

3 Ways to Inspire Connection Among Employees

A Guide for Building the Kind of Connection that Deepens Belonging & Engagement



In 2022, [Gallup](#) reported that the number of actively disengaged employees rose to 18%. This is not good news when you consider that a disengaged employee is 2.3x more likely to be exploring other jobs!

Employee engagement is a measure of employees' commitment to helping their organization achieve its goals. It's demonstrated by how employees think, feel, and act, as well as the emotional connection employees feel towards their organization, their work, and their teams.

Prior to 2020, engagement and well-being were rising globally for nearly a decade – but now, they're stagnant, and most believe it's because they have less opportunity to build meaningful connections. Now is no time to take our eyes off the road, especially when it comes to your distributed knowledge workers' personal and professional well-being. Addressing the structural and cultural issues that have limited connection and created disengagement in your organization is the first step to laying the foundation for a new and better employee experience.



A State of Disconnectedness

The sudden shift to remote work over the last few years gave people an opportunity to do more than just spruce up their home offices. It gave them a chance to think and reevaluate bigger topics, like just how work fits into their lives.

And this has undoubtedly contributed to trends like the Great Resignation and quiet quitting, as many employees realized that personal needs, such as connection, family, happiness, and health mattered more to them than promotions, career paths, and other work-related objectives.

We don't have to tell you, this inevitably leads to turnover, which can leave your organization in a bind. Estimates show that every time a business replaces a salaried employee, it costs 6 to 9 months' salary on average. For a manager making \$60,000 a year, that's \$30,000 to \$45,000 in recruiting and training expenses. This doesn't even account for all of the soft costs required to onboard a new employee, the impacts on morale and culture, loss of knowledge and productivity, or the ways that whole teams can be affected when it's a team leader who leaves.

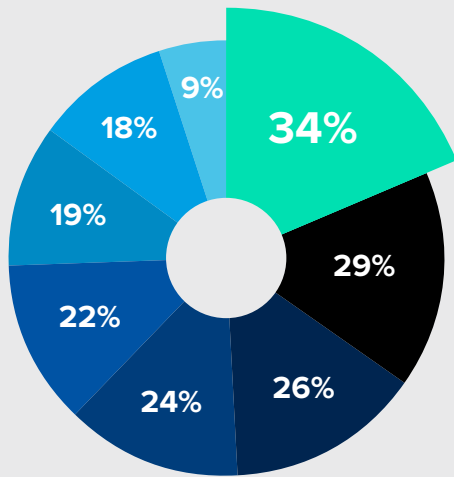
**For a manager
making \$60,000/yr:
\$30,000-\$45,000 is lost**



Not to scare you further, but research out of LinkedIn also shows that **70 percent** of the global workforce is passive talent, and more than half would consider leaving for the right opportunity. So basically, everyone is a flight risk!

The good news is that one of the most important and impactful solutions takes into account the fact that work life and personal contentment aren't mutually exclusive. In fact, everything – including employee engagement and retention – improves when we bring the two into alignment through deeper connection.

Why We Feel Disconnected at Work



Different personalities/workstyles are the main reason employees feel disconnected

- Different personalities/workstyles from coworkers
- Manager doesn't provide much support
- Lack of transparency about big decisions
- choose not to get involved
- My coworkers and have different social identities
- I work remotely and it's difficult to get to know my coworkers
- There aren't company-sponsored events/opportunities
- The onboarding process didn't include opportunities for me to connect

Data source: Enboarder survey of 1,000 full-time, U.S. based employees

Why Connection at Work Matters

Would you be surprised to learn that people with friendly connections at work perform better in their job? According to [research](#), people who have a good friend at work are not only more likely to be happier and healthier, but they are also seven times as likely to be engaged in their job. In addition, employees who report having friends at work have higher levels of productivity, retention, and job satisfaction than those who don't.

The feelings of **belonging** and **purpose** that connection fuels are among the top benefits people are looking to get from their work. These feelings are so profound and

powerful that some employees would even trade some compensation for more meaningful relationships – at least that’s what [over half](#) of the employees surveyed by BetterUp Labs found.

Feeling more connected at work has several other effects on employee and organizational performance. For example, **94%** of employees agreed that they’re more productive when they feel connected to their colleagues, and, when compared to employees who didn’t feel actively connected to their workplace, connected employees were:



More than 3 in 5 employees with [high social connectivity](#) report being highly engaged, whereas just over 1 in 10 employees with low social connectivity consider themselves highly engaged at work.



