



# The Flock guide to boosting employee engagement

Drive employee engagement through simple changes that will keep your company and your people shining



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# CULTURE

# Building culture

Culture is one of the first things a potential hire considers when looking at your business, and a critical factor in retaining talent. It's more than just free lunches and foosball tables.



## Your company culture is determined by how you hand down your mission and values to your team

Company culture directly impacts employee engagement and it can't be implemented in a "set it and forget it" fashion. Building culture requires active listening, consistent action, and scalability. It involves investing in long-term growth, adopting a talent-driven strategy, fostering trust in employees, and enabling transparency in the workplace.

Shine a bright light on your company's mission and values in companywide messaging, training, and goal-setting activities. Display them prominently throughout the office, so they are always top-of-mind. Ensure these values are reflected in your business practices.

When employees identify with your mission and see company values as more than just a bunch of words, they are encouraged and more likely to engage at a higher level.



It is equally important to remind employees of the significance of their work and how it contributes to the mission they are helping drive.



Simply appreciating a job well done and showing that it matters can go a long way to improving employee morale, so provide recognition where you can.

Encourage your team to get to know each other with a happy hour at a local restaurant or a virtual coffee using video conferencing.

Celebrate individual birthdays - with a cake, a card, or a teamwide celebration. Make praise a regular practice in team standups, during 1:1s, and within your internal communications.

Make sure managers discuss goals and career paths as well as concerns or frustrations, and carry that feedback up to leadership, so employees know they are heard and can make a difference. Listening - and following through - lets your employees know that their dedication is not unnoticed.



## Create communities and affinity groups

Culture means little without community. Your employees should never feel isolated. It's important to offer affinity spaces and communities to build better relationships within your company. Affinity or interest groups based on identity, activity, or department can foster a sense of belonging and togetherness within a team.

For example, an LGBTQ+ employee resource group participating in Pride Month activities inspires those within the company to inform themselves and celebrate. An engineering department hackathon or video game contest allows employees to connect with each other based on interests, not on work. These aren't just fun activities - they're moments to celebrate your diverse team, foster inclusion, and offer recognition. Your team's diversity is its strongest asset, providing a range of talents and insights you would never have otherwise.

Building culture is not about freebies or bonuses. It's about letting your employees know they're valued and getting them excited about coming into work - and working with each other - every day.





# DEVELOPMENT



# Invest in your team



**As you ask what employees can do for your company, also ask what your company can do for its employees.**

You've probably heard the phrase, "You need to spend money to save money." The same is true with your team - you have to invest in your employees in order to have them invest in your company. This goes beyond recognition. Helping in your employees' development and individual growth is a means of investing in the long-term for your business.



Your company can invest in its employees through financial incentives: tuition aid, student loan repayment, great medical benefits, commuter reimbursements... the list goes on. But there are plenty of intangible benefits you can offer to keep employees engaged and motivated.

## Learning and development

Want to keep your employees on board while they explore graduate school options or develop a new skill? Consider a continuous learning stipend that allows them to take this opportunity on behalf of the company. Or offer that education within your space to provide the same opportunity to your entire business, through teamwide seminars, workshops, and conferences.



**Track employees' progress and career goals and be proactive about supporting both. Give your team the development they need before they ask for it.**



In our 2020 survey on perks and productivity with Compt, we asked workers what benefits they think should always be offered to employees at all companies. We saw that 65% of respondents over the age of 55 are looking for continuous learning, and 47% of our total respondents agreed. And it's not just our data set - Deloitte's 2019 Global Human Capital Trends report shows that 38% of workers believe learning and development should be a shared responsibility between the business and its employees. That same study emphasizes that 54% of all employees will require a significant amount of reskilling and development by 2022.

Plus, learning and development programs help your business grow and stay within budget. In a Harvard Business Review study, one of its clients found that internal skills training was six times less expensive than hiring new talent. Considering the average amount of time to fill an open job hovers around 40 days, companies that focus on internal training can save both time and money developing their business.

**As more businesses embrace a focus on a growth mindset and internal innovation, it's evident that continuous development is a need across all industries.**



## Build internal learning relationships

Sometimes an employee needs more than just a one-day workshop, though. If you're recruiting your talent the right way, there are plenty of experts within your organization that can provide direct learning opportunities to new hires or across departments. This can come in the form of coaching, mentorship, or sponsorship.

**These internal learning relationships - which each have their own benefits - keep employees engaged, elevate their talents, and identify pain points early on so they can be fixed.**

A mentorship is an ideal way to connect tenured employees with new hires. It allows for smoother onboarding as well as a long-term relationship between employees. Established employees who act as mentors can guide an employee toward a lifelong career within your company and ensure both the employee's success as well as that of the company.



While traditional mentorships have endless benefits, many businesses partake in “reverse mentorships,” where new hires provide upskilling opportunities to their mentors in exchange for career advice, networking, and other professional development. Perhaps a “blind” mentorship—in which the mentor/mentee relationship is anonymized—is best for your company, to avoid personal bias and instead focus on standardized career growth.

**Whatever option you provide will benefit both your employees and your business in the long run.**



Sponsorships can be seen as a less formal version of mentorships. Sponsors, or advocates, may work directly with the employee or have a separate relationship through association or affinity. A sponsor works toward developing an individual’s specific skills. Sponsors help the company identify strong talent and the right projects and opportunities for their sponsored individuals. This is especially important for hiring and promoting internally, which boosts retention and helps develop long-term relationships.



Coaches focus primarily on individual needs, and aren't necessarily delegated "from the top down." A coach may be an employee at the same level as another who, for example, is well-versed in Photoshop and can provide that skill to another. Or perhaps it's a manager who knows their direct report needs better time management skills and can offer that to them.

