024, professional services giant Deloitte estimates 75 percent of the worldwide workforce will be millennials and Gen Z (people now in their twenties and early 30s). And that presents challenges for some managers who remain unaware of the unique nature of this rising generation.

We acknowledge the inherent risks in generalizing an entire generation of people. However, there are a few trends that younger workers exhibit in greater numbers than past generations that can provide insights to managers. For instance, on average millennials tend to move jobs more frequently. Today, a typical U.S. worker stays in a job 4.4 years, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. However, more than 90 percent of millennials report they are job-hopping every two to three years—meaning most will have 15 or more jobs in their working lives.

So, what are the best leaders doing to perhaps slow the churn a bit? They are beginning to understand what will keep their young workers engaged in greater numbers.

According to the research from The Motivators Assessment, the three most motivating work concepts for 20-29 year-olds are:

- A. **Impact 65%** (This concept appeared as a top work motivator in 64% of millennials' Motivators Assessment results.)
- B. **Learning 60%**
- C. **Family 53%**
- D. **Creativity 38%**
- E. **Challenge 37%**

Other drivers that emerged with millennials in greater frequency than with older generations included Friendship, Fun, Recognition, Service and Empathy.

Some of the Least Motivating Work Concepts for young workers included:

- **Autonomy 19%** (Appeared as a top work motivator in only 20% of millennials' Motivators Assessment results.)
- **Ownership 15%**
- **Money 10%**

So what could keep more of a company's millennials in their jobs a little longer, and what could engage more of young, valuable talent?

Impact. Most millennials and Gen Z employees want to know their work is important. They often feel a sense of destiny and feel that they are supposed to do something that will lead to positive change in the world. And that means many can become frustrated and look for greener pastures if they don't believe there is positive outcome from their efforts.



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Learning. A majority of young workers thrive on trying new things and growing. For some, the pursuit of knowledge is its own goal, while for others the emphasis is on making themselves better at what they do.

Family. This is an idea that has never really been addressed in engagement articles, but more than half of twenty-somethings are motivated by making their loved ones proud of them—it was the third strongest work motivator in this study. Those motivated by this idea try to make family a high priority, which means balancing home and work time.

What is not engaging for the majority of millennials? Autonomy & Ownership: Some 80% of younger workers aren't interested in being their own boss or working alone, but they crave direction from their direct manager at this point in their careers. Money: More than 90% aren't motivated by the amount they earn. It's not that compensation isn't important to younger workers, but the research shows it's a satisfier more than a motivator.

MANAGER TIP: ENGAGING MILLENNIALS/GEN Z

In addition to getting to know what motivates each of the people they manage, and sculpting roles accordingly, here are just a few other things The Culture Works has observed in high-engagement organizations that help improve overall engagement levels for younger workers:

- » **Explain clearly the mission of your organization.** Savvy managers let millennials know how their organization makes the world a better place, and then detail how each person's work specifically impacts the success of the enterprise. And then they say it again ... and again.
- » **Challenge them early to learn and make an impact.** In the very first weeks on the job, effective managers set goals for new employees that these people can accomplish in their first six months, and they ensure those goals are tied to at least one core goal or value of the organization. That way new hires—even entry level new people—are learning what is valuable to the organization and seeing the impact their role has. And then the leaders do it again ... and again.
- » **Worry about their well-being.** Many millennials haven't learned how to shut off. While their young employees may have lots of energy, smart leaders in high-engagement organizations encourage their young workers to take their vacation days, turn off the computer on weekends, and go out regularly with friends or family to recharge their batteries. Millennials must learn to balance, and savvy managers realize it's their job to help them adopt that skill.

Many in the rising generation are driven to learn and grow, and the majority want to make a positive impact in their organization. Those are admirable qualities. The leaders that are adjusting to this new workplace revolution will win, those who continue to believe managers should treat everyone the same will be put out to pasture.

FINDING #3

Employees Who are Focused on Others are More Engaged

When it comes to happiness at work, the data shows if we use our talents to positively affect the world around us, we are more than likely going to be happier. As the research team studied just those who rated themselves “very happy” in their lives overall compared with the rest of the database who were “somewhat happy,” “somewhat unhappy” or “very unhappy,” a few trends emerged:

- “Developing Others” appeared as a top motivator three times more often with the happiest people.
- “Excelling” appeared as a top motivator more than twice as often with the happiest people.
- Teamwork, Challenge, Pressure, and Problem Solving appeared as top motivators almost twice as often with the happiest people.

As for those who were unhappy in their lives overall?

