Identifying Signs of Employee Disengagement

Understand What Drives Employee Engagement
Managers need a strong understanding of employee engagement drivers to guide their efforts to identify warning signs of disengagement among direct reports. Below are the 20 core drivers of engagement identified by the Corporate Leadership Council.

Key Engagement Drivers
- Organizational Culture
  - Internal Communication
  - Future Orientation
  - Culture of Flexibility
  - Culture of Innovation
  - Customer Focus
- Day-to-Day Work
  - Importance of Projects to Employees’ Personal Development
  - Connection Between Work and Organizational Strategy
- Senior Leadership
  - Is Open to New Ideas
- Direct Manager
  - Accurately Evaluates Employee Potential
  - Quality of Informal Feedback
  - Accurately Evaluates Employee Performance
  - Clearly Articulates Organizational Goals
  - Cares About Employees
  - Creates Clear Work Plans and Timetables
  - Accepts Responsibility for Successes and Failures
  - Adapts to Changing Circumstances
  - Helps Find Solutions to Problems
  - Is Open to New Ideas
  - Inspires Others
  - Encourages Employee Development

Identify Disengagement through Conversations and Observation
Managers should look for warning signs of disengagement through conversations with direct reports and observations of direct reports’ attitudes and behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions Answered</th>
<th>Conversation</th>
<th>Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are employees aware of the presence of engagement drivers?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ What attitudes and behaviors do employees demonstrate on the job?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do employees perceive the drivers?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ How productive are employees?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are employees satisfied with their experiences with the drivers?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ How often are employees absent from work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would the drivers influence an employee’s decision to leave the company?</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓ How stressed are employees?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Engagement Assessment Conversation Guide

Use the following questions to assess direct reports’ attitudes/experiences around engagement drivers and identify possible signs of disengagement.

1. What were your career objectives upon joining the company? How have these changed during your tenure? What progress have you made against them?

Red Flags:
- Negativity/frustration around goal progress
- Lack of defined career objectives
- Objectives became less ambitious over time
- Employee unsure how to pursue career objectives in the organization
- Employee hesitant to discuss*

2. What types of incentives do/would you value most in terms of rewards and recognition for work excellence?

Red Flags:
- Disbelief/sarcasm around idea of the company rewarding/recognizing employees
- Anger/frustration
- Employee hesitant to discuss*

3. Do you feel recognized for your accomplishments? How have you been recognized in the past?

Red Flags:
- Anger/frustration
- Employee unable to think of any examples
- Employee hesitant to discuss*

*Hesitancy to discuss a particular topic may indicate fear of voicing negative opinions on the topic, or lack of knowledge around the topic (potentially as a result of the company/manager failing to inform them). Lack of knowledge (as indicated through hesitancy or the inability to elaborate) can be a strong indicator that the employee does not understand their role, their connection to organizational success, or the development opportunities/career paths available to them, all of which contribute significantly to employee engagement.
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4. Where would you like to go within the company? What career paths interest you?

**Red Flags:**
- Employee not aware of potential career paths
- Employee not able to articulate where they want to go
- Employee does not seem interested in movement within the company
- Employee hesitant to discuss*

5. How supportive do you feel the company has been of employees’ work-life balance? How has the company been supportive?

**Red Flags:**
- Anger/frustration
- Employee hesitant to discuss*
- Employee unable to elaborate on company support

6. How are things going with (your team, project X, etc.)?

**Red Flags:**
- Anger/frustration
- Lack of interest/awareness
- Employee hesitant to discuss*

7. What factors would influence your decision to stay with the company long-term?

**Red Flags:**
- Employee desire to stay would require change in significant change current conditions such as:
  - Work-life balance
  - Development opportunities
  - Daily work/team
  - Organizational culture
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## Engagement Assessment Observation Guide

Use the following guide to assess direct reports’ stress levels. Observation of any of these behaviors among direct reports may indicate that employees are highly stressed and/or disengaged at work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports are arriving later, leaving earlier, and/or taking longer lunches than usual</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports have higher incidents of absenteeism and/or sick days</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports take longer to complete routine tasks</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports are producing lower-quality work</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports often appear anxious or worried</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports frequently ask questions and voice concerns about how to get all of their work done</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports appear to have increased health problems (often expressed through informal conversations and absenteeism)</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports frequently mention feeling stressed</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports have trouble concentrating when you deliver instructions, guidance, or feedback (e.g., they frequently ask you to repeat statements or forget key pieces of information)</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer complaints about lower-than-expected levels of customer service have noticeably increased</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mistakes or accidents in the workplace have increased</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workplace morale is lower than it has been in the past</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports have trouble prioritizing assignments and strongly resist efforts to re-prioritize their workloads</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports are hesitant or slow to incorporate manager’s and colleagues’ feedback into their work</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports are resistant to any sort of change (in the workplace, operating procedures, daily work, etc.)</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct reports lack interest in new development opportunities</td>
<td>☐ ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>