10 Essential Pillars of
EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

õfficevibe

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Jacob Shriar
Director of Content

Jacob is the Director of Content and Customer Happiness at Officevibe, and is on a mission to make the world of work better. He believes that everyone deserves to love their job and be happy, healthy, and productive at work. He's passionate about startups and company culture, and believes you should never stop learning.

Why Did I Write This Guide?

I wanted to emphasize the importance of emotional metrics, and how they affect engagement. The HR department has a real opportunity to engage workers on a deeper, more emotional level.

I want managers to be able to tell how happy and healthy their employees are. I want managers to be able to measure, optimize, and improve each of these metrics so that their employees can be as happy as possible.

Who Is This Guide For?

This guide is for HR managers, and anyone responsible for employee happiness and company culture. If you've wanted to measure and improve your employees' happiness and wellness levels, this guide is for you. If you've ever wondered how to improve relationships between co-workers or with their managers, this guide is for you.

How To Use This Guide?

Use it as a manual to discover which metrics matter to engagement, how to measure them, and how to improve them. The goal is to become more emotionally intelligent as a leader and to make sure your employees are engaged.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EMOTIONAL METRICS

Metrics are an important part of any business. They help us make smarter decisions based on facts instead of intuition. In HR, some of the more common metrics that people will track are things like cost of turnover, cost of hiring, speed of onboarding, etc.

I'd like to bucket those metrics into a group that I'll call financial metrics.

But there's another set of metrics, that to me, are just as important if not more important: **Emotional Metrics.**

These are things like employee happiness, employee wellness, relationship quality with managers, etc.

I'll go through ten emotional metrics in this guide, and try to break down why they're important. I'll also show how you can track these things, and what to do if you see these metrics start to slip.

There is a lot of great HR software out there, but again, most of them focus exclusively on the financial metrics. There are tools to measure and monitor some of the emotional metrics I'll talk about, but even they only track one single emotional metric.

It's a good step in the right direction, and I'm a big believer in focusing on one thing. But it would be great if there were one tool that could monitor and measure all of these emotional metrics.

Not only that, but this tool would be able to recommend actions automatically, based on the results of these metrics.

For anyone in HR that's not already data driven, it's time to start right now. We can no longer rely on the CEO's "gut feeling", it's not accurate enough, and there's no supporting evidence.

A big reason that companies don't measure emotional metrics as much as they do financial metrics is because they're harder to measure.

But the truth is, they are extremely important to measure because they have a huge effect on employee engagement.

If you're smart about it, it's not that difficult to measure.

There are a lot of "proxy questions" that you can ask to get the answers you're looking for.

What I mean by this, is instead of asking someone how happy they are at work, you can ask questions that infer happiness.

It's safe to assume that if you're happy at work, you probably won't be actively looking for another job, and you also probably enjoy at least a few of the people you work with.

If you ask someone a question like "how actively are you searching for a job?", and "do you have at least two people at work that you consider a friend", you can get your answer.

Engaged employees are more productive; that's been proven many times, so it's important that as leaders, we try our best to make sure every employee is as engaged and happy as possible.

Below are the ten metrics that I will focus on in this guide (note: the list is in no particular order and does not reflect a hierarchy of importance).

Recognition

Feedback

Relationship With Colleagues

Relationship With Managers

Satisfaction

Company Alignment

Employee Happiness

Employee Wellness

Personal Growth

Ambassadorship

GIVING AND RECEIVING PRAISE

Praise is one of the easiest and most important ways to engage employees.

First, let's talk a bit about receiving praise, and how that affects employee engagement. Receiving praise is biological. Let me explain how it works.

I'm sure most of you are familiar with the chemical called **dopamine**. It is a "high" that all humans chase, and a chemical that affects the part of the brain associated with positive emotions like joy and happiness.

People often drink alcohol or do drugs to chase a dopamine high, which comes and goes.

This is where praise gets a little tricky for employers.

According to Gallup, you should ideally be praising someone at least once a week.

Tweet this

This frequency might seem like a lot, but it's important to understand how quickly the effect of dopamine wears off.

Since it wears off so quickly, employees constantly need it. Similar to a drug addict, if they don't get that dopamine, the effects can be pretty dangerous.

Feelings of frustration, anxiety and sadness all start to consume them at work, even if they enjoy what they do.

Again, this is something that as humans, we can't control. We need dopamine one way or another, so if we don't get it from our managers, maybe we'll get it from a bottle of liquor.

It's an advantage for an employer to know this, because when employees get that feeling of dopamine for a job well done, they want to do that same thing again, in order to get more dopamine, so their likelihood of doing more good work is much higher.

Employees who say they're not properly recognized at work, are three times more likely to quit in the next year.

Tweet this

This is a serious issue, and again, one that's pretty simple to solve.

As a leader or manager, all you have to do is be mindful of this, and make sure to give frequent praise and recognition.

The beauty of this is that it's free. All you have to do is recognize someone for doing something good, and do it often. It's more about being aware, and maybe reminding yourself of how important praise is to people.

Giving praise is also important, and in fact, a study from *Deloitte* showed that receiving praise from a co-worker is even more powerful than when it comes from a manager.

This makes a lot of sense because your co-workers are with you on the day to day, and potentially understand the struggles of your job.

Another reason might also be because, as employees, we expect managers to give us praise, so it's even more meaningful from co-workers because it's perceived as being more authentic.

The point of what I'm saying here is that everyone in the company, managers and employees, need to be giving praise to each other very often.

Let's look at some of the research behind why giving and receiving praise is so important:

1 According to the U.S. Department of Labor, the number one reason people leave their jobs is because they "do not feel appreciated."

2 A study of over 1,700 employees conducted in 2012 by the American Psychological Association (APA) indicated that more than half of all employees intended to search for new jobs because they felt underappreciated and undervalued.

3 A worldwide study by Towers Watson concluded "the single highest determinant for engagement is whether or not employees feel that their manager is genuinely interested in their well-being".

4 In a Gallup survey, it was found that employees who receive regular recognition and praise:

- Increase their productivity

- Increase engagement among their colleagues

- Are more likely to stay at their company

- Receive higher satisfaction scores from customers

- Have better safety records and fewer accidents on the job

5 According to research by *Deloitte*, companies with recognition programs are "highly effective at improving employee engagement [and] have 31% lower voluntary turnover than their peers with ineffective recognition programs".

6 In the research by *Deloitte*, 70% of employees reported they are recognized annually or not at all.

As a final piece of advice, remember to be very specific with your praise. Don't just praise for the sake of praising because you think that's what motivates employees.

It's not the word "thank you" or "great job" that they care about, it's the fact that when they do something great (and they secretly know they did), they're reinforced with positivity from someone they respect.

GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback is similar to the concept of praise, but it's different in that feedback can often be slightly more negative.

Praise is to recognize good work, whereas feedback is meant to be constructive, and **to help an employee improve**.

What's important to understand about feedback, is that it's a very delicate process, and you have to be careful about how you deliver it.

If delivered properly, it can help the employee grow within an organization.

If feedback is delivered the wrong way, it can disengage an employee, and make them defensive and angry.

🐦 Tweet this

Here are some tips for giving feedback properly:

1 **Do It In Real-Time**

The best time to give someone feedback on their work is right away. There's no point in waiting or delaying because, as time passes, the feedback could either be viewed as meaningless.

2 Practice First

If you're planning to give someone feedback, make sure that you go over it in your head to try and make it sound as nice as possible.

You don't want to go into a feedback session angry or uptight; an employee will be able to feel that emotion coming through.

Depending on how serious the feedback is, you can also practice giving the feedback on someone else to make sure it sounds okay.

3 Make It A Conversation

The smartest thing my manager ever did for me during my feedback session was ask me what I thought about my performance before giving me feedback.

