

Finding and Cultivating Employees Who Make A Contribution



Within the workplace you have employees with a variety of skill levels, personality traits, differing abilities and even personal challenges that impact how well they will perform and how much they contribute to the organization.

A common mistake organizations make is focusing their time, energy, attention and rewards on the employees who make a big impact at the end of the road when frequently the biggest impacts are enabled by a series of hard-working employees who make a series of contributions along the way. To be successful in cultivating and keeping your good employees you need to find all of them, at all levels of the organization. To succeed in cultivating employees who are good contributors an organization should:

- First, recognize that not everyone is going to be at their best all the time but that over time people who feel recognized, informed, valued and listened to are more likely to be engaged in the organization and, as a result positively contribute to the overall health and success of the organization
- Second, learn to identify people of all levels, abilities and types who make a contribution and what those contributions may look like
- Third, cultivate a culture that creates, recognizes and rewards the different types of contributions different types of people can make in different roles and at different times.

7 Traits of Contributing Employees and Ways to Cultivate Contributions In Others

To recognize employees' who tend to make a contribution we have a snapshot of some of the traits highly engaged and contributing employees often exhibit.

1. **They Do Not Need Immediate Rewards To Keep Going.** Employees who are engaged are willing to put in time and work towards a distant business result because they can delay gratification until they are satisfied they have achieved their goals. Some employees need the carrot on the stick to perform a task, working to win a short-term bonus or praise. Engaged employees see where they are going and are willing to keep working towards their reward. What can you do? Help employees by sharing company goals and connecting employee's individual tasks and contributions to organizational achievements and future plans. This includes all levels of employee.
2. **No Task Is Too Small:** Engaged employees are willing to step out of their job description and contribute where and when they see a need. One thing a

contributing employee does not say is, "That's not in my job description." What can you do? Give employees the opportunity to step outside their core area of work (role and team) through job shadowing, secondments, and collaboration opportunities so they can see all the tasks that contribute to achievement of company success and experience the hard work of other employees.

3. **They Don't Turn Away From Workplace Conflict.** Look for employees who are willing to experience or address conflict related to getting the work done or doing the work well. If they see another employee who is not treating a task or customer appropriately they are willing to address the situation. What can you do? Create opportunities for employees to ask difficult questions and encourage them to share their concerns, opinions and ideas for improvements on an ongoing basis and demonstrate to everyone that you are willing to listen and learn by commenting on and addressing their concerns.
4. **People Go To Them.** Other people tend to recognize these engaged contributors and seek them out for information or assistance. What can you do? While these engaged employees are willing to do what it takes to get the work done they can get burnt out if they are relied upon too much. Recognize which employees are making a regular and ongoing contribution and work with them to balance the workload. Highly competent employees may take on too much and get it done, until they don't.
5. **They Get Back To Work.** When distractions arise they maintain focus and get back to work. Within any workplace events or changes in direction arise that push many employees off their primary tasks. An engaged employee finds a way through the hassles and distractions to clarify what they need to do to get back to contributing to achieving company goals. What can you do? Help employees stay on track by providing regular feedback on their progress towards their own goals, those of their team and of the organization. When distractions arise, such as a change in the organization (a new leader, news announcements) or around the organization (the economy, competitors, customers) help your employees understand what these changes mean and how the organization is adjusting to these changes.
6. **They Step In to Fix Things That Aren't Working:** Because they are invested and are interested in making a contribution they often notice when things 'aren't right'. These engaged contributors notice inefficiency and waste and often offer to fix the problem. What can you do? Actively invite employees to point out inefficiencies and waste in the organization and ask them to offer their solutions. Listen to employees and provide them with the opportunity to share and discuss their observations with others, including with employees of other levels and from other teams and departments.
7. **They Take Responsibility:** Engaged employees take ownership, acknowledge their mistakes and want to learn. What can you do? Encourage employees to assess their own work and discuss their questions or mistakes with their team and/or manager. Let them know you are not looking to blame but to improve. Encourage cross-functional collaboration and conversations and mentorship opportunities so employees have the opportunity to learn from one another.

The vast majority of employees want to be engaged and work in collaboration with colleagues to help an organization succeed. Working with your employees to help them find ways to make a contribution benefits everyone.