

Survey Shows 8% Average Drop In Employee Engagement Since The Pandemic

Average employee engagement has dropped by 8% since the pandemic, according to a survey of more than 800 workers.

The research was carried out by Nottingham Business School (NBS), part of Nottingham Trent University, and Engage for Success (EFS), who were supported by the CIPD.

An online survey conducted in 2022, asked a representative sample of the UK population to self-report their levels of engagement across four main areas - engagement with their job, their colleagues, their manager, and their organisation. It also required them to reflect on their experiences during the pandemic.

The results - which form the first EFS Employee Engagement Index - showed that employee engagement significantly dropped by 11% during the pandemic for the majority of employees across all of the areas of engagement measured. Only a 3% creep in recovery has since been seen, with employee engagement in the UK now rated as 8% lower than before the pandemic.

However, the drop in engagement was clearly impacted by the organisational response and the methods used to engage with employees during the pandemic. Employers who used a variety of methods, providing options to their employees, were relatively insulated by the drops in engagement.

Respondents who stated their organisations offered them no online health and wellbeing initiatives during the pandemic reported a 13% drop in engagement. This dramatically compared to only a 1% drop for respondents who reported their organisations provided four or more health and well-being initiatives. Similar findings were seen for learning and development, communication channels and employee involvement methods.

Almost half (44%) of respondents reported having no learning and development opportunities available to them by their employer during the pandemic.

The degree of drop in engagement also varied across position, demographics, and personal circumstances. Engagement of respondents on furlough was lower than for non-furloughed workers and remains lower.

Co-lead researcher Dr Sarah Pass, senior lecturer in Human Resource Management at NBS and EFS board member, said: "Our

findings show the importance of getting the organisational response right during times of crisis and uncertainty for employees.

"Organisations that involved, supported, and developed their employees saw minimal drops in employee engagement during the pandemic and are almost back to current levels. Whilst those who did little have seen both significant drops in engagement during the pandemic, and a minimal creep since".

"Findings also highlight the fundamental role of the line manager, with frequency of interactions with managers linked to levels of employee engagement".

The EFS Employee Engagement Index will now be introduced annually on a national level but can also be used by individual organisations to give them insight into areas they may wish to develop, and empower them to gain a fundamental understanding of employee engagement in their organisation.

Jonny Gifford, senior adviser for organisational behaviour at the CIPD, the professional body for HR and people development, said: "The pandemic posed a huge disruption to working lives and many organisations are still establishing what the 'new normal' is for them. Employee motivation, commitment and how people identify with their organisations need to be at the heart of this.

A drop in engagement during the pandemic is understandable

"After a period of extreme disruption, now is a good time to rebuild engagement with a strong focus on development opportunities, well-being support and rebuilding communications and interactions. This will help organisations attract, retain and get the best out of people and is key to individual and organisational success".

Dr Pass added: "A drop in engagement during the pandemic is understandable,

however, the lack of rebound is deeply concerning, especially in the current climate. Organisations need to act and put the people issues at the centre of the business agenda if they want to successfully meet the uncertainties and opportunities ahead".

The findings have been published in full in the UK Employee Engagement Survey 2022 report, including a foreword by David MacLeod and Nita Clarke, co-authors of the MacLeod Review and co-founders of Engage for Success, and Peter Cheese, chair of the EFS board.



DR SARAH PASS

Senior lecturer in Human Resource Management at NBS and EFS board member.

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