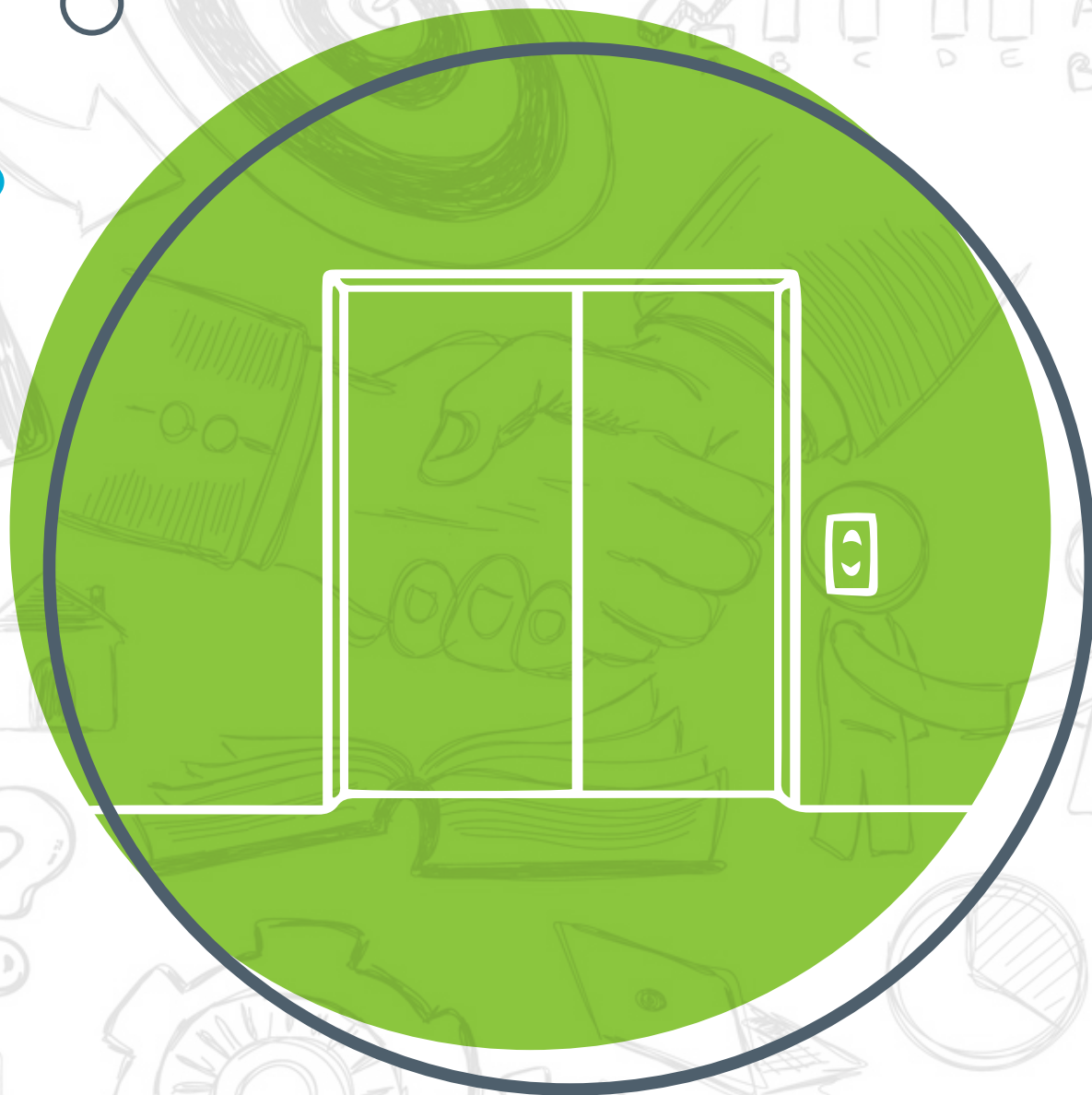


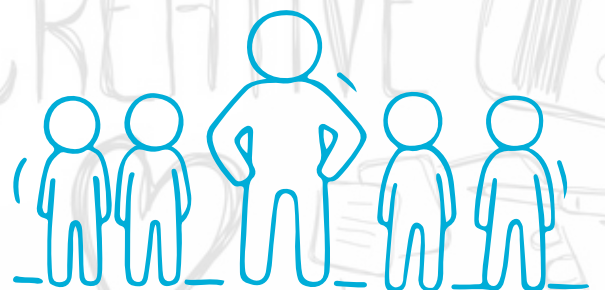
ENGAGEMENT ELEVATORS

When company leaders are focused and intentional about doing good work in these four areas, they can significantly lift (or elevate) employee engagement.



