

6 Key Essentials for Engaging and Retaining Top Talent

Best Practices to Enhance your Candidate and Employee Engagement Levels and Reduce Turnover Rates

| An iCIMS White Paper



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Employee engagement and retention is emerging as the greatest challenge facing leading organizations' Talent Management initiatives. Similar to past periods of economic instability, executives are currently focusing their attention on the financial aspects of the organization rather than the workforce. Similarly, managers are placing less emphasis on employee engagement as soaring unemployment rates often lead to the notion that employees are happy to be employed at all, and that further engagement is unnecessary. This state of mind is very dangerous for businesses as it is during these times of economic instability that workers need to be engaged and feel valued the most. With economic instability and layoffs comes the erosion of employee loyalty and trust, both of which negatively affect workforce engagement levels.

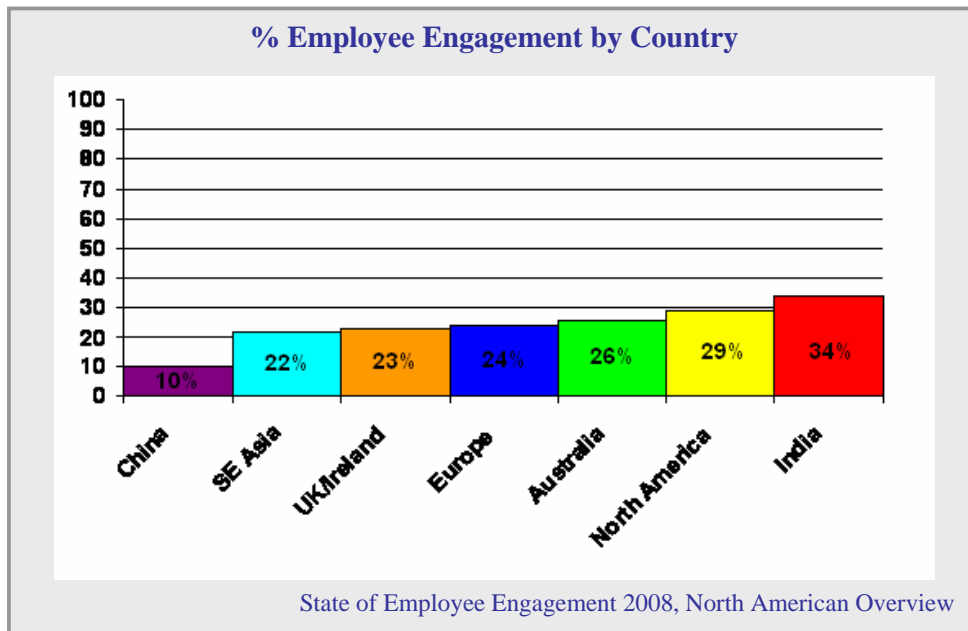
The Figures:

Only one third of the US workforce is fully engaged at their current position.

It is estimated that the US economy is presently running at 30% efficiency with only one third of US employees being fully engaged in their current positions¹. This low level of employee engagement has a strong correlation with high turnover rates, as engaged employees have 51% lower turnover rates². Turnover has also become increasingly expensive; the U.S. Department of Labor reports that employee turnover costs can be anywhere from 30% to 200% of a worker's annual salary and costs the US economy an estimated \$5 trillion annually³. It is important to note that these figures are not unique to the United States; countries all over the world are feeling the financial repercussions of an unengaged workforce⁴.

The Figures:

Employee turnover costs the US economy an estimated \$5 trillion annually.



¹ Gallup Consulting, "Employee Engagement: What's your Engagement Ratio?", www.gallup.com/.../Employee_Engagement_Overview_Brochure.pdf (2008).

² Gallup Consulting, (2008).

³ Journal of Business Strategy (2003). January/February: pg.3.

⁴ BlessingWhite, "The State of Employee Engagement 2008" *North American Overview* 04/08 (2008).



The Harvard Business Review defines engagement as “representing the energy, effort, and initiative employees bring to their jobs”. Innovative organizations engage both candidates and employees, reaping tangible as well as intangible benefits. There are clear correlations between employee engagement, performance, productivity and ultimately profitability. Studies have shown that engaged employees have⁵:

51% lower turnover
27% less absenteeism
18% more productivity
12% higher profitability

The Figures:

Engaged Employees have 51% lower turnover and 18% higher productivity.

Even during times of economic instability, forward thinking companies are investing in HR technology to support their talent management and, ultimately, engagement and retention processes. When used effectively, talent management technology streamlines and automates the entire talent lifecycle. Automation frees up recruiters to focus their efforts on engaging and retaining their top candidates. In addition, organizations leverage HR technology to minimize the repetitive administrative tasks previously overwhelming HR, allowing HR professionals to focus their efforts on engaging and retaining a productive workforce.

