

# The Relationship- Driven Workplace

HOW HUMAN INTERACTIONS & SMART DATA  
DRIVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



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# Relationships matter.

Humans have a basic need for belonging and connection. We're naturally motivated to develop and maintain personal bonds with others. And a lack of interpersonal relationships can negatively impact our health, our ability to adjust, and our well-being.<sup>1</sup>

The workplace is not exempt from our need to connect with the people around us. If employees don't feel connected to their managers, leaders, coworkers, and customers, engagement and performance will suffer.

**MANAGERS EXPERIENCE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS STRESS** when they feel they have a good relationship with their employees

**EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION INCREASES NEARLY 50%** when a worker develops a close relationship on the job



**22% OF EMPLOYEES** are less engaged at work because of workplace conflicts



**ONLY 5% OF WORKERS** strongly agree that their organization helps them build stronger personal relationships

Sources: American Psychological Association, [The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation](#); National Business Research Institute, [The Truth About Job Satisfaction and Friendships at Work](#); ScienceNordic, [Less Stress When Workplace Relationships are Good](#); The Business Journals, [How to Deal with Workplace Conflicts](#); Gallup, [The Business Case for Well-Being](#)

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# Your relationship data matters.

Modern engagement and performance platforms provide access to **A LOT** of data. This data can help tell an aggregate story of the employee experience at your organization. But to make a real impact on engagement outputs, you must measure your engagement inputs.

Think about how you measure your financial health. You can look at your credit score and determine the general state of your finances. But that won't give you any insight into why or how you got there.

The why and the how are important in determining what you should do to improve. You need to look at everything that impacts your credit score and other areas of your finances — including your income, spending, debt, savings, investments, insurance, and more.

It's the same with engagement and performance. You can't just look at your engagement score to see if you're improving, maintaining, or declining. You must dig into the why — and examine the inputs.



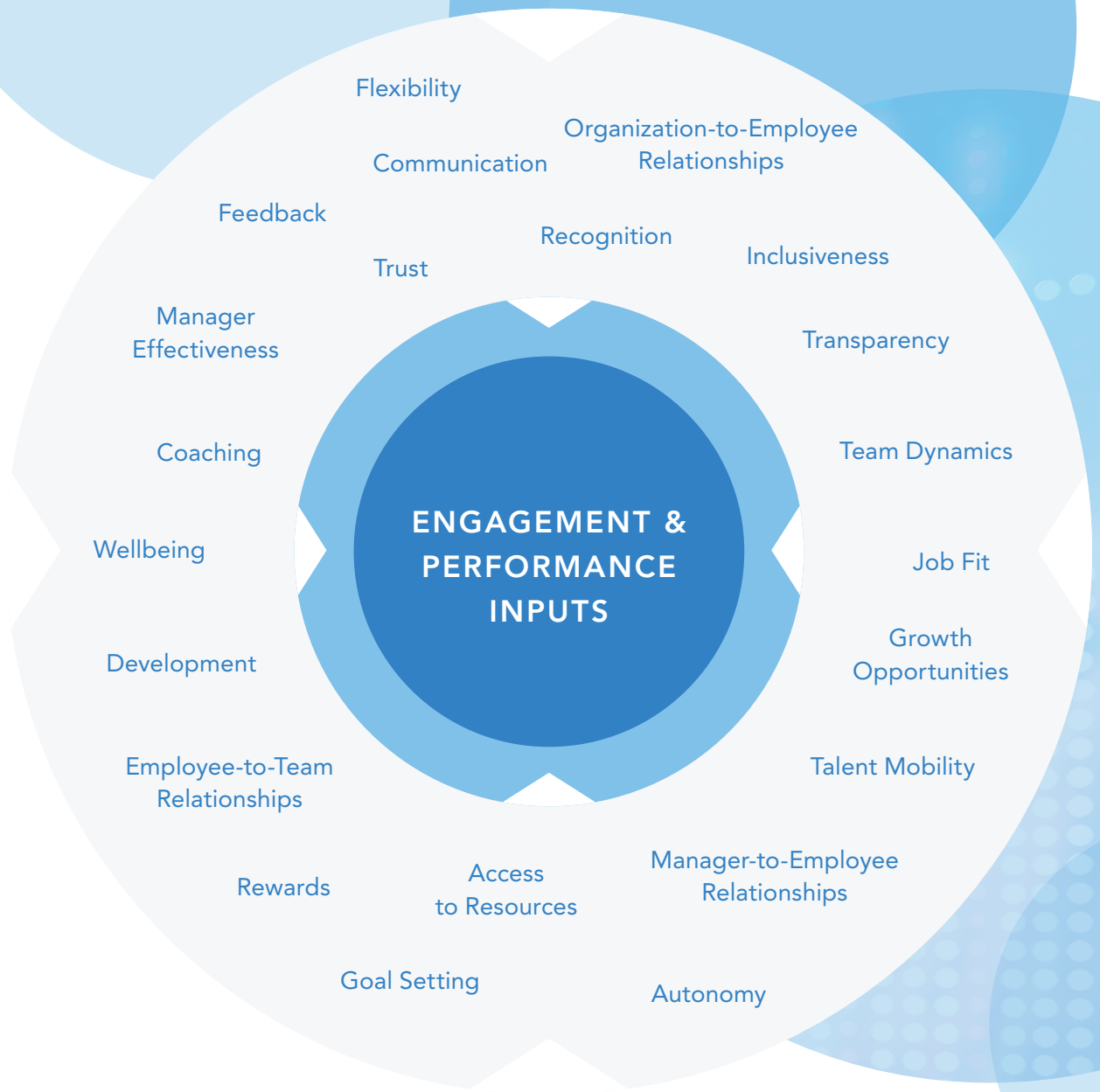
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## You must measure and improve relationships.