Not only did this help soften the blow for whatever he was about to say, but it was a good exercise in retrospection.

4   Listen More Than You Speak

While you're giving feedback, make sure to pause and give the recipient some time to respond to whatever you say. Also, feel free to ask them what they think or if they agree or not with what you just said.

In 2009, Gallup conducted a study about employee feedback from managers, and there were some pretty interesting results.

- Employees ignored by their manager are twice as likely to be actively disengaged compared with workers whose manager focuses on their weaknesses

- Managers focusing on employee strengths are 30 times more likely to manage actively engaged workers

- Managers giving little or no feedback to employees result in 4/10 workers being actively disengaged

Most companies have too formal of a feedback process.

Employees can't wait until the annual review, and usually a company's performance review process is broken and one-sided.

I want to give a great example of a company that gets feedback sessions right.

Medium, which is an online publishing company started by the founders of *Twitter,* has one of the greatest feedback processes I've ever seen.

It's very light, fun, and informal, but it's effective.

It's based on the old game Mad Libs, where you have to fill in the blank in several places within a paragraph. The point of the game is to fill in funny, nonsensical things for humor, but the way it's applied to employee feedback at *Medium* is just genius.

Here is an example feedback form that they use:

I can count on Gabe for _____.

He is viewed within Medium as _____. He directs his energy toward _____, and does so with _____ effectiveness.

At his best, Gabe is _____, _____ and _____.

His strengths include _____ and _____.

When things aren't going well, he does/is _____ and _____.

Some areas for growth include _____ and _____.

He could operate on a whole new level if he were to _____.

In the next six months, I'd like to see him explore possibilities in _____ and _____, and stretch his skills in _____.

Specifically, I'd recommend he connect with _____ or try _____.

What's an example of when he totally crushed it?

What's an example of a situation he didn't handle well?

*If he were an animal, he would be a _____ because _____.*

(Metaphors can be informative and lighten things up)

One last thing I'll say about feedback now that you understand a bit more about how to give it is that you can keep these things in mind when you're receiving it.

Remember to be calm, open, and patient. Let whatever someone is saying to you sink in before you start reacting and be willing to ask follow-up questions to clarify what they mean.

Feedback is meant to help you get better, so while at first it might come across as insulting, they're offering it to your for your benefit.
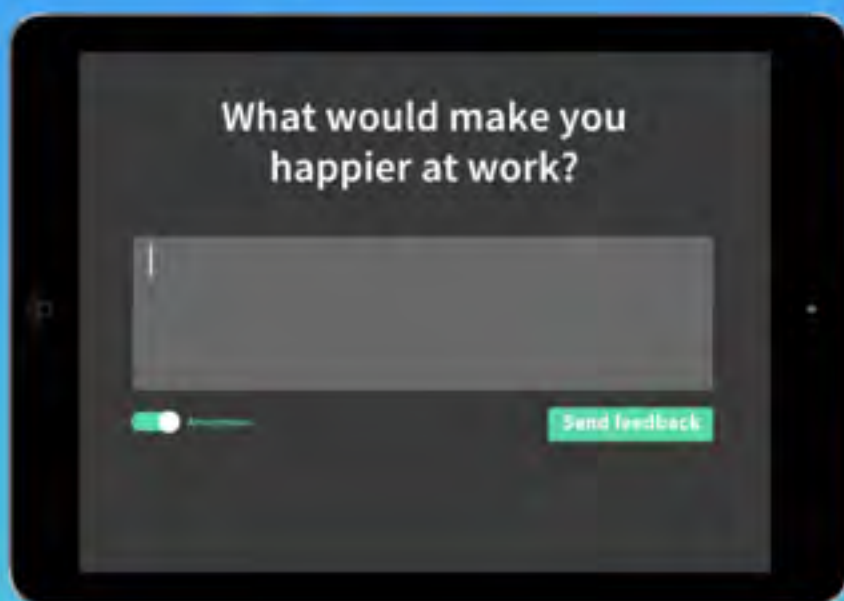
WHAT MAKES US HAPPY

An employee's happiness level is one of the most important things to measure.

It's obvious that if an employee is happy at work, they'll be much more engaged and productive.

It also makes sense then that if an employee is happy outside of work, that will translate into them being happier at work. The same is true if the employee is unhappy outside of work.

It's a bit tricky, because, as an employer, there are limits to how personal you can get with an employee.

Regardless, it's important that you check in and make sure that they are happy both outside of work, and at work.

A group of researchers in the UK link happiness and productivity, suggesting that happy employees are 12% more productive.

As a leader, it's important to learn more about positive psychology, and to understand the science behind what makes us happy.

Martin Seligman, who essentially invented positive psychology, gave a very influential TED talk about three different kinds of happiness lifestyles:

The Pleasant Life

The Engagement Life

The Meaningful Life

Probably the most interesting part of his talk is his assertion that the pleasure lifestyle doesn't lead to long-lasting happiness.

Real happiness comes from finding meaning in what you do.

Tweet this

Here are a few ways to be happier, backed by science:

1 **Surround Yourself With Happiness**

A study done by *BMJ* group found that surrounding yourself with happiness will make you happier.

It's all about creating that positive energy. The trick is to have close relationships with people since it's been linked to us living longer.

2 **Exercise**

Many studies have found that exercise is the most effective mood-regulating behavior, because when you exercise, your body releases endorphins.

The key here is regularly exercising, and not necessarily the intensity or length of the workout itself. If you can make it a habit, and work it into your daily life, that will be the most effective.

3 Accept Failure

If you learn from your mistakes, then it's okay to make them. Research has shown that being able to accept failure, and learn how to deal with it will make you happier in the long run.

As we make progress through a project or task, that's what makes us happy, but along the way, you will hit many bumps and perhaps even fail. It's important to be able to embrace failure.

4   Think Positively

Research has shown that by thinking positive thoughts, we can become happier. Thinking positively is also known as the law of attraction and was popularized with the book *The Secret*.

The research shows that by nurturing a positive mindset we can improve happiness.

According to one study, if we can learn to appreciate the little things in life, and really focus on them, we can make ourselves happier.

5   Laugh Out Loud

What happens is, when we laugh, a chemical is released in the brain that makes us happier. When we laugh a lot, we trick our body into thinking that this is a continuous feeling.

The same way that exercising regularly helps improve our happiness, so too has laughing and smiling been shown to have similar effects, according to one study.

6 **Meditate**

Meditation has been shown to rewire your brain to improve your sense of self and lead to increased happiness.

7 **Buy A Gift For Someone Else**

There's an incredible book that talks all about this; it's called *Happy Money*: *The Science of Smarter Spending*, and in it people around the world reported being happier when they spent money on others.

In fact, if you spend the money on someone you care about, you can increase your happiness even more, according to one study.

(8) Find A Work BFF

Humans are social creatures, so a great way to make yourself happier at work is to have a good friend. A study done at the London School of Economics found that socializing with colleagues is the only thing proven to make you as happy as when you're not at work. Similarly, Gallup found that if you have a close friend at work, you will be much more motivated and productive.

Ways To Measure Employee Happiness

Measuring employee happiness is an important part of understanding how engaged your employees are. Here are two ways I would recommend measuring employee happiness:

1

Niko Niko Calendar

The Niko Niko calendar is originally a tool used in Agile project management to measure the success of a project.

Niko Niko means "smiley" in Japanese, and the way it is used in Agile is to track the mood of a project.

It's a pretty smart idea. Each day, employees put a sticker on a calendar to show how they are progressing with their tasks.

Traditionally, in Agile projects, you measure the number of features completed, but with the Niko Niko calendar, the project manager will look at the mood of the team.

If things are going well, then you would expect everyone to say that they are happy, whereas if things are going poorly, you would expect to see sad faces.