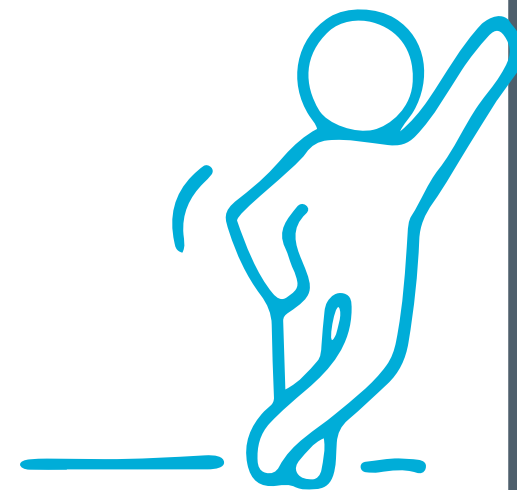
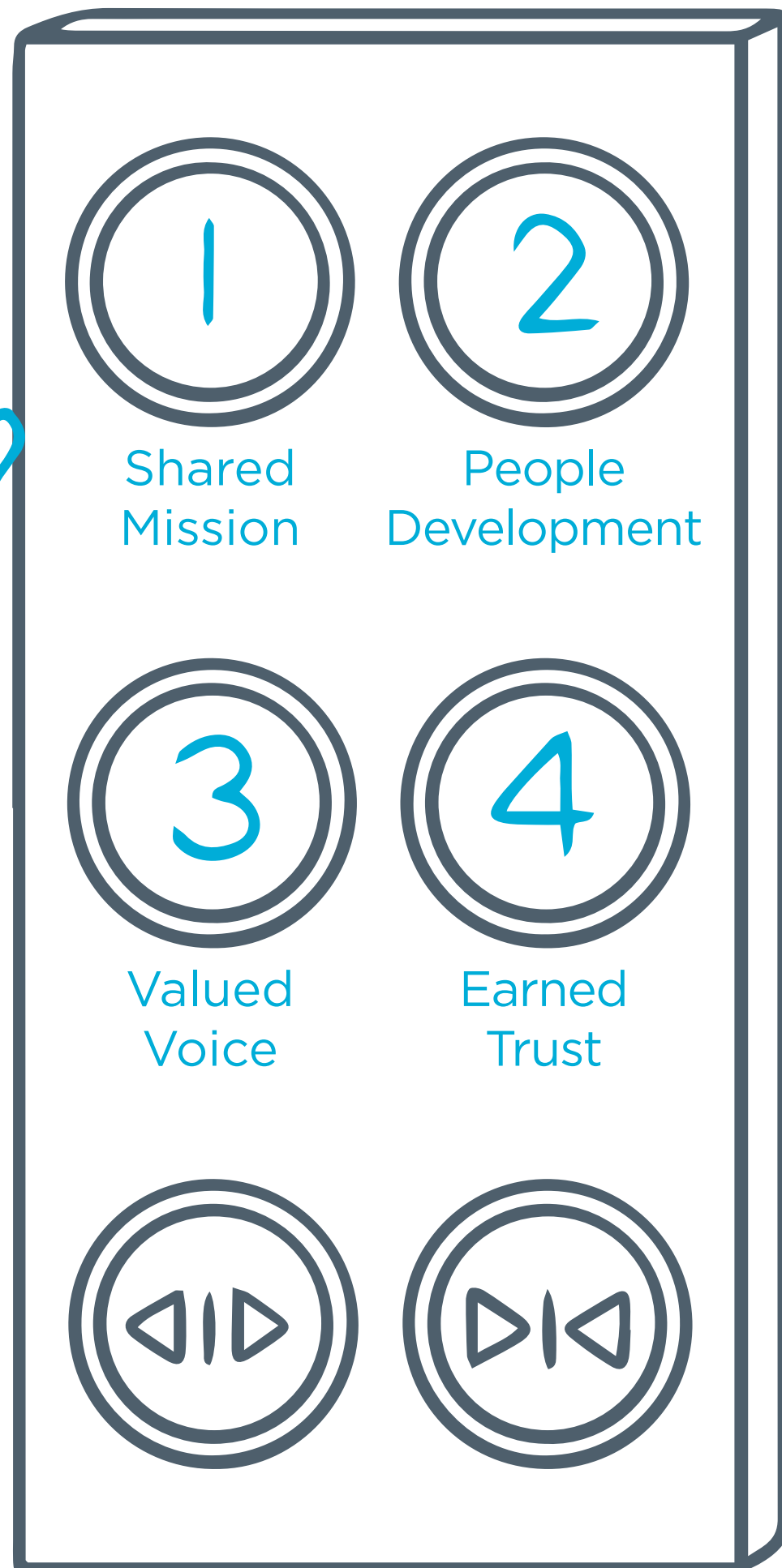
UP YOUR CULTURE

by THE CENTER FOR SALES STRATEGY



UPYOURCULTURE.COM

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Introduction

Company culture and employee engagement have become increasingly hotter topics in recent years. This rise in popularity is largely due to a long string of well-respected experts, with studies in hand, pointing to a solid link between employee engagement and company productivity, revenue, and key customer retention. More than ever before, leaders understand that to grow the bottom line, they must start by creating a culture of engagement.

Think of employee engagement as the emotional commitment and willingness that people have within them to give their very best at work. When an employee is engaged, they fully activate their talents and give their work their all. When a team of employees are engaged, not only are the people happier, but the company enjoys significant improvement in three hard measures:

1. Increased revenue
2. Decreased employee turnover
3. Improved key account retention

All three of these metrics are tied to, and will rise with, employee engagement, so if you increase engagement, you will in turn increase your company performance!

With that understanding has come a tidal wave of employee engagement studies that companies can use to measure their engagement level and better understand exactly how their people are feeling and what they are thinking. Regardless of which tool is used, we find that when a company invests in this understanding, it really pays off.

