

The Top 5 Traits of a Successful Work Culture

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONNECTED WORKPLACE



Produced in
collaboration with:



The Top 5 Traits of a Successful Work Culture

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE CONNECTED WORKPLACE

IDC PREDICTS

By the end of 2022, 70% of European organizations with highly engaged employees will have returned to pre-2020 growth trajectories, compared with only 30% of organizations with poor employee engagement programs.



2020: The Year that Exposed the Cracks in the Employee Engagement Model

The arrival of COVID-19 in early 2020 created a worldwide crisis that few could have predicted. The pandemic has profoundly transformed how enterprises operate and how employees work, and impacted the environment that nurtures employee engagement. While in the past, the workplace was anchored to a close-knit group of employees, often revolving around work life in their employer's physical facility, today that paradigm is shifting.

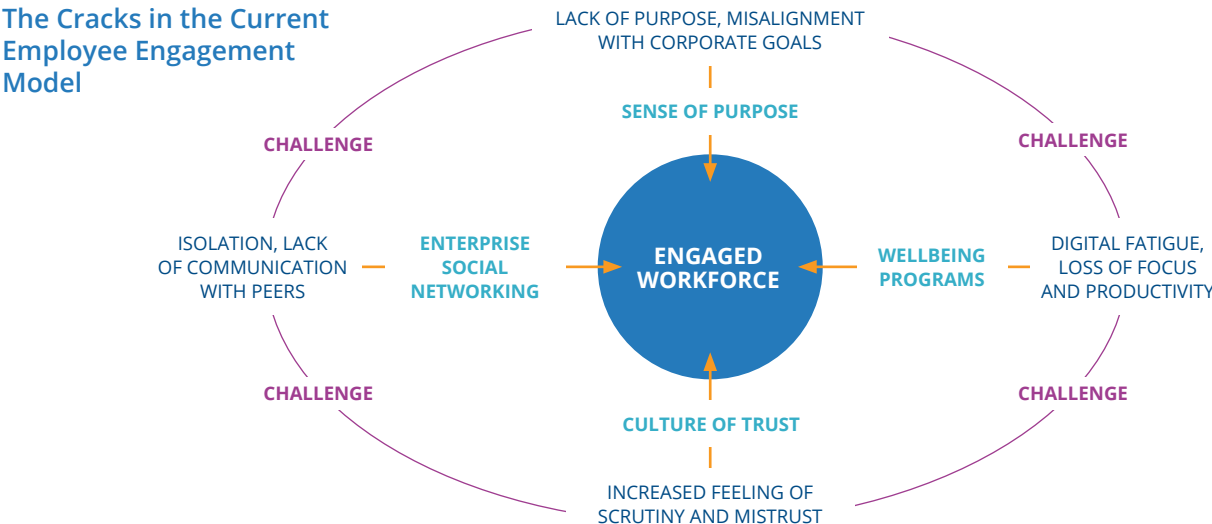
Front line workers, particularly those without an email account, have also been impacted. Their role in customer support has been vital during the crisis, yet many feel disconnected from their organizations.

As with other dramatic shifts that have occurred recently, underlying changes started much earlier but accelerated during the pandemic. IDC identifies the following:

- **Workplace transformation.** Hybrid and virtual workplaces are redefining trust and employee empowerment and bonding. According to IDC research, one in three companies interviewed in our surveys claimed that their workforce will primarily work from home post-vaccine.
- **War for talent.** IDC estimates that the skills gap generated a revenue loss of €29 billion in 2020 in Europe due to poor service quality, and delayed projects. The war for new talent means the needs of newer generations come into focus.
- **Agile organizations.** Companies are embracing flatter organizations and more agile and collaborative practices across business functions and geographies.

