

SOLVING THE STRUGGLE TO FIND
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT THAT WORKS

Six Pillars to Drive Impactful Engagement



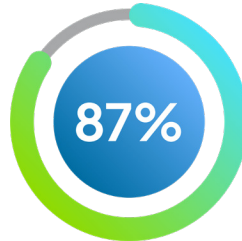
terryberry

terryberry.com

Employee Engagement Models—How Terryberry Builds a Foundation for Success



In 2025, **51% of employees** said they were actively seeking new opportunities. In 2024 when people were surveyed for the reasons they left their previous job, “Engagement and Culture” was quoted at 37%, while “Wellbeing and Work-Life Balance” was cited by 31% of respondents.



Struggles with employee satisfaction and well-being represents a serious headwind that needs an active strategy to address. There are many pitfalls in this process. For example, **87% of frontline workers** report feeling disconnected from their company's culture, with 37% stating it's something they hear about but do not "feel."



Employee recognition and wellness programs can be **effective intervention tools** for employee engagement, but how programs are implemented and integrated into the workplace culture matters, too. Without an intentional strategy for rollout, engagement tracking, plus a way to evaluate resulting benefits, it can be difficult to know the company-specific ROI of such a program.

Aligning Employee Engagement Strategy

Just because a company has an employee engagement program doesn't mean it's effective. Generally engaging with employees is not sufficient. You need an engagement model—a research-backed framework that features the factors that actually predict employee retention.

An engagement model is essential to an effective employee engagement program. Without it, even if you have the elements of an engagement program, you risk having disparate programs that aren't pulling in the same direction, diluting your efforts. It'd be like trying to prepare a meal with ingredients but no recipe. A cohesive engagement model gives your employee engagement program direction and helps your company consistently make progress towards being a more productive organization that attracts and retains top talent.

Sources:
• <https://www.gallup.com/467702/indicator-employee-retention-attraction.aspx> • <https://frontline.workvivo.com/>



Terryberry's Employee Engagement Model—Building Success on Six Pillars

Terryberry's employee engagement model is based on six interconnected pillars, some of which link across the overall engagement strategy more than others. These pillars are: **Purpose, Leadership, Well-being, Equity, Empowerment, and Belonging**. Focusing an engagement program on the six pillars of this model is the first step towards building a company culture that changes the way employees come to work and what they're capable of.

This six pillar model is grounded in years of research examining the factors influencing retention and performance across thousands of organizations. The result is based on a systematic approach of testing various predictors of positive employee outcomes and is refined as workplace dynamics change.

Rather than merely following trends or assembling strategies that seem appealing, this framework emphasizes the application of proven scientific principles to proactively address employee experiences.

Applying these researched engagement pillars to your strategy allows you to:

- Spot engagement killers before they cause turnover
- Know which initiatives connect to which outcomes
- Measure engagement trends and prove ROI

This engagement model is HR's guiding foundation for data-driven strategy that builds effective people and culture management programs. To effectively support each of these pillars, it's beneficial for HR professionals to have a deep understanding of each one and it's role in an effective company culture.

Purpose

WHAT IS IT?

The sense that someone's work is contributing to a cause or purpose bigger than just them. A sense of purpose is especially powerful when employees see themselves aligned with the broader goals and mission of the company.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

When employees have a greater sense of alignment with company purpose in their work, organizations see 70% higher engagement. Employees who align with the organization's purpose show greater commitment and job satisfaction, leading to better performance and improved retention rates.

- Low-purpose environments have up to 3x turnover
- Companies with clear purpose outperform markets by 42%
- Purpose-driven employees lead to more loyal customers

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Clear, lived company values help employees recognize how the company's purpose aligns with their own
- Employee recognition is specific and tied to company values so people see how their contributions connect to the organization's purpose
- Ongoing engagement with employees to find areas where they align with the company purpose and where there's room for improvement



Sources:

- <https://hbr.org/2023/10/how-to-connect-employees-to-your-companys-purpose>
- <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/purpose-workplace-study.html>
- <https://revboss.com/blog/how-a-purpose-driven-culture-gets-you-more-loyal-customers>

Leadership

WHAT IS IT?

