



Better Engagement through Work Life Solutions

Keeping Employees Invested with Professional
and Personal Development Initiatives

As the focus of HR departments shifts to the strategic attraction and retention of top talent, it's no surprise that programs that make employees feel fulfilled are increasingly important. For the sought-after millennial segment, it could be the key to company loyalty, with 53% of them saying that “learning new things or having access to learning or professional development opportunities” would make them stay longer than planned at a job.¹

Yet it turns out that Work Life integration is considered essential to workers in all stages of life. Those just now entering the workforce named it as their top employer-decision factor for “work atmosphere & environment,” while a survey of parents revealed that work flexibility (84%) and work-life balance (80%) trumped salary (75%) as the most important aspect of a potential job.^{2 3}

While modern companies—from tech startups with ample foosball tables to traditional firms offering work-from-home Fridays—may agree on the merits of such employee-focused programs, the methods are diverse. Below we outline how Work Life integration that encourages wellness, career development and healthy competition, can build a more productive, engaged workforce. In order for employees to give their all during work hours, they need to feel part of a winning team. And they must feel valued by the company—long after they log off for the day.

“GAMIFYING” YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES

Gamification has certainly changed marketing and other fields by creating new ways to engage prospects in the age of information overload. Yet the targeted use of competitions, quizzes, and contests can be just as effective internally.

Sales divisions, of course, have long used contests to motivate—and incentivize—its team members for a given time period. But departments not as naturally versed in rivalry have also used competition to increase productivity. Take manufacturing, for instance. Every other year, a multinational tech manufacturer puts on its global lean competition for recognizing the best lean projects throughout the enterprise. The goal is to improve operations and finances for the end-to-end supply chain. Another goal is sustained employee morale. The journey is very long and ongoing so to continue to ignite this kaizen spirit and the energy with people, it is important to make it fun through competitions and recognize people's contributions.

Engagement, though, is not a panacea for turnover—it's merely a company's best defense. According to Gallup's latest “State of the American Workplace” report, while 56% of “not engaged” and 73% of “actively disengaged employees” are looking for other opportunities, 37% classified as “engaged” are also looking for jobs.⁴

A sense of comradery is vital these days. The value of friendship at work cannot be overstated, judging from a LinkedIn study. The employment-oriented social network found that 46% of professionals globally feel work friends are important to overall happiness, while 28% of millennials have texted a manager outside of work hours for a non-work matter (compared with only 10% of baby boomers).⁵ Accessible, personal managers are becoming a palpable asset for today's companies.

While the possibilities are endless, here are a few ideas for team-building and engaging competitions:

- Conference or trade show contests to generate sales or marketing goals
- A steps challenge to keep employees active
- Service day at a non-profit to see which team can raise the most funds or donations

EXPANDING THE DEFINITION OF WELLNESS

Employee wellness continues to be one of the hottest topics for human resource departments. The Society for Human Resource Management reported that 80% of employers have offered preventive wellness services, while other reports show the percentage growing to 92% for companies with more than 200 workers.⁶

The results are wholly positive, according to a Benefits PRO survey of 600 HR professionals with 97% saying that worker well-being “positively influences engagement.”⁷ And a Gallup study suggests that such programs attract the more desirable employees: engaged workers are 28% more likely than their actively disengaged peers to get involved in company-sponsored wellness programs.⁸

Naturally, most programs still center on one's health. Among the 10 most common wellness benefits offered are healthy living resources such as publications, on-site flu vaccinations, a 24-hour nurse line, CPR or first-aid training, smoking cessation programs, and health screenings.⁹ Gym and fitness subsidies are common for companies of all sizes, while other health-focused perks such as on-site stress reduction programs and massage therapy are gaining ground.

The establishment of wellness groups at work is an excellent way to both encourage health habits and build employee rapport. The latter is important to employee satisfaction, and “clubs” centered on running, walking, yoga, and a slew of other activities are happening more and more. Fitness goals can be more attainable by using “the buddy system, whereby employees can “spot” each other when it comes to nutritious eating and developing other healthier habits.

