

# 4 steps to launching an employee engagement program



# Getting started

The benefits of improved employee engagement are substantial: greater talent retention, increased productivity, and a better customer experience, to name a few. But once you've committed to understanding and improving employee engagement, how do you plan for and launch a successful program?

We talked to our in-house team of experts, Janelle Lopez (Director, People Team) and Jill Sonderby (Senior Program Manager, Talent Development). They shared valuable insights and best practices from their own experiences—including rolling out SurveyMonkey's own employee engagement program.

We distilled their knowledge into four steps:

**01** — Achieving alignment

**02** — Building awareness

**03** — Preparing for launch

**04** — Ongoing communication



# 01

## Achieving alignment

The first step behind a successful employee engagement program is a big one: getting an executive sponsor to champion the program with the leadership team and employees. The goal here is to build support within the entire leadership team. If this can't be achieved, the likelihood of a program failing to achieve its goals is much greater. Which brings us conveniently to our opening topic: achieving alignment.

### Setting goals for your employee engagement program

An honest, upfront discussion about what you're measuring, and what you hope the data will help you achieve, is essential. There may be some known issues driving this initiative that can help start the conversation, which will likely reveal other opportunities for improvement. Conversely, there may be positive aspects of your employee experience you're seeking to preserve. In any case, having a deep understanding of your culture is the foundation for strengthening it over time.

- *Do employees see themselves at your company in five years? Ten?*
- *Is there space for them to grow and develop their careers?*
- *Do they believe that leadership is transparent?*

### Determine how you're measuring success

Employee engagement is elastic and multifaceted, so extra care needs to be taken here. What are your ideal metrics and outcomes? Consider what might go into your overall "engagement score," as well as other KPIs such as survey participation rate and employer brand perception on sites such as GlassDoor.

### Decide how the company will respond to results

When you get the data, what will you do to act on it? Tying improvements to business outcomes can boost the appeal of an employee engagement program, while also helping to make it a strategic priority with leadership. A rewarding employee experience creates a high-performing culture that yields tangible returns, such as:

- *Higher productivity*
- *Stronger recruiting*
- *Greater profitability*
- *Increased creativity*
- *Higher retention*



## 02

### Building awareness

Participation is critical to the success of any employee engagement program. In turn, participation is built on building program awareness. This takes place through two main vehicles: general employee communications, and executive communications.

#### Employee communications

Making employees aware of your new engagement program can be accomplished in multiple ways. One of the first is to have a company-wide email and, if possible, an all-hands meeting held by your head of HR and sponsored by executives.

The agenda should address why employee engagement matters to your organization, and briefly touch on any past engagement efforts your company has made. Then, you need to introduce your workforce to what's coming. Explain your new solution and how it works. Communicate why you've chosen to invest in this solution, what it will help achieve, and what's expected of employees to help reach those goals. Be sure to stress the value that their input provides in improving the employee experience.

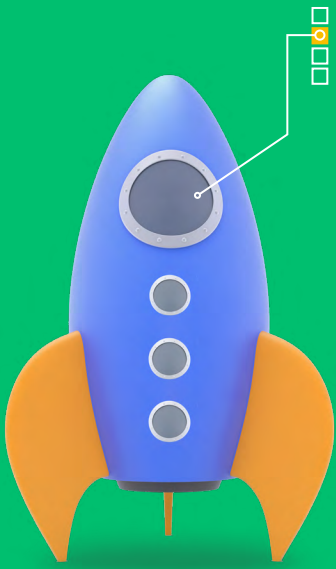
Reinforce your messaging through additional office channels you deem appropriate. TV screens, employee message boards, and chat tools are great vehicles for this.

#### Executive communications

When it comes to maintaining executive support for your program, communication is key. After getting buy-in (discussed above), be sure to provide regular updates to the executive team as the initiative takes shape.

You'll need to craft messaging for any company communications regarding your employee engagement program, so nothing is lost in translation when it's discussed.

Finally, it's important to actively involve leadership. Have them reinforce this messaging with their staff, so they can help drive the initiative from the top down. When senior leaders signal to their direct reports that this is important, it's much more likely to be strongly supported down the chain.



## 03

### Pre-launch preparation

Now that you've gotten commitment from leadership and signaled the coming changes to your company, there are several pre-launch steps that must be taken.

#### Company-wide roll-out meeting

Get the executive team and HR teams to spearhead this meeting to underscore its importance. Here's a brief rundown of things you should address.