Not using an engagement survey yet? That's okay! Even before you lock-in on the right survey for you, you can still get a good sense of your engagement level in the office and begin focus on the things you can do to boost it. You just need to know what to look for!

At Up Your Culture, we have discovered four distinct themes that separate the most highly engaged organizations from those that don't quite measure up:

- Shared Mission
- People Development
- Valued Voice
- Earned Trust

We call these four areas the Engagement Elevators because when company leaders are focused and intentional about doing good work in these areas, they can significantly lift (or elevate) employee engagement.

In this eBook, we will take a deep dive into each of these four engagement elevators. As we do, consider how your organization compares to those that are highly engaged. Think about how your team is doing in that area today and then ask yourself how you can use each elevator to improve engagement on your team in the future.

"Think about what your team is doing today and ask yourself how can we use each elevator to improve engagement in the future."



1st Floor: Shared Mission

Going up! The first Engagement Elevator, Shared Mission, is your company mission—your why. Your mission tells your employees why the work they are doing is important, and it guides, inspires, and rallies your employees to join a cause bigger than themselves.

The Power of Shared Mission

Organizations with highly engaged employees have a clear sense of where they are going as a company and why they are working so hard to get there. Their employees understand the mission because company leaders have communicated it well, and with enough frequency, that every employee feels they are a part of something bigger than themselves. They know where they've been as a group, where they are today, and where they're headed in the future, and they feel as though they are on the journey together. Their Shared Mission is like a flashing beacon guiding them along the way.

Companies that identify and articulate a compelling mission also find they attract stronger candidates with a higher level of talent who have the passion and energy to join the quest and help carry the load. Ultimately, rallying around a strong mission can lead directly to a more talented team and greater momentum to take the company to the next level.

One of the most powerful ways top leaders communicate their mission is through storytelling. The use of stories to instruct and lead has been a part of human culture for thousands of years. Storytelling dates back to the time of tribal leaders who gathered their people around the fire to share their oral history, impart their beliefs, and reinforce their values and rules in the tales of both triumphs and tragedies.

In business today, storytelling plays a similar role, serving as one of the most powerful tools a leader has to turn dreams and goals into results. These narratives allow the group to develop a common language and reinforce a strong sense of purpose for the work they are doing. And at the center of these stories lives the mission.

"Companies that identify and articulate a compelling Mission find they attract strong candidates with higher levels of talent, who have the passion and energy to help carry the load."



Company Example: Amazon

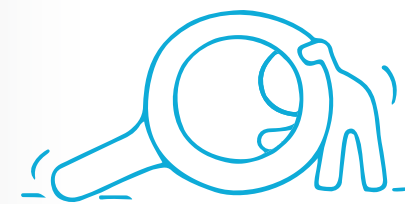
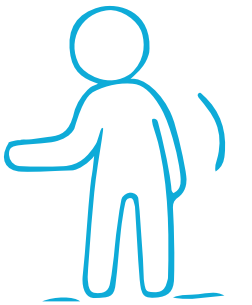
CEO Jeff Bezos relentlessly ensures that his fourteen leadership principles -such as customer obsession, learn and be curious, and hire and develop the best - are fully embraced. Like every company, Amazon shares its corporate vision for all to see, but unlike many other companies, Bezos relentlessly ensures that his fourteen leadership principles are fully embraced and faithfully executed across the enterprise.

→ [Click here to read the 14 principles](#)

How Does Your Company Measure Up?