Employees who have strong social bonds with their coworkers are more [motivated to perform](#).



Individuals who report having connection at work are [7x more likely](#) to exhibit better engagement, customer relations, work quality, and wellbeing, as well as a lower risk of injury.



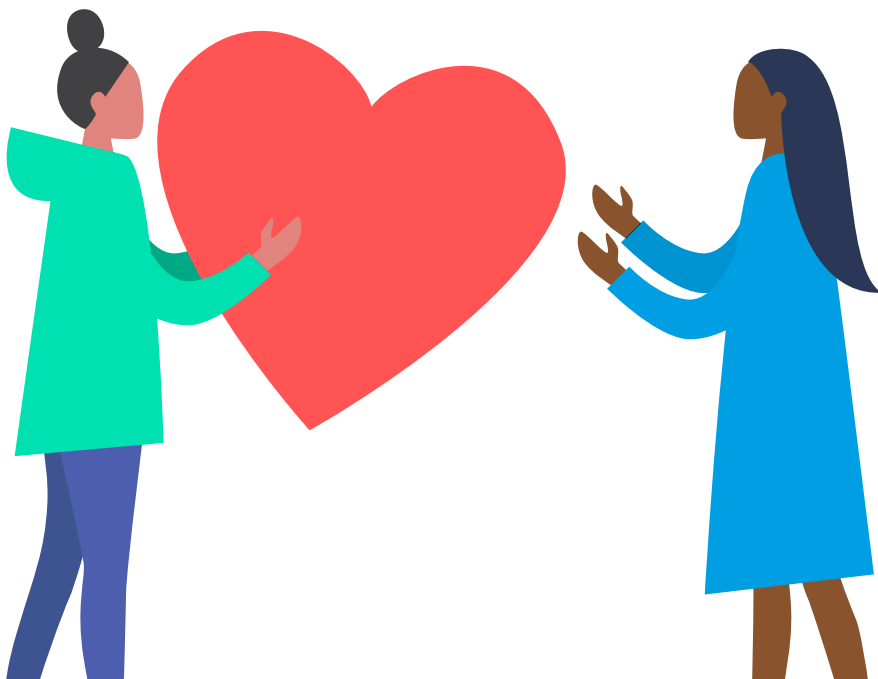
Highly engaged teams show [21% greater profitability](#).

Organizations that view engagement as a feeling often conduct employee surveys and provide offer perks to improve the results. But [Gallup reports](#) that the most successful organizations make employee engagement central to their business strategy. They give employees clear expectations and provide them with the tools and support to do their best work.

Why are engaged teams more profitable?

Those teams who score in the top 20 percent in engagement realize a 41 percent reduction in absenteeism, and 59 percent less turnover. It's simple. Engaged employees show up with passion, purpose, presence, and energy.

So, let's turn our focus to 3 impactful ways to inspire stronger connection among your team members.



1. Amp Up Communication Tactics to Connect More Meaningfully

Social psychologists have been studying the human need for connection belonging for many years. It's been found that feeling a sense of belonging is an important intrinsic motivator. Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes a sense of belonging as a major need that motivates human behavior – just like food, shelter, and safety. And there's data to prove it.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development tracked the lives of 724 men for 79 years. Researchers hoped to discover the secret to success, happiness and a good life. The study found that relationships tremendously impact our health, happiness and quality of life. It was also found that the quality of relationships mattered more than quantity

It's no different at work, where we spend nearly 40% of our lives! Strong social connections make people happier and physically healthier, which can translate into work performance – and employers that support social

connections in the workplace and help employees form strong relationships with one another are helping to build a more successful workforce. That's where communication comes in – and encouraging employees to communicate to connect rather than simply transact.

The benefits of workplace connectedness are significant.

- ✓ Reduce turnover
- ✓ Encourage learning and innovation through information exchanges
- ✓ Ease organizational change by building trust
- ✓ Boost workplace morale, strengthen work role relationships
- ✓ Advance careers and professional development



Distributed teams need intentional communication because they lack the face-to-face interactions that are common in co-located teams. This can lead to misunderstandings, missed deadlines, and a lack of cohesion. In fact, research has shown that distributed workers waste upwards of 17 hours each week on issues related to miscommunication.

