

The New Employee Relationship

Attract



Engage

Transmit



Advocate



The world changed in 2020.

And that change is permanent. And it is affecting people and companies.

And that change means you need to recalibrate the relationship you have with your employees for better engagement and retention.

This eBook outlines four pillars of the employee/ employer relationship and provides the information needed to attract and engage a new breed of employee – one that expects different things from their employers.

Read. Recalibrate. Repeat.

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Recalibrating the Employee Relationship - The 4 Pillars

Anyone even tangentially attached to Human Resources recently, or work in general (which means everyone), has heard about “The Great Resignation.” That term is so ubiquitous now you can’t read a LinkedIn post or an article in a business magazine without at least one or two articles talking about the impact the “Great Resignation” have had on companies.

And you know turnover and disengagement are extremely expensive for you and your company.

According to Gallup, companies experience a cost of 34% of a disengaged employee’s annual salary, or \$3,400 for every \$10,000 they make. And if the average salary in the company is \$70,000 then you’re looking at roughly \$23,000 in costs related to disengagement. Multiple that by the number of employees and you can see how important employee engagement and retention is. Not to mention the cost of turnover – now pegged at 33% of an employee’s annual salary. That’s more than \$20,000 for an employee making \$60,000 per year!¹

Most of the chatter is around describing the “what” the “great resignation is”. Few are providing the “how” you can impact why people are leaving at record rates. It isn’t really that helpful to know “what” is happening without knowing the why and how answers. Trust me, if you get the hiccups, knowing what they are isn’t much help when you’ve been fighting them for an hour or two. Think how much better you’d feel if you knew drinking from the opposite side of a glass of water will cure them in seconds 9 out of 10 times².

We feel your pain. Not the pain of your hiccups, but the pain of the shortage of “how to” help available to HR and management.

Make no mistake. This time around it is different. In the past, changes in the employment/employee landscape seemed to be temporary and could generally be linked back to a singular cause.

Not today.

The last few years have been messy. We are all faced with multiple issues affecting the way in which employees are engaging with their world, their families, their friends and ultimately, their work and their employers.

Our analysis shows the cause for all the “resignations” isn’t singular.

There isn’t a silver bullet out there that can address the problem.

Our goal for this eBook on employee engagement (notice we didn’t say “great resignation”) is to provide you with the information, the approaches, strategies, **AND** tactics you can use to create sustainable employee relationships counteracting today’s issues **AND** set you up to weather future concerns.

Trust us. There will be future concerns.

The 4 Pillars - It’s About Humanity

Our research has determined there are four basic pillars you can work on that will enhance your employee-employer relationship.

We believe understanding our recommended strategies, tactics and tools around these four pillars, will

¹ The Real Cost of Employee Turnover in 2021 - TERRA Staffing Group

² <https://www.healthgrades.com/right-care/digestive-health/10-best-home-remedies-for-hiccups>

attract people to your company that fit in immediately, will stay with you, will refer new talent and maybe, just maybe, want to return when they leave and find out the grass isn't greener at that new startup with free La Croix and unlimited PTO.

We make that claim because we know that all relationships are human - whether in our personal lives or our work lives. And as humans we look for similar things.

We need and want to trust and be trusted. We want reciprocity, support, safety, appreciation.

And we want to give you the tools and tactics needed to ensure your employees feel the same connectedness at work that they feel in their best non-work relationships.

The 4 Pillars in this eBook are interrelated elements of a great employee-company relationship that you need to master to have the organization you deserve.

Each can be addressed individually but they are connected. Good work in one area impacts other areas and can be either a force multiplier or create huge unintended negative consequences.

We will show in this eBook how you can work within the 4 Pillars and understand the connections between each providing a result that is greater than the sum of its parts.