The current model of employee engagement was developed in the early 21st century and was driven by cost efficiency and process optimization. But the crisis has exposed the cracks in this model and shown that it is no longer fit for purpose (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

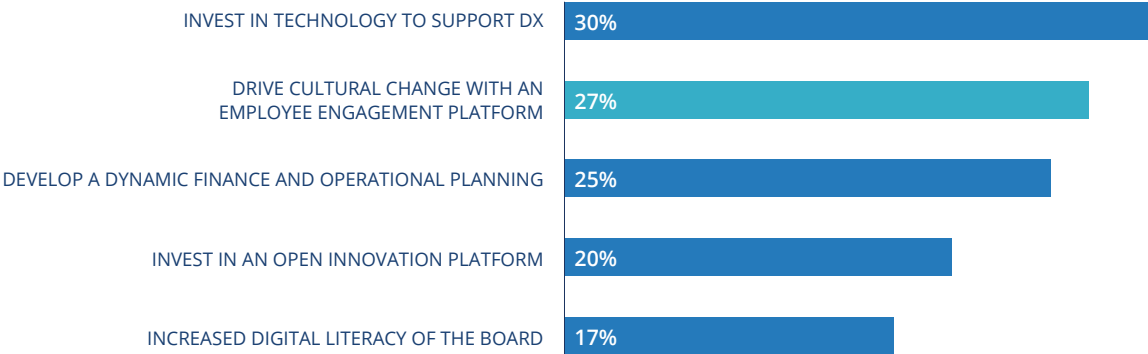


Source: IDC 2021

Getting employee engagement right is a strategic imperative and a top issue in the board agenda. According to a recent IDC survey of 530 decision makers, “driving cultural change with an employee engagement platform” will be prioritized by CEOs to drive the next phase of digital transformation in 2021 (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2

Initiatives Prioritized by CEOs to Drive Digital Transformation (DX) in 2021



Source: European IT Buyer Sentiment Survey — Wave 13 – October 2020, n=530

In essence, employee engagement is more than a matter of caring for your employees, it is a matter of allowing the business to survive.

Employees will remember how they were treated during these crises, and organizations that committed to investing in employee engagement will be rewarded with increased resilience through worker commitment and loyalty — a necessity in a time of uncertainty and rapid change.

“
Employees will remember how they were treated during these crises, and organizations that committed to investing in employee engagement will be rewarded.”

The Secret Sauce for a Successful Employee Engagement Model

The cultural shift required to increase employee engagement to healthy levels cannot be built overnight. There will be many “unknown unknowns” as companies experiment with new working practices. So, an open and learning mindset will be vital for success.

Successful models will vary from company to company, but the ingredients needed to create the “fertile environment” that nurtures employee engagement do not vary. In interviews with the Chief Human Resource Officers (CHROs) of leading companies, IDC identified the following ingredients that form the secret sauce for employee engagement (Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

The Secret Sauce to Nurture Employee Engagement



Source: IDC, 2021

These ingredients fulfil different individual needs: while some nourish daily needs, others satisfy long-term goals and aspirations.

- Daily, employees need regular and honest communication with their managers, to be shown trust in their skills and strengths, empathy, and support on both the good and bad days, and the ability to work with a team they truly respect.
- Long-term, employees need connection, a sense of belonging and purpose. Their work has to be meaningful (i.e., they must feel empowered to contribute and make an impact). And they need to trust their leaders as they navigate an uncertain world.

How to Build Employee Engagement in Company Culture

C-Level executives have made employee engagement integral to business strategies by emphasizing metrics focused on employee satisfaction, well-being, and experience as a top priority for the HR function in 2021–2022 (Figure 4).

These metrics are a testament to the fact that employee engagement is foundational to organizations’ recovery and resilience during difficult times.

FIGURE 4

Top HR Metrics to be Introduced in 2021, According to C-Level Executives



Source: European IT Buyer Sentiment Survey — Wave 13 - October 2020, n=530

IDC believes that a successful business culture with employee engagement at the heart meets the following traits:

- Trust and empowerment
- Meaning and connection to purpose
- Diversity and inclusion
- Well-being
- Digital enablement

To illustrate these cultural traits, we have created a fictional example of a company called Mobu, a successful cosmetic retail firm. Mobu was founded in 2004 and has about 3,700 employees across Europe. While its sales are primarily online, the company has a fleet of sales representatives distributed across major shopping malls in the region.

