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7 tips for improving employee engagement

Any company can benefit from leveraging a modernization strategy to increase employee engagement, retention, and satisfaction. With the pandemic, we've learned that a forward-thinking work environment with innovative employee benefits can be a valuable tool for building reputation. Here are a few tactics that employers can use to ensure success when scaling their small to mid-sized businesses and attract the best talent.

Ergonomic work environment

Traditional desk-bound office life, especially when working from home, has been contributing to sedentary lifestyles, and the [public health effects](#) are only just starting to crop up. As a result, a number of innovative trends have surfaced in the modern, wellness-focused work environment. Of course, outfitting your office with ergonomic task chairs and peripherals (i.e. mice and keyboards) should be the first place to start, but an organization wanting to take the next step can look further.

While the positive impacts of standing desks are still being demonstrated through research, they appear to have [health benefits](#) from lowering risks of weight gain, obesity, and heart disease to improving posture and increasing both mood and productivity.

[Kneeling chairs](#) are another seated innovation that emerged from Scandinavia. Most have a design that consists of an angled seat to shift your body forward and shin rests that take the pressure off your back when you sit. Such a design has many ergonomic benefits for your spine from hip opening, abdominal muscle engagement, and spinal alignment to better digestion and breathing due to decreased pressure on the lower body. While they aren't for everybody, they have some great advantages.

Using an exercise ball outfitted with a chair attachment could also increase core strength and improve energy levels. It's a low-cost option that can fit into an employee home office budget, if that's something your organization is considering.

Communal spaces

It isn't just workstations that can be updated to attract employees. Communal work environments can also be re-thought. The employee break room should be more than just a utilitarian space for wolfing down lunch. It's a key driver for improving corporate culture, morale, and productivity by providing a democratic space where colleagues can meet as equals.

Taking a break should be fun and let you blow off some steam. Consider bringing in board games, installing a TV with an older generation gaming console, or setting up a donation-based library. Of course, classic water cooler-style furnishings and coffee makers never go down the wrong way, but accommodating employees' dietary preferences is not a bad idea either. Consider stocking non-dairy milk and sweetener alternatives.

Peer recognition

Receiving the classic company watch milestone after years of service is a relic of the past with the pace of the 21st century's job market and the normalization of the gig economy, and likely won't make an impact on employee retention.

For the fast-paced, digitally savvy workers of today, incentives like peer-nominated awards on a weekly basis by department, or quarterly company-wide, are going to be a better motivational tool. Awards can be received as token items, or have real value, sourced from a corporate gifting catalog service.

There are also several employee recognition apps, such as the Toronto-based Achievers, designed to let employees send each other gratitude notes and awards that nominees can use to convert into gift cards from popular retailers.

Self-care workshops

Self-care is a priority for the modern workforce. Employees are less likely to put their health ahead of their jobs, so offering occasional yoga, massage, or meditation workshops from specialists can do wonders for morale, and give staff new skills to build on.

Education budgets

According to an article in [Forbes](#), a day-long corporate training session can cost a company up to \$40,000 US, and its usefulness was deemed questionable. To create more effective training systems, companies can carve out a budget for career development, where they can expense a skills-related course from a local college, university, or other learning institution.

Even if the subject matter is more of an extracurricular level, the program will still increase employee morale and improve their perception of your organization.

There are also professional eLearning resources that can be acquired on a subscription service, some public, like [LinkedIn Learning](#) or others can be accessed via a specialty white-label service.

Modernized benefits system

Telemedicine adoption rates are skyrocketing and the format pairs perfectly with work culture. You don't need to spend half the day going to a doctor's appointment just to get a prescription renewal, lab test requisition forms, or a consultation to address your symptoms.

Telemedicine providers offer video or chat-based portals that connect employees directly to licensed healthcare professionals. Different providers have different trials and booking systems but at [Maple](#), the wait time is often 10 minutes or less. Think about how much time is saved.

Virtual care has also seen great results for businesses. 91% of medical issues are resolved in a patient's first interaction at Maple, with 65% of visits preventing workplace absenteeism. That totals to an average of 3.6 hours saved per consultation.

Similarly, remote therapy and mental health tools are becoming increasingly available as they find useful applications in a remote-work environment. Workers now have options for keeping their stress levels and mental health in check.

From government-subsidized iCBT programs to whole-person mental health care services like [Mind by Maple](#), which offers wellness check-ins, a resource library, and same-day or bookable talk therapy sessions from a wide roster of registered Canadian mental health therapists.

Digital productivity tools

Digital tools have become more and more integrated into everyday work life, and not just relegated to the realms of IT and Web Development. Now any employee can benefit from user-friendly platforms to log their vacation days and access organizational charts (e.g. BambooHR), input and track quarterly goals (e.g. Lattice), access company intranet (e.g. Okta), check into their COVID-19 compliant office and book offices (e.g. Envoy) and perform dozens of other functions.

Modern inter-office communications tools have become increasingly important during the pandemic. Traditional offerings come from Skype for Business, Microsoft Teams, and Slack. A good messaging platform should allow for video and voice calls, group chats, topic-based chatrooms, and the seamless integration of tools (e.g. Google Calendar, Zoom, Adobe), or other relevant programs mentioned above.

Update your brand presence

There comes a time for many organizations to issue a rebrand, whether due to outgrowing their current brand identity, a shift in audiences, or a desire to signal a conscious change in the company ethos. A rebrand can involve anything from updating the brand's visual identity, to revisiting the mission statement and core values, to an all-out change in name and identity.

A couple of famous [rebrand examples](#) include Andersen Consulting's transformation to Accenture and Price Waterhouse Cooper's shift to PwC. Both are rumored to have run into the \$100M range. While costly, there are clear ROI boosts associated.

Whether you are considering a rebrand or not, social media is the perfect place for promoting your company culture, showing off your most recent achievements (and rebrand), and ultimately attracting new talent.

Not using your LinkedIn account (or social media platform of choice) to show off the strength of your staff or corporate values is a missed opportunity in this day and age of commoditized social media. After all, according to one [LinkedIn report](#), social media comprises 47% of your employer brand. Granted, this can be challenging in a remote work environment but working around restrictions is what drives innovation.

Conclusion

Modernizing your company's offerings with contemporary employee benefits is crucial to retaining employees and maintaining engagement, especially in a time of increasingly common remote workforces and higher than ever employee turnover.

According to statistics reported by LinkedIn Talent Solutions, [organizations](#) who invest in their employer brand using employee engagement strategies see a 28% reduction in turnover, a 50% cut in hiring costs and hire 1-2 times faster — an ROI that pays dividends.

If you'd like to speak to one of our Maple experts on how to bring your employee benefits to the next level, [please reach out](#). We'd be happy to share our insight as Canada's leading provider of virtual care.

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