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**Human resource management —  
Employee engagement — Guidelines**

*Management des ressources humaines — Engagement des employés  
— Lignes directrices*



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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see [www.iso.org/directives](http://www.iso.org/directives)).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see [www.iso.org/patents](http://www.iso.org/patents)).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see [www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html](http://www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html).

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 260, *Human resource management*.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at [www.iso.org/members.html](http://www.iso.org/members.html).

## Introduction

While there are many definitions of employee engagement, the focus of this document is on fostering the good of employees and the good of the organization they work for and on mutual gains in the employment relationship. It can be seen as a blend of existing HR concepts, including job satisfaction, commitment to the organization and extra-role behaviour, for example discretionary effort<sup>[10]</sup>.

This document provides guidance to facilitate a common understanding of, and maintain consistency in, policies, processes and practices that promote a collaborative approach between organizations, employees and, where they exist, their recognized representatives to support employee engagement.

This dual focus on organizational goals and on enhancing the individual experience at work can be correlated with sustainable performance and is critical to the success of any organization and the well-being of people in the workplace.

Potential benefits of employee engagement can include but are not limited to:

- individual satisfaction with work and job quality;
- reduced absenteeism;
- improved employee retention;
- improved customer service;
- greater product or service innovation;
- improved organizational performance and sustainability;
- improved productivity.

This document is related to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 8, Decent Work and Economic Growth, and is intended to be used by:

- organizational governance bodies and leaders;
- people with HR expertise;
- managers;
- entrepreneurs;
- individuals in the workforce and their representatives;
- professional and trade bodies;
- academics and other professionals interested in employee engagement;
- developers of related standards.

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# Human resource management — Employee engagement — Guidelines

## 1 Scope

This document provides guidance on creating a mutually beneficial environment that encourages everyone to be connected with the objectives, purpose and values of the organization, and for the organization to support its people in a manner which provides quality work and opportunities for development and professional fulfilment. Organizations can use the guidance to determine what is practical or material to the organization's internal and external context regardless of its size, type, structure, nature or complexity, whether in the public, private or voluntary sector.

The document applies to anyone who works for or on behalf of an organization. The guidance contained in this document is not intended to infringe upon national labour laws, established collective agreements or collective bargaining.

## 2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

## 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <https://www.electropedia.org/>

### 3.1

#### social dialogue

negotiation, consultation or simply exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, employers and employees, on matters of common interest relating to economic and social policy

[SOURCE: ISO 26000:2010, 2.17, modified — Note 1 to entry removed.]

## 4 Principles

### 4.1 General

The following guiding principles apply:

- All organizational stakeholders have a role to play in improving employee engagement, principally the senior leaders, managers, HR experts, employees and employee representatives.
- Employee engagement should be embedded within the organization's culture and enacted through the organizational policies.
- Two-way communication is an essential part of employee engagement.

- Organizations will need to regularly assess progress against their employee engagement objectives. This can be achieved through surveys or interviews which should be bound by anonymity and confidentiality at the individual employee level.
- The health and well-being of the workforce is a priority consideration throughout this document. Organizations should therefore regularly assess the health risks associated with over-engagement over a prolonged period of time.
- Organizations should be aware of all legal provisions for data protection and privacy.

### 4.2 Employee engagement

From the perspective of this document, employee engagement is predicated from an inclusive workplace approach which informs, promotes and enables conditions where all members of an organization have a constructive voice and contribute productively in a manner meaningful to them. Engaged employees are more likely to be committed to their organization's goals and values and motivated to contribute to sustainable organizational performance. This is a two-way process whereby the organization provides an inclusive, supportive environment and individuals respond by freely providing discretionary effort<sup>[17]</sup>.