A quick intro to the 4 Pillars:



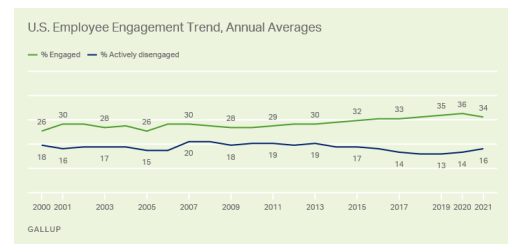
Pillar #1 – ATTRACT

What are you doing to make your company interesting enough to get noticed by talent that fits with your company vibe? Do you know what type of people thrive in your organization? Do you know how to make that visible to those looking for your type of organization? How do you know what drives top performers at your company and how you can find and attract more of them? Figuring out what is special about you and making sure that people who share similar values know about you and find you is key.



Pillar #2 – ENGAGE

Employee engagement has been the watchword for companies for well over 30 years but became ubiquitous in the 2000s. Research has shown that employee engagement, while being the focus of huge amounts of time and treasure by companies, has been impressively stagnant with a fairly big drop in 2021. Our discussions peel back some of those layers and get to real causes and ways you can drive better employee engagement.





Pillar #3 – TRANSMIT

This may be a new word for you when talking about employee engagement and retention. Our research is showing the key to better retention and engagement is the way in which current managers and employees walk the walk and talk the talk about the culture. We believe engagement is a human issue and can only be impacted by other humans. The humans in your organization responsible for making sure engagement happens are your managers. We will address how you can look at engagement as a management task - not a software or enterprise task.



Pillar #4 – ADVOCATE

Having an employee base that is confident with sharing their employee experience drives better recruitment, increased engagement, faster hiring, and a whole host of benefits. Employees (and alumni) are a critical source of positive employer branding. Manage it and enhance it.

While we have high resignations, we aren't seeing a lack of available hires. The labor force actually grew by 304,000 people in February 2022.³ That same source states:

"...people aren't quitting their jobs to exit the labor market and sit on the sidelines, economists said. Instead, the high level of resignation indicates a strong job market for workers with ample opportunities, they said."

What that means is employees are being selective. What you're seeing is employees taking back some agency from employers and looking harder and deeper for the jobs and the companies that match their values and provide an emotional connection and engagement.

Net-Net

The world changed drastically in 2020. In a way that not just impacted the way we socialized but in the way we prioritized the various parts of our lives. We found out in an instant how much we need social connections. We discovered what we really valued in our relationships and our employment. Those feelings and impressions, while they were always in the background, are now shoved front and center with no warning leaving all of us unprepared.

Now is the time to take a step back. Look at the changes in how we work, where we work, with whom we work and why we work and ensure we're turning the appropriate dials and pulling the right levers to encourage employees to **WANT** to work with you and **WANT** to bring their connections into their work orbit.

This eBook on "4 Pillars of the Employee Relationship" will spell out the reasons and the responses you need to know about and embed in your organization if you want to be an employer of choice.

Pillar #1 – ATTRACT

When you have a choice of three options how do you choose amongst them? That is the issue in today's talent marketplace.

Employees now have their choice of jobs and employers need to find ways to make their job the one the recruit wants. This asymmetry of jobs to workers is creating a huge problem for companies who have traditionally been able to hire without needing to worry about competing offers.

While being an employer of choice (aka - attractive) isn't new - Harvard Business Review stated in an article from 2015 that companies needed to "strengthen their organizations' brands." The focus then was on the talent shortage and therefore the employer brand was how companies "closed" the deal with their targeted recruit. The best brand won over a recruit who might be considering three similar offers. The brand helped break the tie.

Today however, the post-COVID employee relationship is different.

People looking for work know they have more power than in the past and are exercising that power by looking at the company's entire footprint - not just the compensation and benefits. And the things potential employees are looking for today are very different than we would have thought just a few years back.

Today companies need to not only provide similar compensation and benefits as their competitors but also match offers from companies never before seen as competitors. Taxi companies never had to worry about someone hopping into their personal car and stealing business until Uber came along. Companies now compete for talent with other companies **AND** the gig economy. Companies need to up their game and view employment through the lens of the employee and not simply through the lens of the "market" in general.