With these daunting statistics in mind, isn't it time organizations pay more attention to engaging and retaining their current candidate base and workforce? Below is a list of **Six Key Essentials for Engaging and Retaining Top Talent Throughout your Organization's Talent Lifecycle.**

Recruitment Cycle

Engaging and retaining talent begins during recruitment processes and feeds into employee management.

1) Develop an Employment Brand

Before an organization engages an extensive candidate pool, they must first develop a cohesive employment brand reflecting their vision for the future and long-term talent management needs. Employment branding should be viewed as a long term strategy; the brand image your organization promotes today will influence candidates' impression of your organization for years to come. A successful employment brand accurately reflects the employment experience of the current employee base as well as creates a theme that resonates with the desired new-hire demographic. Establishing an effective employment brand and gaining the reputation as a “great place to work” helps to ensure a continual stream of qualified applicants over extended periods of time, as well as decreases internal turnover rates. An organization's unique employment brand will not only work to attract highly qualified candidates, but ultimately keep them engaged throughout an extended recruitment process.

Best Practices:

Strategically develop a cohesive employment brand reflecting your organization's vision for the future and long term talent management needs.

⁵ Gallup Consulting, “Employee Engagement: What's your Engagement Ratio?,” www.gallup.com/.../Employee_Engagement_Overview_Brochure.pdf (2008).



While prominently reflecting your employment brand in outgoing correspondence with candidates and current employees is a best practice, it is only the beginning. Your employment brand needs to be an integral part of your organization's everyday recruitment and talent management processes. If your employment brand reflects of culture of continuous improvement and knowledge sharing, that culture should be evident to new hires from day one. Having employees live and breath your employment brand is the best way to gain recognition.

Best Practices:

Make your employment brand an integral part of your organization's everyday recruitment and talent management processes.

2) Maintain a Robust Pipeline

Actively recruiting companies are considered the strongest and most viable. These companies view hiring freezes as opportunities to expand their pipelines and ear mark candidates for future employment opportunities. Building an effective pipeline goes beyond collecting and managing resumes. Effective pipelines are composed of qualified candidates ready to work at a moment's notice. Ideally, pipelined candidates have already been screened or interviewed and your recruiters are waiting to match them with the ideal job opening⁶.

Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) plays a central role in effective candidate pipelining. CRM is the practice of building, and more importantly maintaining, meaningful relationships with candidates to keep them engaged throughout an extended recruitment process. An effective CRM program involves ongoing communication with both passive and active candidates and strategic marketing communications targeted at certain demographics of a candidate pool. Effective CRM programs use a variety of mediums to engage their pipeline, including: branded electronic postcards, promotional offerings, company newsletters and so much more. To maximize their CRM program, a growing number of recruiters are leveraging CRM software technology to streamline their processes and ensure consistence⁷. Once this robust pipeline of engaged candidates is in place, it is important for recruiters to take advantage of it; a well-managed and well-utilized candidate pipeline has been shown to significantly lower overall recruiting costs.

Best Practices:

Develop a cohesive CRM program to engage your pipelined candidates and strengthen your employment brand.

3) Strive for an Ongoing Dialogue with Candidates

While building an extensive pipeline is essential for successful recruitment processes, it is equally as important to continually follow up with these candidates regarding their employment status. This is where most organizations fall short of effectively engaging candidates. Engaged candidates appreciate knowing where they stand in the extended recruitment cycle.

⁶ Pedro Silva, *5 Reasons to Continue Developing Your Candidate Pipeline*, ERE.Net, <http://www.ere.net/2009/05/18/5-reasons-to-continue-developing-your-candidate-pipeline/> (May. 18, 2009).

⁷ Marcia Prera, *Candidate Relationship Management: an Expense or Investment?*, <http://ezinearticles.com/?Candidate-Relationship-Management-An-Expense-or-Investment?&id=1021979> (Mar 3, 2008).



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An ongoing dialogue also keeps an organization's employment brand fresh in a candidate's mind. It is important to remember that qualified candidates are always being pursued by other recruiters and this ongoing communication helps your organization remain at the top of their list of perspective employers. While ongoing communication is important, it is even more important to be consistent. When recruiters remain in communication with candidates for the first half of the recruitment process and then abruptly stop, a candidate immediately thinks they are no longer being considered for employment. While it may sound obvious, see this ongoing dialogue all the way through. If a candidate is no longer being considered for a specific position- let them know.