Many factors impact engagement and performance, but among the most critical is relationships. You've heard it before: **people don't leave their jobs, they leave their managers.** The relationship between manager and employee can make or break an employee's experience and results.

Relationships matter, and your relationship data matters. But how do you measure and improve relationships in your organization? You need the right tools and approach. You must empower employees at all levels (especially your managers) to build awesome and lasting connections.

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A photograph of two men in a meeting. One man is leaning forward, looking at something on a table, while the other man, wearing glasses, looks on attentively. The scene is set in a modern office with large windows in the background. A large blue circular graphic is overlaid on the bottom right of the image, containing the table of contents and the Quantum Workplace logo.

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## SECTION 1:

# What to Measure

Measuring relationships in your organization isn't easy. Relationships are made of people, and people are complex. But you should regularly monitor certain areas. In this section, we'll discuss:

- Six important factors that affect workplace relationships
- Three critical areas of engagement
- How to focus on your organization's key engagement drivers

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# Six Relationship Factors

## 1. Trust

Relationships are rooted in trust. Without trust, you have no foundation on which to build. Research shows a big difference between high-trust companies versus low-trust companies.

Employees at high-trust companies report less stress, more energy, higher productivity, fewer sick days, higher engagement, and less burnout.<sup>2</sup>

In the workplace, trust can take many shapes and forms, such as:

- Being vulnerable to the ideas and input of others
- Having confidence in coworkers and leaders to do their jobs and do them well
- Feeling comfortable talking about successes and failures
- Being willing to share honest and specific feedback when asked

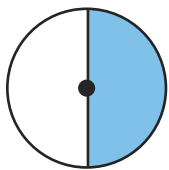
<sup>2</sup> Harvard Business Review, [The Neuroscience of Trust](#)



## 2. Communication

Communication can make or break the most precious of relationships. Effective communication means knowing not only how to send a message, but also how to receive it and provide necessary feedback.

Good communication enables employees to understand and act upon important information effectively. But poor communication can lead to misunderstandings, frustration, and even lost productivity.



Our research shows that great conversations lead to higher engagement, but only about half of employees are having them.

Communication is important at all levels of the organization, but one-on-one conversations — particularly performance conversations between managers and employees — are mission critical opportunities for productive communication. Ask yourself:

- Are your managers having regular one-on-one meetings?
- Are managers using one-on-one meetings to dig into engagement data?
- Are they having ongoing performance conversations with their teams?
- Do managers and employees feel the meetings are effective?

# 3. Collaboration

One way to understand relationships in your organization is to look at the frequency and quality of collaboration. In highly collaborative organizations, employees analyze and solve problems together. They know the power and potential of merging minds.

Employees are more productive, have more motivation, and are more likely to persevere through challenges when they work with others on a task.<sup>3</sup>

There's a certain level of accountability and energy that comes from working with others that you can't get when working alone. But collaboration doesn't come easily to everyone. It requires a culture of openness, honesty, feedback, and teamwork. Find out where your organization stands in these areas.



<sup>2</sup> Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, [Cues of Working Together Fuel Intrinsic Motivation](#)

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# 4. Diversity & Inclusion

The most innovative organizations are diverse and — more importantly — inclusive. They understand the benefits of unique perspectives and experiences, and consciously work toward a culture that accepts and celebrates individual differences.



**67% OF JOB CANDIDATES** want to join a diverse team<sup>4</sup>



**2.3X HIGHER CASH FLOW** at inclusive companies<sup>5</sup>



**57% OF EMPLOYEES** want to prioritize diversity

Understanding employee perceptions on diversity and inclusion can shed some light on the quality of relationships in your organization. Do employees feel their opinions are valued? Do they think everyone is treated fairly? Do they feel accepted by their coworkers?

<sup>4</sup> Glassdoor — [What Job Seekers Really Think of Your Diversity Stats](#); <sup>5</sup> Josh Bersin — [Why Diversity and Inclusion Has Become A Business Priority](#)

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# 5. Respect

This one seems simple, but respect is often forgotten or underestimated.