Attracting the right people is Pillar #1. So let's define what we mean by attraction.

What is Attraction?

Attraction is the sum of the experiences potential employees have with your company brand.

Often companies leave HR responsible for attraction. But Attraction is much, much more than that. Attraction lives in your marketing department. Attraction lives in the C-Suite. Attraction lives in the front-line employees who deal with consumers/customers.

In other words, Attraction is the force that is created when all the elements of a company's brand are pulling together, aligned on the company's mission and values. Attraction is what happens when a brand isn't trying to sell or recruit. It is the pull - not the push.

Unfortunately, many companies have a hard time manifesting these brand values outside marketing messages.



Attract

Why is Attraction Important?

Attraction is important because it reduces the amount of “recruiting” you must do (and pay for) and increases alignment between applicants and the company. If a company has a great (and visible) brand, people with similar values will seek them out. The company gets more culturally aligned people to choose from and once chosen, those employees are more likely to stay.

Cheaper to get and lower costs due to reduced attrition.

Win-Win - and Win because the employee is now working at a company that aligns with their personal brand. The employee is connected at more than the transactional level (pay/insurance) and connected at an emotional level. Over the long haul, emotion trumps money.

The Tactics for Attraction

What do companies need to do to be more “attractive”?

People always want to feel good about where they work. Today, however, they have more power to actually get what they want.

According to one Forbes article diversity and inclusion, location of work, and technology the candidate will have access to are key touchpoints. The World Economic Forum 2022 Labor Landscape document suggests workers want enhanced “hygiene” factors such as work location flexibility, competitive pay, skills development, a focus on mental wellness, work time flexibility (PTO, 4-day work week, etc.).

The report states, and we believe it to be the umbrella for all the prior employee wants...

“CULTURE MATTERS – the attraction and retention tool that eats strategy for breakfast. The heightened focus on reshaping company culture to build trust, retain remote teams and energize the employee experience will call for an Employee Value Proposition that brings a sense of purpose and wellbeing plus empathetic leadership for a digital world.”

The culture at your company is now a mission-critical asset. Without it you can't compete for and attract the right people to your organization.

Knowing what employees want isn't enough to get them to choose your company. Your company has to walk that talk and make your commitments to employees visible before they are even on your radar.

Your reputation must attract them. But, how do you do that?

Being Attractive

The number one thing you can do is **create reasons to talk about your company**, either purposely via planned brand marketing or organically via sharing and employee posts. Your future employees are out there on the web watching videos, reading tweets, checking Glassdoor. You can't ignore those channels just because you're not a "person" but a company. You and your company need to play the game they play.

Your company and the people in it, should be encouraged and helped to post updates regularly to the various social feeds. Don't make it mandatory or track it ... just help them learn the tools so they can share their good fortune being part of your team. Your demographic and your industry may determine which networks make sense, but everyone should understand that social isn't just for kids. Everyone uses it. And those that use it the most may just be the right people to bring you into the future.

Work to find ways to highlight how employees can grow in the company. Make sure you celebrate promotions, certifications or other newsworthy events publicly. Your job is to make sure potential employees can see personal progress is possible at your company. Provide shareable information your employees can put on their various networks. Positive word of mouth is how you become more attractive.

Use your own internal tools to help train and practice posting to social feeds. Every internal engagement platform these days have social feeds. Monitor them. Use the info for ammunition for your own company posts in the social realm. Employees experienced with your internal tools will be better prepared and more effective in the wild.

Create mentors in the employee population that can help social media shy people get comfortable with the process of posting information supporting the company. Employees are more likely to learn from and be comfortable with a fellow employee helping them than a trainer or even a boss.

At the end of the day "Attract" is a function of how well current employees feel they connect to the mission/values of the organization and how well the company promotes, advertises, trains, and enables sharing of positive employee messages and their feelings about you as an employer.

"Attraction" is a positive feedback loop on the entire employee relationship.

Remember, engaged and empowered employees are happy to share their good fortune via social media and word of mouth. This leads to more targeted and better fitting candidates who will be more connected to the company culture faster and deeper leading to greater engagement which creates more points of connection sharing how attractive your company is. One begets the other and vice versa.