### 4.3 Approaching employee engagement

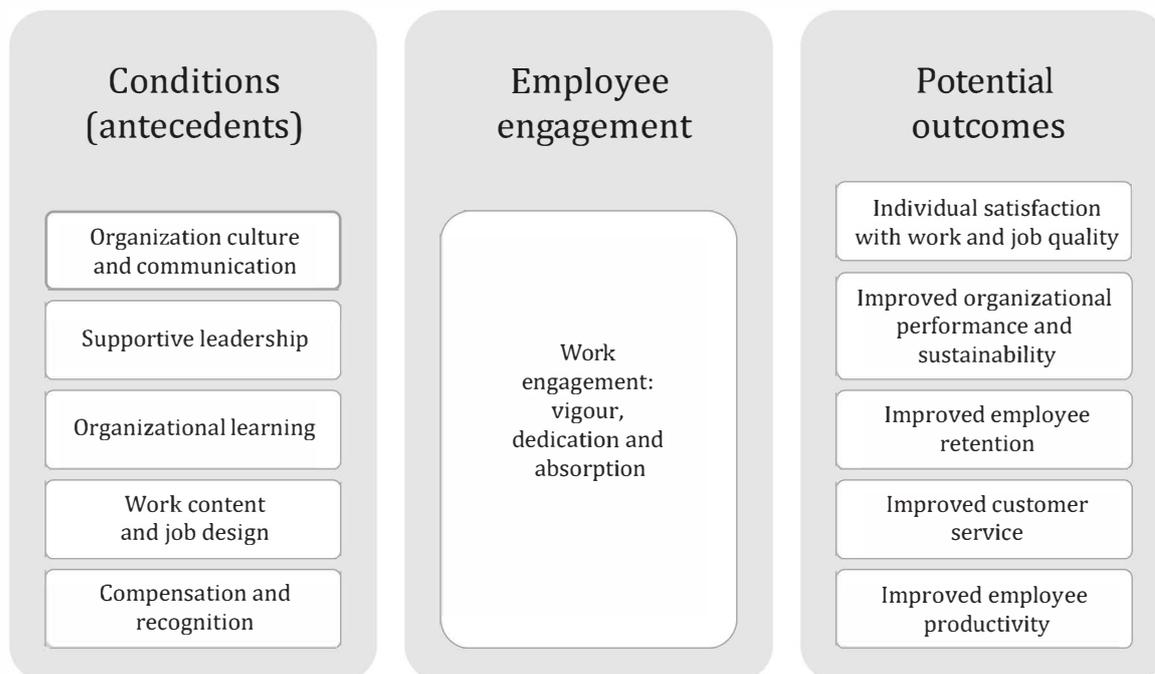
Engagement can be measured by the level of an individual's vigour, dedication and absorption in their work,<sup>[15]</sup> in line with the seminal work of Schaufeli et al.<sup>[15]</sup> Vigour refers to employees having high levels of energy and resilience while working and the willingness to invest effort in carrying out their roles. Dedication refers to employees being strongly involved in their work and experiencing a source of pride and challenge. Employees who are absorbed will be fully concentrated and engrossed in their work.

## 5 Employee engagement framework

### 5.1 General

The framework which guides this document is presented in [Figure 1](#). The figure highlights the association between some of the 'conditions' related to work engagement which organizations can change and enhance, and these are discussed in more detail in [Clauses 6 to 10](#).

Figure 1



**Figure 1 — Overview of employee engagement framework**

## 5.2 Potential outcomes of employee engagement

A number of potential outcomes of employee engagement can be identified:

- individual satisfaction with work and job quality can increase<sup>[6]</sup>;
- organizational performance and future sustainability can improve where there are higher levels of employee engagement;
- improved employee retention;
- improved customer service can be reported;
- productivity can be increased.

## 5.3 Measuring employee engagement

The use of qualitative and quantitative methods of assessment can help to build an understanding of employee engagement. These include but are not limited to:

- focus groups, to gain a deeper understanding of employee experiences;
- employee surveys, either internally developed or existing survey instruments through third-party providers;
- validated instruments related to work engagement, such as the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale<sup>[15]</sup>.

# 6 Organization culture and communication

## 6.1 General

Organizational leaders should be visibly responsible for driving and enabling engagement. Within the organization there should be a shared understanding of employee engagement and this should be reflected consistently within organizational strategies. The organization should provide appropriate

and regular communications to stakeholders so that they are clear about role expectations, modes of operation and organizational policies, processes and practices.

To enhance employee engagement through organization culture and communication, organizations should observe the stated guidelines in the areas covered in [6.2](#) to [6.5](#).

### 6.2 Culture and values

The culture and values of an organization can have a significant impact on employees and their ability to carry out their role. It is important for employees to have an understanding of organizational culture and to have the opportunity to influence what the organization values in the present and future.

To enhance employee engagement through culture and values, organizations should:

- involve employees in developing organizational values so that they are clearly articulated and can be recognized, accepted and connected with;
- provide opportunities for employees to influence, understand, support and realize the organization's purpose, culture and values;
- promote a culture that enhances employees' feelings of being competent, valued and purposeful in their work;
- make managers responsible for being role models and for demonstrating organizational values and bringing them to life;
- assess what policies, processes and practices drive and support the measurement of employee engagement and identify areas of good practice or of concern, constructing action plans where necessary;
- promote clear links between agreed organization values and objectives at all levels.