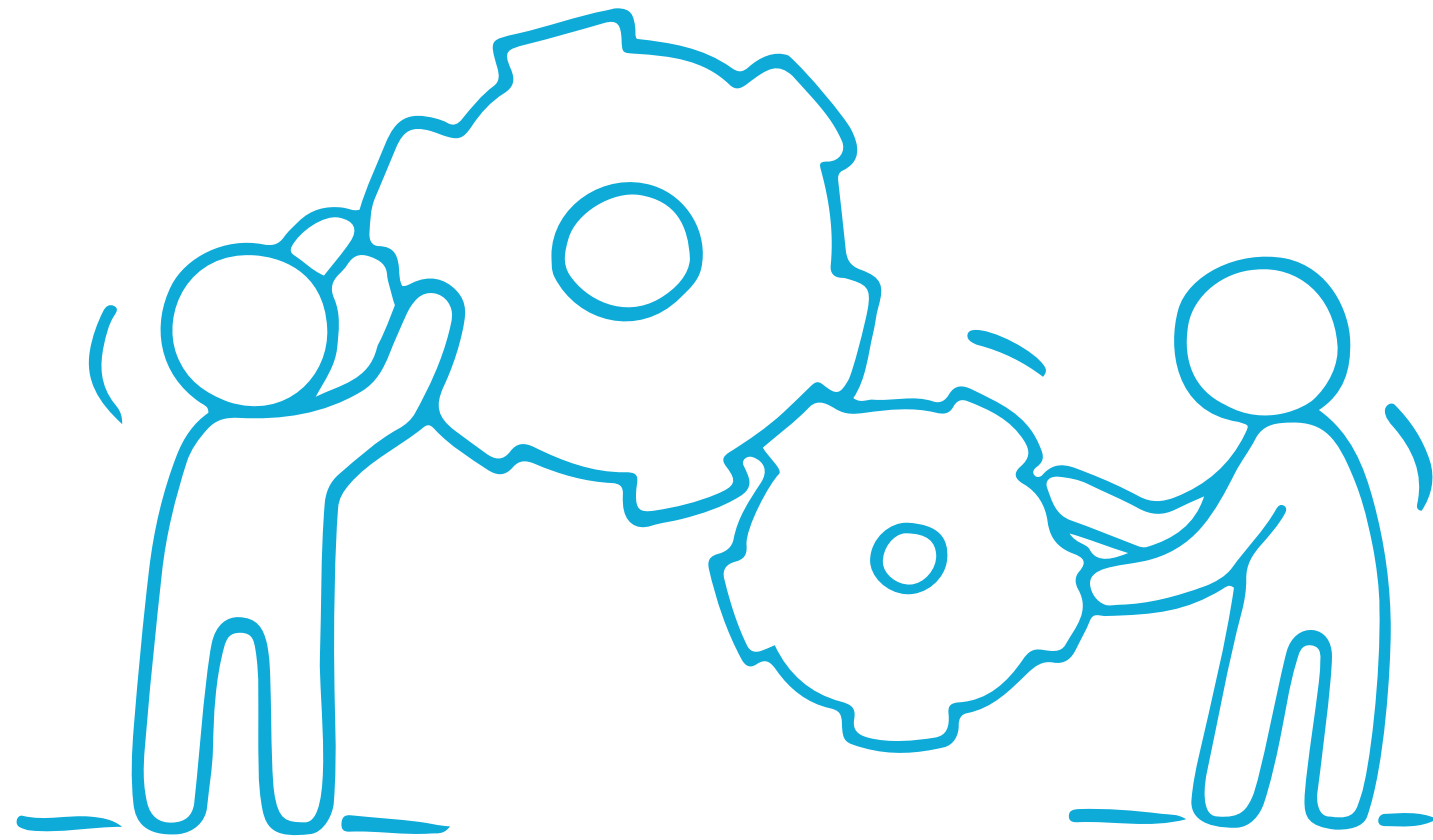
- Does your organization have a clearly defined [Mission Statement](#) that inspires and unites your people?
- Do your employees know why their work is so important to the customer or community and feel as though they are part of something bigger than themselves?
- Do you find ways to energize your people and make them feel invested in the journey?
- Do your people know how their day-to-day responsibilities connect to your company Mission?
- Do your company leaders regularly share stories related to your mission to keep it alive?

"All the energy you invest in them today will still be paying you dividends ten years from now."



WHAT WE'VE SEEN FIRST-HAND

A radio station sales manager that focuses on the emotional impact they can make on their listeners, local business owners, and their staff, commented on their Reason for Being (mission statement) which is "We Move People." By using storytelling, describing the sense of belonging and shared mission to his staff, he said, "We had an ALL HANDS-ON DECK approach! They raised over \$100K for Cancer Services in this year's RADIO THON. Thanks to each of my staff having a specific role, ALL felt they were a part of it! "



Take Action

Step 1

Does your organization have a clearly defined Mission that inspires and unites your people? If not, this is the time to identify your why and begin communicating it regularly. Work with your leadership team to nail-down why your company and the work you do really matters.

- What will you be remembered for?
- What impact do you make?

You will know you have been successful when your employees refer to your Mission on their own.

Step 2

Also, consider how you can share your Mission with the outside world. Expressing your “reason for being” on your website, business cards, and on social media will allow people to understand who you are as a company, how you impact others in a positive way, and why your work is important. If you do this consistently, your current employees will feel an even greater sense of pride in the work they do, and you will find it won’t take long before your Talent Banks begin filling up with candidates who are a strong match for what you need.

You will also find that when your Mission is well-defined, every tough decision will become a little easier to make. The right path will become clear because you have your eye fixed on your north star. You will know where you are headed and why.

Step 3

Once you have identified your Mission, consider how you can get people to rally around it and feel a shared sense of purpose and dedication. Don’t let these become words that wilt on the wall. Instead, challenge yourself to find ways to energize your people and make them feel invested in the journey!

- Clearly articulate how your Mission connects to the day-to-day operations of your business.
- Recognize the work being done that aligns with that Mission.
- Create the legends that people will cling to by sharing stories and keeping your Mission alive!

2nd Floor: People Development

Going up! You learned from the first Engagement Elevator, Shared Mission, that organizations with highly engaged employees have a clear sense of where they’re going as a company and why. Leaders communicate their purpose and vision well enough, and with enough frequency, that each employee, in turn, can clearly articulate the details with others.

The second Engagement Elevator, People Development, focuses on how managers can show that they care about their people, build individualized relationships, transparently share information, coach both strengths and weaknesses, and provide meaningful feedback.

The Power of People Development

We define employee engagement as the emotional commitment and willingness to give your best at work. When an employee is engaged, they fully activate their talents and give their work their all. When a team of employees are engaged, not only are the people happier, but the company enjoys significant improvement in three hard measures:

- Increased revenue
- Decreased employee turnover
- Improved key account retention

All three of these metrics are tied to, and will rise with, employee engagement, so if you increase engagement, you will in turn increase your company performance!

Let’s take a deep dive into People Development, and as we do, consider how your organization compares to those that are highly engaged. Ask yourself how you can focus on people development to improve engagement on your own team.

Peek inside the companies known for their first-rate cultures, and you will find at their core, managers who are naturals at developing their people. When a manager has the innate ability to spot talent, hire the right people, and then set each person up for success, they pave the way for strong employee engagement.