Instead of using this in a project management setting, use it to gauge the happiness level of your employees.

2 Self-Reporting

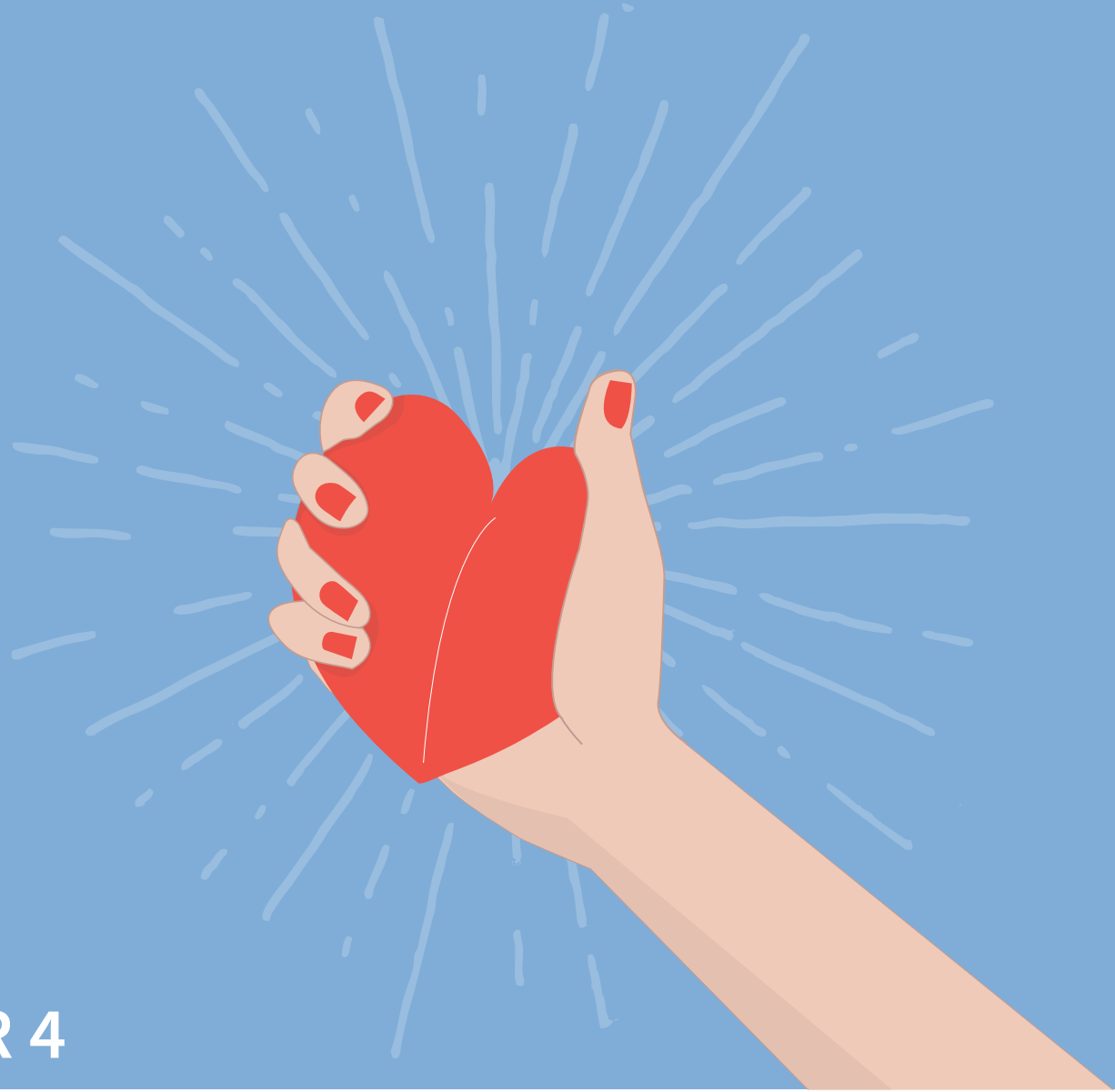Self-reporting is the most common way to measure someone's happiness.

Have employees report how they're feeling on a daily or weekly basis, and then measure that over time to find patterns and trends.

Tools like *Officevibe* or any employee engagement survey will let you collect that information.

See Officevibe in Action

See how Officevibe works

PILLAR 4

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS

Employee wellness is an important metric to be tracking.

There are many reasons why having healthy employees makes sense for your business, like lower absenteeism, and higher energy levels that will lead to more productivity.

There are plenty of easy and simple ways to increase employee wellness, but one of the best things you can do is educate yourself.

Managers and leaders need to be educated on the matter, and likewise, employees should become educated on how to increase wellness.

The more educated everyone is, the more efficient we will be at ensuring our wellness.

The real secret to becoming healthier is about building better habits into your life.

Tweet this

When you build better habits, or try to get rid of bad ones, one of the most important things you need is a good support system.

Your co-workers can be that support system.

There are three points that you need to think about when trying to increase employee wellness.

I'll go through each of them, and talk about simple ways you can implement these into your company.

The first point is to eat healthier. Healthy eating is even more important than exercising, and this is where education plays a huge role. If we know what's good for us, and what's not so good, we can start to make smarter decisions.

The second point is to exercise and move more in general. Most office jobs require us to sit all day, which is terrible for us, and is doing an immense amount of damage.

The third point (and this is probably the hardest one of the three) is to manage stress.

Stress does a lot of damage to your body, and we often are faced with stress at work. Whether it's because of our boss, a client, or both, stress is abundant in the workplace.

We need to find ways to deal with and manage the stress for our well-being.

🐦 Tweet this

Eating Healthier

We all need to start eating healthier. We need to learn what food is doing to our body, and how it affects our energy levels.

There are two foods that are very common in our society that can be both harmful for us and the environment. The first one is bread, and the second one is meat.

It is very hard to cut both of these out of your diet completely, but you should cut down on these foods as much as possible.

- Bread is high in carbs and spikes sugar levels very quickly.

- Bread contains gluten, a protein that has glue-like properties that damage the wall of the digestive tract, causing pain, bloating, and fatigue.

- Bread contains phytic acid, which is a molecule that binds minerals like calcium, iron, and zinc, and prevents them from being properly absorbed.

- Bread has very little nutrients to begin with, and things like gluten and phytic acid reduce the absorption of other nutrients.

- Bread made from sprouted grains are more nutritive and easier to digest. Kamut and Spelt bread are also good replacements.

It would also serve you well to avoid eating too much meat. Not only is meat not good for you, but it's horrible for the environment.

Consider cutting meat from your diet for these two reasons:

1 **There are a lot of antibiotics in meat**

Look at this statistic:

Out of all the antibiotics sold in the United States each year, 80 percent are used in agriculture, primarily to fatten animals and protect them from the conditions in which they are raised.

2 **Meat uses a lot of water**

Meat-eaters consume the equivalent of about 5,000 liters of water a day compared to the 1,000-2,000 liters used by people on a vegetarian diet in developing countries.

Did you know that in California today, you may save more water by not eating a pound of beef than you would by not showering for six entire months?

So what should you be eating instead?

Things like nuts, seeds, berries, fruits, vegetables, etc. Essentially, anything natural.

Include these in your diet whenever possible:

1. Garlic

Garlic has lots of antibacterial, and antiviral benefits, and also has important anti-cancer properties.

2. Kale

It's sometimes called "the new beef" or "the queen of greens", or "the nutritional powerhouse," because it's low in calories, high in fiber, and has zero fat. It's also high in iron, vitamin K, A, and C, and is filled with powerful antioxidants. It's a true superfood.

3.Onions

Onions can lower blood levels of cholesterol, and can also help increase bone density. It has important anti-inflammatory benefits and has been shown to lower the risk of many cancers.