The degree to which leaders highlight the value of daily objectives and inspire employees to think beyond their own interests.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Effective leaders who communicate honestly encourage innovation, smart risk-taking, and achieve better results from their reports.

- 73% of employees with supportive leaders develop healthy lifestyles vs. 11% without
- Good leaders increase motivation (91% vs. 38%) and retention (75% vs 49%)
- Effective managers double employee sense of value, create 2.3x stronger belonging, reduce burnout by 62%, and increase discretionary effort by 49%
- Many leaders struggle, with only 20–26% of leaders consistently demonstrating supportive behaviors

Problem: 38% of those surveyed said the leadership is "too busy" to participate in wellness initiatives. 45% lack the ability to measure leadership's impact on well-being.

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Honest and open communication
- Investing in employee training and career paths
- Leaders demonstrating self-care, balance, transparency, and honesty
- Respecting boundaries and promoting flexibility in work-life balance



Sources:

• American Psychological Association (2016). "Work and Well-Being Survey." American Psychological Association • Society for Human Resource Management (2024). "Influence of Managerial Effectiveness on Attitudes About Their Job and Employer." SHRM • McKinsey & Company (2021). "Psychological Safety and the Critical Role of Leadership Development." McKinsey Quarterly • Original Terryberry survey information

Well-being

WHAT IS IT?

How an individual feels about their life as a whole and how they function on a daily basis, related to their physical, mental, and emotional health. For many, well-being is driven by three main factors: money, meaning, and health.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Well-being has an underlying impact on every other pillar in the engagement model. Physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy employees are more likely to remain focused and motivated, encouraging supportive collaborations and greater capacity for challenging obstacles and problem solving. It should be noted that in today's evolving professional environment, most employees aren't focusing on professional advancement in their careers—instead well-being is a significant motivating factor. This is especially true among younger generations, and with nearly 75% of the workforce on track to be millennial or younger by 2030, businesses will need to evolve to keep effective, experienced employees.

- Burnout and mental strain are on the rise, and have a significant impact on productivity
- **Research** suggests physical activity can play a powerful role in countering burnout, a significant issue in the modern workplace
- Eight in ten employees believe mental health and well-being trainings are important to create a positive workplace culture

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- **Employee wellness programs** easily provide a host of resources covering both physical and mental wellness without burdening HR teams.
- Engaging in conversations with employees around well-being, listening to their feedback, and supporting them with resources that promote mental and physical wellness.



Sources:

- <https://www.forrester.com/press-newsroom/the-next-gen-workforce-five-key-tech-areas-separate-younger-workers-from-older-generations/>

Equity

WHAT IS IT?

Perceptions of fairness and justice in organization processes, outcomes, and interpersonal interactions.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Equity can be difficult to nail down because it involves the perception of fairness, but it's an essential topic to address in a time when everyone wants to feel seen, heard, and considered. To address these pervasive fairness challenges, organizations can't just rely on policies; they need new philosophies.

Historically, implicit bias has seeped into many industries over time, leading to some groups being favored or devalued, often unintentionally. Pursuing equity means actively working to ensure things like fair treatment, access to resources, and advancement opportunities are extended to all groups and—most importantly—that those groups feel secure and seen in that work.

Equity has been a significant focus for modern companies with 90% of Fortune 100 companies listing equity as one of their corporate values. The focus also has a significant upside, with increased perceptions of fairness improving employee performance by 26% and retention by 27%.

- Only 18% of employees feel they work in a fair environment
 - 1/4 of "unfairness" concerns are in hiring, promotion, and compensation—the rest happens in day-to-day work.

- Only 33% of organizations practice information transparency
- 68% of employees don't feel adequately supported at work
- 18% of employees feel they are considered for opportunities
- 24% of employees feel acknowledged for their contributions
- 63% of our survey indicated a "moderate" or lower confidence level in fostering equity for all employees

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Treatment of individuals is based on individual need and advancement is based on contributions and merit
- Sharing conditions for advancement, performance expectations, compensation standards, workloads, etc.
- Ensuring employees feel seen, heard, and supported across teams and job types, especially among teams that aren't regularly plugged in to direct company communication
- Transparently communicating opportunities and messaging around advancement, workload, and opportunities to ensure equitable access, consideration, and treatment
- Recognition is made available and visible to employees, especially for those who don't have email addresses

Sources:

• <https://hbr.org/2022/07/how-fair-is-your-workplace> • <https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2021-08-11-gartner-hr-research-reveals-eighty-two-percent-of-employees-report-working-environment-lacks-fairness>

Empowerment

WHAT IS IT?