### 6.3 Communication

An organization's communication strategy should foster two-way information sharing with employees and, where they exist, their recognized representatives. Information should be in accessible formats and employees, and their representatives, should be provided with genuine opportunities for consultation and feedback.

To enhance employee engagement through communication, organizations should:

- use established mechanisms and channels to enable two-way communication and give employees and their representatives feedback opportunities;
- maintain consistency of messages that are communicated internally and externally;
- provide managers with the tools and skills development opportunities to enable them to communicate clearly to employees;
- deliver clear internal communications to provide employees with key information and updates on developments;
- communicate their commitment to diversity and inclusion in all policies, processes and practices;
- highlight to managers the importance of providing constructive feedback to their team;
- provide regular opportunities for employees to discuss their performance with their manager.

## 6.4 Employee empowerment

When employees are empowered to have a say in the way their work is organized and have some autonomy in the way that they perform their roles through policies, processes and practices it can lead to increased levels of engagement.

To enhance employee engagement through empowering employees, organizations should:

- focus upon, and develop, the learning potential within the organization, in order to develop both leaders and employees;
- provide autonomy to employees in how they carry out their role where this is physically safe and appropriate as agreed with employee representatives;
- offer access to appropriate and well-publicised training and development activities to all employees;
- provide employees with opportunities to contribute through consultation to organizational decision-making;
- provide opportunities for self-directed career development with support from managers;
- create opportunities for employees to develop or redesign their job roles where appropriate with support and approval from managers;
- provide forums for employees to share feedback and views with managers and wider stakeholders, including employee representatives.

## 6.5 Employee representation

Where employees are represented it is important that there is a clear and shared understanding of the role that the representatives should play in the consultation and decision-making processes.

To enhance employee engagement through employee representation, organizations should:

- recognize, acknowledge and appreciate collective employee representation, where it exists, as the legal and/or legitimate voice of the workforce when implementing and conducting employee engagement initiatives;
- where formal collective employee representation does not exist, agree on the scope of and terms of reference for employee representation, including health and safety.

## 7 Supportive leadership

Leaders in organizations need to have the appropriate capabilities to enhance employee engagement. They also need to be clear about their responsibilities in this area.

To enhance employee engagement through leadership capabilities and responsibility, organizations should:

- agree and communicate a shared understanding of how employee engagement is put into practice within the organization in consultation with employees and their representatives;
- emphasize the importance of encouraging employee engagement in organizational strategies, policies, processes and practices;
- make senior leaders responsible for improving the conditions that enhance employee engagement as part of their job description;
- establish, implement and maintain an employee engagement promotion policy that includes a commitment to continual improvement of conditions enhancing employee engagement;

- provide necessary resources, for example time and budget, for managers to support employees' job performance and engagement;
- provide opportunities for leaders to develop their ability to enhance employee engagement;
- emphasize to leaders the importance of including employees and their representatives in decision-making processes by having an open and regular dialogue.

## 8 Organizational learning

Learning in an organization starts at the on-boarding stage, when employees are introduced to key processes and activities. Organizations should provide employees with the support that they need to carry out their current and future roles effectively and safely. This will involve undertaking learning needs analyses and subsequently evaluating learning activities to assess whether the objectives have been met.

To enhance employee engagement through organizational learning, organizations should:

- create and maintain employee engagement from the start of employment; the organization should provide a detailed onboarding programme for all new hires which includes an introduction to the organization, health and safety requirements and job-specific information;
- identify learning needs at the individual, team and organization levels in consultation with employee representatives;
- allocate budgets for learning and development activities to sustain employee engagement;
- provide learning and development activities that are accessible and inclusive;
- provide opportunities for employees to practise new skills and knowledge gained through learning and development;
- provide managers with the resources, skills and development opportunities to enable them to identify the learning needs of their teams;
- provide equitable and accessible diversity and inclusion training that promotes inclusive behaviour and raises awareness of bias and how to challenge discriminatory behaviours;
- carry out an evaluation of all learning and development activities, for example through the use of anonymized questionnaires;
- utilize the evaluation of organizational learning activities to influence future employee engagement activities.

## 9 Work content and job design

### 9.1 General

To increase employee engagement, organizations should allocate employees to roles which are appropriate to the individual's knowledge, skills and abilities. The requirements of roles and work activities should be reviewed regularly. Employees should have opportunities to input into the design of activities and roles. Organizations should regularly provide clear information about development opportunities for their employees.

To enhance employee engagement through work content and job design, organizations should observe the stated guidelines in the areas covered in [9.2](#) to [9.5](#).