Being attractive is about sharing your positive attributes. But who is sharing them? Your employees for sure. But employees who aren't engaged have no reason to help. Disengaged people don't want to highlight the company – in fact they are more likely to bring down the company when given the chance.

And this is why employee engagement is the second pillar in the employee relationship.

Pillar #2 – ENGAGE

The TV show Star Trek Next Generation featured veteran actor Patrick Stewart as the Captain of the Starship Enterprise. One of his iconic lines was the command “Engage”, indicating to the helmsman to engage the engines and take off to whatever new adventure awaited. While Captain Picard can command someone to engage, you can’t do that with employee engagement.

But let’s start at the beginning...

What is Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement first appeared conceptually in the 1990s, based on the work of William Kahn and was defined as

“...the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.”

Since that time employee engagement has been used synonymously with ‘employee experience’ and “employee satisfaction”.

Employee engagement is critical. The cost of employees is a huge chunk of a company’s operating budget so any reduction in costs – either through efficiency or productivity, reduced turnover, faster onboarding, etc. will reap **HUGE** rewards for a company.

Why Employee Engagement is Different Today?

The professor who coined the term “The Great Resignation”, Anthony Klotz also said:

“From organizational research, we know that when human beings come into contact with death and illness in their lives, it causes them to take a step back and ask existential questions,” Klotz said. “Like, what gives me purpose and happiness in life, and does that match up with how I’m spending my right now? So, in many cases, those reflections will lead to life pivots.”⁴

And after 2 years of COVID lockdown, personal human losses and illness, virtual work, stress caused by family maintenance problems like day care to the loss of a job, employees are pivoting.

And that pivot means impacting employee engagement just got messier.

⁴ <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-everyone-is-quitting-great-resignation-psychologist-pandemic-rethink-life-2021-10>

Today's "New Employee Relationship" must now include:⁵

- Greater work/life balance enablement.
- Ongoing professional skills development.
- Flexibility in what, where and when employees work.⁶
- Resources and education that impact the individual and family life experiences of their employees - emotionally, financially, socially, and in their career.

What does all that mean for a company trying to create a two-way engagement between their employees and the company? It means a great focus on specific, personalized, and flexible benefits, work structures, work locations, and flexible hours.

How Can You Drive Engagement Today and in the Future?

First of all – you can't do what you did before. It is not the same world inside, or outside, the corporate bubble.

Key Engagement Initiatives Needed Now

1. Engagement is About Recognition and Appreciation

Every survey and study about employee engagement and retention shows recognition and appreciation is one of the cornerstones of great companies and great employees. Making sure people **KNOW** they are appreciated and are shown the recognition they deserve is **probably the single most important thing you can do.**

Train your managers on how to do recognition right (there is a right and wrong way), allow your employees to recognize each other through peer-to-peer recognition, install an engagement platform that allows employees to see how others are recognized and appreciated as part of the company basic values. This should be job one before doing anything else.

2. Engagement is About Human Conversations

Today's employees get all kinds of texts, slacks, emails, updates, etc. Unfortunately, if you're only using digital tools, you're missing the one thing that really gives engagement its power - the human side of things.

Yes, you should use all those methods of communication. But don't **ONLY** use them to discuss progress on a project or a problem that needs to be addressed. Use recognition extensively! Have a conversation. If you're back at the office don't just send an ecard. Walk down/up/over to the person's location and chat with them **AND** send the ecard. If they aren't located where you can see them in real life. Make a call. Make a zoom - whatever works in your organization. Use this time to recognize their efforts. Add the human to the digital for real impact.

And don't just talk about work. Talk about them. What is going on in their life outside the work bubble? Let the employee know they are important enough for you to take time for a one-on-one. They will appreciate it.