4. Avocados

Avocados are one of the best foods for heart health. They help prevent inflammation and also has many anti-cancer benefits.

5. Beets

Beets are a great source of iron, and guards against cancer. They are very low calorie and are considered a fiber food. They might even help you lose weight.

6. Cabbage

Some of the health benefits include cancer prevention, an excellent source of Vitamin C, high in manganese, and has anti-inflammatory nutrients. It also helps support the digestive tract.

7. Almonds

Almonds lower your cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.

8. Quinoa

One of the most protein-rich foods. It has almost twice as much fiber as most other grains.

9. Maca

Maca is rich in Vitamin B vitamins, Vitamin C and E. It provides plenty of Zinc, Iron, Magnesium, and amino acids. Many athletes take Maca for peak performance, and it can also help manage your hormones.

Getting More Exercise

Like I mentioned earlier, most office jobs don't allow for much movement, so it's up to us to make that extra effort to move more.

Just getting up every 30 minutes for a quick walk can make all the difference.

Seriously, sitting is killing you, and has even been called "the new smoking." We weren't meant to live like this. Humans are meant to be nomadic and move around.

Look at some of these very scary statistics on the effects of sitting all day:

1. People who sit for the majority of their day have a 54% greater risk of dying from a heart attack.

2. According to a survey, if you sit for more than 4 hours a day, you're much more likely to suffer from chronic ailments like heart disease and diabetes.

3. A study done in 2011 found that every hour of TV people watched after the age of 25 was linked to 22 minutes taken off from their life expectancy.

4. People who sit less have a lower risk of kidney disease.

5. Men who spent more than 23 hours a week watching TV and sitting in their cars (as passengers or as drivers) had a 64% greater chance of dying from heart disease than those who sat for 11 hours a week or less.

6. Sitting for elongated periods of time increases risk of death up to 40%

The trick to fixing all of this is to sit less and move more. Try taking the stairs instead of the elevator a few times a week, and weather and distance permitting, try walking or biking to work instead of driving. At the very least, make it a point to get up from your desk and stretch a bit. It seems trivial but it will make all the difference.

Consider these other ways to move more:

1 **Walking Meetings**

According to research at Stanford University, people are more creative when they're walking. Another study out of Germany found that your short-term memory improved when you're walking.

2 **Take All Phone Calls Standing Up**

There are two main benefits I see with this one.

Besides sitting less, you can walk around, use your hands, and be more animated on the phone. And also, you can shorten the time it takes and avoid idle chit-chat.

3 Buy A Stand Up Desk

Stand up desks don't have to be expensive depending on how you do it, but they're a great way to avoid sitting all day.

Ideally, if you can afford one of the desks that adjust, that will allow you to stand for a few hours, and sit for a few hours, depending on how you're feeling.

4 Measure And Optimize

Invest in tools like Jawbone and Fitbit to measure your health, and use the data to make improvements in your life.

Remember, you can't improve what you can't measure.

4,812 steps

2.17 miles

1,447 calories burned
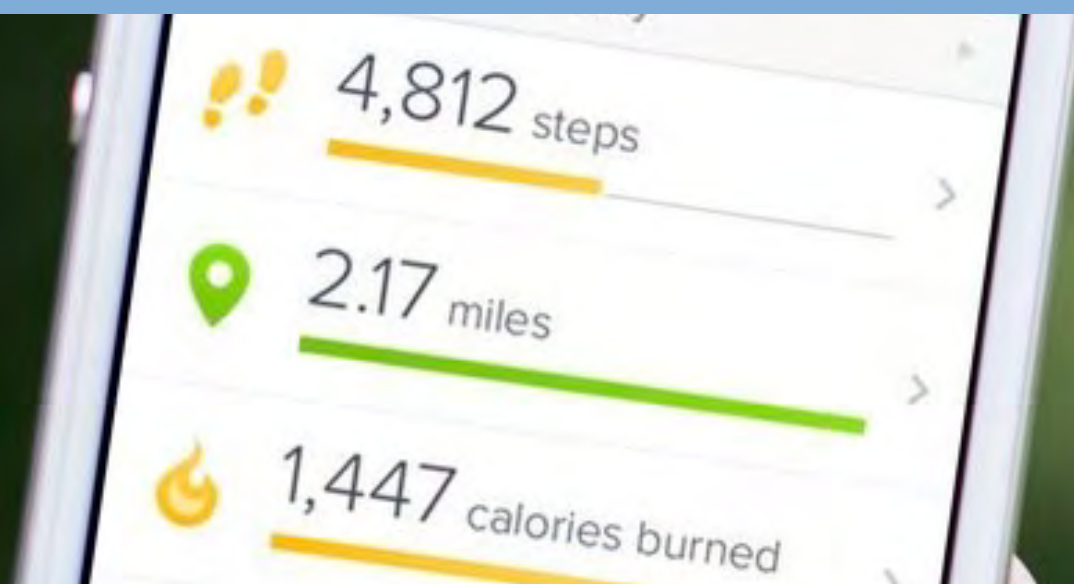
Managing Your Stress

Too much stress can lead to employee burnout.

Employee burnout can have huge negative effects on your company, both financially and emotionally.

Tweet this

Stress is natural, and we'll never be able to entirely rid of it from our lives. Some people say that a bit of stress is a good thing, because it shows passion and dedication.

Either way, we should all try and learn how to manage our stress.

Things like exercise and eating properly help, because they help regulate our moods, which play a big factor in how susceptible we are to stress, as much of stress is perception.

45
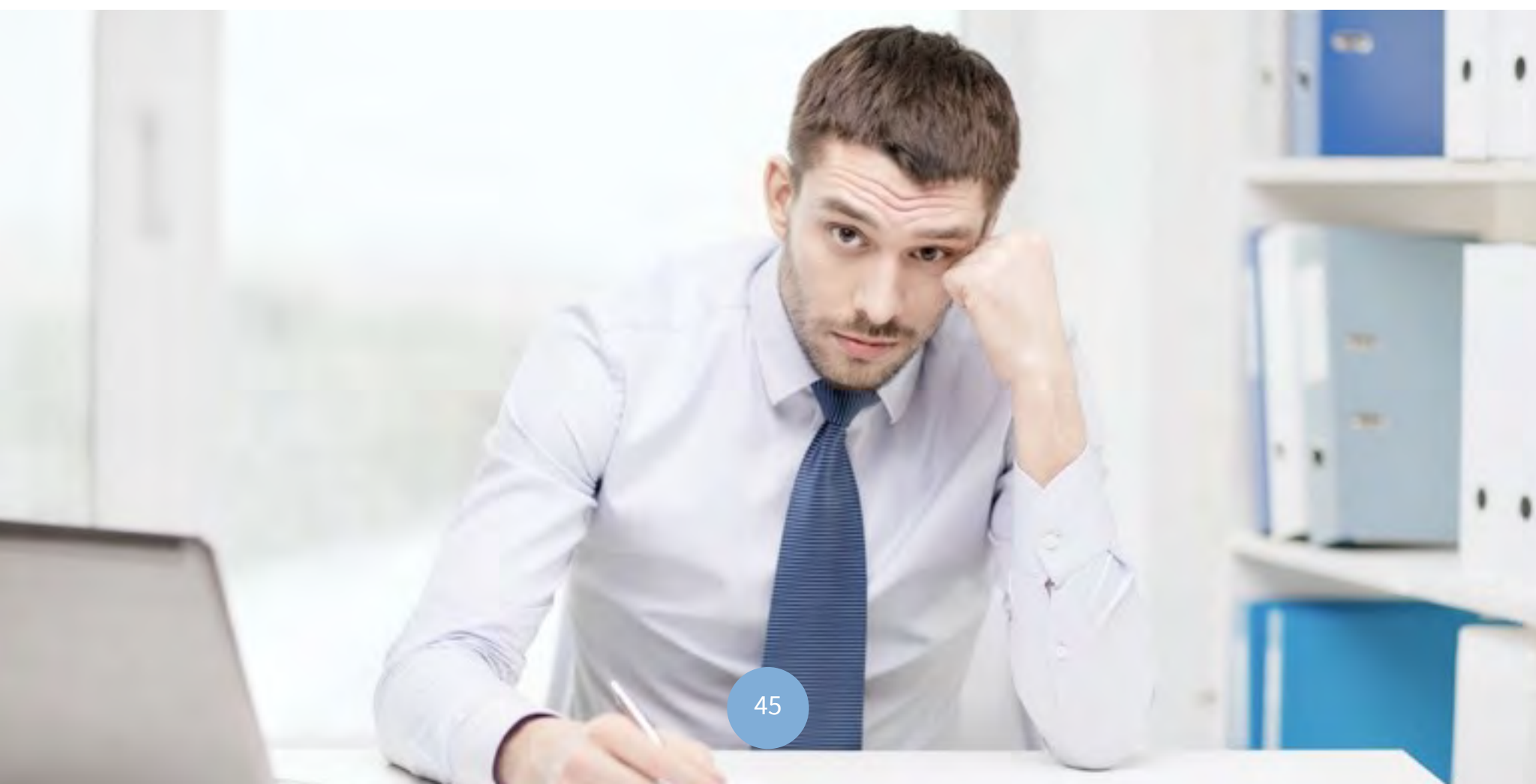
Another thing you can do to manage your stress is to meditate.

