

Seven Habits Of Highly Engaged Organizations

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By now we've all heard about the dismal state of employee engagement. The percentage of U.S. workers whom [Gallup reports](#) are "not engaged" is 49.5% — and 16.5% are actually "actively disengaged." This level of disengagement costs organizations not just in turnover costs, but also through toxic work environments, employee theft and accidents, and customer service deficiencies.

But some companies manage to inspire and motivate their employees and these highly engaged organizations reap the many fruits of employee engagement including higher employee and customer loyalty. Here are seven habits of highly engaged organizations:

1. Daily huddles: A daily huddle brings together everyone in a department or even a small business to get things quickly and accurately communicated. A five- to 10-minute stand-up daily meeting gets everyone focused on the most important issues and cuts down on telephone tag and other time wasters. I recently attended the [2016 ScaleUp Summit by Fortune magazine and Gazelles Inc.](#) and heard repeatedly how companies experienced increased productivity, accountability, and alignment simply by implementing this regular practice.

2. Weekly messages: On a weekly basis, the top leader of the organization issues an email, voicemail, or video message to everyone. It's a platform for her to explain the current priorities and also to make a personal connection with employees by sharing what's on her mind. At [Sprouts Farmers Market](#), a 200+ unit healthy grocery store chain, the CEO included in his weekly email verbatim comments from customers received in the past week and recognized specific stores and employees that had been praised. This gave everyone extra incentive to pay attention to the message.

3. Annual summits: Every year the organization sets aside time to reflect on past performance and set the stage for the coming year. For large organizations, these annual gatherings might occur through a cascade, with top leaders attending a summit where they get inspired, trained, and focused before they hold summits for their people who in turn hold summits for their people. At [Mitchell International](#), an insurance software company, an annual "Mitchell Way Day" serves to engage everyone in the company's cultural values and customer experience priorities through departmental exhibits, individual and group exercises, and a high-energy celebration.

4. Meeting moments: To keep the company's No. 1 priority top of mind, organizations start each and every meeting with a moment of sharing about the topic. At Chevron, where safety is of utmost importance, employees take turns beginning each meeting talking about an aspect of safety for one minute — ranging from sharing high corporate level news about an averted incident at one of the company's refineries for example to more everyday perspectives about, say, the importance of not texting while driving.

5. Forums: Communication must flow in multiple directions, not just from the top down, so organizations set up employee forums — either regularly-scheduled in-person town-hall type gatherings or ongoing digital bulletin boards or both. These mechanisms give employees a chance to share their insights, feedback, and concerns with company leadership and with each other. When Sony's U.S. electronics company wanted to reinvigorate internal brand alignment and engagement, it invited employees from across the country to contribute to the effort via a forum on its intranet. Employees appreciated the invitation to share their comments about the Sony brand and to read others.'

6. Customer connections: Engaged companies directly link employees and customers. Business communications software company [Slack](#) actively collects customer feedback and its employees are voracious readers of the input. Other companies ensure all employees spend time answering or monitoring customer calls. Insights from these direct connections with customers not only enable organizations to troubleshoot problems and develop better new products, but it also helps employees understand the importance of their work.

7. 360-degree training: Employees regularly participate in learning and development programs designed to engage their heads, hearts, and hands and feet. That is, training has a knowledge component, imparting new information and skills that employees need to improve their job performance. Training also motivates employees by connecting their individual work to the larger purpose of the company through storytelling and brand experiences. And employees also receive tools, engage in role-playing, and participate in other exercises designed to shape and guide their daily actions and decisions. Fast food chain [Jack In the Box](#) engaged corporate employees, franchisees, and restaurant workers with multi-dimensional training to execute the roll-out of its new brand strategy.

Employee engagement doesn't just happen — and it can't be taken for granted. If organizations want their employees to be aligned, focused, and productive, engagement must be cultivated through regular, ongoing practices.

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