⁵ <https://ifm.flagshipinc.com/what-do-employees-want-in-2022>

⁶ <https://hrxexecutive.com/employees-want-more-from-work-in-2022-heres-how-to-deliver/>

3. Engagement begins before the employee is even hired.

As mentioned in Pillar #1, your employer brand precedes you and is the foundation upon which new employees build their own ongoing connection with your company. Employee engagement relies on trust and transparency. Do what you say you will do and make sure people know you're doing it.

4. Engagement Starts at the Top - And at the Bottom

Most companies sideline employee engagement to HR. But, the reality is most employees look to the executives in a company to model the brand they bought into when they were hired. "Do as I say not as I do," can't be a company's engagement plan. Top-down engagement is just that – executives being part of the engagement discussion or using the engagement platform. That's how you get the top-down approach going.

Traditional surveys allow you to get the "bottom up" information. The survey is great at assessing the employee mindset. Surveying your employees communicates you're interested in their point of view and are working to better the company/employee relationship. But don't stop there. Act on the information. Employees want to see their input is valued and implemented.

Do the work.

Employees are looking for more accountability and visibility in their management and managers. COVID taught us that engagement is really about human relationships. It's connections and caring.

5. Upskilling and Growth

A study highlighted on the Leftronic blog showed 70% of employees believe they lack the skills needed to do their job. When they can't do the job, they are, by definition, disengaged. And disengagement costs approximately \$550 billion. But companies that invest in training show a 21% greater profit.⁷

When people are competent and create value, they are engaged.

Investments in training and mentoring are investments in engagement.

The Other 1,000 Engagement Tips

We've listed 5 engagement activities you can use to improve your employee engagement and therefore improve retention and improve overall employee performance (and by extension company performance). The problem is there are as many engagement strategies as there are people. Each employee will engage differently.

And that is why your managers and leaders are critical and the basis of the third pillar – Transmit. Machines can't do human work. Managers must do that. And we'll explain that in our discussion of Pillar #3.

⁷ <https://lefronic.com/blog/employee-training-statistics>

Pillar #3 – TRANSMIT

Engagement is a team sport - and coaches are required.

As we mentioned in the introduction, the four Pillars are **Attract, Engage, Transmit** and **Advocate**. The Pillars work together as a team to drive engagement in your organization. And, as you know, every winning team has a great coach. Your company - and its “employee team” is no different. If you want to be a winning organization, you need a great team and a great coach. Or, as in a corporate situation, multiple coaches.

It’s About Their Experience

Employee engagement and retention isn’t an enterprise problem.

The responsibility for creating and maintaining employee engagement doesn’t sit in a particular office nor is it attached to a particular department or title. It requires a team of people pulling together to create and maintain engagement.

Employee engagement, like culture, is influenced as much by one’s individual experiences as it is by the sum total of experiences of all the employees. To quote Investopedia:

“Corporate culture refers to the beliefs and behaviors that determine how a company’s employees and management interact and handle outside business transactions. Often, corporate culture is implied, not expressly defined, and develops organically over time from the cumulative traits of the people the company hires.”⁸

Culture - and we’d argue - engagement - is soft, squishy and based on the sum total of experiences - not just one person - or one document - or one policy. That is why your “coaches” are so critical in making sure the entire organization is engaged. They are the transmission lines for engagement and culture. And they all need to be sending the same signal.

Engagement is Transmitted Through Humans

After COVID, the word “transmission” carries some unique baggage. But that is exactly how engagement, retention and culture spread through an organization. It is transmitted by the people.

⁸ <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/corporate-culture.asp>

Humans will listen to, and believe, other humans more than a faceless “corporation.” When companies rely on the technology or the “process” to create engagement and impact retention, they are removing the human, and ultimately, removing engagement. When a platform is considered the solution, the tool ends up used infrequently, or used frequently but incorrectly, creating issues of favoritism and unintended consequences.

You can't buy an employee engagement platform and think you can set it and forget it. That only works with a [Ron Popeil Rotisserie and BBQ oven](#).