Respect is the most important factor contributing to employee job satisfaction,<sup>6</sup> yet 54% of employees claim they don't regularly get respect from their leaders.<sup>7</sup>

Respect means different things to different people, but here are a few examples of what respect looks like in the workplace:

- Giving honest and regular feedback
- Treating people with courtesy and kindness
- Ensuring employees have the tools and resources they need to do their work
- Providing autonomy and flexibility
- Recognizing employees for good performance
- Talking less and listening more

<sup>6</sup> SHRM, Survey: [Respect at Work Boosts Job Satisfaction](#); <sup>7</sup> Harvard Business Review, [Half of Employees Don't Feel Respected by Their Bosses](#)

# 6. Empathy & Compassion

Employees want to feel cared for by their organization, their manager, and their teammates. Compassion means having an authentic desire to help others and to make others happy. Having compassion starts with empathy — putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.

According to one study, 92% of CEOs think their organization is empathetic, but only 50% of employees say their CEO is empathetic.<sup>8</sup>

That’s a big disconnect between leadership and the rest of employees! You’ll know your organization is filled with compassionate individuals when:

- Employees are eager to drop what they’re doing to help others
- Employees get to know each other on a personal level
- Managers and leaders prioritize **team building activities** and team development
- Employees support each other in good times and bad



<sup>8</sup> Businessolver, [State of Workplace Empathy](#)

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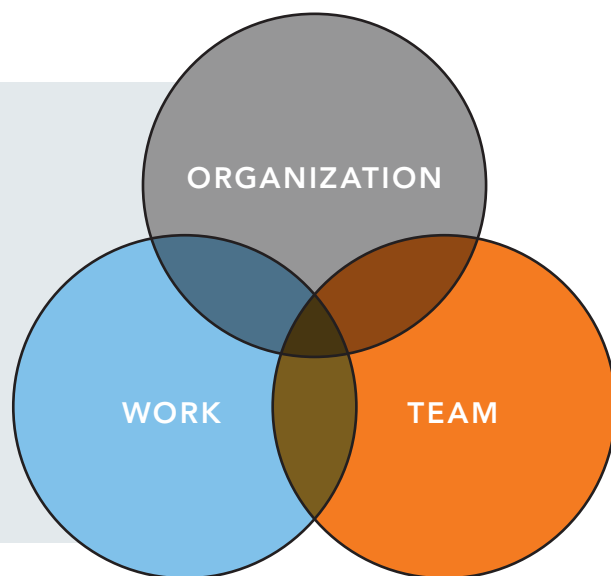
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# Three Critical Areas of Engagement

We've discovered three critical areas of employee engagement: organization, team, and work. Relationships are foundational to each of these areas.

Our [scientifically validated e9 model](#) examines how employees view the strength of the mental and emotional connection they have toward their role, their team, and their organization.

The three factors work in concert with one another, and engagement peaks when scores are high in all three areas.



WORK	TEAM	ORGANIZATION
<b>INSPIRATION:</b> I am inspired by the work we do.	<b>DISCRETIONARY EFFORT:</b> My immediate coworkers consistently go the extra mile to achieve great results.	<b>ADVOCACY:</b> I recommend this organization as a great place to work.
<b>IMMERSION:</b> I find my work engaging.	<b>COMMITMENT:</b> My immediate coworkers are committed to this organization's overall goals.	<b>PRIDE:</b> I am proud to work here.
<b>MOTIVATION:</b> My work motivates me.	<b>ACCEPTANCE:</b> I feel accepted by my immediate coworkers.	<b>INTENT TO STAY:</b> It would take a lot to get me to leave this organization.





# Your Engagement Drivers

The areas discussed on the previous pages will help you determine what to measure, but you should really dig deeply into your organization's key engagement drivers.

You can identify your engagement drivers in your engagement survey data. They are actionable survey questions that are directly correlated to engagement outcomes. They might look something like this:

- I feel comfortable sharing feedback when I have it.
- If I contribute to the organization's success, I know I will be recognized.
- Teams collaborate well with other teams.

All drivers impact engagement, but some make a larger impact on engagement than others.

This varies from organization to organization, year to year, department to department, and person to person. Your best approach here is to:

- Understand what is driving engagement in your organization
- Identify weak areas within your top drivers
- Implement programs targeted at improving those drivers

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## SECTION 2:

# Where to Measure

Your organization is a complex web of diverse and dynamic relationships. Different types of relationships impact employees in different ways. In this section we'll cover:

- Measuring relationships at all levels
- Measuring relationships in every direction

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# Measure at All Levels

## Across the Organization

You need to measure engagement across the organization to establish a baseline. This is the type of measurement you're probably most familiar with. You'll benefit from a high-level overview of strengths and opportunities. You'll also have a benchmark to measure against for different groups and teams, as well as future engagement surveys.



**The Right Tool for the Job:**  
annual engagement survey

## Groups & Teams

Once you have your annual engagement data, slice and dice it in ways that are meaningful to your organization. Consider how your organization functions, breaking employees down into more targeted groups like division, department, job level, or location. Identify areas where you need to dig deeper, and probe into your findings by asking more targeted questions.