Trust and Empowerment

Though Mobu has country offices across Europe, it mainly operates a virtual workplace, so it does not spend lavishly on real estate and amenities for workers. Employees primarily experience the company through their tools and technology; their experience is digitized.

Mobu recognizes the importance of employing local people in each country, but its teams are distributed across national geographies. This opens up broader talent pools and enables more diverse teams to work better together. It also means more opportunities and the potential for a more level playing field across the workforce.

In 2009, after the last financial crisis, Mobu introduced a lean and dynamic organization. This flat structure has given employees a strong sense of autonomy, mastery, and purpose. From sales reps to marketing managers, employees are empowered to make decisions and feel that they're making an impact on the overall success of the company.

Constructive feedback and clear guidance on how Mobu employees can achieve their goals (sales targets, customer satisfaction, etc.) is essential for a culture of trust and empowerment.

Moreover, Mobu employees enjoy a flexible schedule and don't conform to the traditional nine-to-five model. This flexibility is crucial for work-life balance, particularly for those with young families. Employees are trusted and there is no monitoring of their working hours.

Employee trust is one of the lessons learnt during the pandemic. IDC surveys show that about 1 in 4 European companies deployed monitoring tools at the peak of the pandemic in 2020, just to reassure an overwhelming majority of managers who consequently agreed that "yes, despite initial reservations, I trust my employees."

Meaning and Connection with Purpose

Bringing employees together and connecting them to a higher purpose is motivating and energizing and helps organizations to deliver their North Star. When everyone is clear about core business goals, it brings alignment into the organization. This, in turn, makes work meaningful and builds employee confidence and resilience.

Mobu employees take pride in their company and are actively engaged in its direction. The company's lifeblood flows through digital channels, and its headquarters are its collaboration tool. There is a frequent and transparent flow of communication, both top-down and bottom-up, delivering cohesion and organizational alignment.

Everyone at Mobu has a voice and feels “psychologically safe” for an open dialogue. Employees can ask questions in their all-hands videos, sales agents share customer feedback to marketing executives in discussion groups, and teams find the #watercooler channel to share weekend experiences.

This applies to all employees, from the CEO to sales assistants, and the leadership team make themselves available and come across as approachable, human, and real.

Employee recognition is a constant practice at Mobu. Valuing employees' talents and contribution to the company, and doing so openly, strengthens their connection and engagement. Celebrating wins, big or small, has a significant impact on employee morale and engagement.



Everyone at Mobu has a voice and feels “psychologically safe” for an open dialogue.

A recent IDC survey found that a majority of organizations (62%) intend to deploy significantly more frequent employee touch points well past the pandemic. Following up on employee feedback is always important, but it is even more critical in times of uncertainty. Employees need greater care and extensive communication to unite the workforce around the organization's culture and values.

Diversity and Inclusion

There is an African proverb that says *“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”* This is true to Mobu's cultural values.

The correlation between diversity and innovation has been studied numerous times, empirically tested, and corroborated. A team composed of employees with varying expertise, skills, and interests (as well as gender, age, and nationality) is likely to be more innovative and creative than homogenous siloed teams.

The IDC Employee Experience Index shows there is a strong correlation between balanced diversity and strong employee engagement programs — companies with a mature strategy for employee engagement are 40 times more likely to succeed in bringing diversity and inclusion. It also shows that these factors cross-fertilize — strong diversity also brings strong employee engagement.

For Mobu, creating a diverse culture is crucial for market success. The executive team acknowledged since the company's conception that maximizing diverse skills, backgrounds, and expertise across multiple areas in the organization is critical for innovation and growth, and that it brought a stronger engagement to the various groups, virtual networks, and teams across the organization.