After studying those that are the most masterful at turning a team into a “tribe,” we have built a list of best practices to share. Consider each of these best practices as another floor in the employee engagement skyscraper. As you conquer each floor and continue your elevator climb, you will make an enormous impact on your employee engagement!

“When a manager has the innate ability to spot talent, hire the right people, and then set each person up for success, they pave the way for strong employee engagement.”



Company Example: Zappos

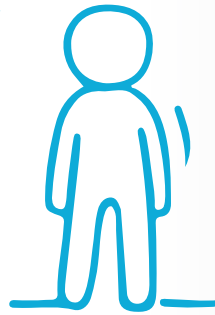
Zappos hires 50 percent on hard skills and 50 percent on cultural fit. They say Zappos is harder to get into than Harvard. Here's why. They have two sets of interviews, a talent assessment and a culture fit interview, and candidates must pass both. Months can pass between an initial cultural fit interview and an actual job offer. They hire hard so they can manage easy and in CEO Tony Hsieh's words, "Most companies are very quick to hire and slow to fire when really it should be the other way around."

Source: Zappos.com / [Careers](#) / [Why Us](#)

How Does Your Company Measure Up?

- Do you understand the strengths and weaknesses of each person you manage so you can put them in situations where they can be most successful?
- Do you have a plan and a process in place to further develop your people (even your veterans)?
- Do you provide consistent and meaningful feedback on what your people are doing well and help them to identify precisely what they could be doing differently to achieve greater success?
- Do you develop your people by delegating responsibilities that match their skillset and giving them the opportunity to shine?
- Do you acknowledge successful behaviors even before they result in goal-attainment?

"Most companies are very quick to hire and slow to fire when really it should be the other way around."



Take Action

Step 1

Developing people is not a "sometimes" activity, but rather an exercise that needs to happen all the time, over time. Because the speed of business is lightning-fast and the number of distractions in your day is only rivaled by the number of fires you need to extinguish, you must have a process and plan to develop your people. If you wait until you have time, it will never happen.

Consider how you can begin investing in your people and helping them to reach their potential.

The best way to begin is to gain a clear understanding of both their strengths and weaknesses using a validated talent assessment. Each person on your team is wired very differently and therefore needs a very different kind of coaching. An understanding of their strengths will help you align them with the work that needs to be done and put them in situations where they can shine. You can trust them with increased responsibility in those areas, set higher expectations, and challenge them more. If you are aware of their weaknesses (we all have them), you can create workarounds to prevent those weaknesses from getting in the way of their success (like giving spell-check to someone who is not a good speller).

Step 2

Another way to increase the development of your people is to provide consistent and meaningful feedback to them - both positive and negative. Important to note - research shows that if you want to increase the performance of an individual, you should increase the ratio of positive to negative feedback. Both are important, but feedback is most effective when the ratio is somewhere around 5:1.

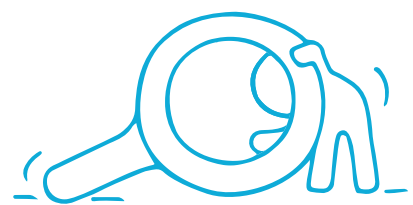
Positive feedback gives people insight into exactly what they are doing well which allows them to repeat that behavior again and again, fine-tune it each time, and further increase their success in the future. Don't wait until they have achieved the goal to tell them they did well. Seek opportunities to point out what they are doing right along the way to improve their performance.

Step 3

Will you replace the test under Step 3 with:

Finally, begin scheduling a yearly one-on-one meeting with each of your direct reports and ask them questions that will help you understand their goals and motivators as well as the kind of relationship and coaching they want from their manager. Up Your Culture clients use a tool called the Growth Guide that asks questions like "What would be the best challenge we could give you at work right now?" and "When you're successful, whom do you want to hear about it?" The information gained from these conversations helps you improve communication, identify growth opportunities, and increase trust.

When you use strategies like these to invest in your people, you will improve your relationships and grow your people. Not only will they be able to maximize their performance and achieve excellence in their work, but just as important, they will have a stronger sense of connection and loyalty to the company and a greater passion for carrying the load.



WHAT WE'VE SEEN FIRST-HAND

A sales manager discovered the power of understanding the unique strengths and weakness of each person she manages. She shared, "understanding how each one of them is wired and what motivates each one to get work done has been extremely helpful in my overall relationships with them." She also found that when the team is clear on each person's top strengths, they are able to learn from each other and grow even faster.

3rd Floor: Valued Voice

Going up! Researchers have learned that companies with the highest levels of engagement have four things in common: Shared Mission, People Development, Valued Voice, and Earned Trust. When a company commits to improving in these areas, they simultaneously lift—or elevate—their levels of employee engagement.

As a quick reminder, we define employee engagement as the emotional commitment and willingness to give your best at work. When your people are engaged, they will fully activate their talents and give you their very best. Consistent employee engagement leads to increased revenue, employee retention, and customer success.

The Power of Valued Voice

Engagement Elevator number three, Valued Voice, is achieved when employees trust their coworkers and leaders enough to participate in open, two-way communication. Keeping that basic definition in mind, let's take a deeper dive on how you can use this to improve the engagement on your own team.