**The Right Tools for the Job:** annual engagement survey, pulse and lifecycle surveys, feedback

## Individuals

If you want to impact a specific group or team, you'll need to engage the individuals within it. This is where managers become critical to the mission of engagement. You simply can't rely on surveys to collect and analyze individual perceptions. You need your managers to keep a constant pulse on what's happening with their employees at an individual level.



**The Right Tools for the Job:** feedback, one-on-one meetings, talent review metrics, goal tracking, recognition

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# Measure in Every Direction

## The Institutional Relationship

The institutional relationship is the relationship between employees and their organization. It includes general sentiment and perceptions around procedures and policies, goals, company vision, management, technology and equipment, fairness, and more.

**Why it Matters:** Helps organizations understand high-level concerns.

## The Vertical Relationship

The vertical relationship is the relationship between manager and employee — going both ways. Employees rely on their managers for clear communication, coaching, and feedback. Managers rely on direct reports to get their work done, perform well, and help build a positive reputation for their team.

**Why it Matters:** Helps identify strong and struggling teams.

## The Horizontal Relationship

The horizontal relationship is the relationship between coworkers. Employees rely on their coworkers to:

- Be team players
- Be respectful, accepting, and inclusive
- Help when needed
- Share knowledge and resources
- Help take ideas and projects to the finish line

**Why it Matters:** Helps identify opportunities to align and motivate teams and individuals.





## SECTION 3:

# When to Measure

Relationships aren't static — they're dynamic. They constantly change and evolve, and you need to gather feedback every step of the way. In this section we'll discuss:

- How to measure across the employee journey
- The importance of continuous listening

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# Measure Across the Employee Journey

## Attract

Your employer brand has a huge impact on your organization's ability to attract the right talent. It helps set you apart from other organizations competing for the same talent — and sets the stage for any future relationship. Make sure to clearly communicate around company culture and values. You want to make a good (and honest) impression before a job candidate ever steps foot inside your company.

**Relationship Goal:** Introduce your culture and values. Make a good impression. Help current employees understand how to advocate on your behalf.

**Relationship KPIs:** employee referrals, job posting metrics, volume and quality of candidates

## Recruit

Your recruiters and hiring managers should build positive relationships with any and every candidate who takes the time to apply. A little respect goes a long way — no one wants to feel ignored or left in the dark about your hiring process.

**Relationship Goal:** Keep the hiring process simple, transparent, and authentic. Be sure that hiring managers are well trained in communicating with and interviewing candidates.

**Relationship KPIs:** new hire survey results, anecdotal feedback, percent of job offers accepted, time-to-fill

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# Onboard

Get your new hires off on the right foot with a solid onboarding process. Help them hit the ground running by setting them up for success and thinking well beyond their first day. You should have a plan in place for their first 30, 60, and 90 days.

**Relationship Goal:** Slow and steady wins the race. Make sure new hires understand the basics before you launch them into the chaos. Connect them with others who can help answer questions throughout their onboarding process.

**Relationship KPIs:** onboarding survey results, completion of onboarding goals

# Develop

The first several months of an employee's tenure are key to their future success at the organization. Managers should continue to act as coaches and get to know each of their employees on a personal level. One-on-one conversations should be focused on development, performance, and growth.

**Relationship Goal:** Prioritize frequent manager-employee communication around development, goals, role, performance, etc.

**Relationship KPIs:** frequency and quality of one-on-one meetings, goal progress, team engagement scores, recognition stats, development opportunities completed, talent review metrics

## Retain

Yay! Your new employee made it through their first year. But don't get comfortable. Once the honeymoon phase is over, employees will start itching for more. You've put in a lot of hard work — don't risk losing your top performers because you assume they're happy and engaged.

**Relationship Goal:** Continue listening to employees. Help managers take an individualized approach to develop and retain key employees.

**Relationship KPIs:** frequency and quality of one-on-one meetings, goal progress, team engagement scores, recognition stats, development opportunities completed, talent review metrics, average tenure

## Separate

Sometimes, it just doesn't work out. Break-ups can hurt, but they can also serve as valuable opportunities to learn more. It's up to you to ensure this relationship ends on a good note.

**Relationship Goal:** Listen to feedback from exiting employees and thank them for their contributions.

**Relationship KPIs:** reason for leaving, turnover rate



# Move Toward Continuous Listening

Many organizations have been stuck in a rut when it comes to engagement. They've been doing surveys for a few years and developing action plans — but nothing really changes. Sound familiar?

Your annual survey is great for establishing a baseline and measuring company-wide perceptions. But if that's the only way, place, and time you are collecting employee feedback, you're not sending a very promising message to your employees. You're basically saying that you want their feedback, but...