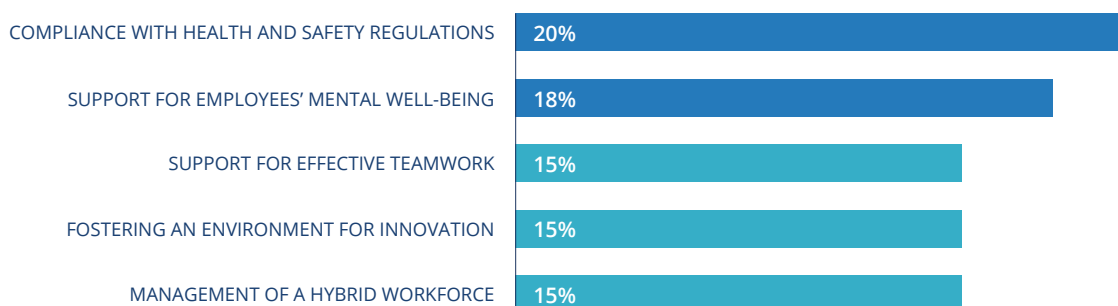
Mobu has understood the fundamentals of inclusion and diversity in its employee engagement programs — communications, employee listening, continuous training, well-being and safety — but found that this was not sufficient. The company discovered that a culture of inclusion had to be built around the language it used in its internal and external communications, and set out on a quest to determine how the employer brand was built, how employment interviews were conducted, and how career development plans were structured. Gradually it built awareness and continuous training around the use of “inclusive language” — i.e., how expressions, pictures, messages, and texts can be used to (at first) avoid the exclusion of certain groups and then gradually include all groups targeted for recruitment or career development. Mobu realized that this related to all aspects of training, recruitment, and career development, and managed to improve the employer brand enough to greatly improve diversity in new applications, and also in the fairness of outcomes in promotions.

Well-being

Well-being has become a major concern and board-level issue during the pandemic. IDC research shows that as new working models emerge from the current crisis, business leaders are finding it difficult to comply with health and safety regulations and support employees' well-being (Figure 5).

FIGURE 5

Organizational Challenges Resulting from New Working Models



Source: European IT Buyer Sentiment Survey — Wave 14 – November 2020, n=430

Well-being and employee engagement are deeply connected. [The World Economic Forum](#) defines well-being as “a state of being that is shaped by engagement and other workplace factors as much as by physical and psychological health.”

Mobu is a healthy organization, based on a simple but core principle in its corporate culture: “when employees feel cared for, they in return care about their company.” This caring culture has had a significant impact on employee engagement and resilience during critical times, and most recently during the pandemic.

Mobu has a comprehensive well-being program that was introduced well before the pandemic. It includes fitness, mental health coaching/counselling, and financial planning assistance. The company knows that these initiatives, despite their cost, are paying off. For example, it is less affected by leaves of absence and presenteeism (going to work when you are ill) than its peers.

Mobu’s well-being program is constantly evolving, adapting to different circumstances, and tailored to individual needs. Pulse checks of employees with questions such as “how are you feeling today?” help to personalize targeted programs.

Commitment from the top is necessary. Mobu executives have proactively removed mental-health stigmas across their organization, and most importantly they are leading by example.

Digitally enabled

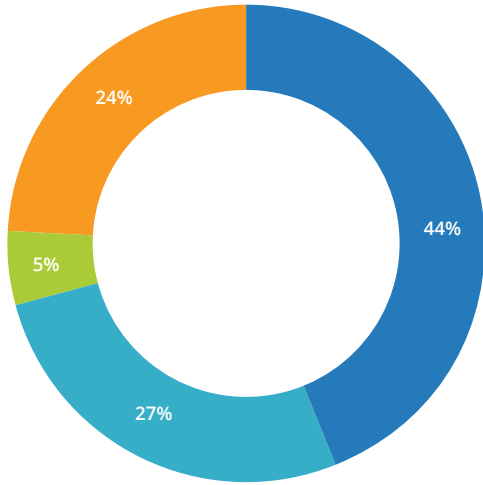
Digital enterprises are anchored on a “digital first” culture, and employee engagement platforms are vital to sustain and develop the right company values and principles.