Create Lines of Transmission

In order to have great culture, great engagement and great retention you need an engaged and trained management team. These are your company's coaches. These are the people who transmit the goals and objectives of the company into day-to-day behaviors. These are the people who are tasked with modeling appropriate behaviors, communicating the company mission and values. Their behaviors are the visible evidence of the company's culture and engagement.

But... if your coaching staff isn't focused on the mission, or they lack the skills to engage their staff, engagement cannot happen. Period. Full stop.

Upskilling and training management about the science and practice of engagement - rewards, recognition, appreciation, and communication, is the single biggest factor driving engagement and reducing turnover. It's been said so often it is becoming a throwaway line but shouldn't be - **people don't leave companies, they leave managers.**

Managers are a linchpin in the engagement equation. So, the question you need to ask yourself is this: how much of your “engagement” strategy ends up focusing on “take your goldfish to work days” and pizza instead of manager training?

How to Build Stronger Transmission Lines

Knowing that managers are critical for retention and engagement, you would expect managers would get a ton of training on this part of their job. But sadly, that is not the case. Too often managers believe and are reviewed for how well they “keep the trains running on time”. Tactical outputs become a proxy for management performance, when in reality, management performance should be measured on how well the people on their team are **ENGAGED** with keeping the trains running on time.

Dr. Beverly Kaye - author of the bestselling book “Love ‘Em or Lose ‘Em: Getting Good People to Stay” offered advice on how to encourage retention at the CIO's recent Future of Work Summit.

1. Great managers ensure their staff get training, get opportunities, get noticed.

Growth in a job is critical. If people do not feel they are growing, they will not stay and if they don't feel their managers care about their growth.



2. Assume your staff can leave at any moment.

More critical now than ever, with the great “resignation” managers need to be operating as if their new hire could be recruited away immediately - and should continuously recruit them with opportunities for growth.

3. Remote workers may need more love now.

With remote work - and the difficulty of “in real life” bonding increasing - managers must work harder to create human connections. Managers need to reach out to their employees through every medium and mode available - text, email, slack, phone (yeah – that is still a thing), smoke signals, whatever tool they can.

4. ALL employees are saying, “I want to be noticed. I want to be rewarded.”

People haven't changed in thousands of years. We are all still driven by basic rules of engagement. One of the most axiomatic is people want you to notice them. They want managers to give ongoing feedback. Managers need to get comfortable with recognition.

5. Employees feel they are not getting all the information they should be getting.

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

Managers need to do more to ensure they are having enough conversations with their employees **AND** as important – make sure they are addressing the issues of the individual employee. Are your managers asking their teams what they need to know? What are they not hearing but think they should? In other words, bring them inside the circle.

Finally, managers need to be sure they are doing everything possible to engage and lean into the employees' passions. If an employee is a dog lover see if there is a project you can assign to them that matches that value. Managers who can connect personal and professional goals will win every time.

Enabling Engagement is THE Management Task

Here is the obvious net-net for “Transmit” - every one of the things we discussed in the “Engage” pillar are things managers need to enable and empower. Employees are engaged when their managers work to make sure they have the things they need - communication, recognition, appreciation, growth.

Organizations **MUST** put more effort and time into training managers on the drivers of employee engagement and be measured on what they are **personally doing** to create engagement.

Pillar #4 – ADVOCATE or How to Create Missionaries

Employee Advocacy

Employee Advocacy isn't new - but it has taken on a much bigger role in employee engagement than in the past due to social media. Social media puts anything related to sharing information on steroids. Good information about your company can go viral in a minute - think of all the great press Zappos got when it first launched. Or it could hurt you tremendously. Anyone remember all the negative posts about Uber when a former Uber employee posted publicly about sexual harassment and discrimination at Uber. It only took one person with an understanding of how social media works to cause irreparable harm and ultimately forced Uber to address their toxic culture in their IPO filing. That's not a good look.

Smart companies manage the various audiences who can provide positive advocacy and don't just "assume" things are okay.

