A Quick Guide to

Employee Engagement Drivers and Self-Reflection Questions

What are the employee engagement drivers?

Employee engagement drivers are specific conditions that create engagement. Improving these conditions will create a higher level of engagement which leads to increased recruitment and retention, increased job performance, and employees going above and beyond for the good of their colleagues and the organization.

Ten employee engagement drivers

1. **Clear and Promising Direction:** Ensure that staff and faculty understand how their work is connected to the goals of the department, college, campus, and University.

2. **Commitment to Excellence:** Set and encourage high expectations for the quality of work, including demonstrating a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

3. **Confidence in Leaders:** Communicate openly and honestly to build trust and confidence in leadership.

4. **Development Opportunities:** Encourage the ongoing learning and development of skills and knowledge and ensure everyone has opportunities to receive coaching and mentoring.

5. **Respect and Recognition:** Interact respectfully and consistently recognize good work and meaningful contributions.

6. **Authority and Empowerment:** Ensure that everyone has the autonomy they need to accomplish their work and the empowerment to make decisions.

7. **Clear Expectations and Feedback:** Define roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations and provide regular feedback.

8. **Collaboration:** Expect and support cooperation and the sharing of ideas within and across the organization.

9. **Support and Resources:** Ensure everyone has the skills, training, information, and resources needed to succeed.

10. **Work, Structure, and Process:** Actively manage workload so that it is distributed equitably, aligns with goals and priorities, and allows for improvements in the way work is done.

What's Next?

As a supervisor, you are also a leader, and it is important to understand the engagement drivers and place them within the context of your work. This will help you gather feedback in a way that is meaningful and makes a difference; it will also help you prepare for effective team discussions and prioritize an action plan to achieve the goals and priorities of your unit or department.

Review each of the engagement drivers and the self-reflection questions* in this guide to gain a deeper understanding of employee engagement at the University of Minnesota.

> * See the *Employee Engagement Discussion Questions* quick guide for a list of suggested questions to discuss with your faculty or staff.

Employee Engagement Drivers and Self-Reflection Questions (Cont.)

Driver

Clear and Promising Direction: Ensure that staff and faculty understand how their work is connected to the goals of the department, college, campus, and University.

1

Why it's important. Employees look for opportunities to contribute to something larger than themselves and to make a difference. Supporting faculty and staff in connecting their work to the goals of the department, college, and university is critical to creating a high level of engagement. The University of Minnesota's mission to teach, research, and serve the public should be tied to the work of every University employee. College and unit goals should directly influence and connect to the work of its faculty and staff.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do I share important information I receive from leadership?
- When strategy and goals are communicated to faculty and staff, how are the reasons behind the strategy and goals communicated?
- How has my unit changed over the past few years? What changes are yet to come and why? How do I communicate this to faculty and staff?
- How do I make connections between what people want to learn and do and the future work of my area? Do I ask people what they want to know, and what they want to learn about so that I can provide them information and direction?
- How do I speak to employees about how their contribution helps both the college/unit and the University of Minnesota achieve its goals?

Driver

Commitment to Excellence: Set and encourage high expectations for the quality of work, including demonstrating a commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

2

Why it's important. Delivering high-quality education and research is critical to the University's success. Ensuring that employees are working together toward these common goals requires an environment that encourages and supports teamwork as well as promotes innovation and continuous improvement. Engaged faculty and staff want to contribute to the success of something greater than themselves through their work.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Have I established and documented quality standards in my college/unit? How do I hold individuals accountable?
- How do we measure service delivery? How does my area seek and use feedback from those receiving services from us? Are those results freely shared and celebrated?
- Where is quality routinely superior or routinely a problem? What do we have in place to address these?
- How do I invite faculty and staff input on ways to maintain or improve quality and/or service? How do I invite employee ideas on ways to overcome barriers?
- Has increased workload had an impact on quality? If so, how can we meet our workload demands while still maintaining high levels of quality? What can be changed to ensure that the highest priority items are done in a high quality, timely manner?

Employee Engagement Drivers and Self-Reflection Questions (Cont.)

