

Comfortable Being Myself at Work

Understanding the Issue

To be 100% comfortable in any situation, one must be able to be themselves. It can be exhausting to display different façades, in and outside the office.

In an ideal world, everyone should always feel comfortable being themselves, which is why it is crucial that work environments provide a space of equality to do so.

If everyone is acting in a professional manner, there is no reason why people can't be themselves.

This theme helps identify many of the different levels of diversity within a company's culture and compliments the theme, Commitment to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

The main difference between them is one measures how the organization deals with equality and diversity while the other measures to what degree the organization makes employees feel comfortable in the workplace environment.

Recommended Action Items

Consider implementing the following action items as part of your personalized strategy to improve the level of employee engagement within your team.

1 Diversity & Inclusion Education

It is never too late to foster a healthy culture within your team (or an organization). Open the lines of communication to introduce, explain and discuss the importance of equity, diversity and inclusion. Team meetings and training sessions are recommended actions to begin this discussion.

2 Team Building Exercises

Team building exercises lead to better teamwork and stronger work relationships. As organizations evolve & grow it's vital to help teammates get to know each other both personally & professionally. Ensure these exercises are well planned and have the purpose to maximize building relationships.

3 Social Gatherings Out of the Office

Find ways to develop relationships and to celebrate work that has been accomplished. Social interactions help build a sense of belonging within the workplace as well as a sense of community and culture within a team. Some social activities to consider are get-togethers after work, zoom games, sports activities and escape rooms.

4 Consistent Messaging

It is important that everyone is on the same page when it comes to an inclusive culture of equity, diversity and inclusion. Consider some corporate training so that your entire team participates in training and learns how to incorporate the principles of EDI into their everyday activities. These efforts also ensure that all employees have the necessary platform to communicate together.

Why is this Important?

Being comfortable with oneself within the work environment leads to more self-satisfaction. Having to put up walls and filters can be difficult especially if it is with those you work for.

It is crucial for organizations to help foster a sense of teamwork with everybody's support. Work environments must be a place free of judgement, open to ideas and is a safe inclusionary place.

Factors that Influence

- + Geography of the organization
- + Average age of management
- + Industry of the organization
- + Honesty & willingness to share feedback from co-workers

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Equity, Diversity & Inclusion

Understanding the Issue

This theme focuses on employees' perceptions of how well their organization values Equity, Diversity & Inclusion.

Cultural backgrounds, personal styles and lifestyles are all components of diversity that organizations should value and accept within their workforce.

The results of this theme give key insights into how positive the culture of the organization is. There is a direct relationship between having a welcoming workplace and maintaining employees' work-life balance.

Recommended Action Items

Consider implementing the following action items as part of your personalized strategy to improve the level of employee engagement within your team.

- 1 Review your workforce and set targets**
Collect and analyze demographic data for your organization, including the leadership team, and set realistic benchmarks and metrics for your EDI goals. Analysis and goal-setting should address talent acquisition, retention, and promotions.
- 2 Revisit the hiring process**
Look beyond your current pipeline and strategies for recruitment for opportunities to attract new candidates. Target underrepresented groups by adding new avenues for recruitment through professional organizations, schools, and online communities. Also, carefully review job postings to avoid gendered, ageist, or other implicitly biased language and create a diverse hiring committee.
- 3 Intentionally talk about DEI**
Implicit bias is natural but can hurt EDI efforts when left unchecked. Make EDI top of mind by explicitly committing to it, not only in the onboarding process, but also through ongoing training and initiatives. Ensure time is committed to sharing updates in regular meetings and communication that highlight EDI related targets and progress.
- 4 Foster open communication and a culture of speaking up**
Encourage employees to share thoughts and concerns by providing a variety of channels, from leadership roundtables to anonymous feedback mechanisms. Let employees know when feedback has been received and that it is taken seriously. Whenever possible, share results and updates from team suggestions.

Why is this Important?

Employees are the driving force behind an organization, and it is essential they feel fairly valued and recognized regardless of their background. An important part of organizational culture is an explicitly inclusive and supportive environment that begins at the top.

When employees feel welcome and comfortable their performance and commitment improve. In addition, diverse teams often outperform homogenous teams in terms of problem-solving and creativity.

Factors that Influence

- + Demographics of local population and/or industry
- + Demographic differences between workforce and sr. management

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Diverse Backgrounds of Employees

Understanding the Issue

This theme focuses on whether the organization is doing enough to hire, develop and retain employees with diverse backgrounds.

Diversity can mean different things to different people - that is why it is best to understand what diversity and inclusion means to the organization.

Whether it relates to ethnicity, gender, and/or sexual orientation, everybody deserves to be respected, for who they are, both within and outside the workplace.

This topic correlates with:

- *Commitment to equality, diversity & inclusion*

This theme drills down on whether management follows these principles hiring employees with diverse backgrounds and investing in them to have successful careers.

Recommended Action Items

Consider implementing the following action items as part of your personalized strategy to improve the level of employee engagement within your team.

1 Develop a Comprehensive Diversity & Inclusion Plan

It is important to have a clear outline and plan on what Equity, Diversity & Inclusion means to your department/organization. Consider an EDI Survey to gain feedback from staff to ensure everyone's voice is represented and heard. Once the plan is set, ensure these values are incorporated into everyday operations.

2 Communicate Needs Clearly

When new job opportunities are available, ensure that both the posting and role requirements are described/promoted to attract a diverse candidate base. For potential applicants to become interested in job postings, they need to see something that catches their eye and attention. A simple phrase, "Candidates must have a strong commitment to workplace Equity, Diversity & Inclusion" can make all the difference!

