



The Key to Employee Satisfaction & Engagement: Personal & Professional Development

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The ability for employees of all levels in an organization to grow, both personally and professionally, is a key component to employee satisfaction, engagement and retention. This is particularly true for Millennial workers, a generation that is often characterized as obsessed with self-improvement.

Caroline Beaton [examined this drive to self-improvement](#), noting:

“In 2015, 94% of millennials reported making personal improvement commitments (compared with 84% of Boomers and 81% of Gen Xers). And we’re willing to pay the price: While Boomers said they’d spend an average of \$152 a month on self-improvement, millennials anticipated spending nearly twice that—though our average income is half as much. Our strategies range from new workout regimes and diet plans to life coaching, therapy and apps designed to improve wellbeing.”

Employees who find an outlet for self-development within their organization report higher satisfaction. A recent [case study on employee satisfaction with UBS](#) (a Swiss bank employing 65,000 people) measured their performance in this area and found that employee satisfaction was significantly below that of high-performing organizations. They charted a course to improve their score in a series of four changes:

- They measured manager performance in this area and targeted learning resources to managers, with a goal of making them better people managers
- They prioritized internal mobility through various internal recruitment initiatives
- They focused on improving the feedback culture
- They upped their learning game, making learning opportunities diverse and accessible through their own internal UBS University

The result? Within one year, UBS saw a 10-point gain in satisfaction related to learning and career opportunities within the firm.

Are your managers being trained to foster engaged employees?

The first step in the UBS process was a focus on managers. In *Human Resources Executive*, Debbie Shotwell makes the case for [why effective managers are your secret weapon](#) - and in fact, a starting point in any path to employee engagement. She notes:

“Gallup found that 51 percent of managers aren’t engaged themselves, and 14 percent are actively disengaged. A bad manager can have sweeping effects on performance, engagement and retention companywide. The impact? Gallup estimates that these disengaged managers cost the U.S. economy between \$319 billion to \$398 billion annually. And some 50 percent of employees have quit to escape a bad manager at some point in their career.”

Shotwell says it doesn’t have to be this way: "Capable and engaged managers aren’t born, they’re trained – regardless of whether they’re an outside hire or internal candidate." She discusses three ways organizations can develop and equip managers to play a key role in developing and sustaining an organizational culture of employee development and engagement.

1. Focus on coaching for goal achievement
2. Drive accountability with regular, ongoing check-ins
3. Tap talent-management technology to leverage deep performance insights



Training managers is vital. Gallup says that managers account for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores. They address this in another article, [The Damage Inflicted by Poor Managers](#). Among the suggestions offered by the authors:

“Leaving managers to their own devices can create disengaged workplaces. Companies should offer tailored and intensive training, coaching, support and guidance to all managers.

Many companies measure engagement but offer a one-size-fits-all approach to managing it. It's better to provide foundational development in the first year of an engagement initiative and train and coach each manager on specific people-management needs in subsequent years.

Lower-performing managers are going to need tailored strategies and more intensive support. Managers should not be punished for their own lack of training — and they shouldn't have to figure out how to engage their employees on their own.”

To bolster engagement, make it a priority to identify and hire managers with high potential. Once hired, train and coach managers in good leadership skills, people management, and building engagement. Also, hold them accountable for results as part of their job responsibilities.

The commonality or themes in all these efforts is training and development – for managers, yes, that is critical. But too many organizations stop there. To maximize engagement and commitment, it's important to extend self-development opportunities to the entire workforce.

ESI EAP's Peak Performance Benefits: A complete coaching, training and development program for your organization

The path outlined by UBS is a compelling one, but not all organizations have the resources to maintain an internal university for employee training. ESI's Employee Assistance Program goes well beyond traditional EAP benefits to encompass **Peak Performance Benefits**, a personal and professional development program that includes one-on-one personal & professional coaching, over 300+ online training programs, more than 25,000 online self-help resources, and wellness coaching. Plus, we offer a broad range of training, development and compliance resources geared to supervisors and managers, including a Management Academy and specific tools for best practice recruiting, hiring, and onboarding. Learn more about [how ESI EAP's Peak Performance Benefits could help your organization](#).