Meditation has amazing benefits when it comes to managing stress.

Mindful meditation helps control the part of the brain that handles emotions, which consequently helps manage stress levels. It's also been found to decrease cortisol, which is a stress hormone.

While you're meditating, deep breathing helps relax the body and lower the heart rate, which ultimately lowers your stress level.

Another great thing you need to do is take more downtime.

Every employer should be actively encouraging a healthy work-life balance.

Remember that downtime is not only an important way to reduce stress, but it will make you more productive.
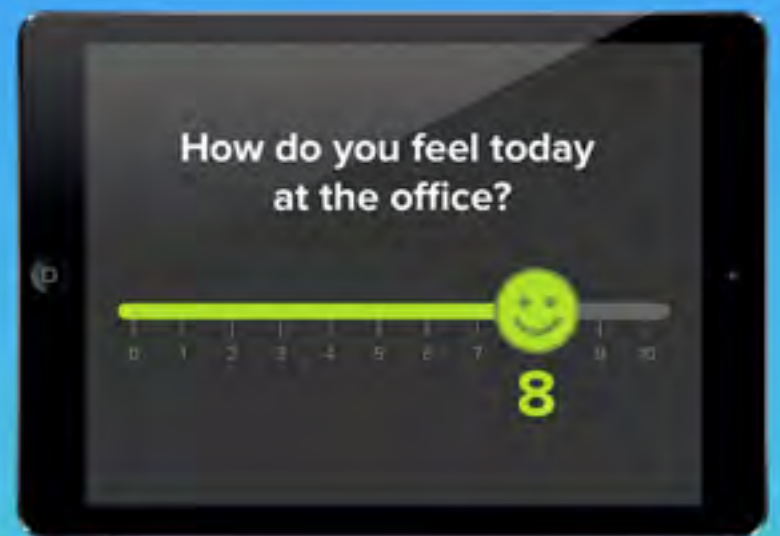
What's important to understand about downtime is that what matters more than anything is how you use your downtime.

An amazing study found that university employees who reported thinking negatively about their work were even more exhausted when they came back to work.

PILLAR 5

YOU AND YOUR BOSS

75% percent of people that quit their jobs quit their bosses.

This number should be pretty telling about what matters to an employee, and how easily an employee can be disengaged.

Your relationship with your direct manager or a boss can have a huge effect on your health.

According to a study at the Stress Institute in Stockholm,

Employees with managers who were incompetent,
inconsiderate, secretive and uncommunicative,
were 60% more likely to suffer a heart attack
or other life-threatening cardiac condition.

It's so important that managers understand what to do make an employee happy and engaged and that they actively work on it.

In recent years, we've seen a shift in how managers view their employees, and a new consideration for how employees should be treated.

Traditionally, employees were treated as numbers on a sheet. Leaders didn't care about their personal lives, and they kept work and personal relationships separate.

This isn't the case anymore.

Smart leaders understand that now it takes a certain level of connection, and a certain level of interest to help employees grow.

More and more, employees personal lives are spilling over into their professional lives and they are starting to blend more than ever.

Employee engagement and having happy, productive employees comes down to treating people with respect.

To be able to treat your employees with respect, you need to be able to understand them, what they're going through, and what's on their minds.

One of the most important skills that a leader can have is empathy.

A study conducted by the Center for Creative Leadership found that empathy is positively related to job performance.

The study found that managers who show more empathy toward employees are viewed as better performers by their bosses.

Empathy is something that can be learned and is something that all managers should practice.

When managers are more empathetic, they have a better understanding of their employees and therefore can motivate them more.

Google famously found out what it takes to be a great manager by analyzing data from hundreds of their employee surveys about managers.

Google called this Project Oxygen and it was one of the most data-driven reports on what it takes to be a great boss.

Since *Google* is a very autonomous company to begin with, they wondered if managers were doing more harm than good, and so they got rid of all of them.

What they ended up finding out was that managers do matter, but they have to be good.

Bad managers cause harm while good managers help employees grow.

By looking at all of their data, Google was able to come up with eight traits that make a great leader.

1. They are a good coach.

2. They empower their team and don't micromanage.

3. They express a genuine interest for team members' success and personal well-being.

4. They are productive and results-orientated.

5. They are good communicators.

6. They help with career development.

7. They have a clear vision for the team.

8. They have the necessary technical skills that help them advise the team.

In addition to the eight behaviors of a good manager,*Google* also narrowed down he top 3 causes for why managers are struggling in their role:

1. They had a tough transition (e.g. suddenly promoted, hired from outside with little training).

2. They lack a consistent approach to performance management and career development.

3. They spend too little time on managing and communicating.

Google now uses this data to help struggling managers and reward top managers.

From their Think With Google page:

We regularly survey employees about their managers, and then use that information to publicly recognize the best managers and enlist them as teachers and role models for the next year. The worst managers receive intense coaching and support, which helps 75 percent of them get better within a quarter.

The key here is that it's a relationship.

You can use a lot of the tips and best practices from a romantic relationship to understand how you can have a better relationship with your manager.

It's a two-way street, meaning both parties have to be equally committed to make it work. Basically, reciprocation.

It needs to be based on trust, and the relationship should grow stronger over time, through frequent feedback and coaching sessions.

YOU AND YOUR CO-WORKERS

Human beings are social creatures. It makes sense therefore that they would want to be social at work, and be friends with the people they are spending so much time with.

Too often, managers will discourage this type of social interaction, and view it as a distraction from work, when in fact, it's making employees more productive.

After years of research, Gallup found that to measure employee engagement, you only need to ask 12 questions.

They call this their Q12 survey.

One of the questions on there is "do you have a best friend at work?" There's a reason for this.

They understand the importance of having someone they consider a true friend at

Gallup found that employees who report having a best friend at work were:

- 43% more likely to report having received praise or recognition for their work in the last seven days.

- 37% more likely to report that someone at work encourages their development.

- 35% more likely to report co-worker commitment to quality.

- 28% more likely to report that in the last six months, someone at work has talked to them about their progress.

- 27% more likely to report that the mission of their company makes them feel their job is important.

- 27% more likely to report that their opinions seem to count at work.