Organizations with preeminent company cultures demonstrate genuine respect for the thoughts and opinions of their employees. Their leaders value the unique perspective of their people and actively seek to understand their views. The very best strike a healthy balance between listening and leading, effectively making their people feel valued while also making decisions that drive the team forward. You may have heard this expressed as “everyone has a voice, not a vote.”

Engaging leaders find that when they consistently listen to their employees and value their opinions, their people feel increasingly more comfortable opening up to them. Strong bonds of trust form, and because the employees know their manager cares about them, they feel more secure sharing information, ideas, and concerns they may not have revealed otherwise. This level of trust allows companies to gain insight into potential obstacles ahead to avoid them and also generate a steady flow of innovative ideas and improvements.

These exemplary companies don't just listen, though. They also find great value in sharing information back with their people in return. They keep their employees informed and establish a hallmark of transparency. As a result, employees feel as though they are on the inside, part of the solution, and even a partner in the success.

In more than one study, including a recent survey conducted by [TinyPulse](#), employees have pointed to company transparency as the number one factor leading to workplace happiness. As it is in any relationship we form, transparency fosters trust and happiness. When an organization consistently shares information on the vision, strategies, and current events, everyone develops a deeper connection.



“Engaging Leaders value the unique perspective of their people and actively seek to understand their views.”

Company Example: Buffer

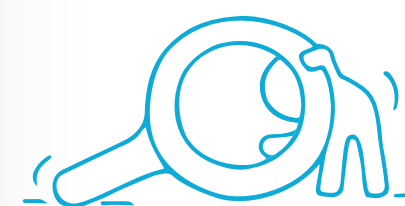
One company well-known for its creation of a social media management tool is also known for practicing radical transparency. The company shares information about their sales numbers, salaries, and revenue use, not just to their employees—but the entire world. This strategic move is bold, but it reinforces Buffer's brand as being honest, helpful, and straightforward.

Source: [Buffer.com](#) / About

How Does Your Company Measure Up?

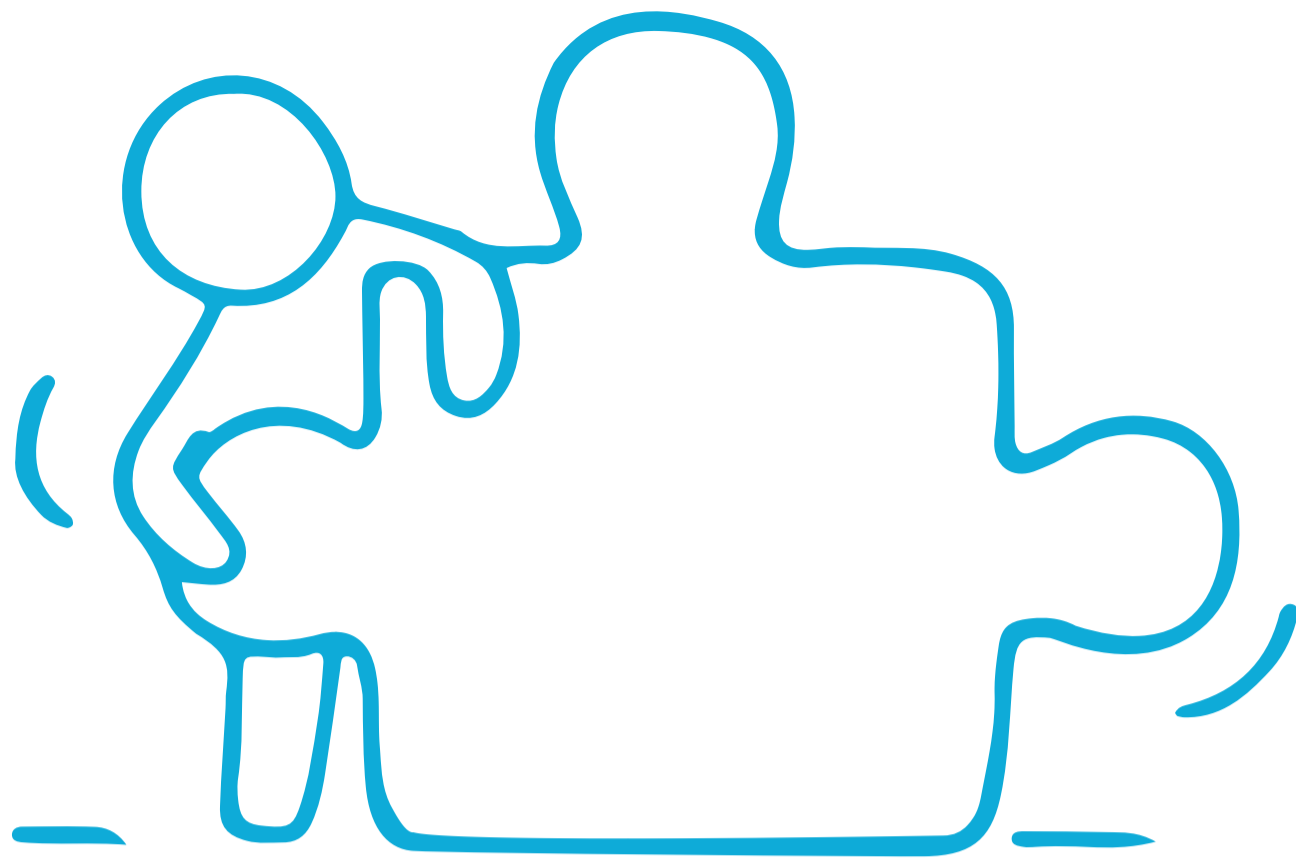
- Does your organization seek the opinions of employees and demonstrate a sincere desire to listen?
- Do you consistently share information back with your people about your company mission, vision and goals?
- Do you provide a level of transparency that makes employees feel deeply connected to the business and a partner in the success?
- Do your leaders actively seek the unique perspectives and opinions of your employees – even when they are different from their own?
- Do your employees feel comfortable sharing information, ideas, and concerns with their leaders?

