Employee Training and Its Effect on Engagement, Productivity and Organizational Health

Engaged teams have lower turnover and

10%

higher
customer ratings

17%

higher
productivity

21%

$

greater
profitability

than disengaged teams.

Source: The Brandon Hall Group's Employee Engagement Study 2018
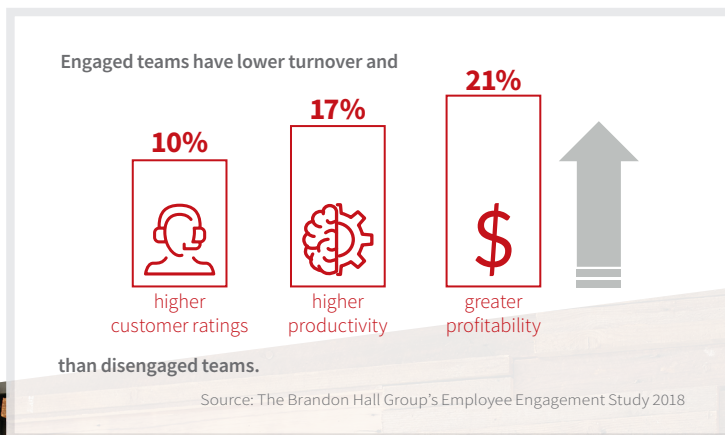
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In today's business environment, employee engagement drives productivity. In turn, productivity affects the cultural and financial health of an organization. In a 2018 employee engagement survey conducted by the Brandon-Hall Group, 62 percent of respondents from highly productive companies said that improving worker productivity was their main reason for implementing employee engagement strategies, programs and activities.

In a separate 2015 study, seven out of ten respondents said that job-related training and development opportunities directly influence in their decision to stay with a company[1]. For millennials and Gen Z workers, it's nearly 90 percent[2].

The lesson here is to invest in retaining your present employees. The biggest key in keeping employees engaged and productive is to incorporate efficient, applicable and effective training into their work schedules. Unfortunately, many companies don't have the time, money or resources available to create sustainable training programs that are:

- Aligned with organizational goals and strategies

- Agile enough to adapt in real time with a learner who is struggling to comprehend the material

- Flexible enough to maximize each learner's optimal learning style

- Cost-effective enough to show a return on investment and gain leadership buy-in

- Relevant enough to keep learners engaged

- Reinforced well enough so learners retain knowledge long after the initial training ends

What ends up happening is that the company's learning and development personnel and management team piece together the most essential training for employees, which is often compliance training, familiarization of equipment or software, or safety training for hazardous environments.

While this training is relevant and important, employees will begin to see it as a chore if it is the only training provided. Compliance or safety training does not put employees on an upwards career track or develop them personally. Once that happens, employees disengage from training, and productivity slips. In a worst-case scenario, employees feel like the company doesn't care or consider them an important part of the team.

Today, there is an almost insatiable appetite for learning and development that goes far beyond just millennials and Gen Z workers. Baby boomers and Gen X are discovering that new methods of delivering training are keeping them engaged, and their skills become as competitive as everyone else in the workforce.

Your ability to engage your workforce and optimize their productivity can help attract—and keep—the top talent in your industry.

"The only thing worse than training employees and losing them is to not train them and keep them."—Zig Ziglar, author, salesman and motivational speaker

Largely Unengaged Workers Lead to Decline in Productivity

Nearly every executive working in a successful organization will tell you that a big reason for the company's success is an engaged workforce. In fact, it may be the biggest.

Engaged employees in the workplace are easy to spot. They're energized with confidence and positivity while they motivate people to do better. They lead by example, whether they're trying to or not, because they are focused on the task at hand and aren't easily distracted. Problems are not roadblocks; instead, they are opportunities to be readily accepted.

When employees are fully engaged and immersed in their work, they achieve amazing results. Team commitment to organizational goals spreads like wildfire, driving your business forward with a shared objective to achieve.

Unfortunately, a recent study reveals that 66 percent of U.S. workers consider themselves unengaged or uninspired at work[3]. Ironically, this ties the lowest percentage for unengaged workers since 2000. What does that say about today's work environment when two-thirds of the workforce being unengaged and less productive is the best mark reached in 18 years?