- 21% more likely to report that at work, they can do what they do best every day.

A doctoral thesis by researcher Helen Stockhult found that:

> Social relationships between colleagues
> is at the root of an employee's willingness
> to take on responsibilities beyond
> their formal job description.

A study was done at the University of Wharton that showed that if you help someone for 10-30 minutes per day, you feel LESS time constrained, which seems completely counter-intuitive at first, but then when you think about it, it might make sense.

Helping someone makes you feel more confident and more capable of doing things.

Here are a few ways that you can become closer with your co-workers.

All of these ideas don't cost anything, and might be very obvious, but it's important to be reminded of them.

1 **Spend More Time With Them**

Eat lunch with your colleagues, take a coffee break with them, just spend some time with them.

You can also try talking to them about non-work related things, and see if you have anything in common (I bet you will).

2 **Be Friendly**

Being friendly is something that I (unfortunately) don't see enough of.

It's important to say good morning, goodbye, ask co-workers how their day is going, etc.

Studies have shown that feeling ignored at work is even worse than being bullied and has incredible effects on engagement levels.

You want to work with happy, productive people, so make sure to include them in your day.

3 ### Attack Problems Head On

It's very possible that there's a co-worker that's getting under your skin, or you just don't like for whatever reason.

A common response to that would be to ignore them, to avoid any confrontation.

It's important to deal with that issue right away, to avoid any negativity. Try and talk to your co-worker and figure out what's going on, and how you can fix it.

4 ### Don't Judge

With millennials about to make up most of the workforce very soon, they are the most diverse group of workers in the history of employment.

It's important to let go of any preconceived notions you may have about any race, religion or sex, and understand that everyone brings value to the organization.

Their diverse backgrounds help you understand how to market or sell to that community, so their insight is very valuable.

5 Praise Each Other

Research from *Deloitte* found that praise means more when it comes from your colleagues rather than your manager.

This makes sense, since they're closer to the work.

Your colleagues have a better understanding of what you're doing on the day to day, so the praise is more authentic when it comes from them.

Similar to the relationship with your manager, this relationship is built on a foundation of trust and mutual respect.

You're a family, working together to achieve
a common goal.

There's no time or place for any ignorance or any corporate politics; everyone should be thinking with the mindset of collaboration instead of competition.

This is especially true for millennials, but everyone feels this way.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Personal growth is an important emotional metric to be measuring, for the simple reason that it's what motivates people to do better work.

Made famous in Dan Pink's TED talk called *The Puzzle of Motivation*, and his book *Drive*, autonomy, mastery, and purpose are what count to an employee.

Autonomy, mastery, and purpose are the three key ingredients to personal growth.

Let's go through each of them quickly, and then I'll talk about how you can measure and improve them.

Autonomy

Autonomy is incredibly important for our drive and motivation. We need to feel a sense of ownership in our work, and we need to feel like we've made decisions around what we do and how we do it.

Mastery

Mastery is mastering whatever skill you have for your work. So if you're a graphic designer, the goal is to become the most skilled, most knowledgeable graphic designer out there. This need for expertise in whatever field you're in is a huge motivator for everyone.

Purpose

Employees need to feel a higher purpose and a stronger connection with their work and their company. They need to feel as if they're doing something that's bigger than them, and that they are serving a higher purpose.

The Science Behind Personal Growth

There is a lot of science behind why this is important, and how this leads to measurable results.

In a study conducted at California State University, the researchers wanted to test autonomy at work, and how it affected motivation. They split people into two groups and gave them both a relatively difficult task.

One group was given a difficult but interesting task, while the second group was given an easy but boring task.

The people who worked on the more interesting task performed better, despite it being harder.

The researchers also found that in the third task they would work on, the group that did the interesting task performed better. So that good energy followed them even into further tasks.

A 2014 study by *Deloitte* found that an organizational focus on purpose leads to higher levels of confidence among employees and managers, and drives business growth.

Also, according to a 2010 Burson-Marsteller/IMD Corporate Purpose Impact study, a strong and well-communicated company purpose can contribute up to 17% improvements in financial performance.

Measuring And Improving

The simplest and arguably most accurate way of measuring all of this is to ask your employees what they think. Do they have enough autonomy? Are they improving their skills? Do they understand the bigger purpose behind what they're doing?

This can all be done using an informal survey, but it's important to collect this information to know where you stand.

These three things, especially purpose, have been proven to motivate and drive people to do good work.

If these things are low, it's important that as an organization, you're working on improving all of this.

Here is what you need to do to improve this:

1 **Give Them More Autonomy**

Even if it's perceived autonomy, employees need to feel that sense of ownership, like they made that decision.

You can give employees autonomy by letting them choose what to work on, or encouraging side projects to give them that sense of control.

Also, remember not to micromanage employees. It's okay to offer help and support, but give them the freedom they deserve.

2   Help Them Master Skills

Having an employee master skills makes sense for the company as well, because you'll have an incredibly skilled employee.

You should be encouraging them to take online classes or other workshops to help them improve their skills and expand their knowledge.

Improving your craft and learning new skills for your job is an important factor for motivation.

3 Remind Them Of The Purpose

Employees need to understand why they're doing what they're doing.

It can be pretty demotivating to think that what you're doing for your work doesn't matter and is meaningless. Make sure that you explain the bigger picture to your employees.

For example, if you're working for a pharmaceutical company, instead of being a company that makes pills, remind your employees that you're saving lives, or helping to fix someone's problem.

It's important to continuously remind them of the *why* they do what they do, because it's something that can be forgotten in the bustle of the work day.

The more you remind them of it, the more they'll feel a connection to the company and a sense of pride for what they do.

Once they feel that sense of pride, their performance and productivity will go up.

COMPANY ALIGNMENT

A company's core values serves as the guide for everything else.

Everything becomes much clearer when you have your core values defined. Also, hiring for culture fit becomes so much easier because you have all of your "requirements" written down already.

As an employee, when joining a new company, if you align yourself with the company's core values, that is the definition of a good culture fit.

A company in Chicago called *Tasty Catering* has built a culture that relies heavily on their core values to drive decision-making. By paying constant attention to the importance of their core values, the staff developed characteristics like respect and autonomy. As a result, employees found a way to cut food costs by remarkable margins and grew sales by 10% and profit 142% in a single year.

> The vision and mission of the company become much clearer and all of the employees are now working towards one aligned, unified goal.

🐦 Tweet this

If you don't have any of your core values defined yet, it's not that big of a deal.

Zappos, who is a leader in company culture, only created their core values after about 6 or 7 years. In a way, this is better, since now you have a better understanding of your business and the people in it.

You can use that knowledge to craft core values that are relevant to your company.

There are three important things to consider when talking about how to measure and improve what I'll call "company knowledge."

1 **Core Values Knowledge**

This might seem obvious, but it's important that all of the employees know both the core values and the mission of the company.

Often, employees don't know what the mission is and so they're lost, which is a huge issue because they need to be able to relate to and align with these values.

2 **Core Values Alignment**

It's one thing to know the core values of the company, and it's a completely different thing to be able to align yourself with those values.

If you're able to align yourself with these values, believe in them, and live them even outside of work. You'll then you'll have a true connection to your company.

3

Company History Knowledge

It's important for employees to understand the history of the company they're working for.

How did it all start? Is the story inspiring? These types of things will help employees understand the purpose and vision and ultimately the core values will make more sense.