Leveraging HR technology makes it easy for Recruiters to facilitate ongoing dialogue with active candidates. Many Talent Acquisition Solutions allow Recruiters to automatically trigger stock communications as candidates are moved through the recruitment process. Automatic email triggers ensure timely and consistent communication to more effectively engage candidates. This same idea is can also be applied to pipelined candidates, every x number of weeks a stock communication can be triggered.

Employment Cycle

After an organization has successfully engaged a candidate throughout the recruitment process, it is essential to keep the new-hire engaged throughout employment.

4) Training

First and foremost, an employee wants to feel valued; disengaged employees can often feel like "just another number." Employees have the highest engagement levels, and thus the least feelings of being devalued, in collaborative atmospheres where training, skill transferral and knowledge sharing are encouraged. Satisfaction with training and development are key factors affecting employee engagement, especially among Generation Y dominated talent pools⁸. By investing in an employee's professional development and providing extended training programs, organizations are sending out the message that they value this individual's employment.

As research has shown, a variety of factors contribute to high levels of employee disengagement. Offering employee training programs is an important step to improving employee engagement but it is important to take this training a step further and offer advanced trainings to managers. Certain schools of thought argue that poor management within an organization is the root of employee disengagement. Employee satisfaction with an organization is directly correlated with satisfaction with the immediate supervisor; unsatisfied employees are characteristically disengaged. To rectify these high levels of disengagement caused by poor management, industry leading organizations are implementing manager training programs to stimulate engagement and learning. Studies have shown that training managers in retention and engagement leadership

Best Practices:

Leverage HR Technology to set up triggers for automatic communication letting candidate know where they stand in the recruitment cycle.

Best Practices:

To increase employee engagement levels, strive to create a working environment where training, skill transferral and knowledge sharing are encouraged.

⁸ The Sloan Center on Aging & Work at Boston College. (2009, March) Engaging the 21st Century Multi-Generational Workforce: A Study for the MetLife Mature Market Institute.



competencies makes a difference. Some organizations are even holding managers accountable for the engagement levels and attrition of their individual teams.

5) Compensation

Research has shown that performance based compensation increases employee engagement and ultimately decreases attrition rates. Successful organizations utilize performance related compensation to reflect organizational values and reward employees for contributing to the larger organizational structure. Performance related compensation motivates employees and keeps them focused on critical success factors.

This compensation does not need to be monetary; instead it can be in the form of vacation days, summer Fridays, team lunches, and so on. A compensation system is not one size fits all; rather rewards systems are best crafted around employees' intrinsic motivators. What motivates one employee does not necessarily motivate another. The most successful compensation programs are often the result of collaborative efforts amongst employees and executives. It is important to customize reward programs around generational preferences and listen to employee suggestions.

Best Practices:

Implement some form of performance related compensation to motivate employees and keep them focused on critical success factors.

6) Open line of Communication

The final and arguably most important aspect of employee engagement is maintaining open lines of communication. During times of economic instability, it has become increasingly important to keep the lines of communication perpetually open. During times of frequent layoffs, it is a natural reaction, even of top performers, to worry about a pink slip. When employees are no longer experiencing job security, engagement levels plummet. It is during a critical time in which an organization needs its workforce to be the most efficient that open lines of communication are the most important.

Frequent meetings with supervisors help increase employees' sense of job stability and improves engagement. Supervisors should strive to create working relationships with all of their team members, becoming familiar with individual expectations, desires and even long-term goals within the larger organization. In a collaborative effort employees and supervisors create individual growth plans and share awareness of professional development opportunities. The highest levels of engagement are found amongst employees with clearly communicated paths of advancement and opportunities for growth.

Best Practices:

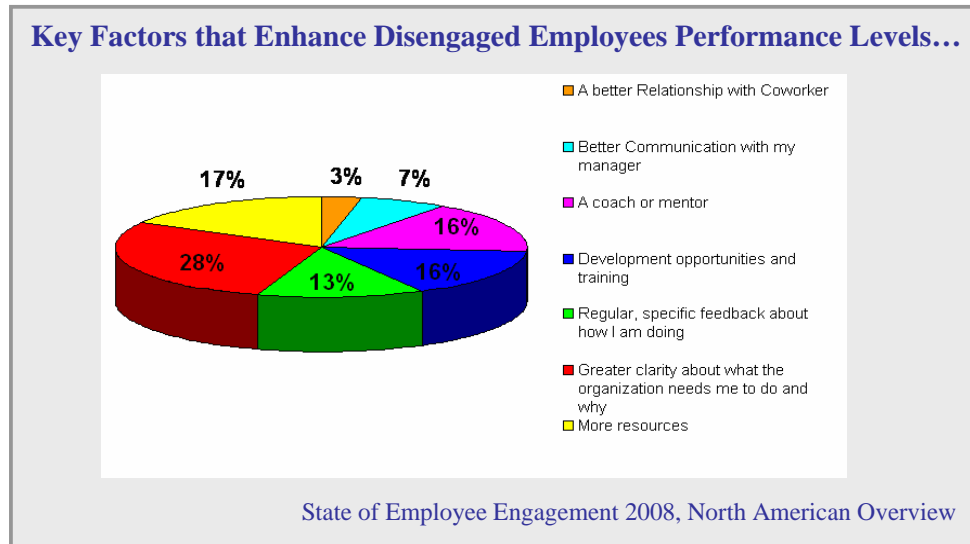
Utilize Employee Engagement Surveys to gain a deeper understanding of your workforce's career expectations and overarching goals.