Driver

Confidence in Leaders: Communicate openly and honestly to build trust and confidence in leadership.

3

Why it's important. The success of your college/unit depends largely on the quality of its leaders throughout all levels of the organization. Leaders influence how faculty and staff perceive the college/unit as a whole and play a critical role in reinforcing strategies and goals. Effective leaders deliver key messages and share important information with employees in their group in a concise, relevant, and timely manner. Employees will have high levels of engagement when they understand the college/unit's strategies and goals, and are confident that leaders are capable of achieving objectives.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What procedures and processes are in place to ensure that employees get information about important changes in a timely and consistent manner? Do employees hear rumors before there is an opportunity to communicate important information directly to them?

- Do I avoid communicating certain types of information to faculty and staff? How is "bad news" shared with employees? How does my personal style affect the way my communications are received? How can I solicit feedback on this?

- How do I hold poor performing employees accountable for their performance?

- How do I take responsibility for my mistakes? How do I respond when I don't have an answer?

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Development Opportunities: Encourage the ongoing learning and development of skills and knowledge and ensure everyone has opportunities to receive coaching and mentoring.

4

Why it's important. Development is often cited in engagement research as one of the top drivers of engagement which includes the ongoing learning and development of skills and knowledge, including job mastery and professional development, coupled with career planning activities. To remain motivated and productive, employees need to grow in their jobs–and perhaps grow beyond them. Given the changing nature of work, employees may need encouragement and support in reviewing and assessing their goals and the activities that support those goals. Leaders are in a position to provide valuable career coaching and feedback to help employees reach their career objectives.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Have I discussed the desire for career advancement and development with employees and the opportunities that exist for them?

- How can I communicate to our employees the skills required to compete for open positions? How can I better communicate the required qualifications to prospective candidates?

- How do I support employees in understanding how to plan their careers and what they need to do to advance? How do I help talented, ambitious employees remain challenged and satisfied at the University?

- Are employees ever kept in their current positions for longer than planned because no one has been identified to fill their position? If so, how can I better identify successors to job roles currently filled by employees identified as candidates for promotion?

Employee Engagement Drivers and Self-Reflection Questions (Cont.)

Respect and Recognition: Interact respectfully and consistently recognize good work and meaningful contributions.

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Why it's important. Faculty and staff who feel respected in their workplace will show respect for their work and for the organization. The University invests in creating the conditions that make work meaningful and rewarding for employees. In return, employees respect their work environment, colleagues and the reputation of the University. Organizations that make a reciprocal commitment of respect will have faculty and staff who take a personal interest in organizational objectives.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do I treat faculty and staff respectfully? How do I ensure respectful behaviors within the college/unit? How do I know that all groups and individuals are treated with respect and dignity?
- How can I be more supportive of employees who have personal or family matters to attend to?
- How do I give and share credit for success?
- How do I recognize faculty and staff, either individually or as a team, for doing a good job? Is this recognition meaningful to the employees?
- How do I model inclusive behavior toward people, ideas, and ways of working?

Authority and Empowerment: Ensure that everyone has the autonomy they need to accomplish their work and the empowerment to make decisions.

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Why it's important. Employees with appropriate autonomy and discretion to complete their work are better enabled to be more productive and effective. By managing how they work, employees are also more likely to find ways to fully use their skills and abilities leading to more input, innovation, and increased job satisfaction.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What do I do to create an environment that welcomes new ideas and recognizes the sharing of ideas?
- Examine the structure and accountabilities around different types of decisions. Do employees understand what decisions they can and cannot control? Do employees understand the rationale behind the delegation of decisions?
- Am I making the majority of the decisions for my college/units? How can I drive the decision-making down into lower levels within the organization?
- Do I involve employees in changes that impact them?
- Do I delegate challenging work and give employees the authority to complete the work?

Employee Engagement Drivers and Self-Reflection Questions (Cont.)

Driver

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Clear Expectations and Feedback: Define roles, responsibilities, and performance expectations and provide regular feedback.