Furthermore, the two-thirds of a disengaged workforce includes nearly 17 percent that label themselves as "actively disengaged," which are the worst employees to have. According to the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School:

"Actively disengaged workers are the most damaging employees in the workplace. They are unhappy and let that unhappiness show in words, attitudes and actions. They undermine the performance of others by constantly voicing their displeasure and listing the many reasons why they are so miserable in their jobs.[4]"

When employees are apathetic or dissatisfied with their daily duties, an organization is in peril. Without a desire for excellence, employees can't contribute to the team's collaborative efforts, causing stagnation that can destroy a business from the inside.
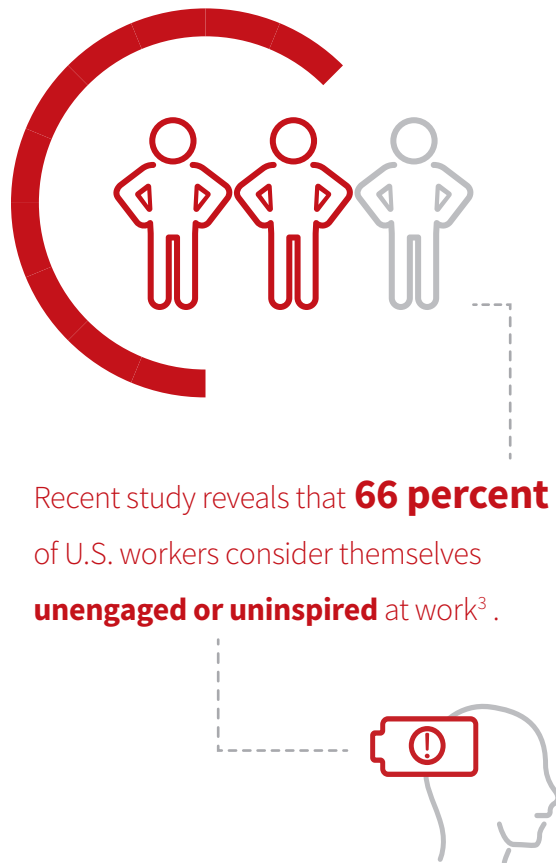
Recent study reveals that **66 percent** of U.S. workers consider themselves **unengaged or uninspired** at work[3] .

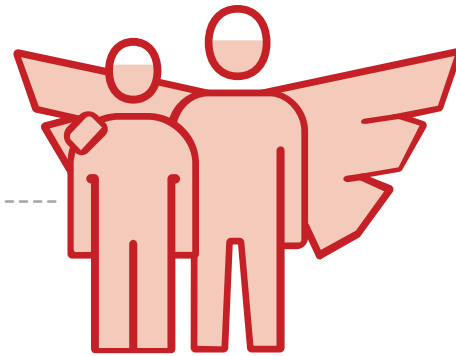# The Next Generation of Business Leaders Is Harder to Keep Engaged Without Training

Nearly 90 percent of millennials said that offering career training and development would keep them loyal to their current employers[2] . Additionally, many ranked training and development opportunities at or near the top of considerations for accepting a new job. Salary or compensation was a distant third for this generation.

For several reasons, developing effective employee training programs benefits companies and makes fiscal sense.

> When employees are more productive, they're more self-confident, smile more, engage with co-workers and seek to take on more responsibilities.

Training increases personal effectiveness and productivity

Personal effectiveness is how well you do what you do. It's important to understand that everything in your life begins with you—how you work, how you react and how you view the world—and it reflects on your personal effectiveness.

Nearly 90 percent of millennials said that offering career training and development would keep them loyal to their current employers

Source: *Bridge*, 2018

The best tips for improving personal effectiveness include:

- **Make the most of your unscheduled time.** Allowing time for yourself reduces stress and ultimately increases your effectiveness.

- **Be results-oriented.** To do this, you must set goals. Without them, you don't know where you're going, how to get there or if you have arrived.

- **Focus on one or two tasks at a time.** More than one or two tasks can lead to confusion, shoddy work and frustration since nothing ever seems to get finished.

- **Identify your challenges and work to overcome them.** Be committed to learning new skills, gaining knowledge and increasing your abilities.

- **Mentally prepare**

When employees are more productive, they're more self-confident, which influences the company culture. They smile more, engage with co-workers and seek to take on more responsibilities.