Perceptions of control, autonomy, and participation in decision-making. Empowerment has two components: structural and psychological.

Structural empowerment is the degree to which employees feel like they have the tools to do their job effectively and continue to do so better in the future.

Psychological empowerment is the degree to which employees feel competent, effective, and in control of their professional lives.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Increased empowerment leads to a higher sense of intrinsic motivation—a sense of impact, competence, meaningfulness, and choice. Employees with a higher sense of empowerment report higher job satisfaction, morale, and psychological well-being with a lower rate of turnover. In addition they put in more effort and perform tasks better than their peers.

- A low sense of empowerment accounts for 58% of job stress and job satisfaction
- Access to resources and control accounted for 47% of stress levels at work
- Tools, systems, and policies that promote empowerment increase confidence and reduce stress

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Employees have access to the tools (technology), resources (information and support), and opportunities (development and advancement) to excel at their jobs
- A culture of self-learning and ownership, reducing micromanagement and preparing future leadership
- Leaders empower employees to make effective decisions without needing extensive support



Sources:

- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *The American psychologist*, 55(1), 68–78. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0003-066x.55.1.68>
- Thomas, K.W., & Velthouse, B. (1990). Cognitive Elements of Empowerment: An "Interpretive" Model of Intrinsic Task Motivation. *Academy of Management Review*, 15, 666–681.

Belonging

WHAT IS IT?

Employees experiencing an acknowledgement of their talents, interests, experiences, and finding whole acceptance of one's self expression of these.

Intrinsic to belonging is a respect and acceptance of diverse viewpoints and backgrounds.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Drawing from Maslow's hierarchy of needs, belonging is a fundamental element of overall wellness. 82% of people worldwide said they feel lonely at work, with 46% adding they were likely to leave a job because of it. A healthy culture of belonging will inherently lend itself to a more diverse workforce, and companies in the top quartile of gender diversity outperform competitors by 39%. Those with diverse management see 38% more revenue and 30% higher profit margins.

Belonging is a frequently overlooked aspect of employee engagement, with billions spent in diversity training missing the mark because they neglect belonging and inclusion for everyone.

Belonging drives:

- 56% better job performance
- 50% lower turnover
- 75% fewer sick days

Benefits of a culture of belonging include:

- Freedom to voice opinions without fear of negative consequences, which significantly contributes to productivity
- Acceptance of self expression of talents, interests, and experiences, which has a significant impact on intent to stay
- A workplace culture that encourages open communication and collaboration, making teams more effective
- A positive influence on their sense of purpose

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Specific achievements are given and based on core values and personal milestones
- Programs like employee recognition and employee resource groups (ERG's) promote inclusion and belonging, driving autonomy and productivity
- The company makes the effort to bring in employees from diverse role types: remote, part time, full time, contract, etc.
- Leadership practices where diversity of ideas is celebrated, not just tolerated

Sources:

• <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15555240.2023.2178448> • <https://www.betterup.com/press/betterups-new-industry-leading-research-shows-companies-that-fail-at-belonging-lose-tens-of-millions-in-revenue> • <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-matters-even-more-the-case-for-holistic-impact>

Solution



Moving Toward A Complete Model-based Engagement Strategy

These are the six pillars that are key to building a better, more effective workforce. It's a complex array of interlinked qualities that need a variety of support resources. Fortunately there are a few key steps you can take to address many of these needs as long as you maintain the right strategy for each:

1. Recognize and reward employees
2. Provide resources that support employees' physical and mental well-being
3. Collect, analyze, and act on employee feedback to meet needs as they exist


Effective Employee Recognition Needs Support

Recognizing and rewarding employees is a powerful behavioral tool with documented benefits. It lets you recognize professional

employee milestones, but more importantly, it reinforces the behaviors that need to be encouraged to stabilize the six pillars.