Here are some ways to improve the quality and quantity of communication among team members.

1. Demonstrate empathy any time the team member expresses a problem or frustration.

Use [The Empathy Formula](#) to acknowledge the team member's feelings based on facts. Here's the formula:

"It sounds like you're (feeling) because/about (fact)."

Here's a real-life example: "It sounds like you're feeling overwhelmed (feeling) because of the reduced number of people on the team (fact)."

2. Establish a new one-on-one meeting routine.

Have a scheduled meeting at least twice per week over video conference. If these meetings are currently less frequent, use the same amount of overall time divided up over more meetings. Always have your camera on and ask that the employee does the same – it's a way to build connection and drive resonance.

3. Talk to your team members every single day.

If a meeting is not scheduled, call them on the phone and talk to them. Sometimes just a quick check-in call is all it takes for some days. One of the most important elements of being an effective manager is keeping lines of communication open with your team members, especially when it has nothing to do with assignments or project statuses.

Do note that talking to a team member in a team meeting doesn't count here, nor does exchanging texts or leaving voicemails. We have to put in the work!

4. Demonstrate your availability as a manager.

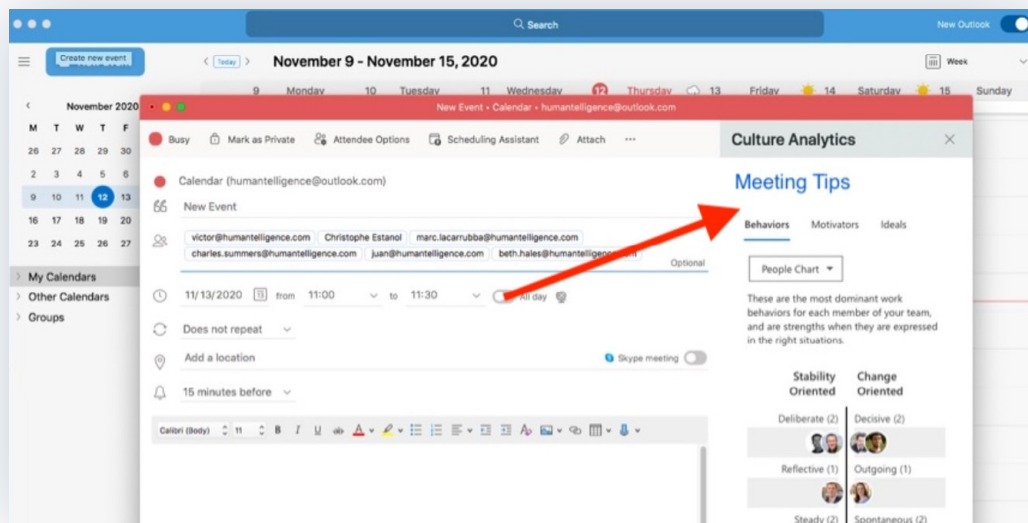
End your meetings with your team member by encouraging the team member to contact you by phone or to request an unscheduled meeting. Always answer the call when possible.

5. Establish line of sight and continue to reinforce it.

Ensure work assignments, expectations, and deadlines are perfectly clear. Break down current goals into smaller chunks that are measured on a more frequent basis. Find opportunities during your one-on-ones to talk about how the specific work they do contributes to a specific team or company objective. This is not as obvious to them as it might be to you.

6. Do not hold hybrid meetings.

Being a good manager entails leveling the meeting playing field so all team members can contribute equally. This is a best practice in general, and particularly important for any struggling team members. If some of the team members are in the same location and some are remote, have the onsite team members split up and join from their own computers. It equals the playing field, and makes remote employees feel less on the outside. Giving everyone access to the culture or dynamic of that meeting group also ensures everyone is equipped to communicate effectively.



7. Leverage a Culture Playbook

Consider using team collaboration tools like Humantelligence at least once a week with your teams. The first step is deepening your [understanding of the team member's motivators and behavioral preferences](#) to best know how to help them. Once you have a deeper understanding of his/her psychometric-based Talent Profile, use the one-on-one comparison tool to go over your and the team member's similarities and differences, which will help the team member feel "seen." Uncover how the team member's unique strengths shown on their Talent Profile can be better put to work for the benefit of the team, and then tell them.