IDC research shows that employee and workforce engagement technologies are areas of increased spend, despite tighter IT budgets. In fact, 44% of organizations worldwide plan to increase spending on these technologies (Figure 6)

FIGURE 6

Intentions Regarding Spending on Employee Engagement Platforms

- INCREASED DEMAND
- DEMAND STAYS THE SAME
- TOO SOON TO TELL
- DECREASED DEMAND



Source: Worldwide IT Buyer Sentiment Survey — Wave 2 – April 2020, n=582

Furthermore, a recent IDC survey shows that employee engagement platforms are ranked as top 10 technologies for increased spending, well above other solutions such as cloud, collaboration, or secure connectivity.

Mobu's employee engagement platform is the backbone of its company culture, connecting and engaging a dynamic and geographically disperse workforce. The following are some of its core functionalities:

- It is secure and enterprise grade but has a consumer (or frictionless) experience.
- The platform connects the organization top-down and bottom-up via newsfeeds, messaging, and video.
- Employees are connected with relevant personalized content and channels of communication, from discussion groups to direct messages to a colleague.
- It supports knowledge sharing, so that employees can easily share and find information.
- Sales reps without an email account are given access codes to connect so that they can engage with other colleagues.
- Employee profiles are visible for accountability and connection to purpose.
- The platform has built-in integrations with third-party tools — from project management to productivity tools.
- It can monitor, measure, and drive engagement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The role of the CHRO has been significantly elevated during the crisis, with a seat at the C-Suite table. The ability of the CHRO to influence decisions is undeniable given the importance of employee engagement to organizations' recovery and resilience during difficult times.

In a post-vaccine era, employee engagement will continue to be a crucial indicator of the health of an organization, differentiating a good from a bad employer. In fact, employee advocacy and business branding will be more effective than salary and other benefits for talent attraction and retention. Hence the importance for CHROs to team up with the other C-Level executives for the rollout of successful programs.

Employee engagement platforms are the enabler of a successful culture. So, the choice of a trusted IT partner meeting the following criteria is crucial for a great start:

- Expertise in enabling cultural change with technology by supporting best of breed collaboration and communication tools.
- Deep understanding of the intricacies of employee engagement; i.e., what works and what doesn't in a hybrid working environment and across office and deskless workers.
- A sound business acumen in solution approach, able to connect technology investments with business outcomes, and across different industries.

Those companies that feel that cultural change doesn't affect them risk their own existence. IDC research shows that the main obstacle in digital transformation is not financial or technological but fundamentally cultural. We are living in a time when "culture eats strategy for breakfast," and those companies that invest in employee engagement and culture today will be the winners of tomorrow.

About Crayon

Headquartered in Oslo, Norway, with more than 2000 employees in over 50 offices in 35 countries, Crayon operates a global, customer-first and vendor-agnostic IT consultancy. Crayon helps clients select the best solutions for their business needs and budget to thrive and innovate with software, cloud, data, and AI.

Crayon delivers 24/7 managed services and advisory through step-by-step frameworks based on industry standards and best-practice methodologies to:

- Right size your IT estate for a cloud future
- Optimize your hybrid and multicloud environment
- Operate a secure and managed modern workplace
- Innovate with a scalable data platform, AI and IoT

[Visit crayon.com](https://www.crayon.com)





About IDC UK

5th Floor, Ealing Cross,
85 Uxbridge Road
London
W5 5TH, United Kingdom
44.208.987.7100

[Twitter: @IDC](#)
blogs.idc.com
www.idc.com

Copyright and Restrictions:

Any IDC information or reference to IDC that is to be used in advertising, press releases, or promotional materials requires prior written approval from IDC. For permission requests contact the Custom Solutions information line at 508-988-7610 or permissions@idc.com. Translation and/or localization of this document require an additional license from IDC.

[For more information on IDC](#)

[For more information on IDC Custom Solutions](#)

Global Headquarters:

5 Speen Street Framingham, MA 01701 USA P.508.872.8200 F.508.935.4015 [idc.com](https://www.idc.com)

Copyright 2021 IDC. Reproduction is forbidden unless authorized. All rights reserved.