**This skills-based approach helps provide teams the necessary skills to progress and succeed.**

Of course, these internal training methods differ based on your company's needs, size, and availability. A new business with 2-5 employees may not have the capacity and skill set that a well-established enterprise can offer. But it's important to stress an internal commitment to growth to keep your team growing, working, and thriving.





# COMMUNICATION

# Listen to your employees

As a leader, your number one priority is communicating with your employees to confirm their needs are met so they can do their best work. So how do you know what exactly your team needs? Well... listen!





## Run effective meetings

We could all do with fewer meetings at work - especially meetings that could have been an email - but 1:1s and team standups are critical and should always stay on your calendar. 1:1s shouldn't be a strict performance review or task check-in, but a chance for supervisors to connect with their direct report, gauge their emotions, motivation, and engagement, and see what they truly need from the organization. This feedback is invaluable to any company looking to grow and any leader looking to improve rapport with their team.



**Communication and empathy is part of your job. It's not optional, and it requires active attention and ongoing improvement to master, remote or not."**

**Sam Mallikarjunan**

Chief Revenue Officer, Flock



These meetings are also the perfect opportunity to identify skills gaps or to set goals within your team or for an individual. From this feedback, you can establish mentorships, skill shares, continuous learning, or affinities... see where we're going here?



Listening is key to effective meetings, and it drives all activities that can improve employee engagement.

## Prioritize exit interviews

Unfortunately, you can't retain all of the incredible talent that you hire and invest in. So when you lose a key employee, you need to hear the (sometimes difficult) reasons they've moved on. That's where exit interviews come into play. It's the one option many departing employees have to deliver frank and honest feedback—and an underutilized tool in many businesses. While it may be worrisome to hear negative feedback, every leader knows these critiques help your business grow and do better to retain similar talent in the future.



A new trend in the workforce is enacting “stay interviews,” which have the same intent as exit interviews but are more proactive in retaining a high-quality teammate. Taking the time to ask for the kind of feedback that would be given in an exit interview helps administrators make changes that can prevent employee attrition. Stay interviews include questions like “what can we change to keep high-performing employees?” or “do you have the right tools and support to do your job well?” to understand and address your employees’ pain points.

## **Actively listen through pulse surveys**

Regardless of how well you plan your 1:1s or treat your employees, there will always be a fear of retaliation from transparent and frank feedback. So give your team an opportunity to anonymously share this through pulse surveys. These regular check-ins - weekly, monthly, even quarterly - take just a few minutes to fill out but provide the honest feedback your company needs for long-term success.

**Being able to improve internally to elevate your employees’ experience not only contributes to higher employee engagement, but also to better business all around.**





# ENGAGING REMOTE TEAMS

# Remote employees don't have to go it alone



Now... how does this work when your team is distributed or remote? It's easier than it seems (we promise!) - as long as you're prepared.



First thing's first: your remote hires won't succeed without you, but it's important to evaluate how well they'll perform through your interviewing and hiring process. Make sure remote hires very quickly display:

- Excellent communication skills, both written and verbal, to keep remote teams aligned and informed.
- The ability to work autonomously, stay organized and manage their time well - necessary when employees work across time zones, with multiple teams, and in different locations.
- A positive attitude and dedication to the company's mission and values - so they remain engaged and motivated.

Once you have a strong remote team, you'll be ready to implement strategies to keep them engaged.

## **Tools to keep your remote team engaged**

Luckily, there are plenty of tools to increase engagement for on-site and remote employees alike. Incorporate an enterprise social networking tool like Jive or Jabber to keep your teams communicating and socializing - or use channels to keep the watercooler conversations flowing.



Tools like [15five](#) help you track performance and engagement. And new social-based technologies like [Donut](#) connect employees randomly to form cross-company relationships.

**Maintaining a social structure keeps your employees in tune with each other, remote or not. And that helps everyone connect better with your company - including your customers.**

## **Provide structure**

Speaking of structure... your team needs that all around! Encourage your remote workers to structure their days as they would in the office. Make sure they're [taking their lunch breaks](#) and nourishing themselves, and that they're [offline after working hours](#). Set up [proper productivity tools](#) to keep your entire team on the same page. Utilize [video conferencing](#) in every meeting with remote team members and add on-site staff (if any) to these meetings, on camera, so every employee - remote or not - feels included and stays engaged. The only difference between your on-site team and your remote team should be the location.



It's important all around, but especially for your employees who work from home: make sure you stick to your 1:1 schedule. A remote employee isn't given as many opportunities to provide feedback in passing or in the moment, and these meetings are a regular chance for them to provide the insights you need as a leader. This is your number one opportunity to connect with your remote team and drive engagement - don't slack.

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**1:1's should be unstructured meetings where employees can wax poetic about whatever is on their minds. They become MORE important with remote work, not less. You still need to build that trust and give people a space to vent.”**

**Sam Mallikarjunan**  
Chief Revenue Officer, Flock





## Offer individualized benefits

Your employee engagement strategy means little if you aren't able to walk your talk and provide for your team. Outside of necessary medical and financial benefits, secure proper flexible benefits for your remote workers who can't necessarily use all of your company's offerings. A remote worker doesn't need the monthly parking pass or catered lunch you provide in-office, so find ways to provide relevant benefits.

**The opportunities for a great benefits package for remote employees are endless.**

- Try offering a [lifestyle spending account](#), which allows your team to build individual benefits packages based on their own needs.
- Offer ergonomic assessments and an equipment reimbursement plan so each individual has a proper workspace at home.
- Plan an all-expenses-paid trip where all of your employees can interact in-person, connect on new levels, and resolve any feelings of isolation.
- If your office provides catered lunches or snacks, give your remote workers a choice between different snack or meal subscription options.
- Flexible working hours make it known that you trust your remote workers - and you understand their needs.