Convenience, of course, is paramount to the success of any such program. The desire to make the most of time at work is a powerful catalyst for participation, especially for a group who may hesitate to download and use yet another fitness app. This is why wearable fitness devices are increasingly being integrated with an organization's HCM software.¹⁰

It's best to tailor your wellness offerings to the interests and priorities of your employees—and the prospective workers you'd like to attract. A new Forbes piece outlined the four key areas that likely to drive business success:¹¹

- **Time** – Spending quality time with employees for coaching or even a lunch can convey a sense of value, while flexible schedules are popular with workers. Flextime can mean four-day weeks (four 10-hour days as opposed to five 8-hour days); casual start and stop times for convenient family time and remote working.
- **Transparency** – Internal transparency about company policies, compensation, incentive plans, and other areas directly affecting employees can build trust and make workers feel more invested in shared success.



6 Ways to Foster Healthy Competition at Work

A new article from [Small Business Trends](#) outlined the essentials of increasing productivity, engagement, and motivation through competition:

- Keep a lighthearted and fun element to the contest
- Monitor the effects to ensure the results aren't counterproductive
- Compete in teams to preempt a dog-eat-dog environment
- Encourage competing with oneself to achieve a new “personal best”
- Stay focused on the end goals rather than fleeting results such as volume of customer calls
- Provide a reasonable reward that your staff actually values—many would prefer a paid half-day over a plastic trophy

- **Recognition** – Millennials in particular find internal recognition for job performance to be very important.¹² An outside-work dinner to reveal and celebrate accomplishments usually flying under the radar—with gift cards as rewards—can be an effective activity to boost morale.
- **Giving Back** – Again, millennials are leading a rise in the importance of corporate philanthropy. Companies that give back in huge ways tend to inspire a more generous, positive workplace. Employee engagement and pride are sure to follow.

GROWING CAREERS ON THE INSIDE

It's hard to believe that not too long ago employees would stay at companies for decades, and even look forward to a certain gift for every tenure milestone. But these days, three years at the same company is considered long. The millennial segment is the most willing to jump ship for better opportunities, with 36% saying they'll look for a new job in the next year if the job market improves, compared with 21% of non-millennials.¹³ While the reasons are many, 52% of millennials say the opportunity for career progression is the most desirable quality in a workplace.¹⁴

What's most concerning is that only 12.1% of employees feel their current employers are preparing them for future work.¹⁵ This is why education is one of the top two trends this year, according to the SHRM.¹⁶ Education assistance is one of the oldest company perks, and remains an effective one.

Upward mobility has always been paramount for employees, but it's becoming clearer that this doesn't necessarily mean a larger paycheck. A recent reward and recognition study revealed that 1 in 5 employees find a promotion with a higher title to be more valuable than a raise, while a third would rather choose a positive company-wide email from an executive over a \$500 bonus.¹⁷ Accordingly, the notion of one's professional "brand" has joined the corporate cultural lexicon. Employees at all career stages are striving to make their respective skill sets—and the value they bring—more visible to decision-makers inside and outside of their companies.

Considering the emergence and potential of these forward-thinking employee segments, a good investment would be an integrated system for maintaining and cultivating employee reputations. Knowing an individual's reputation and workforce roles enables your organization to better predict how well their capabilities and behaviors will have a positive effect on desired business outcomes. And reputation measures and workforce role analysis offer a very tangible source of feedback for workers, providing them with actionable insight that helps them develop themselves and their careers as well as see the effectiveness of those efforts by tracking changes over time.

Other ways to encourage career development and engage employees include:

- A mentor-protégé program in which junior staffers can learn from senior employees in the same departments
- Company-paid certification for role-relevant courses, online or offsite
- Injecting detailed career pathway discussions into periodic reviews

MAKING WORK / LIFE BALANCE FEEL FIRST-NATURE

With Oracle Work Life Solutions, you'll be able to drive higher employee productivity and engagement through the use of innovative mobile and social technology. Gain insight into the social reputation and influences of your employees, then tailor their experience to glean the most productivity and loyalty from your workforce. Monitor employee wellness to help them attain the right work-life integration and help manage fun competitions that help obtain business goals. There are three elements to this comprehensive solution, which integrates with your other HCM modules:

- **My Reputation** – Analyze your talent's reputation within social communities and among peers, while monitor employee social media policy compliance and mitigating any risks. Increase employee engagement and improve their experiences with wider adoption of social tools.
- **My Wellness** – Enhance the employee experience at work, and improve work-life balance and workforce wellness. Use game mechanics to help employees stay focused on reaching their wellness goals.
- **My Competitions** – Align individual motivations and behaviors to business outcomes of the company. Run contests so that employees can better complete work assignments and contribute to an end goal in a fun way.

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