3 The Myth of Culture Fit

In most organizations, a perceived culture fit is an important attribute for a potential applicant. The notion that one needs to feel like they can 'hang out' with an applicant is overrated. Many applicants are rejected for this very reason. The aim should be on developing a diverse workforce and culture.

4 Plan for Career Development

Career development is a crucial in retaining a highly motivated and diverse workforce. Discuss team members' career paths and personal goals, at all levels of the organization. Review their development periodically and provide helpful updates on their progress. Address gaps in skills by providing the required training and development.

Why is this Important?

Having a workforce that is both skilled and consistent is the ultimate key to any organization's future success.

A team that is diverse, consisting of individuals with different backgrounds, creates an enriched and engaged corporate culture.

Employees who are accepted for being themselves, regardless of their background, tend to be happier and more engaged in the workplace than those who are not made to feel comfortable.

By establishing a strong reputation for diversity and inclusion, organizations can become a magnet to attract employees from a larger pool of candidates to form a diverse, skilled workforce.

Factors that Influence

- + Location of the organization
- + Views of upper management
- + Office vs remote workers
- + Size of organization

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Mental Health & Wellness Support

Understanding the Issue

This theme examines employees' comfort levels and sentiments regarding work culture and systems that support employee mental health and well-being. This includes how trustworthy employees feel their managers and coworkers are.

Rather than identify any one issue, this score reflects general employee sentiments on this theme. As such, results can contrast with those on relationships or those that measure stress levels, such as:

My department has enough employees to handle our workload; and

My manager is available when I have questions or need help.

Factors that Influence

- + Involvement with employees
- + Open lines of communication
- + Existing policies that deal with wellness

Recommended Action Items

Consider implementing the following action items as part of your personalized strategy to improve the level of employee engagement within your team.

1 Positive Working Relationships

It is important that managers know the members of their team well, both professionally and on a personal level. This does not mean that you need to be friends with each employee. The goal is to ensure everyone feels they are respected and are treated fairly. A culture of openness helps employees and reduces stigmas related to mental health.

2 Acknowledge good work

It is important that managers provide positive feedback and acknowledge employee/team efforts and achievements. This helps build a stronger sense of confidence among employees and encourages more active involvement in ongoing and future tasks.

3 Emotional Resilience

Managers' behaviors can have a significant impact on their teams, especially during challenging times. It is very important for managers to be emotionally resilient and to guide their teams in a calm and productive manner.

4 Promote Health & Wellness

Consider hosting seminars or workshops that address mental health and stress management techniques. Reinforce healthy behaviors by providing incentives and make mental health self-assessment tools available for all employees. These strategies help demonstrate that the organization believes in taking mental health and wellness seriously.

Why is this Important?

The topic of mental health and wellness is an important indicator of how well employees feel supported at work. Even with no formal policies in place, managers and coworkers can work to create a culture that provides understanding and support for others, without stigma.

Effective managers can cultivate an environment that gives employees the comfort they need to be open about their wellbeing.

Environments that ignore employees or are openly hostile to mental wellbeing, lead to higher levels of stress and staff turnover.

Creating a positive workspace can help ensure that everyone can be their best selves which then manifests into higher employee satisfaction.

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Commitment to Ethical Business

Understanding the Issue

This theme examines employee perceptions on company ethics and business practices in the larger community. It helps identify how respectable the company's reputation is to individuals within the organization.

This score does not identify any one issue but rather reflect employees' general sentiments on this topic. As such, results can contrast with various topics such as: **Mental Health & Wellness**, **Committed to Equality**, **Diversity & Inclusion**.

Factors that Influence

- + Open Communication
- + Clear Mission and Vision
- + Community Outreach Policy

Recommended Action Items

Consider implementing the following action items as part of your personalized strategy to improve the level of employee engagement within your team.

1 Engage Team Leaders & Middle Managers

Communicate important messages to Team Leaders & Managers so they are equipped to discuss them with their teams. Ensure all employees have a role model so that ethical behavior becomes the norm.

2 Multiple Channels for Communication

Ensure employees have multiple avenues to communicate their issues. If their immediate manager is not engaging in ethical behavior, employees should have alternate options to voice their concerns (such as HR, Senior Leaders, Flex's 'Open Door' platform).

3 Create a Framework to Develop an Identity

Corporate identity is about internal activities that shape perception. Senior leaders should share their vision of how certain desired behaviors align with the high-level goals of the company. Sharing anecdotes of how good behavior leads to success is useful in developing a consistent identity.

4 Ensure Employees are Heard

When employees provide feedback on important ethical improvements, respond in a timely manner to indicate when and how follow up actions will take place. Thank all employees for their input. If a particular point that was raised won't be addressed, it is imperative to offer an explanation as to why it cannot be pursued.

Why is this Important?

A company's reputation helps attract top talent. Ethical businesses generally have employees who believe in their organization's mission and vision. Even when there are no formal policies in place, managers & coworkers can work to create a culture that supports the community.

Effective leaders communicate about charitable events the company supports and are open and transparent about past donations.

Principled organizations encourage community outreach by making employees aware of causes supporting their interests.

This demeanor also offers insight into the company's genuine interest in charitable endeavors and that they focus on more than just making profits. These initiatives improve workplace morale and public relations which can result in the company acquiring new customers who support the same good deeds.

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