Proactive managers and supervisors delegate work to these employees and subsequently adjust their training to gain new skills to keep them productive in their new responsibilities.
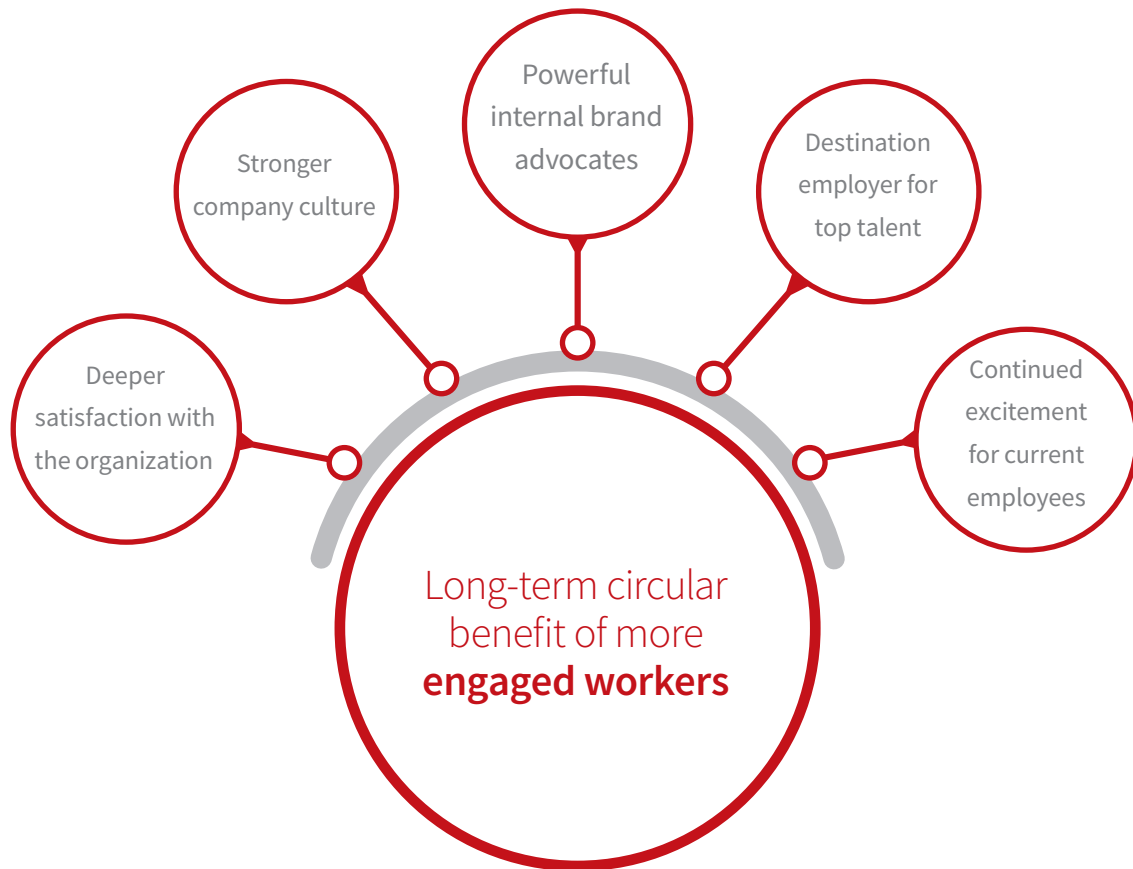

Training helps employees set and manage priorities for better production

When you're faced with multiple projects and deadlines, prioritizing time is often difficult. Training employees on time management, organization and setting priorities is critical if your company wants productive workers. Whether you prefer to use an app on your phone or a yellow legal pad and a pen, many people can be productive in the short term by breaking down their time based on what is due today, this week and long-term. It will help them determine:

- What are my work priorities for this week?
- What are my work priorities today?
- What are my long-term work priorities?

Without effective time management training, this productive spurt may only last for a day, a week or even a month before old habits return and the employee is back to square one. Training that provides knowledge or skills to facilitate prioritizing work, coupled with scheduled check-ins with a manager to ensure the employee is sticking with his or her plan, will eventually lead to positive and permanent behavior modification for the employee. This is most easily done with an effective corporate training process that allows for blended learning and personalization for management and staff.
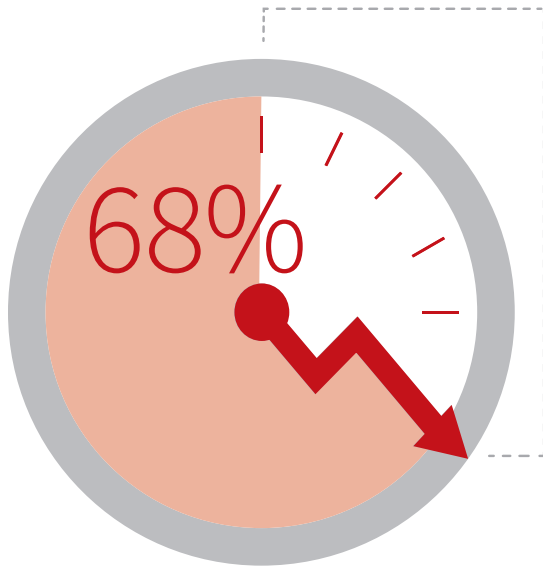
Work overload decreases productivity by 68 percent in employees who feel they don't have enough hours in the day to complete their tasks.