- ...only on your terms
- ...only in response to the specific questions you choose to put on the survey
- ...only within the short period of time that the survey is open
- ...only in the format that you feel is best
- ...only based on what they can remember from the past year of events

An engagement survey is a point-in-time snapshot of data. And although these snapshots are valuable, they don't help you address engagement throughout the year. They don't give you the data and tools you need to maintain ongoing, healthy relationships with employees.

## You need to be more agile.

If you want to make a measurable and meaningful impact on engagement, you must enable your organization to act upon findings in a timely fashion.

There are many important events, issues, and concerns that arise between annual engagement surveys. Employees experience things in and out of the office, every day, that have a REAL impact on their engagement and performance. They change roles. They discover new passions. They have babies. Their bosses quit.

You need to be right there with them if you want to respond in meaningful ways.





## SECTION 4:

# How to Measure

Now for the good stuff — the tactics that will help you keep a pulse on relationships at work. You might be using one or a few of the following tools and tactics, but you should be moving toward a strategy that includes **all** of them.

Finding a platform that helps you integrate these approaches and their resulting data will help take relationships and engagement to the next level.

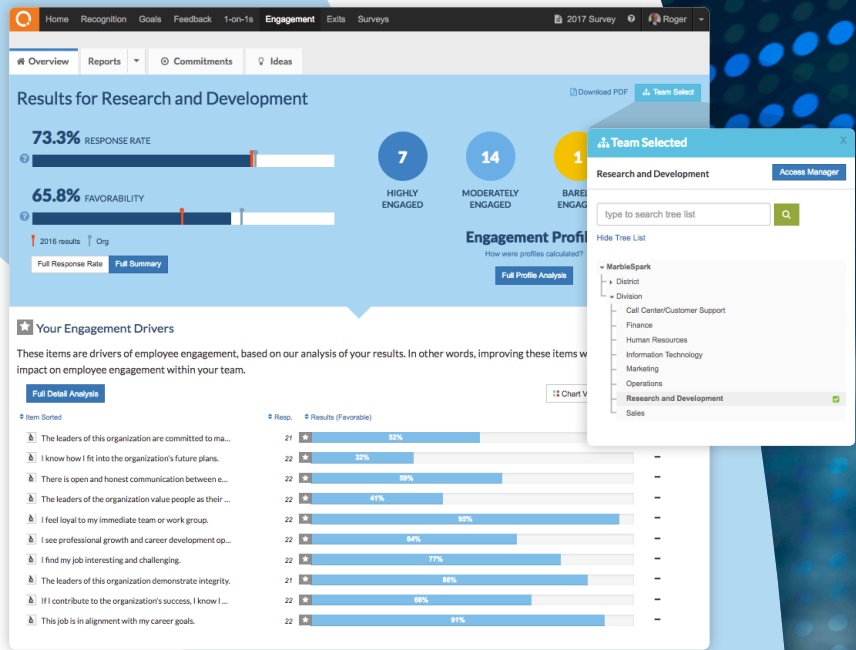
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# Annual Engagement Survey

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SURVEYS

An annual engagement survey benefits everyone in the organization. Employees can voice honest opinions about their workplace — confidentially and with an equal amount of weight and influence as their peers. Honest feedback can drive positive and meaningful change.

Employers learn the whole truth about what’s going on in their workplace — good, bad, or ugly. They get access to invaluable employee feedback in a quick and efficient way. Detailed reports and analytics enable leaders to see what’s working and what’s not. They can use insights to create the necessary strategic plans to increase engagement across the organization.

## Relationship Goals:

- Listen to feedback
- Assess the state of relationships at a high level
- Communicate results back to employees
- Commit to action and change on important issues



# Pulse Surveys

My job allows me to utilize my strengths.

Strongly Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Strongly Agree

**You Added:** Communication from the top is choppy and bleeds into confusion about company strategy. We see massive amounts of change on the front lines often with little or no context.

LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SURVEYS

Pulse surveys are fast, easy-to-implement surveys designed to collect lightweight employee opinions. They can collect feedback on any topic, launch at any time, and be sent to any employee. They're a stress-free way for leaders and managers to collect tons of actionable and real-time employee feedback. Smart organizations use pulse surveys to:

- Assess engagement levels throughout the year
- Track progress on engagement initiatives
- Evaluate leadership accountability
- Create ad hoc polls
- Gather feedback before, during, and after change

## Relationship Goals:

- Ask for and listen to feedback in a timely manner
- Target your audience
- Measure against engagement goals
- Be agile and address issues quickly

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# Lifecycle Surveys

Which of the following factors contributed to your decision to leave? (Please check all that apply)

- Poor relationship with my manager
- Poor relationship with coworkers
- Didn't like the role
- Workload was too demanding
- Felt unrecognized or underappreciated
- Disagreed with company strategy
- Moral or ethical conflict
- Undesirable work environment
- Conflict with management practices
- Other

Please elaborate on why you decided to leave:

What do we need to improve in order to retain our top talent?

[LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR SURVEYS](#)

Lifecycle surveys measure employee perceptions at a specific point in their tenure. They provide a unique opportunity to better understand employee perceptions at key milestones. Here are examples of critical moments in the employee journey when a lifecycle survey can help you capture valuable data and strengthen relationships in your organization:

- A job candidate completes the application or interview process
- A new hire arrives for their first day
- An employee celebrates their fifth anniversary
- An employee resigns

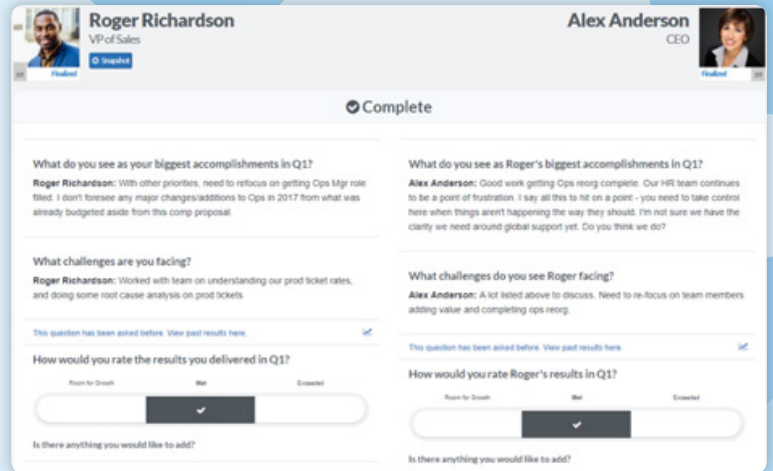
## Relationship Goals:

- Understand strength of relationships at key milestones
- Identify red flags early in the relationship — align expectations and adjust
- Provide opportunities that lead to lasting relationships
- Pinpoint issues that are leading to break-ups and brainstorm new strategies

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LEARN MORE ABOUT ONE-ON-ONES

# One-on-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings are foundational to relationships in the workplace. They provide valuable opportunities for managers and employees to connect and align on performance. These meetings also allow managers to collect honest, direct, real-time employee feedback.

Encourage managers to use one-on-one meetings to dig into findings from other data sources. For example, if a manager's team scored low in communication and resources, they should investigate this area with team members. How do employees prefer communication? Through what channels? How often? What suggestions do they have for improvement?

## Relationship Goals:

- Meet regularly and consistently
- Encourage managers to listen more than they talk
- Train managers to coach (not manage) team members
- Ensure employees at all levels know how to give and receive feedback

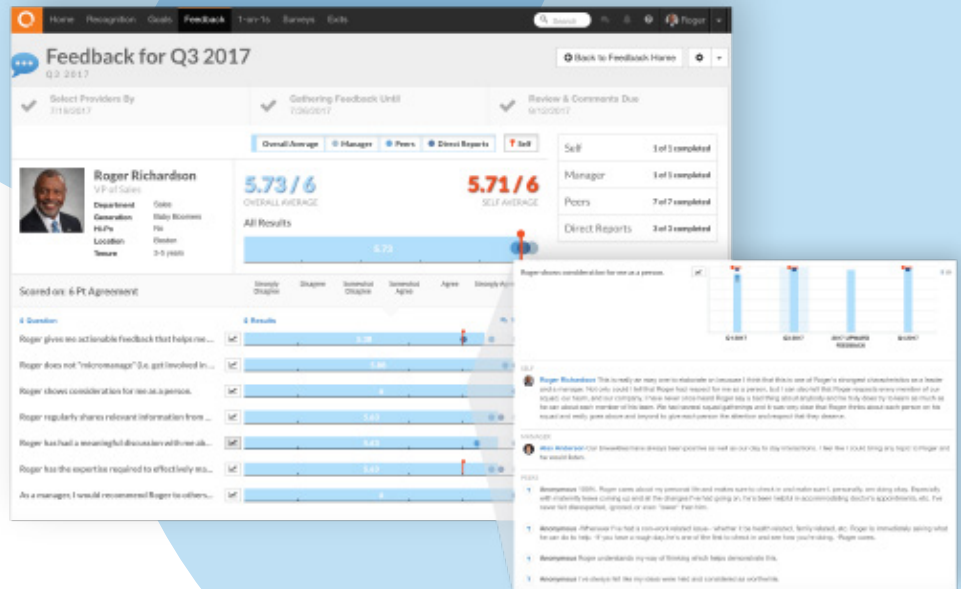
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# Employee Feedback