The employees will have more of an attachment to the company if they know the whole story. If an employee joins many years after its founding, they don't have the same appreciation as some of the employees that have been there longer.
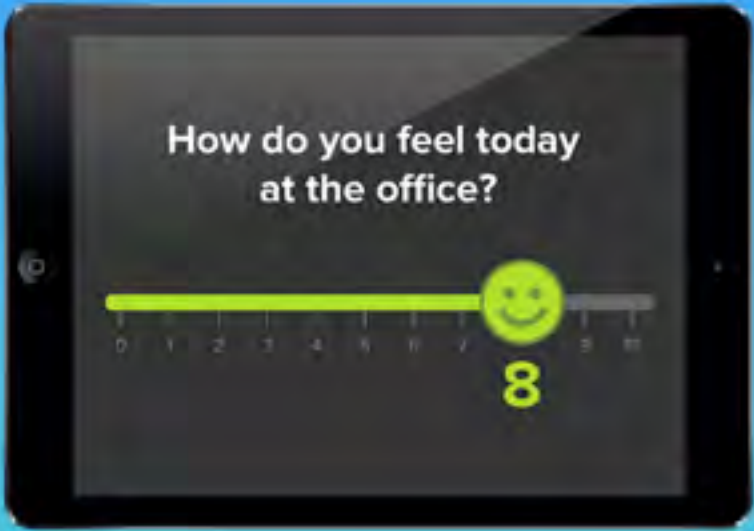
The main thing to think about when trying to measure and improve this is to tell your story.

There is no such thing as too much communication, and the more that your employees know and live the core values, the more aligned and focused everyone will be.

PILLAR 9

CAREER
SATISFACTION

When talking about career satisfaction, what I mean is how satisfied you are with your work in general.

This goes beyond salary and benefits; It has to do with whether you are being challenged enough, if you like the environment you work in and whether you have the right tools to help you do your job, etc.

Once you pay someone fairly enough, so that money is off the table, these are the types of things that will continue to motivate an employee.

Let me go one by one, and explain how you measure career satisfaction.

1

Salary And Benefits

You need to be paying your employees appropriately for the amount of work they do. Otherwise they will feel as if they are getting cheated. This is what's known as equity theory, and it says that an employee needs to feel as if the exchange is equal for both parties.

So many companies offer amazing benefits in the hopes of attracting top talent to their company, so it is becoming more competitive than ever.

If you can't afford to compete with all of the perks that companies offer, you can potentially make up for it in equity.

Once an employee is invested in the company (financially and emotionally), they'll be much more committed to the organization's goals.

If you're not okay with giving up equity, and still can't afford certain perks, you can get creative, and offer things that don't cost money, like flexible schedules, autonomy, etc..

2 **Workload Satisfaction**

This is a bit of a tricky one, and you can't afford to overdo it, or under do it.

For a worker to be satisfied, they have to work on tasks that are slightly challenging. If they're too hard, then the employee will become disengaged out of fear.

If a task is too easy, they'll also become disengaged because of how bored they are. People have a genuine interest in mastery, and growing their knowledge, so they're not afraid of working on a task that's challenging, but again, it can't be too challenging.

Dan Pink calls this a Goldilocks task, and several experts have called this Flow.

What they're referring to, is a state of mind where you lose yourself in what you're doing. I'm sure everyone has experienced this before, where you don't even realize how long you've been working on whatever you're working on, because you're so engaged in the work.

The best advice I can give for this is to have open and honest communication, so that an employee can express if their work is too easy for them, or if they're finding it too hard.

3 Clarity Of Expectations

This is a mistake that way too many companies make.

You know the expression about not assuming? Don't assume that an employee understands what you as a manager expects from them. You need to be constantly communicating this.

This lack of communication will inevitably lead to problems. Either the manager will be disappointed or the employee will be confused (or both), but either way, this is something that needs to be avoided.

Frequent feedback is very important, and there is no such thing as too much communication.

Remind employees over and over again about what is expected from them in their current role. Once they know, everyone can agree on goals to achieve, and you can discuss how you'll achieve them.

4

Enablement

Not having the right tools to do your job can have an effect on you engagement level.

If you want to ensure maximum productivity, invest in the proper equipment for your employees, it will make their jobs easier, and make them better at what they do.

I once worked for a company where the designers wanted to work with Mac computers, however their office only used PC's. This caused them to complain about how much longer each task took them.

This naturally made them less happy than if they were able to work on a Mac.

I understand that every employee can't have the fanciest equipment and the nicest office, but within reason, it makes sense to enable your employees to be their best.

5

Work Environment

Is your office too noisy? Too cold? Too hot?

People need to be comfortable in their work environment for them to be engaged and productive.

Open offices are all the rage these days, but when you need some quiet time to concentrate, they can be pretty distracting.

If an employee is constantly complaining about the office environment, one idea might be to let them work from home. Remote workers have been shown to be more engaged and more productive.

PILLAR 10

AMBASSADORSHIP

Are your employees brand ambassadors?

Would they promote your company for you when they go home after work?

How many employees do you have that would promote your company? If it's a lot of them, then it's safe to assume that you're doing something right.

This is often referred to as the Net Promoter Score (NPS).

NPS is originally a customer service tool.

The way it works, is you ask a customer a simple question:

> On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you
> to recommend our product/service to a friend?

Scores 6 or lower are known as detractors, 6-8 are known as neutral, and 8-10 are known as promoters.

To get your score, you take the number of promoters, minus the number of detractors, and divide by the total number of answers.

Any score over 50% is considered excellent.

In product management, it's the best way to know if your product is good, because the theory is if someone is willing to recommend your product to a friend, then they like it.

Instead of using it for customer service, use it to gauge how employees feel about your company.

Ask them: "On a scale of 0-10, how likely are you to recommend working here?" Another question you could ask would be "On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend our products/services?" The beauty of asking your employees this question instead of your customers is that your employees hold your company to a higher standard, so they'll be tougher (but more honest) with you. :

You should also ask employees this question over time, to see if your scores are improving. This question is so great because it's very direct and to the point; there should be no ambiguity here, and your score will tell you if you have a problem.

I also like the idea of using "proxy questions" in this context, to see if an employee would be a true brand ambassador. For example, if an employee has a t-shirt with the company logo on it, would they ever wear it outside of work? If they say yes, that's a subtle way of showing pride for your company.
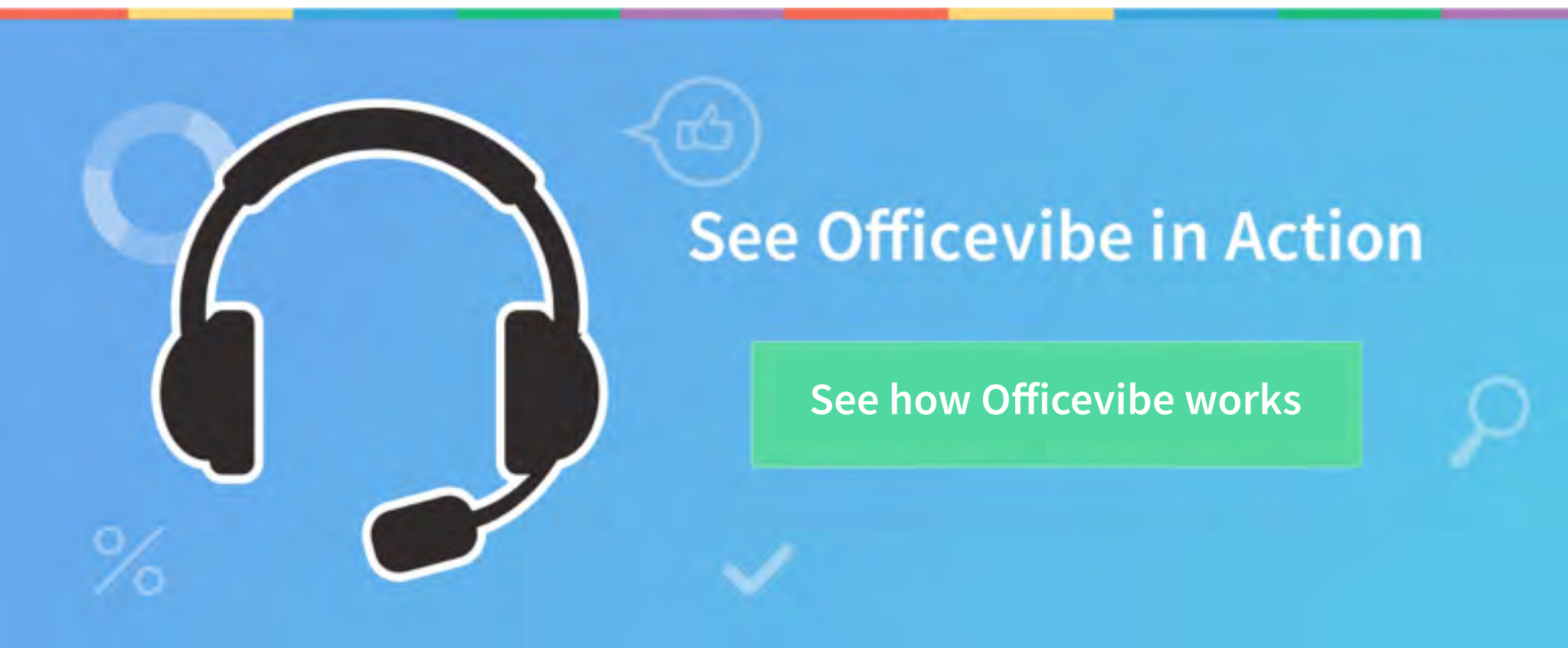
CONCLUSION