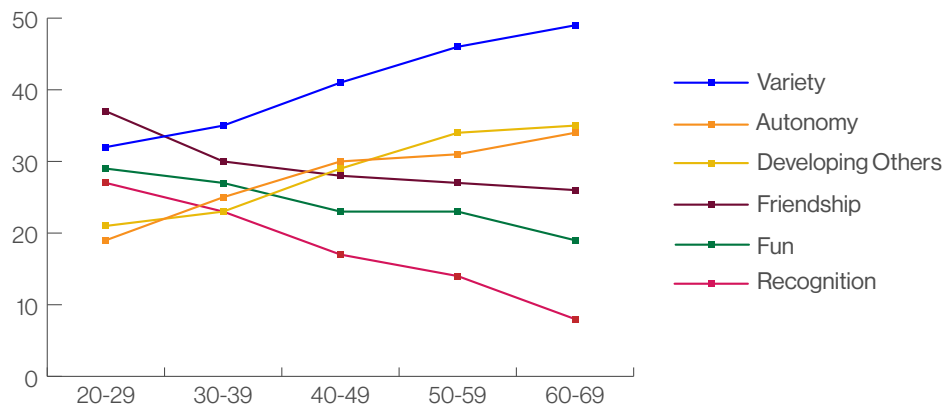
- They were more likely to be motivated at work by Reward-Driven motivators such as Money, Recognition and Prestige.
- They were less likely to have Family as a top motivator.
- They were less likely to have Fun as a top motivator.

This lends to some fascinating findings for executive leaders seeking to implement overall engagement strategies for an entire organization. They would be wise to consider ways to develop a culture that encourages more employees to mentor younger co-workers and for more people to be able to lead projects and teams. They could also help ensure more individuals are able to have a positive work-life balance with sufficient time for family—as those who feel they can meet family obligations along with work demands are typically more engaged. In addition, smart companies can ensure that camaraderie and fun are encouraged in the workplace.



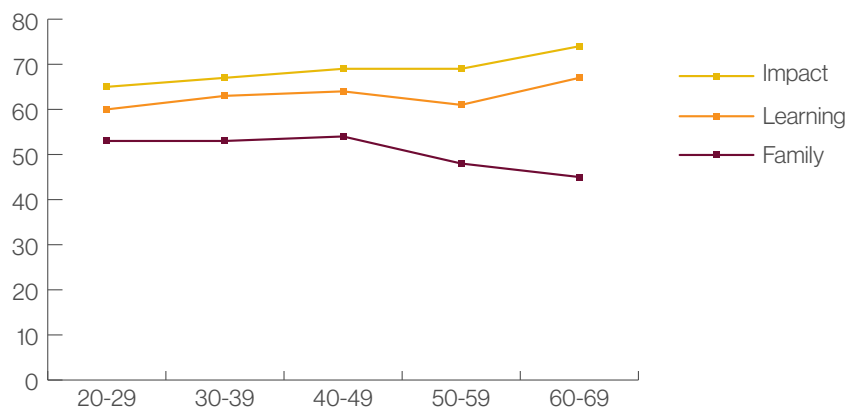
ADDITIONAL FINDINGS

Some Motivators Can Change With Age



By analyzing demographic trends of the most popular top Motivators, we see that some Motivators like Recognition often decline in importance in some people over time, while other motivators like Developing Others often increase in importance.

But Most Motivators Remain Fairly Consistent With Age



Most Motivators remain consistent through many people's core working years. For instance, the three most prevalent top Motivators in people's 20s—Impact, Learning and Family—remain top motivators throughout the generations.

ENGAGEMENT SOLVED

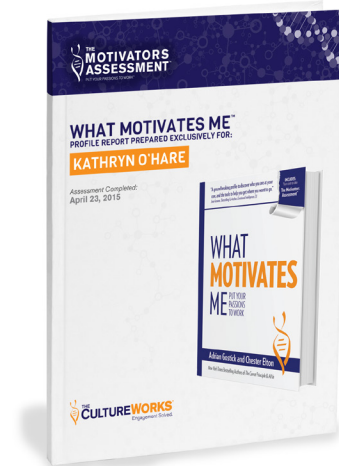
There is hope for a global solution to the employee engagement dilemma. Those managers and organizations that are seeing the greatest increases in engagement levels are assessing motivation on an individual level and are sculpting employee's jobs to ensure people do more of the activities that engage and fewer activities that demotivate. They are also addressing unique generational differences in motivation, and are building corporate-wide strategies that help managers build high-performance teams where employees feel they are truly making a difference.

As leaders we cannot be enslaved by preordained, generalized notions of engagement. To more fully engage people and encourage employees to perform at their full potential, managers must begin to look inside their people's minds, to understand what truly motivates each employee. All of our people host a unique blend of motivators, core engagers that should guide us as leaders in sculpting the work that's right for them.

NEXT STEPS

Discover what motivates you and your team by taking The Motivators Assessment™. Visit TheCultureWorks.com.

To achieve even higher levels of engagement, learn how What Motivates Me Engagement Training™ and Certification can help you and your team align your newly discovered motivators with what you do every day.



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT US AT:

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ABOUT THE CULTURE WORKS

An innovator in Employee Engagement solutions, The Culture Works® is home to What Motivates Me Engagement Training™, All In Leadership Training™ and Carrots Recognition Training™, and is the provider of The Motivators Assessment™ — the world's most extensive and scientifically tested assessment to help individuals identify their unique blend of core motivators.

Based on two decades of experience, and the results of workplace interviews with more than 850,000 people, our training programs and *New York Times* bestselling books *All In*, *The Carrot Principle*, and *Leading With Gratitude* help managers and leaders create high-performance cultures where employees feel what they do every day matters and makes a impact.