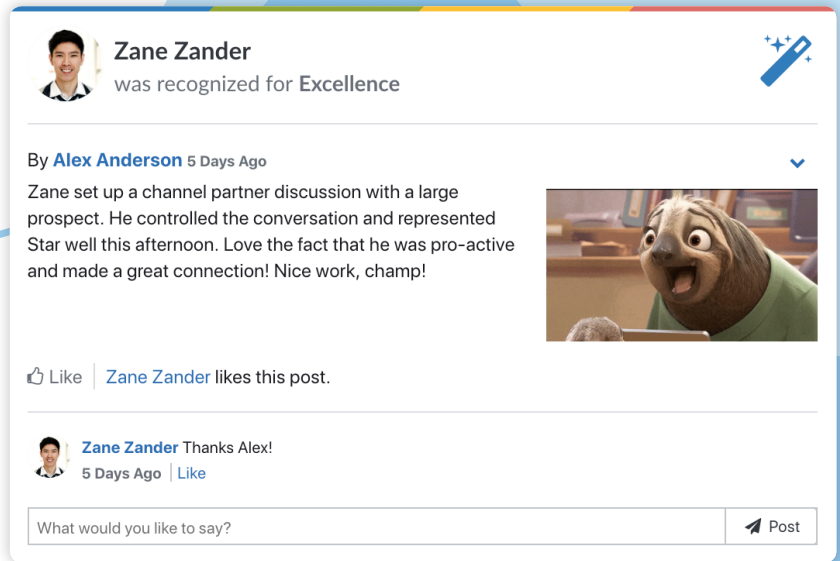
LEARN MORE ABOUT FEEDBACK

Great companies are built on trust, and trusting cultures are built on feedback. Regular feedback builds strong relationships by encouraging continuous and transparent performance dialogue. There are many uses for feedback in your organization that can help you improve, such as:

- **New Hire Feedback:** at 30, 60, and 90 days
- **Milestone Feedback:** after a lateral move, promotion, or for a first-time manager
- **Exit Feedback:** from an exiting employee and their peers
- **360 Feedback:** from an employee's manager, peers, and direct reports
- **Upward Feedback:** from direct reports
- **Peer-to-Peer Feedback:** from one team member to another
- **Project Feedback:** related to a specific project

## Relationship Goals:

- Help employees improve and grow
- Create a feedback-safe environment
- Make feedback routine and expected



# Employee Recognition

LEARN MORE ABOUT RECOGNITION

Receiving recognition is a top driver of employee engagement. Openly acknowledging and praising employee behavior or achievements offers many benefits, such as:

- Increased productivity
- Increased engagement
- Decreased turnover
- Improved company culture

There are many ways to recognize employees, but one of the most effective is public, peer-to-peer, real-time recognition. This type of recognition helps organizations celebrate, motivate, and engage teams across the organization.

## Relationship Goals:

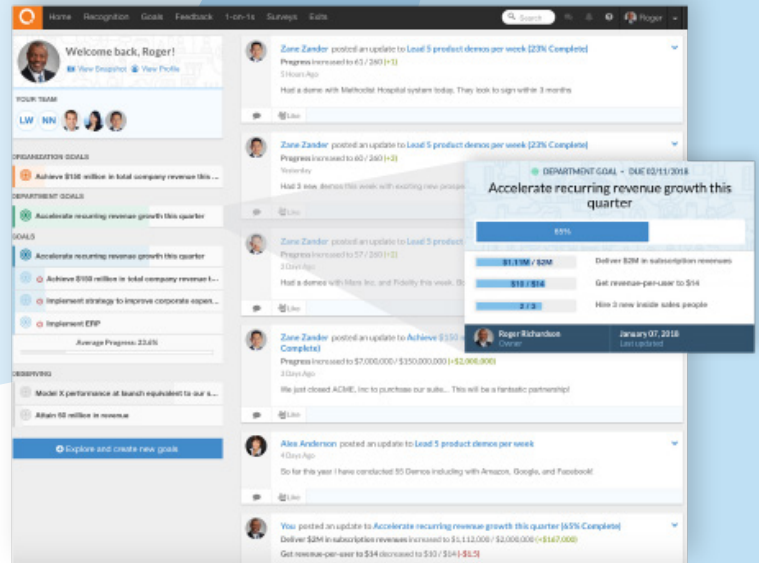
- Treat employees as valued team members, not as numbers
- Celebrate successes with authentic storytelling that matches efforts to results
- Continuously communicate to keep the program alive