Step 2: Discuss Team Culture

Choose a topic for the team to focus on to reveal specific questions based on the team's data.

Behaviors

Topics about our work styles:

- ☐ Approach to problem solving and getting results

Deliberate

Decisive



- ☐ Approach to interacting with people

Reflective

Outgoing



- ☐ Approach to the pace of the work

Steady

Spontaneous



- ☐ Approach to established procedures and standards

Cautious

Freeform



From here, you can then leverage the team culture playbook. A team Playbook enables you to align culture to strategy so you can improve your team's performance. It's a simple three-step process to help guide your team through driving better collaboration, inclusion, and team effectiveness more quickly. With ongoing and frequent assessment of your team's culture, you'll be well on your way to better engaging team members and ensuring optimal effectiveness.

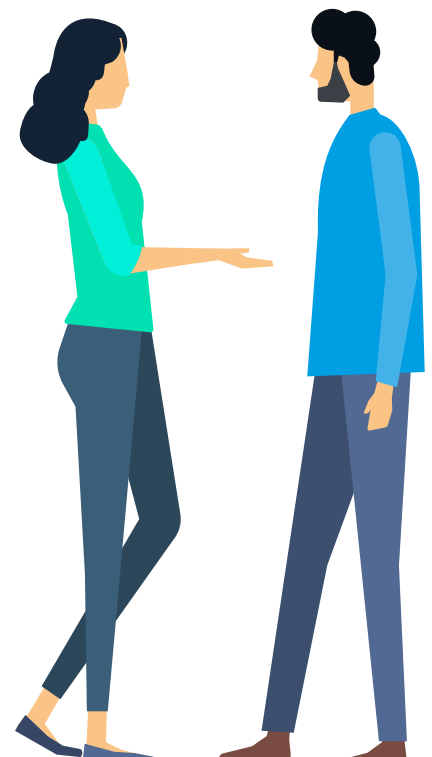
2. Establish Stronger Connection to the Organization

Connection to your organization is just as important as connection to one another. Of course, this is fundamentally part of human connection. In fact, perceptions of social support from workplace friendships have been proven to be positively related to workers' views of being appreciated by the organization and their overall job satisfaction.

Furthermore, when employees are active in their social networks and feel they have higher support levels, they are more likely to remain in the workplace (Horan, 2021). Their social interactions have been found to increase self-reported [positive feelings](#) at the end of the workday (Nolan & Küpers, 2009), which then become associated with the organization.

Here are some ways to help start generating some of those positive feelings!

- **Face-to-face Interaction:** Make sure your employees are making the most of their in-office days and that there are adequate spaces and reasons for in-person interactions.
- **Encourage spontaneous check-ins:** With fewer people around us, it's easy just to immerse ourselves in work, but regular check-ins with others are crucial for everyone, in particular leaders who may not otherwise notice if their team is struggling.
- **Mobility / New Challenges:** Make sure your employees aren't being overlooked for internal opportunities. Start harnessing the power of your current workflow...this includes upward movement, learning & development, or upskilling.
- **Include remote employees at all times:** Make sure your remote employees aren't being overlooked for team and company events. Be mindful to create opportunities for genuine human connection for these employees or resentment can start to creep in.
- **Support informal mentorships:** Facilitate communication across departments and employees of different ages and experience levels so team members can learn more about each other and their areas of work, while sparking new ideas and interests.



- **Recognize employee contributions big or small:**

Recognition and gratitude are integral to creating a positive employee experience. Workhuman's Employee Experience Index with IBM Smarter Workforce Institute – based on a study of more than 23,000 workers – showed that when employees receive recognition for doing good work, 83% report a more positive employee experience. Set up formal or informal channels of recognition, and start seeing connection to the organization increase.

Benefits of Team Connectedness

+34%

greater goal attainment

+36%

boost in well-being

+59%

more positive relationships

+92%

more professional growth



Date Source: BetterUp

3. Use Technology to Make Connection Easier for Distributed Teams

Research has shown that workers who trust senior leaders are nearly 2x as likely to be engaged, and that translates into successful business outcomes. Many U.S. studies report high-trust organizations are 2.5x more likely to be high-performing revenue companies than their low-trust counterparts.