“Employees have pointed to company transparency as the number one factor leading to workplace happiness.”



WHAT WE'VE SEEN FIRST-HAND

A manager sent a personalized co-video message to every person in their market who had made a positive impact on their goal—beyond just her direct reports or her department. She also made personal calls to each employee in the market at least twice over the last 60 days to give them encouragement or just lend a listening ear.



Take Action

Step 1

Consider how you can improve two-way communication on your team. Your goal should be to increase information sharing in both directions – from them to you, and from you to them. Recognize that people are more engaged and invested in their work when they feel as though they have all of the information they need.

Is there a way for you to further increase transparency and provide everyone with a better understanding of your vision and where they are in comparison?

Step 2

Also, think about how you can demonstrate that you value their ideas and opinions. You may want to seek their input and for their thoughts more often. You may also decide to make an effort to be better at active listening. Little things like putting your phone on silent, turning off your computer screen, and taking notes while people talk can make a big impact.

Step 3

The most effective way to increase transparency and trust in your organization is to begin scheduling a bi-annual Townhall meeting (often called an “Ask me **anything** meeting.”) This Townhall should include every employee in the organization regardless of their position.

You will want to start by explaining why you have planned a Townhall meeting (to increase transparency, happiness, and employee engagement) and reinforce that you will have an open forum with an “ask me anything” theme. Plan to open the floor to questions and respond to every question asked, but also provide a means for people to submit questions anonymously in advance if they prefer. An “ask me anything” style meeting is a great way to increase the information flow in your organization, better understand how your people are feeling, address issues before they become deeper problems, and ensure you are providing your employees with a clear understanding of your mission, vision, and goals.

4th Floor: Earned Trust

Going up! Highly engaged employees describe their company as authentic because they are who they say they are. They live their core values, rewarding those who demonstrate them and not tolerating those who don't.

It's no secret that when your employees are engaged, they are emotionally committed and willing to give their best at work. That's because engaged employees feel as though they have a stake in the game and a sense of purpose which makes them willing to give it everything they've got to achieve success.

Employee engagement has a major impact on business success, proving to reduce turnover, increase performance, and retain key customers.

The Power of Earned Trust

Let's take a deep dive into the final factor that the best company cultures have in common, Earned Trust. You will want to consider how your organization rates right now, and how you can improve engagement on your own team in the future.

If you talk to people who are highly engaged at work and ask them about their leaders and their company culture, you will likely hear them use words like “authentic,” “legit,” or “genuine.” That is because companies with strong cultures and engaged employees *are* who they say they *are*.

Trust is fundamental to high performance in a team and high engagement in an organization. We have found that companies with strong cultures of integrity develop trust in the following ways:

1. Live their **core values** every day. Especially when times are tough.
2. Do the **right** thing because it's the right thing to do – not just as a matter of marketing but as an uncompromising stance taken by all leaders.
3. **Communicate** their commitment to their people through both words and actions.
4. Show **character** by holding themselves and others accountable to what the company stands for.
5. Encourage **candor** and consistently show appreciate for honest, accurate input.



“All the energy you invest in them today will still be paying you dividends ten years from now.”

A recent [Gallup poll](#) shows that only 17% of people rated the honesty and integrity of their company executives as either “high” or “very high.” That lack of trust leads to a lack of employee engagement.

Company Example: Airbnb

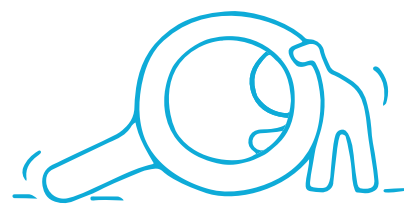
For years, Airbnb employees remarked that it made a huge impression during their first week to hear live, directly from the general counsel of the company, about ethics. “No global movement springs from individuals,” explains Brian Chesky, Airbnb’s CEO. “It takes an entire team united behind something big. Together, we work hard, we laugh a lot, we brainstorm nonstop, we use hundreds of Post-Its a week, and we give the best high-fives in town. Integrity, honesty—those aren’t just core values. Those are values that everyone should have.”

Source: Culture Amp | Blog | How Airbnb is building its culture through belonging

How Does Your Company Measure Up?

