Employee Productivity and Engagement 2026

Build the conditions for employees to do their best work

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About the Research

"HR.com's State of Employee Productivity and Engagement 2026" survey ran between May and August 2026. We gathered responses from 193 HR professionals in virtually every industry vertical. Respondents are from all over the world, with the majority from North America, especially the United States.

Employee engagement is improving, albeit slowly

29% of HR professionals rate the average employee as highly engaged **(8 or above on a 10-point scale)** up from **23%** in 2022

Yet only 18% say more than 80% of their workforce is highly engaged

And 37% rate average employee engagement at 6 or below

What can organizations do to move from average to high engagement?

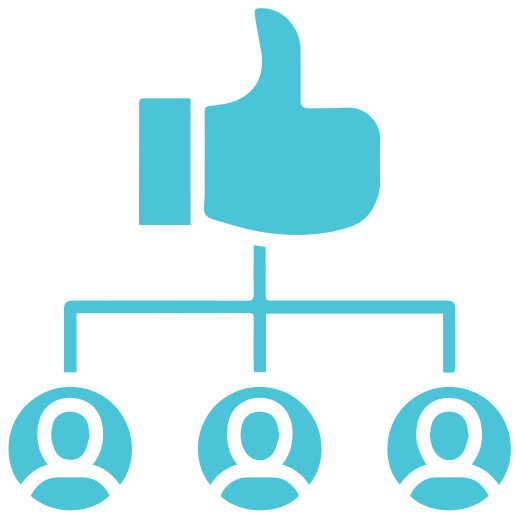
First, determine which factors are most linked to engagement in your organization

Our study found the factors most linked to employee engagement are:

- compensation and benefits **59%**
- work-life balance **57%**
- trust in leaders **57%**
- career growth opportunities **56%**

Second, track engagement regularly

75% of organizations now measure engagement, yet most only check in periodically:



42% measure engagement annually

21% only track it twice a year

Under a third of organizations **(30%)** track engagement at least quarterly

Compared to engagement laggards, engagement leaders are:

more likely to track engagement at least quarterly **(36% vs. 22%)**

Engagement leaders: those organizations that responded between eight and ten to the question "On a scale of one to ten, please estimate how engaged the average employee is in your organization."

Engagement laggards: those organizations that responded between one and six for the same question.

Third, take the time to invest in engagement-related practices

Compared to engagement laggards, engagement leaders are:

6x more likely to say they invest enough in engagement-related resources **(42% vs. 7%)**

about **4x** more likely to say senior leaders prioritize engagement **(46% vs. 11%)**

4x more likely to invest in programs to boost engagement **(53% vs. 13%)**

3x more likely to continuously improve and maintain a positive culture **(81% vs. 26%)**

nearly **3x** more likely to train managers on how to engage employees **(43% vs. 16%)**

Fourth, consider how talent practices and engagement correlate with improved productivity

The biggest factors linked to improved productivity are:

supportive leadership

50%

open and effective communication

46%

clear goals and expectations

39%

Compared to engagement laggards, engagement leaders are:

4x

more likely to rate their average employee as highly productive

(80% vs. 20%)

10x

less likely to rate productivity at 6 or below

(4% vs. 42%)

Fifth, measure productivity beyond performance reviews

56% of organizations measure productivity through performance reviews

Far fewer measure productivity via direct outcomes, such as:

quality assessments	22%
efficiency metrics	20%
output measurements	17%

This lack of outcome-based measurement is a missed opportunity to get a full picture of employee productivity

Sixth, consider how AI can help boost employee productivity

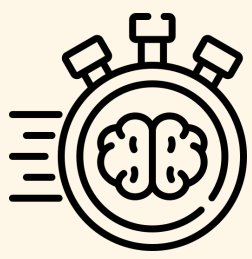
Over the next two years, HR professionals most commonly expect AI to enhance employee productivity by:

reducing administrative workloads	helping employees work more efficiently	providing faster access to knowledge and expertise
64%	**62%**	**60%**

Compared to engagement laggards, engagement leaders are:

about 2x more likely to say AI will support employee performance and productivity

(58% vs. 25%)



much more likely to say AI will provide faster access to knowledge and expertise

(72% vs. 54%)

Final key takeaways

As engagement and productivity converge around leadership, organizations must build around these four pillars:

- **Turn measurement into action.** Most organizations now measure engagement; fewer translate results into visible follow-through.
- **Invest in manager capability.** Train managers on listening, feedback, and coaching, not just process.
- **Combine multiple practices,** not a single initiative. Culture, recognition, and program investment reinforce each other.
- **Measure outcomes, not just activity.** Pair performance reviews with quality, efficiency, and output data.

HR.com's State of Employee Productivity and Engagement 2026

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