This can effectively be done through a technology-enabled employee engagement program from an experience provider. A **tech-supported employee engagement program** allows you to:


- Track who is being recognized and ensure good distribution to promote equity
- Recognize employees who live the company values to reinforce a sense of purpose
- Celebrate bold work and individual achievements that contribute to the team to improve empowerment
- Build a positive culture of acknowledgement and celebration, improving feelings of belonging
- Amplify behavior that strengthens any of the six pillars, reinforcing it across the organization



Wellness Workshop - Beat Perfectionism

Register [Worksheet](#)


Audio Guides



Interplay Between Anxiety & Depression

6 min

Weekly Readings



Basics of Stress & Anxiety Part 4

4 readings

Providing Digital Tools for Well-being

Well-being is an important part of the engagement model. With the volume of conflicting health information and programs available, providing a **dedicated resource** can help clear the noise for employees. Company-wide challenges and initiatives can also help encourage positive health practices and build camaraderie even among remote teams. A proactive program providing resources around well-being can address several of the engagement pillars:

- Resources that encourage and support mental and physical well-being
- **Wellness challenges** build a culture of empowerment and belonging

The Crucial Improvement Cycle—Ask, Analyze, Act (Repeat)

An important step that's frequently left out is a strategy to ensure your program is hitting the mark and making adjustments if it's not. For example, 45% of organizations surveyed don't have structured feedback on how wellness programs are perceived. In order to drive ROI from any part of your engagement program, you need to ensure your employees feel heard without feeling exposed and that their voice and feedback is included in your strategy.

Pursuing honest feedback from employees involves trust. Without it, feedback data becomes extremely unreliable. Overall, data needs to follow three fundamental "a"s: accurate, anonymous, and actionable.

Effective anonymity requires appropriate systems. Simple surveys and spreadsheets are not secure nor do they guarantee privacy, hurting the reliability of the data. To ensure privacy is respected, you should work with a provider who can supply a platform that not only collects data, but will report it back in a way that follows best practices ensuring the highest levels of trust and anonymity.

The Value of Attributed & Flexible Surveys

In addition to anonymous surveys, a survey supplier also needs to be able to provide attributed surveys and a variety of options for survey creation. Attributed surveys, where you know who took which survey, are well-utilized for areas like onboarding and individual experiences, helping you move faster and implement focused follow up where appropriate. Tools for survey creation should include input from experts, question-creation tools, and the opportunity to customize questions to your business's specific needs.



Data Integrity

You also need to ensure the data you get from employees is accurate and actionable. Creating survey questions that are succinct and effective is a deceptively difficult task. This is a significant potential pitfall, since faulty questioning can result in flawed data that holds back your efforts without you ever realizing it. It's the work of experts to structure questions that get accurate, actionable data that can help guide necessary improvements. You need data you can act on, not vanity metrics.

Asking Demands Action

Finally, the desire and follow-through to act on employee feedback is a crucial part of this process and is important to driving confidence and improvement. If you take the time to ask employees about their experiences and analyze the answers, it's imperative you take action and share the process with employees. (This, in turn, contributes to fortifying the empowerment, leadership, and belonging pillars of the engagement model.) By asking and not taking action on a cyclical basis, you'll not only see an erosion in the employee experience, but also in engagement and trust.



More Than Just Employee Engagement

Employee engagement has become a crucial part of workforce management to improve productivity and reduce turnover, but an effective strategy is not random. Impactful engagement demands a model that works as a guiding roadmap to focus on the areas that matter. Terryberry's research-backed engagement model addresses six key pillars supporting greater employee engagement: **purpose, leadership, well-being, equity, empowerment, and belonging**. Implementing these pillars requires an complete set of tools, including employee feedback and an ongoing strategy of cyclical improvement.

If you're ready to take the first step in driving a more successful workplace culture and environment, schedule a conversation with our team to discuss how Terryberry's engagement model, platforms, programs, and services can transform employee engagement at your company.

[Schedule a Conversation](#)