

Say, Stay, or Strive?

Unleash the Engagement Outcome You Need

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Managers face many challenges in determining how to act upon engagement survey results. Overly simplistic views of engagement as a generic indicator of morale or happiness often fail. Building off of our Say, Stay, and Strive behavioral model of engagement, a starting place may be to determine and better understand the type of engagement outcome you need.

For instance, one manager may have an employee who is incredibly hardworking but needs to say more positive things about the company due to his/her network impact on peers. Another manager may have employees who generally seem positive about the company and committed to staying, but need to ramp up individual effort toward the new performance behaviors required by an organizational transformation.

To assess how to drive different engagement outcomes, we analyzed the relative predictive weight of each of our 15 core driver categories¹ using responses from over 300,000 employees representing 57 countries, 495 companies, and 63 industries. The results, shown in Figure 1, demonstrate the top drivers for engagement overall as well as each of the most significant drivers for the outcomes in our Say, Stay, and Strive engagement model (i.e., we find that engaged employees **say** positive things about the company, **stay** with the organization, and **strive** to go above and beyond).

Figure 1—Rank Order of the Relative Weight of Drivers Across Engagement and Say/Stay/Strive

Driver Rank	Engagement Overall	Say	Stay	Strive
1	EVP	Reputation	EVP	EVP
2	Reputation	EVP	Work Fulfillment	<i>Performance Management</i>
3	Work Fulfillment	Work Fulfillment	Reputation	Work Fulfillment
4	<i>Performance Management</i>	Diversity & Inclusion	<i>Career Opportunities</i>	Reputation
5	<i>Career Opportunities</i>	Talent & Staffing	Rewards	Enabling Infrastructure

The analysis uncovers that while having a compelling employee value proposition (EVP), company reputation, and fulfilling work are top drivers across all outcomes, they can vary in importance depending on the specific engagement outcome desired.

For example, reputation is the top driver in motivating employees to say positive things about the organization, but it is not as important in encouraging them to strive. Further, we find that some drivers are unique to each of the three types of engagement outcomes (these drivers are shown in green). We see that rewards are a unique driver for an employee to stay with an organization, and enabling infrastructure is uniquely important for an employee to strive to go above and beyond.

¹ Driver categories include career opportunities, collaboration, diversity and inclusion, EVP, empowerment, enabling infrastructure, learning and development, manager, performance management, reputation, rewards and recognition, senior leadership, talent and staffing, work fulfillment, and work/life balance.

Take Action

So, what does this mean for a manager? First, the employee value proposition (EVP), reputation, and fulfilling work are critical across all engagement outcomes. Managers should take opportunities to clarify a compelling promise to employees (or design an articulated EVP if it does not already exist), elucidate the positive aspects of what the organization is known for in the market, and connect these two to a sense of purpose for the employee.

But second—and equally important—managers need to take a tailored approach if there are unique engagement outcomes of interest.

Let's take a deeper dive into the unique drivers of different engagement outcomes.

The figure below summarizes common and unique drivers for engagement outcomes based on further item-level analysis within driver categories. Based on this analysis and our deep human capital experience, tangible action areas are provided for the type of engagement you need to make happen.

Figure 2—Common and Unique Drivers for Engagement Outcomes



What Employees Need to Advocate for Your Company (Say)

In addition to the common drivers across engagement outcomes, it appears that talent management is very important for inspiring employees to say positive things about your company. Specifically, having a diverse talent pool and sufficient colleagues with the right skills to get the job done will drive employees to become advocates for your company. While *promoting* and *retaining* key talent are important, it is crucial to *attract* the right people to achieve your business goals.

What Employees Need to Continue Providing Their Talents to Your Company (Stay)

Career opportunities are uniquely important for employees to stay. Great employees either will stay and advance with their current company, or will leave and find these opportunities elsewhere.

We also see rewards and recognition as uniquely important for employees to stay—in particular, non-monetary recognition can be a more important driver of retention than compensation. This means that focusing on improving the perceptions of future career opportunities and ensuring appropriate rewards not only improves engagement, but also specifically improves the likelihood that employees will stay.

What Employees Need to Focus Their Energy and Effort Toward Exceptional Performance (Strive)

Getting the most out of employees requires performance focus and enablement. Performance management that clarifies objectives, creates line of sight, and provides useful feedback is highly important for employees to strive.

Employees are also more likely to give extra effort if there are systems in place that enable them to contribute. Protracted processes and/or lack of resources have been shown to frustrate employees and stifle discretionary effort.

Final Thoughts

As we have seen, employee engagement has different facets and behavioral outcomes. Managers often find themselves needing to emphasize one outcome (like getting top talent to stay with an organization) over another (such as striving to go above and beyond). Understanding these nuances requires measurement, insight, and action in the areas that matter most to the outcome in question.

The analysis in this paper presents insights and prescriptions for action for three important engagement outcomes—say, stay, and strive.

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