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Simple Performance Management Practices that Drive Up Employee Engagement

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The following is a guest post by Sean Conrad. Sean is a Senior Product Analyst at Halogen Software, one of the leading providers of performance appraisal software.

Most of us are familiar with Gallup's employee engagement research and the twelve statements they use to measure it.

When I look at the list, it strikes me that there are some basic employee performance management practices that, if done well, address most of these needs. They include:

- Giving employees meaningful feedback on a regular basis.
 - Being clear about goals and helping employees see how their work matters to the organization.
 - Recognizing and rewarding employees fairly.
 - Giving employees opportunities for growth and development.

Given their importance and impact, we'd do well as managers to give them our time and attention.

Give Employees Meaningful Feedback on an Ongoing Basis

Research consistently tells that employees want meaningful, ongoing feedback. But many of us struggle to make it part of our work culture. Here are some things that can help:

Increase the frequency of your performance appraisals

Instead of just doing annual performance appraisals, conduct quarterly mini reviews. This helps to give managers and employees a regularly committed interval for dialogue and feedback.

Gather feedback from others

Feedback from multiple sources is broader and more objective, and helps the manager and employee get a more accurate view of their performance. You can keep it simple, and just request feedback from another employee or manager who works with the employee, or conduct more formal 360 degree assessments.

Keep ongoing notes on performance

Keeping and sharing notes on performance year-round helps to better document performance, opens up the dialogue between a manager and an employee, and makes writing performance appraisal faster and easier. Highlights, challenges and disconnects that might not otherwise be discovered until the annual performance appraisal meeting can be shared and explored in a timely way.

Define Clear Goals and Link Them to Organizational Goals

Employees need to clearly know what is expected of them, and understand how their work contributes to the organization's mission and success.

SMART goals are broadly recognized as the most effective way to write clear goals. Specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals let employees know what is expected of them, how success will be

measured, and when they must complete work.

But we should also give employees a context for their work by linking their goals to higher-level organizational goals, so they understand how they're contributing to organizational goals.

Recognize and Reward Your Employees Fairly and Consistently

Recognition and rewards should be frequent and come in many forms. Since we're all motivated by different things, it's important to know what your employees value, so you can reward them effectively. But all programs should be tied to employee performance. And your employees should know the metrics used as measurement.

Provide Opportunities for Growth and Development

Employees need to feel as though they have a future with an organization, and a career path that helps them further develop their knowledge, skills and abilities. Make sure you provide things like formal training, challenging work assignments, mentoring programs, etc.

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