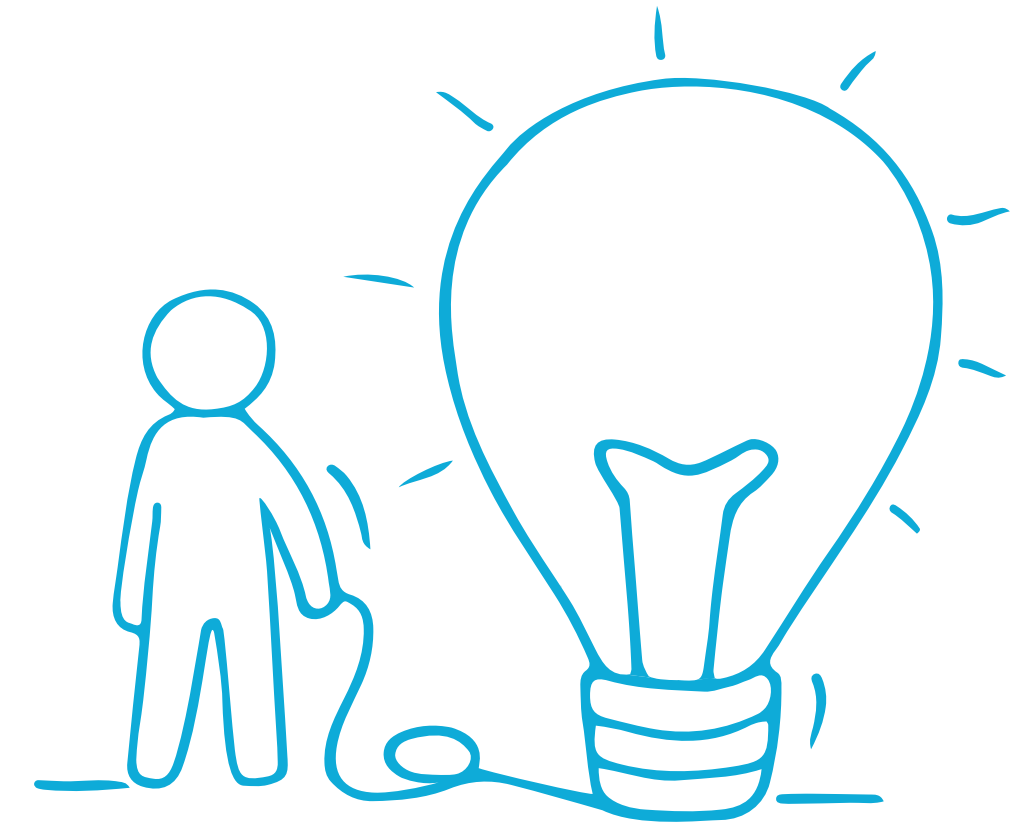
- Does the description of your company on your website and in your sales collateral match how your employees would describe their experience there?
- When an employee does not behave in a way that aligns with your core values, is that dealt with immediately?
- Do your leaders put the needs of their team ahead of their own?
- Do your managers lead by example, demonstrating the behaviors they expect from others every day?
- Do you have a “speak up” culture in which your employees feel comfortable sharing their opinions and concerns?

“Integrity, honesty—those aren’t just core values. Those are values that everyone should have.”



WHAT WE’VE SEEN FIRST-HAND

A manager spearheads their new Culture Committee and has helped everyone in the organization to live their core values every day. She set up a system for people to share “high fives” online to recognize coworkers that has gone the extra mile and upheld their core values. Her committee then highlights all of the high fives in the “First Friday Email” they send out each month. To add a little more fun, she explained, “Everyone who receives a High Five gets to select a little something out of the High Five Prize Bag.”



Take Action

Step 1

Trust is fundamental to high performance on a team and high engagement in an organization.

When there is a gap between an organization’s espoused values (who they say they are) and their real-life-day-to-day actions (who they really are), mistrust develops, and performance suffers. This is the time to repair any cracks that have formed in your foundation of trust or work to ensure you prevent them from happening in the future.

Step 2

Ensure you are living your core values every day (especially when times are tough). For example, if your company values Responsiveness and it often takes you 48 hours to reply to an email, that’s a problem. Think about each of your company’s core values and how you can live them each day.

Also make a commitment to reinforce your core values by recognizing those behaviors in others. You can give virtual ‘high fives’ on a private company site or post something on a physical board if you share a central office.

Remember that as an organization, you are what you tolerate. So, it’s important that you also hold others accountable to living up to your values and deal with issues that arise right away. As a leader, you show character by holding yourself and others accountable to what the company stands for.

Step 3

Another action you can take is to challenge yourself to always do the right thing because it’s the right thing to do (and not for any other reason). Often that means taking the tougher or the less popular road, so it’s rarely easy. But people recognize insincerity right away, and they know a marketing ploy when they see one. If your leaders consistently take an uncompromising stance on doing the right thing, your people will spot that too. Take a moment to ask yourself, would your employees say you always do the right thing?

- You also earn trust with others when you communicate and demonstrate your commitment to them using both words and actions.
- Tell your people they are important to you and then back that up by showing them.
- That means doing things like scheduling one-on-one time with them, showing up to those meetings on time, and investing in them because they matter.
- Look for opportunities to share meaningful feedback with those you manage and spend time teaching them or helping them grow.
- Also, encourage candor on your team, which will demonstrate your appreciation for honesty and accurate input.

Conclusion

Consider whether one or more of these engagement elevators needs to go “up” in your company. When your employees are engaged, they are emotionally committed and willing to give their best at work. Employee engagement has a major impact on business success, proving to reduce turnover, increase performance, and retain key customers.



[Check out our Culture Video](#)

Ready to Up Your Culture?



[CONTACT US FOR AN APPOINTMENT](#)