

Thinking differently about engagement

DRIVING ENGAGEMENT DURING UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Did you know that both positive and negative affect serve important functions for workplace engagement? The research tells us that an important distinction among highly engaged employees is the presence of a shift from negative affect to positive affect.¹ And while the stressful and uncertain times surrounding COVID-19 present an array of new challenges, they also offer unique opportunities to drive engagement.

When employees are more likely to encounter negative events during their workday, their levels of engagement will not necessarily decrease. The presence or absence of a *shift* from negative to positive affect is more powerful than simply the presence of negative or positive work events.

The Affective Shift Model of Employee Engagement



Annual engagement surveys serve a critical purpose, but they don't provide employee feedback to specific situations. Pulse surveys are shorter and more customizable, and allow for employee feedback on specific situations, such as guidance on how to shift affect from negative to positive during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Here are a couple of comments from one hospital organization's employees:

"The support of the ELT during the COVID-19 pandemic has been wonderful! Making sure that all staff members have the tools they need to do their job makes coming to work a lot easier, and giving staff daily updates helps ease fears. Thank you for all that you do!"

"[Our organization] is handling the COVID-19 crisis very well. We have space to keep those patients on separate floors, away from other patients, and we have adequate PPE to protect us."

Key Takeaways

Engagement does not have to decline during or after periods of difficulty.

Employees have more to say right now than ever. If you don't have the resources to ask for their feedback right now, ensure you have a method to capture their feedback regarding COVID-19 soon.

1. Bledow, R., Schmitt, A., Frese, M., & Kühnel, J. (2011.) "The Affective Shift Model of Work Engagement." *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(6), 1246-1257.