Why it's important. Communicating expectations and giving feedback are two of the most important parts of a leader's job. All employees need ongoing feedback on expectations and performance in order to continuously deliver high quality services. Leaders who do this successfully improve the chances of high productivity and quality work for individuals, college/units, departments, and the University overall. Clarity regarding goals and priorities enables excellent performance by allowing employees to focus their efforts on essential tasks. Likewise, by continually raising the bar, ongoing monitoring and feedback regarding performance helps ensure that faculty and staff capabilities are optimally developed and used.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do I identify and reward excellent performance?
- How often do I discuss performance expectations with and give feedback to faculty and staff? Do I do this on a regular and informal basis as opposed to a formal, annual event?
- What kind of feedback do I give to employees and how often is it given? How do I know if it is effective?
- How do I know my feedback is fair, timely, and specific? Do I give positive feedback when employees do well, and corrective feedback when employees need improvement?
- How do I determine if an employee is meeting performance expectations? Do I rely on objective performance goals? Do I seek feedback from those who work most closely with the employee?

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Collaboration: Expect and support cooperation and the sharing of ideas within and across the organization.

Why it's important. Good cooperation and teamwork helps units develop better ways to get work done and react faster to changing needs. Collaboration can also lead to better cross-unit work within an industry/discipline and is an important skill for leaders and college/units. One way successful organizations meet and exceed their goals is by optimizing cooperation across college/units that rely on each other.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do I share information and keep both my group and other groups informed?
- How do I assign and coordinate roles to encourage collaboration?
- How do I promote the benefits of working collaboratively with other groups?
- Have I set specific team goals? How are goals communicated? How do I know college/unit goals are clear to all team members? How do I communicate results expected of team members? Are there any consequences for not meeting team objectives?
- How do I ensure employees know how they should collaborate with others in the context of their day-to-day jobs?

Employee Engagement Drivers and Self-Reflection Questions (Cont.)

Support and Resources: Ensure everyone has the skills, training, information, and resources needed to succeed.

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Why it's important. Engaged employees who have the knowledge and resources to perform are likely to meet performance expectations and perform optimally. Employees can only perform at optimal levels if they have the necessary information, training, and resources (e.g., tools, technology, equipment, and supplies) required to do their jobs effectively. Employees require on-going training and development to effectively handle the changing nature of job expectations and work environments. Well-trained employees are more likely to have and use higher levels of skill in their jobs. They are also more likely to demonstrate enthusiasm and positive attitudes towards their work, and exhibit higher levels of commitment to the organization. In assessing the training and development needs within your area, take into consideration the skills employees need to help the organization achieve its objectives.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What equipment, tools, supplies, and materials do employees say they need in order to help them do their jobs more effectively? How do I provide this for them?
- What skills are critical to the success of the college/unit both now and into the future? Do faculty and staff lack any of these critical skills? If yes, what resources are available to address needs?
- How do I make use of training and development programs—both internal and external—that employees have completed? What gaps exist between the skills valued and the skills in which employees are trained?
- How long does it take new employees to reach an acceptable level of productivity? How can this time be shortened?
- How do I include other avenues of learning such as mentors, self-directed options, cross-training, stretch projects, or skill development?

Work, Structure, and Process: Actively manage workload so that it is distributed equitably, aligns with goals and priorities, and allows for improvements in the way work is done.

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Why it's important. We continue to be challenged to do more work with fewer resources. Operating efficiently not only ensures a productive workforce, but that our work environments run effectively, increase motivation, and decrease frustration among faculty and staff. Employees closest to the work being performed often have the best ideas on how to improve work performance. Universities are increasingly competing for resources as well as faculty and staff effort and cannot afford to lose productivity due to inefficient processes. Tapping into employee feedback will have a positive impact on operating efficiencies, service, and employee satisfaction.

SELF-REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How well do I manage the current workload? Do I over-assign work to top performers and under-assign work to lower performers? How can I invite faculty and staff input on work assignment practices?
- How can the workflow be better organized to help employees get their jobs done more effectively? How might the way work is currently done be changed to improve performance?
- What do employees feel are the greatest barriers to performing their jobs? To what extent are these factors under my control? How do I explore these issues with employees?
- What do employees find most challenging or fulfilling? What do they find most frustrating or unfulfilling?