Definition of Employee Advocacy

Traditional definitions of "employee advocacy" typically have similar elements:

"Employee advocacy is a method used to promote your brand and initiatives through people who work for your organization in an authentic and trusted way, typically on social media or other digital channels."⁹

However, for our discussion of employee engagement and retention, we add in ex-employees in our advocacy discussion.

We know not every employee leaves a company on bad terms. Some employees find opportunities to grow and do different work that provides opportunities that can't be realized in their current company.

Benefits of Employee Advocacy

A study conducted in 2018 by PostBeyond and Golfdale Consulting showed:

- Company branded messages had a 561% increased reach when shared by employees compared to branded channels.
- 44.5% of people say they are more likely to apply for a job if they saw their friend post about it on social media than they would if they saw the same position on a job board.

⁹ <https://www.gaggleamp.com/what-is-employee-advocacy>

In addition, when employees post positively about their company culture, others passively absorb this information and it is easier for recruiters to find more people who are already knowledgeable about, and positively disposed, to your company. See how this dovetails nicely into the “Attract Pillar?”

Who Are Your Advocates?

A study conducted in 2018 by PostBeyond and Golfdale Consulting showed:

Current Employees

As we talked about in the “Transmit” pillar discussion, training and supporting your employees’ social media efforts in support of your company are critical for making sure your company’s culture and the engagement principles you’ve installed are shared and praised to as many people as possible.

Your current employees are your best advocates.

Ex-Employees

All companies experience turnover. It’s normal and natural. Hopefully, companies are losing employees that find a better alignment elsewhere or may have been the wrong hire based on one experience or it could be a layoff or reduction in force. Unfortunately, most organizations act as if employees who have left no longer exist. But those employees have opinions about your company, your values, your managers, how it was to work there, etc.

Those employees could be actively hurting your reputation - or helping it. Many companies just don’t know. Making sure your “ex-employees” are working for you and not against you, is yet another way to help drive retention and engagement.

Boomerang Employees

A survey of 2,500 U.S. adults conducted earlier this year by The Muse, a job-search and career-coaching company, showed nearly three-quarters of workers who quit to take a new job said they felt regret. Almost half of those workers said they would try to get their old job back.¹⁰ The question is how many companies highlight how they would be happy to reunite with a past top performer. Boomerang employees, or those that do return to their former employer, will need a little time for acclimation and will probably be your best advocates going forward.

Creating Advocates Means Creating Safety and Content

Creating employee advocates isn’t hard. But it takes effort.

Safe To Share?

First, employees need to feel comfortable sharing what’s going on at their company and they need to know what and how to share. None of those things are typically second nature to employees. That is where your company’s training on social media - what’s acceptable, what’s not, what’s expected, what’s not, are critical. Employees need to feel safe sharing - and they need guardrails to feel comfortable sharing outside the walls of the company intranet.



¹⁰ <https://www.wsj.com/articles/some-job-switchers-are-having-second-thoughts-great-resignation-11650663370>

Content

Don't assume your employees know what to share. A few will take to the advocacy game quickly and with enthusiasm. Others won't. Showing what other employees have shared will provide examples for other employees to see what is acceptable and popular.

Some of the ways you can create content include:

- **SWAG** - well thought out merchandise/items with a company logo can be a nice way to keep your name in front of people. But take time to think about your brand and the image you want to present. If you're a cutting-edge technology firm maybe a "pen" isn't the right choice but a weird backup battery for electronics like phones or earphones could be just the thing.
- **Recognition and Rewards** - make this a priority. People who feel valued love to tell others. Nothing makes someone feel like a member of the team than recognition from their managers, executives and peers. People tell everyone when they are rewarded at work.
- **Company Sponsored Posts** - create content to make posting easy. Companies can help by developing editable content to share in a common folder on the intranet or elsewhere. Employees can look for things to share from there and make it their own if they want. Don't make this mandatory but make sure your teams know where to find content to share.
- **Outreach** – connect with past employees and followers on various social sites. This can be commenting on their posts or thanking them for sharing your content. Think of your ex-employees as another target market for recruiting and employee branding. There are many tools that allow you to see what is being posted on various social media channels. (Google Alerts, IceRocket, Topsy, etc.)¹¹