#### *Remind everyone of the importance of having their voices heard.*

Talk about how employees' feedback will be acted upon, and how essential it is to improving the experience.



#### *Build trust by talking about confidentiality.*

This item is critical. Be sure to go into detail on how your chosen solution protects employees from reprisal. Without the promise of confidentiality, there is no trust—and trust is vital to getting the candid feedback your company needs to actually make positive changes. Explain to employees how their survey responses are confidential, how their privacy is protected, and what exactly their HR business partners can see as results come in.



#### *Introduce employees to your new solution.*

What is it? What will it help your company achieve? Give employees a quick demo so they can understand what the user experience will be like. Ideally, your new solution lets employees easily and quickly voice their opinions so they can focus on work.



#### *Talk about what's next.*

Let everyone know when the program will be launching. Also state what management's participation goal is, and consider a company reward for achieving it. Then be sure to explain what will happen as data becomes available, how HR plans to share findings, and how they'll take action.

## Manager communication

Reach out to management to reiterate the big points of the new engagement program. Let them know what it means, what they can expect during rollout, and define what their role is in supporting it.

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## All-employee announcement

This should be an executive email from the CEO, president, or founder of your organization. Reinforce the importance of the new initiative, how committed leadership is to it, the company participation goal, and how it will benefit employees and the company as a whole.

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## Company resource page for employees

Whether your company has its own intranet or some other method for hosting internal information, create an easily accessible resource page for your program. Include all the necessary steps for:

- *How to access the solution*
  - *How to respond to a survey*
  - *When they can expect to receive surveys*
  - *Who to contact with any issues*
  - *Who they can contact to learn more about opportunities to improve engagement*
  - *What's next after the survey closes—what actions can employees expect?*
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## Company resource page for managers

A resource page for managers is also key. Make sure it includes the following items:

- *What is expected of managers*
  - *How to view their team's engagement score*
  - *How to access and understand the tool's features*
  - *How to pass information to your team when senior leaders share data for your organization*
  - *How to learn more about the engagement solution you've purchased*
  - *What's next after the survey closes—what actions will be expected from managers?*
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## Manager reinforcement in 1:1s

Communicate to management that their support is essential to a successful program. Advise them that 1:1s are a perfect channel for managers to share with employees how important feedback is to the company and their future experience. Also let them know what the HR team is doing in response to feedback that's been received.



# 04

## Ongoing communication and reinforcement

Once you've launched, you need to make sure your metaphorical rocket stays in flight. Develop a plan for ongoing communication to fuel enthusiasm for your program.

### Company all-hands

Once the program has been underway for a period (one or two quarters may be sufficient depending on your data collection method) make time in your next company all-hands for an update. Restate company participation rates and goals, announce when the next survey is coming, and share early learnings.

### Leadership read-out

The HR team should have regular read-outs to the leadership team, which is made easier if your employee engagement solution tracks trended data. To supplement these, consider doing a deep analysis that highlights any profound insights on a quarterly or twice-yearly basis. You should also:

- Identify areas of focus/improvement, and review proposed action plans
- Cover other areas where opportunities exist
- Show how engagement is trending and aligning with company goals

### HR client group read-outs

Additionally, HR should share insights with each organization and team. Read-outs should cover what impact their feedback is having, any interesting insights, and how the team is thinking about addressing the data. Encourage a dialogue to brainstorm and get further buy-in on proposed actions.

### All-employee message about next steps

Employees should also be regularly updated on how the engagement initiative is progressing (a quarterly cadence is recommended). As an integral part of the process, transparency is paramount. Be sure to:

- Show company-wide results to all employees in all-hands meetings
- Explain what's being done to improve areas of focus/improvement
- Highlight the direct impact their voices have on company initiatives
- Reinforce the value of continued participation

## Conclusion

Humans are complex beings with a galaxy of needs and motivations that exist both inside and outside of the office. So it's no surprise that rolling out a successful employee engagement program requires significant effort and attention to detail.

To minimize the complexity of your program, invest in a solution that does as much of the lifting for you as possible. [SurveyMonkey Engage](#) does this in a number of ways:



Prebuilt surveys and automated deployments make administration easy



Employees have their own portal to increase their involvement



A social science-backed methodology provides a framework and common vocabulary for understanding engagement



Intuitive, human design makes surveys feel like conversations



Prebuilt analysis dashboards help you easily identify trouble spots



Surveys are short but effective, boosting participation and response quality

Interested in learning more? [Schedule a demo with our sales team today.](#)