Companies can no longer afford to simply pay an employee and leave them alone. Employees want to be engaged on a deeper level, and feel an emotional attachment to a company.

Companies that want to be serious about company culture and employee engagement will measure and monitor these types of metrics over time, and will optimize and improve all the time.

It's not enough to measure things like time to hire and cost per hire; those things won't matter so much in the future, because those are less important than true drivers of engagement.

There has been a ton of research in recent years about the neuroscience behind all of these emotions.

There is a lot of research showing that if employees are happier, they'll be more productive, if managers are more empathetic, they'll be perceived better, and achieve higher results.

Managers should learn how to lead with and increase their emotional intelligence.

If you're a manager reading this, please sign up for this free online course called Inspiring Leadership Through Emotional Intelligence.

Your company should be conducting employee engagement surveys that measure these things on a regular basis.

It could be once a month, asking 5-10 questions that will measure a mix of these metrics, so two questions on happiness, two questions on the relationship with their manager, etc.

If you're looking to increase your happiness, or looking for a great course to recommend to your employees, The Science of Happiness taught by UC Berkeley is an incredible course.

Your company should conduct employee engagement surveys that measure these things regularly. It could be once a month, asking 5-10 questions that will measure a mix of these metrics, so two questions on happiness, two questions on the relationship with their manager, etc.

Learn How To Measure & Improve Employee Engagement

A 15-minute presentation on the importance of employee engagement, how to measure it and how you can easily improve it.
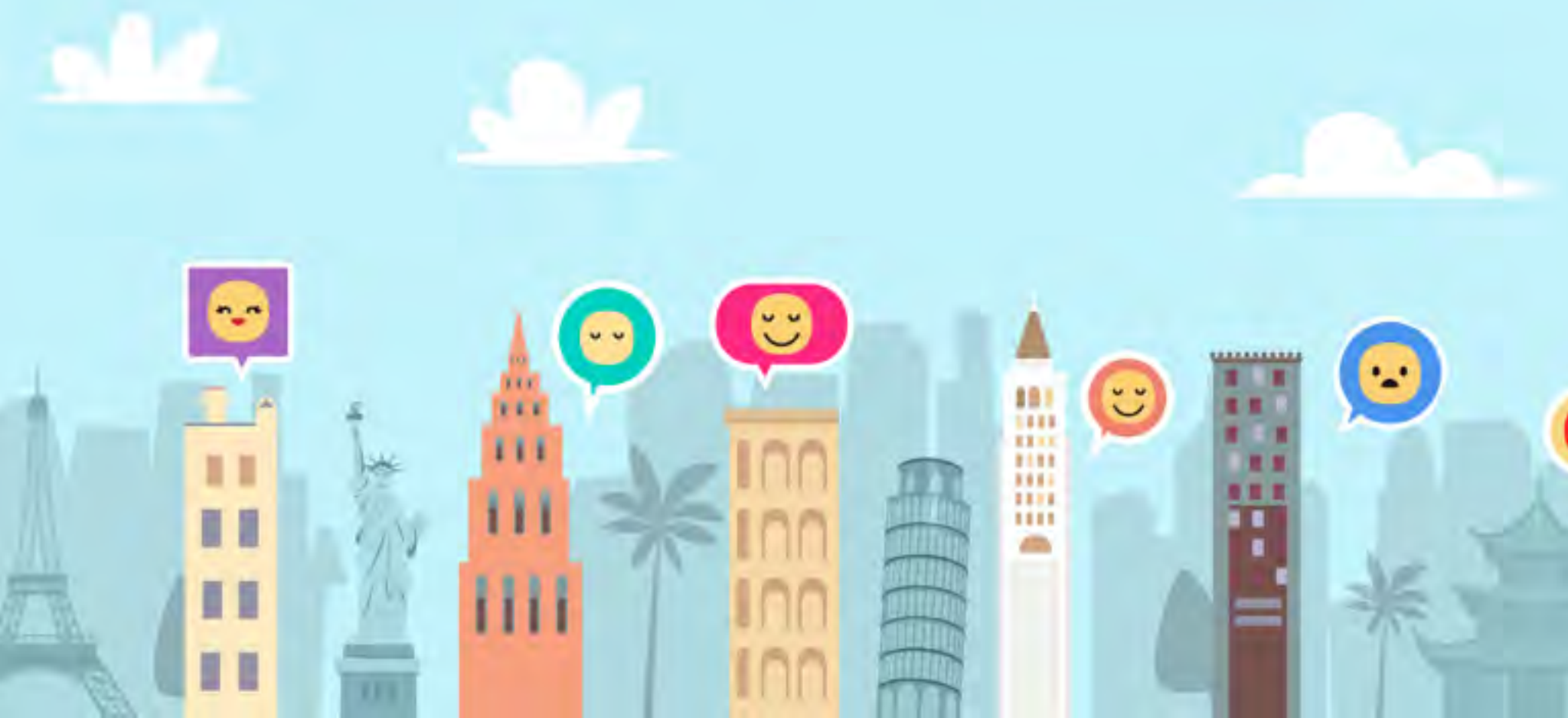
View Product Demo

The Best Employee Engagement Resources

Insights To Improve Your Company:
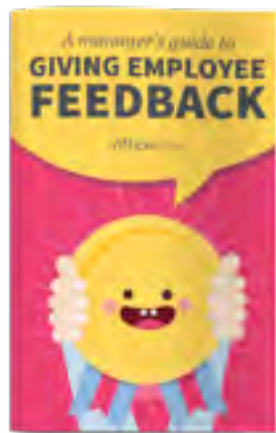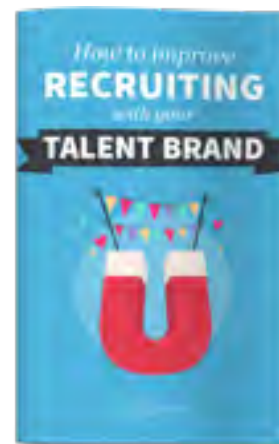

10 Essential Pillars Of
Employee Engagement

How To Improve Recruiting
With Your Talent Brand

15 Biggest Employee
Survey Pitfalls

The Ultimate Guide
To HR Analytics

See More!