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# Goal Setting & Tracking

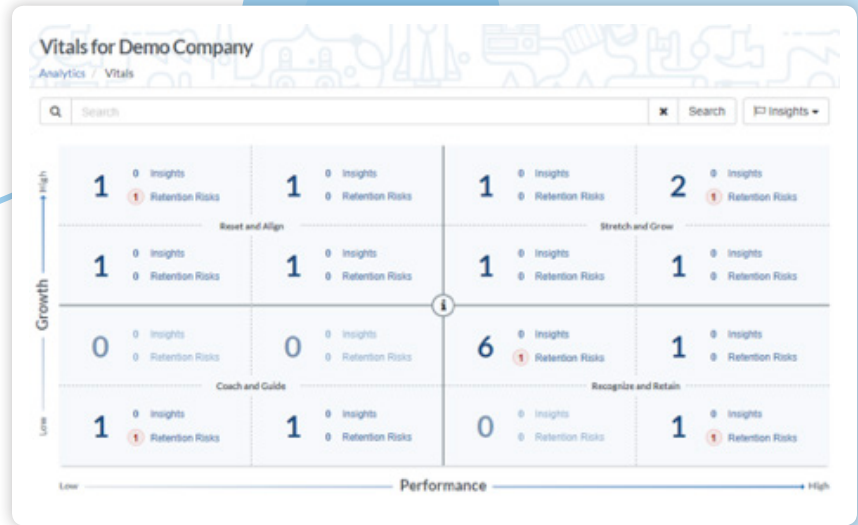
LEARN MORE ABOUT GOALS

The most successful people and organizations set goals to reach success. Goals help people and organizations achieve more, faster, with less. Goals can be a powerful tool in your organization and provide many benefits, such as:

- **Shared Alignment:** Goals unite employees, managers, and leaders around a common purpose.
- **Performance Motivation:** Goals motivate, inspire, and fuel higher performance.
- **Clear Direction:** Goals provide guidance on how employees should spend their time.
- **Effective Evaluation:** Goals help measure success.

## Relationship Goals:

- Get employees on the same page across all levels of the organization
- Motivate and inspire employees
- Help employees understand their contribution to the organization



LEARN MORE ABOUT TALENT REVIEWS

# Talent Reviews

Talent decisions should be based on credible data that is easy to access, understand, and act upon. Managers, leadership, and HR should have clear visibility into the organization’s talent pipeline and make informed decisions on how to keep and develop key talent.

Consider optimizing your talent review process with technology that makes ongoing data collection and analysis easier. This allows you to be more agile, more collaborative, and to make data-based decisions in real-time.

## Relationship Goals:

- Understand performance and growth at an individual and organizational level
- Nurture and develop top talent
- Know when someone is at risk of leaving the organization





## SECTION 5:

# Empower Your Managers

When it comes to measuring and improving relationships, fancy tools and strategies will only get you so far. The most important thing you can do to optimize relationships in your workplace is to empower your managers.

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# Inform Them

HR departments across the globe are collecting more and more data every day. Figuring out what to do with all that data can be exciting and overwhelming. But whatever you do — don't hoard the data! Share it with the people who know your people best: your managers.

Managers play a critical role in engagement and performance. They impact each team member's experience daily. They understand the unique challenges and opportunities of their teams. And they bring a fresh and important perspective to the data you're collecting.

Managers should be able to access their team's data anywhere, anytime. They should be using it as a pivot point for employee conversations — to move from what is to what should be.



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# Coach & Connect Them

Few managers are naturally talented at managing people. One study estimates only 1 in 10 people have high talent in people management.<sup>9</sup> That means about 90% of managers need at least some level of coaching and development around managing and motivating their teams.

Identify possible areas of development by looking at your existing data. Where are your managers struggling? What kind of feedback are you hearing from employees? Why are employees on certain teams leaving? What are your managers stressed about?

Help managers develop new skills and sharpen existing ones by offering training on important manager topics. Connect struggling managers with strong managers who can help troubleshoot issues and brainstorm new approaches.



## 20 Critical Topics for Manager Development

- Time Management
- Delegation
- Giving and Receiving Feedback
- Conflict Resolution
- Decision Making
- Communication
- Technology Etiquette
- Self-Awareness
- Listening
- Empathy
- Influence and Persuasion
- Change Management
- Motivation
- Visioning
- Team-Building
- Strategic Thinking
- Mentoring
- Goal Setting
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Emotional Intelligence

<sup>9</sup>Gallup – Managers Account for 70% of Variance in Employee Engagement



# Equip Them

Modern engagement and performance platforms make it much easier for managers, HR, and leadership to understand and improve their relationships with employees.

The right software will connect the dots between engagement and performance data, making it easy for everyone in the organization to make data-informed decisions that drive results.

## Do's and Don'ts of Engagement & Performance Software

**Do:** Find software that solves real business problems.

**Don't:** Be distracted by tons of shiny new features.

**Do:** Make sure to find a software that fits your people.

**Don't:** Buy software that doesn't fit your current (and future) practices.

**Do:** Choose a software that empowers managers to take the reins.

**Don't:** Put the burden solely on HR.

**Do:** Find software that integrates with your HRIS.

**Don't:** Settle for software that doesn't streamline your work.

**Do:** Ensure you can customize your content.

**Don't:** Let the software force you into rigid boxes.

**Do:** Select a platform that provides in-tool coaching resources.

**Don't:** Leave managers and employees empty-handed.

**Do:** Insist on a full platform approach.

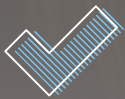
**Don't:** Buy multiple tools for multiple needs.





# The All-in-One Toolset

EVERY HR PRO WANTS IN MANAGERS' HANDS



SURVEYS



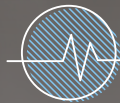
GOALS



RECOGNITION



FEEDBACK



VITALS



ONE-ON-ONES



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