Steps to Advocacy

1. First - get buy-in from your executives and other management levels. They **NEED** to be playing the game and they need to be visible. If the rank and file don't see the execs participating in social media they will assume it really isn't important.
2. Communicate internally about advocacy. Show how it is done. Share updates, tweets, etc.
3. Ensure managers are talking about company pride and advocacy. Make it part of their ongoing management training.
4. Provide training. Start during onboarding and continue with general sharing of advocacy efforts and updates. Make advocacy visible and important in the company.
5. Monitor Activity. Check who is sharing and what they are sharing. Are there some groups doing it better than others (positive deviants)? Find out what they are doing and share their practices. Look for those that aren't playing the game. Find out why. Lack of engagement in this area could be a huge red flag for overall employee engagement or a problem with a manager. You can use technology to monitor activity but also include humans in the equation to make sure things can't slip by.

¹¹ <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/tools-monitor-online-reputation/>

6. **ACTIVATE** advocacy for your company through a referral program. Like the old saw about the tree falling in the forest, even the most engaged and happy employees need a way to be an advocate. Your engagement platform should include rewards for participation and referrals. But don't punish non-participation. Use surprise and delight awards through an engagement platform when people tweet/post/share. Create ongoing rewards for bringing new, qualified, and culturally aligned applicants into the company. This helps focus your employees on the behaviors and activities you want and give those a bit reluctant a reason to experiment and to try out sharing. The awards don't have to be huge, but they do provide a signaling mechanism to your employees that the company finds this activity important and is paying attention to the work they are doing to enhance the company.

We Trust Those Like Us

You ask your neighbors who they used for updating their home because you think they will tell you the truth and you value their opinion. The same principle applies to your company and its reputation. Employees, ex-employees, even consumers, can be those trusted advisors to your new employees reinforcing their great decision to join you, or to potential recruits to apply.

Either way, your ability to train, promote, support and help your various audiences share great information about your company driving better recruiting, better hiring, better retention and better engagement overall.

Summary

You know, and we know, the past few years were crazy and will have a profound impact on how we work globally for years and years. How you react to these changes is critical if you want to be an employer of choice and want to be successful as a business. Our take on the future of work and the “great resignation” included 4 pillars companies need to master to win today and in the future.

Below is a graphic highlighting the 4 Pillars - why they are important and how you can create a work environment (virtual and in-person) where everyone can thrive and be more engaged with the work you do. Use these questions to outline your organization’s current standings, aspirations and goals within each pillar. Then identify the tools and platforms you have currently implemented, and those you may need in the future to achieve your goals. Finally, list out the people and roles needed to help you move forward in recalibrating your employee relationships and think through their roles and responsibilities in this initiative.



ATTRACT

What are you doing to make your company interesting enough to get noticed by talent that fits with your company vibe? Do you know what type of people thrive in your organization? Do you know how to make that visible to those looking for your type of organization?



ENGAGE

How do you measure employee engagement? Do you currently have both formal and informal recognition programs in place? How do you gauge success in these programs? Do you train managers on engagement and recognition?



TRANSMIT

Too often, culture and engagement is seen as an enterprise problem, however, as we stated, engagement is a human issue and can only be impacted by other humans. And the humans in your organization who are responsible for making sure engagement happens are your managers. Management training, management empowerment and management contribution to engagement cannot be ignored yet it is in most initiatives.



ADVOCATE

Get your message out in an authentic and human way. Make sure your current employees are advocating for your business. Use your current employee base as a powerfully influential recruiting tool. And let’s not forget about employees who left in the past. How do you manage your alumni? The best organizations leave an indelible impact on their employees that lasts even through multiple job changes.

We suggest you share this internally and have deep conversations around how you and your fellow leaders can use this information to help you recalibrate your employee relationship.

For more information on how to have these conversations and what kinds of platforms can help you implement and manage this “recalibration” visit [Hinda.com](https://hinda.com) and [click contact us](#).