Source: *Cornerstone, 2014*

Training eliminates your employees' biggest productivity challenges

You can't fix your productivity problems until you identify them and learn how to change behaviors and triggers that cause them. For most employees, productivity problems tend to fall in one of four categories:

1. **Procrastination:** Procrastinating is so easy to do and so hard to avoid, especially when the task is something you really don't want to do. When you feel yourself procrastinating, ask yourself, "What am I avoiding?"

2. **Poor planning:** Many people simply don't plan. This is a vital step in using your time wisely. It's also important that your planning be realistic! Don't set yourself up for failure by making unreasonable expectations for yourself.

3. **Personal disorganization:** Disorganization is a huge time-waster. In addition, disorganization adds greatly to your stress level.

4. **Indifference:** You may believe that there really isn't anything that can be done to improve your productivity. You try to improve, but you think it takes too much effort and only yields small differences.

Disorganization is not only a huge time-waster—it greatly adds to your stress level.

The good news is, each of these problems can be fixed. Training provides tools and techniques that improve productivity—as long as the employee is willing to put in the effort to find and implement them. Furthermore, he or she cannot give up if something doesn't work the first time. Effective training allows your employee to find the method that they find works best.

Learning and development programs help identify common time-wasters

A recent study by Robert Half found that the average office worker wastes 56 minutes a day on their mobile phone for non-work activities and another 42 minutes doing personal tasks[5]. That's nearly eight hours a week spent wasting time at work.

More numbers from the study include:

- Employees ages 18 to 34 rack up 70 minutes on mobile devices and 48 minutes on personal tasks each workday—the most of all age groups

- Male employees most frequently check non-work email on their cell phones (32 percent), while females browse social networks more (33 percent)

- More than half of professionals (58 percent) often use their personal devices at work to visit pages that are banned by their company. Only 39 percent of managers think it happens.

While engaged employees occasionally check personal messages at work, they tend to do it during breaks or at lunch because they're focused on their work during the day. How do we know? Because companies with engaged employees can outperform those without by 202 percent[6]. It's a safe bet that better performing companies do not have very many employees wasting 98 minutes a day at work.

Time management and organization training can identify where your employees are losing their time during the day. Employees engaged in the business often feel a sense of ownership at the company.

The average office worker wastes 98 minutes per day doing personal tasks and using their mobile phones for non-work activities.

Source: *Robert Half, 2017*

Managers have the skills to help employees create goals to keep productivity on track

Goals are a critical first step toward a successful life and career. However, writing thorough, challenging and attainable goals takes thought and consideration. Successful organizations train managers and supervisors how to help employees write their goals to align with the company's vision, as well as improve productivity.

Managers are often knowledgeable about what it means to manage others, but they need training to learn how. Too many companies do a disservice to their management team—and by extension, their workforce—by woefully undertraining managers and supervisors.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics found that employers with fewer than 100 employees provided, on average, only 12 minutes of manager training per six-month period. Furthermore, organizations with 100 – 500 employees provided only six minutes of training, on average, for the same time span[7].

This lack of training has a potentially serious cause and effect to a company's bottom line. Without proper training, managers and supervisors can struggle with the "people" part of the job. Deficiencies in emotional intelligence, teambuilding,

creativity, conflict management and communication skills—things every successful manager can be trained on—often lead to managers and supervisors receiving low ratings from their staffs.

Employees who give their managers a low rating are four times more likely than their peers to be interviewing for other jobs[8]. Of the employees who rate their bosses unfavorably, 40 percent interviewed for a new job in the past three months, compared to just 10 percent who rated their managers highly.

However, well-trained managers who have learned and mastered the soft skills like emotional intelligence and teambuilding, partner with their workers to create goals that meet the career-building desires of the individual while advancing overall organizational goals.

Nearly half of employees said they've quit a job because of a bad manager. 56 percent think managers are promoted prematurely and 60 percent think managers need managerial training

Source: *Udemy, 2018*

In Order to Achieve Success Training Is the Key

Productivity is measured differently by every company, but the effects are the same. Productive employees dramatically improve company culture and engagement is high. We've also seen that today's worker wants clearly defined paths for advancement in companies they work for and will choose a company interested in their development over one that pays a higher salary.

Your organization's professional development does not happen in a vacuum. It takes a well-planned process with the right tools and delivery strategies to maximize the effectiveness of the training sessions for everyone.