Employee Engagement Surveys are another crucial aspect of open communication, after all, employees are the most valuable source of engagement insight. Ideally Engagement Surveys are conducted twice a year; these surveys help employers gain a dynamic perspective of their talent's career expectations, desires and even overarching goals⁹.

⁹ Insala, *Motivating and Retaining Top Talent through Employee Engagement*, <http://www.insala.com/Articles/employee-development/motivating-and-retaining-top-talent-through-employee-engagement.asp> (Aug. 5, 2008).



Engagement surveys also offer employees an opportunity to voice their opinions and offer suggestions to enhance their level of daily engagement. If employees are taking the time to complete a survey and offer suggestions, management needs to take the time to discuss and act on their suggestions. Failure to act on the results of Employee Engagement Surveys destroys an organizations credibility and translates to the workforce as “we do not respect or value your input”, ultimately increasing disengagement.



How iCIMS Can Help

iCIMS' Talent Platform automates and streamlines the end-to-end talent lifecycles of more than 750 industry leading organizations around the world. Offering candidate and employee self-service portals, applicant tracking, CRM, automated surveys, onboarding and employee data management, iCIMS helps organizations effectively increase candidate and employee engagement levels. iCIMS' configurable workflows and enhanced CRM features make building, maintaining and utilizing a robust candidate pipeline easier than ever.

iCIMS' Employee Self Service Portal, powerful Communication Center and automated iForms help organizations all over the world achieve high levels of employee engagement. Employee Self Service Portals can be configured to provide employees with one stop access to your organization's most important resources, including training schedules, performance reviews, engagement surveys and more. These Self Service Portals allow employees to take responsibility of their professional development and work to improve organizational-wide engagement. Furthermore, leveraging iCIMS' Talent Platform is also an easy way to ensure open and consistent lines of communication with your entire employee base.

iCIMS clients benefit from an unparalleled customer experience and award winning customer support teams. **Click here** to view an online demo today and see how iCIMS can reengage your talent!



Read this brief case study to discover how iCIMS helped Universal McCann dramatically increase their candidate engagement levels:

The Challenges

As an innovator in media communications, Universal McCann fosters a culture of curiosity, encouraging workers to continually seek knowledge, ask probing questions and use their imaginations. As Universal McCann grew into an international leader, their out-dated manual recruitment efforts could no longer keep up with their search for “curious” talent. As an organization, Universal McCann was attracting the right talent but it was taking recruiters too long to identify that talent amongst the hordes of other applicants. Qualified candidates were being lost to the “black hole” and it was nearly impossible to keep candidates engaged.

The Solution

In addition to searching for a technology provider to streamline and automate their talent acquisition processes, Universal McCann wanted a platform that would help foster their “culture of curiosity”. After evaluating a handful of competing vendors, iCIMS’ robust Communication Center, Candidate Relationship Management (CRM) features and configurable screening questions made it the solution of choice for Universal McCann. With the help of the iCIMS Talent Platform, Universal McCann can automate their talent acquisition processes and will no longer have to worry about losing qualified candidates to the black hole.

The Results

“Since implementing iCIMS’ Talent Platform, we have seen our **candidate engagement levels** go through the roof!” says Bryan Moll, Recruitment Manager. iCIMS helps Universal McCann build and support a robust pipeline of qualified candidates. More importantly, with the help of iCIMS’ communication center, Universal McCann can stay in touch with these pipelined candidates and keep them engaged for extended periods of time. Recruiters even periodically use branded HTML communications to peak candidate’s interest and encourage them to update their profiles or apply for recently posted jobs. Customizable screening questions are Universal McCann’s favorite feature in the Talent Platform. In addition to qualifying questions, Universal McCann created curiosity questions for candidates to answer during the application process. These questions allow candidates to express their ideas and creativity while giving recruiters a sense of the candidate’s ingenuity. This addition to the application process ensures that Universal McCann is attracting innovative thinkers who are job ready!