## 9.2 Job design

Job design involves the process in which the key responsibilities and activities of a role are identified and then subsequently reviewed. Where organizations involve employees and their representatives in this process this can lead to increased engagement.

To enhance employee engagement through job design, organizations should:

- have a systematic and consultative approach to designing and reviewing roles;
- implement a system to enable leaders to be able to clearly articulate the purpose of each role within their team and provide support for employees to reach their potential;
- encourage employees to contribute to ideas around how their work can be undertaken and delivered, for example through job-crafting, which provides employees with the opportunity to propose changes to the way that the tasks within their roles are organized and carried out.

## 9.3 Working environment

The work environment has a significant impact on employees and their experience of carrying out their role in the organization. Organizations should provide work environments that are safe, inclusive and supportive.

To enhance employee engagement through the working environment, organizations should:

- provide a variety of workspaces at the official work location or work site to enable employees to optimally perform different aspects of their job role;
- provide employees with support to access resources and technology to undertake their work;
- utilize policies and processes to promote a workplace culture that prioritizes the safety and well-being of employees, including hours of work and overtime;
- encourage and empower leaders to adopt a leadership style of a trusted advisor and coach to help employees to feel empowered and supported;
- offer flexible working hours and remote working where appropriate, needed and possible and in line with collective agreements where they exist;
- systematically identify and assess the risks that can be associated with constant high levels of engagement so that the well-being of employees is prioritized and for the prevention of burnout;
- review anonymised health, safety and absence data to identify risks that could have a negative impact on employee engagement and well-being;
- include employees and their representatives in the risk-assessment process.

## 9.4 Workplace health promotion

Workplace health promotion involves employers, employees and employee representatives working in partnership to improve the health and well-being of people at work. This can be achieved through a combination of improvements to the work environment, the way that work is carried out and by providing access to appropriate support services and resources.

To enhance employee engagement through workplace health promotion, organizations should:

- have a health management approach which has been developed in conjunction with employees, employee representatives and other key stakeholders;
- where possible, provide access to or information about health support services, including occupational health guidance;

- have a systematic process to regularly review the health management strategy, policy, practices and processes;
- have a strategic approach to enacting the health management policy;
- provide resources to employees which will aid them in achieving a healthy lifestyle, for example signposting to external health organizations and provision of healthy eating options;
- use an inclusive approach for health promotion and recognize that the combined impact of personal, environmental, organizational, community and societal factors influence employee well-being;
- provide information on support services for employees who are experiencing health problems.

### 9.5 Resilience, sustainability and work-life management

To enhance employee engagement through resilience, sustainability and work-life management, organizations should:

- make employees aware of any flexibility options offered by the organization;
- consider offering flexible working hours and working from home, taking into account an employee's health and life stage to facilitate the continued productivity of employees;
- promote work-life balance among employees.

## 10 Work compensation and recognition

### 10.1 General

Organizations should have a clear framework for financial and non-financial compensation that is transparent and articulated clearly to employees and other stakeholders. The framework should be routinely evaluated by a group of stakeholders to include leaders, employees and their representatives.

To enhance employee engagement through work compensation and recognition, organizations should observe the stated guidelines in the areas covered in [10.2](#) and [10.3](#).

Pay-setting can be subject to negotiation and collective participation and bargaining arrangements.

### 10.2 Employee compensation (extrinsic)

Extrinsic compensation is a tangible and visible reward given to an individual or an employee for achieving something. It usually has monetary value. Organizations should provide an equitable and transparent framework for compensation.

To enhance employee engagement through work compensation and recognition, organizations should:

- create a fair, equitable and transparent compensation framework in consultation with employees and their representatives;
- agree on clear criteria with their employees for expected performance;
- involve employees and employee representatives in the design, implementation, delivery and review of compensation programmes;
- endeavour to provide financial security for employees by reducing uncertainty where possible.

### 10.3 Employee recognition (intrinsic)

An intrinsic benefit or reward is an intangible award of recognition, a sense of achievement or a conscious satisfaction. Where employees feel appreciated and their contribution is acknowledged this

can increase levels of engagement. Organizations should use transparent criteria for intrinsic rewards and make decisions in an equitable manner.

To enhance employee engagement through intrinsic recognition, organizations should:

- consult with employees and their representatives to consider possible approaches to intrinsic rewards;
- provide opportunities for job enrichment and career development, such as the opportunity to work on new projects or join new teams;
- promote managers' use of a coaching or two-way communication style to recognize the work of employees;
- establish mechanisms for employees to nominate their colleagues for recognition.

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