Once effective learning and development is implemented, it closes skill gaps and opens new avenues of opportunity for management and employees. It increases productivity and subsequently makes employees proud of their accomplishments. Couple that with a manager trained in emotional intelligence who supports and coaches the employee for better performance, and suddenly you've created a healthy, positive and strong culture.
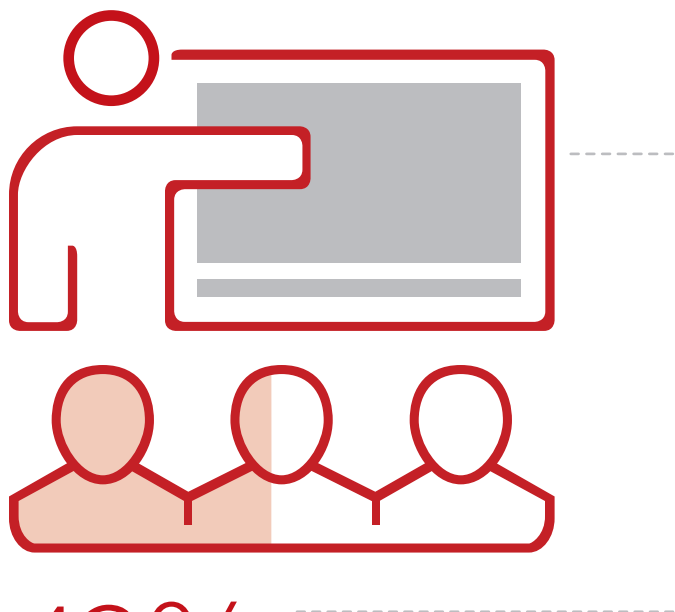
42% of L&D professionals who indicated their employees were high engaged in learning were also highly engaged overall at the organization.

Source: *Findcourses.com, 2018*

About the Author

Daniel Rose creates content, articles, white papers and case studies for the Thought Leadership department at SkillPath, using his 25 years of experience in adult education and training to inform, enlighten and engage his readers. He is an expert in management, leadership and communication, and his writings about compliance, human resources and workplace issues have appeared on *Forbes.com*, *Inc.com*, *Entrepreneur.com* and *ReadersDigest.com*, as well as the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Orange County Register*. He recently co-authored *Top Career Tips* (2018 SkillPath Publications).

About SkillPath

A leader in learning and development since 1989, SkillPath provides professionals worldwide with strategic and innovative training solutions.

Our mission is to provide the highest-quality training for companies and businesspeople around the world, so they can benefit personally and professionally from the experience.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, our revenue funds scholarships for students at Graceland University. We have a long history of partnering with programs that develop individuals' leadership and innovation skills, and our mission aligns with companies that share a goal to invest in mentoring and scholarship opportunities for students and young professionals.

To learn more about this topic or other workplace challenges, download additional free resources at **skillpath.com/resources.**

Resources

1 – Gutierrez, Karla. (January 2016). "10 Statistics on Corporate Training and What They Mean for Your Company's Future." Shift Disruptive eLearning. *https://www.shiftelearning.com/blog/statistics-on-corporate-training-and-what-they-mean-for-your-companys-future*

2 – "Millennials are Most likely to Stay Loyal to Jobs with Development Opportunities." (July 2018). *Bridge. https://www.getbridge.com/news/press-releases/millennials-are-most-likely-stay-loyal-jobs-development-opportunities*

3 – "Employee Engagement on the Rise in the U.S." (August 2018). Gallup. *https://news.gallup.com/poll/241649/employee-engagement-rise.aspx*

4 – "Engaged, Disengaged, Actively Disengaged. What's the Difference?" (March 2016). UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School Executive Development. *http://execdev.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/blog/engaged-disengaged-actively-disengaged.-whats-the-difference*

5 – "Working Hard or Hardly Working? Employees Waste More Than One Day a Week on Non-Work Activities." (2017). Robert Half. *http://rh-us.mediaroom.com/2017-07-19-WORKING-HARD-OR-HARDLY-WORKING-Employees-Waste-More-Than-One-Day-a-Week-on-Non-Work-Activities*

6 – Katz, Eyal. (March 2017). "Remote Workforce NPS: The Most Important Metric You're Missing." Business 2 Community. *https://www.business2community.com/business-innovation/remote-workforce-nps-important-metric-youre-missing-01785305*

7 – "The Bottom-line Necessity of Training Your Managers." *HR Professionals Magazine. http://hrprofessionalsmagazine.com/train-your-managers/*

8 – Bolden-Barrett, Valerie. "Workers Unhappy with Managers 4x More Likely to Job Hunt." (November 2018). HRDive.com. *https://www.hrdive.com/news/workers-unhappy-with-managers-4x-more-likely-to-job-hunt/542515/*