2X
more engaged



2.5X
more profitable

In 2016, Bart de Jong and colleagues conducted 112 studies with nearly 8,000 teams, finding a positive relationship between intra-team trust and achieving shared goals. A willingness to be vulnerable is one of the states in which we can build that trust. Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, in their development of a Trust Model, discussed three elements that must be in place before we allow ourselves to be

vulnerable, taking the risk to trust. We allow ourselves to be vulnerable when we believe someone:

- Shows Ability – knowledge, skills, competencies that allow someone to have influence in a specific area.
- Has Integrity – is on the same page with us about the principles we uphold—often implicitly assumed.
- Is Benevolent – the extent to which we believe that a person wants to do good for us. It's about caring about the other person, not having a vested interest, and not benefiting from the relationship.

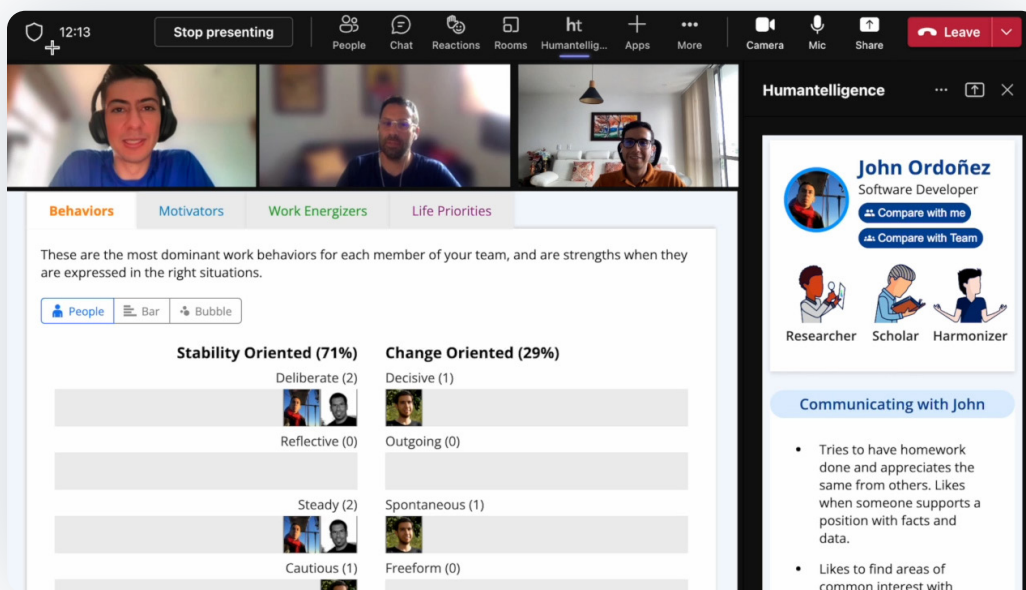
As you might guess, building trust like this typically takes time because it's based on experiences. However, in today's distributed teams where things happen quickly, and there is less opportunity for organic interactions, you need to expedite the process if you want employees to perform better and achieve results.

One of the most effective ways to accelerate trust-building is to enable connection among employees – and the best part? You don't need to roll out big, fancy, expensive new software. Use what you have.

With a simple [add-on or plug-in](#) to your existing communication tools, your team members have the insights needed to connect and work more effectively together. The bolt on surfaces actionable insights – generated automatically from self-assessments –

into the existing daily workflows of all teams — within chats, team channels, emails, and meetings.

Your team then has access to the kind of information needed to better understand, connect, and collaborate with another – the kind of information that normally only comes after months, if not years, of working with one another, and the kind of information you use to only get when working in-office with others. For example, if you're meeting in Teams, you'll have custom communication tips for everyone who is a part of that meeting group.



Using technology like this is one way to enable the kind of connection that leads more engaged teams and better productivity.

Not Convinced? Try for yourself with a [Free Team Trial](#).

Building stronger connection at your company

Now that you understand the connections needed for employees to feel they belong, think about how employees connect in your organization. How are you using technology to connect humans to one another? Is it easy for employees to connect and support one another?

Ensuring a positive and empowering working environment where all employees feel valued and connected doesn't just help your company; it helps your people. An employee who feels connection to others is an employee who is more likely to find their work meaningful. An employee who finds their work meaningful is an employee likely to be engaged – demonstrating through their work a commitment to the overall success of the business.

**Inspire deeper connection among colleagues.
Create more collaborative relationships.
See engagement & productivity soar.**

[Get started today](#)

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