



5 ways to keep employees engaged and productive

How to provide the right technology so employees can work where, when and how they want to help you grow your business



Introduction

Your business will never possess a more powerful competitive advantage than your employees. Are you making the right choices to take full advantage of that value — or even to hang on to it?

Just 33% of U.S. workers today consider themselves engaged: This small group feels challenged and fulfilled at work, and routinely go the extra mile for their coworkers and employers. But that means 70% of U.S. workers, at best, show up and do enough to get by at work. At worst, disengaged workers can cost businesses more than they contribute.¹

One important way to keep employees engaged and productive, creating their best work, is through the right technology. Your employees are used to consumer technology that works without hiccups. If they have

an issue, they just download a different app. But at work, your employees need to communicate and collaborate easily and seamlessly, all with the same toolset, whether they're in the office or working remotely — and they need devices that are designed to maximize the benefits of their technology toolsets. Otherwise, they may face unsynced or inaccessible files, siloed data, or applications that don't work as well on mobile devices. Technology woes like these don't just frustrate employees; they impede their ability to collaborate, share opinions and ideas, and perform high-quality work.

According to recent research, when asked about the specific impact of 16 common collaboration tools, most workers surveyed cited only two — email and instant messaging — as helping them to be more effective at their jobs.²

This may be why many employees take technology into their own hands: At least 1 in 4 seek out their own mobile and cloud-based apps. But when your employees use unsanctioned tools, it makes it nearly impossible to safeguard your business's data.

In this e-book, we'll look more closely at how you can address the problems your employees may be facing with their daily technology, and how you can equip them to do their best work while keeping your data and information secured.

1. Gallup, *State of the American Workplace*, 2017.

2. Forrester Research, *The Way We Work: A Mobile, Collaborative Workforce Needs an Accessible and Flexible Toolkit*, January 2017.

1

Choose tools that bring employees together — no matter where they work.

Most employees understand the importance of working together: According to Forrester research, 56% believe improved collaboration benefits their customers. Employees are also acutely aware of the tools they use to collaborate: 85% of workers say having the right technology can make or break their ability to collaborate effectively.³

³. Forrester Research, *The Way We Work: A Mobile, Collaborative Workforce Needs an Accessible and Flexible Toolkit*, January 2017.



Action Plan



Assess your current technology.

How well do your business's technology tools and devices help your employees create, connect, and collaborate with people inside and outside your company? Can they share and collaborate on documents on any device, without versioning issues? Are online meetings quick and easy to set up?



Get insights into your collaboration needs.

Ask your employees to discuss how they work together and which tools — whether you provided them or not — they like to use. Your goal should be to uncover features they consider important, but that your business isn't delivering.



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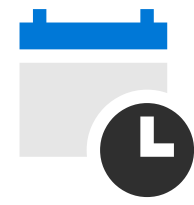
Take work/life balance seriously — and take steps to back up your commitment.

Living a balanced life is hugely important for employees today — work/life balance is second only to compensation when people decide whether to seek new employment.⁴ One key to addressing work/life balance issues is to give your workers control over their schedules and tasks, allowing them to work on-the-go and remotely, using the devices they prefer.

4. Society for Human Resource Management, *Employee Job Satisfaction and Engagement: The Doors of Opportunity Are Open*, 2017.



Action Plan



Set clear, consistent, and fairly applied policies.
It's up to you how to set policies for flex time, remote work, and other scheduling options. What matters most to employees is that they know the rules and see them being applied fairly.



Provide a remote-work toolset.
Determine the types of technology you'll need in order to make working remotely as effective as working in the office. This can include easily accessible document and data storage; collaboration tools, such as shared calendars and team sites; and a variety of communication tools, including email, an intranet, video conferencing, and instant messaging. Also consider devices you can supply that allow mobility without compromising security and perform seamlessly with the other work-related applications and tools you select.



3

Choose solutions that promote simplicity and usability.

When selecting employee collaboration and remote-work tools, you have a choice: Should you rely on a collection of single-purpose applications, or seek out an integrated set of solutions from one vendor?

In many cases, the answer comes down to one key point: Choosing multiple apps from many different vendors does little to resolve common employee complaints about coordinating schedules, finding the right people or resources to do a job, working from the same version of a document, or simply enjoying the same seamless experience across devices. On this basic level — enabling employees to do their very best work — an integrated solution almost always offers better long-term value.



Action Plan



Take a methodical approach to choosing your tools.

Once you have your employees' feedback on your current business technology, make a list of the capabilities — rather than specific applications — you need.



Seek out integrated, cloud-based solutions, and consider their benefits.

Research solutions that provide these capabilities, along with shared data and resources, so employees can enjoy a seamless experience without logging in and out of multiple apps or hunting down information in disconnected systems.



4

Focus on quality of work — no matter where employees work.

Modern, cloud-based productivity tools have led to a radical shift in thinking about where and when people work. That's hardly surprising, given that 88% of employees work from two or more locations during a typical week — and 21% work from three or more locations.⁵

Yet it's important to assess how your business technology performs when it's literally on the move. Can your employees switch from laptop to tablet to smartphone while working on the same document, and have confidence they're still seeing the latest version of their work? Can they be sure everyone on their work team will receive a critical document ahead of a key deadline? Can they work offline and know their emails, calendar, and documents will sync properly when they reconnect? Do they have access to devices that are designed well for the productivity tools on your short list?

⁵ Forrester Research, *The Way We Work: A Mobile, Collaborative Workforce Needs an Accessible and Flexible Toolkit*, January 2017.



Action Plan



Prioritize mobility.

Assess every business application in simple terms: Can its mobile experience match its desktop capabilities? Does that experience extend to every mobile device that matters to you and your employees? Then, seek mobile devices that maximize the capabilities of those business applications.



Offline matters just as much as online.

An application should be just as functional offline as it is online: Can employees still view emails, contacts, and calendars? Can they access and edit documents? When a device goes back online, does everything sync and update seamlessly?



5

Build trust with always-on security.

Data breaches and other security incidents can affect employee engagement and performance, taking time away from productive tasks and undermining employee confidence in your business if they lose important data or files. That's especially true when dealing with lost and stolen mobile devices — a common problem that can be either a momentary inconvenience or major setback, depending on your business's mobile device location and remote-wipe options.



Action Plan



Perform a business data-security audit.

This can be completed with a few common-sense questions: Where is your business data stored, and how is it backed up? How do employees currently share access to files and data? How can your business control access to sensitive data? And how does your business back up and otherwise secure data on employees' mobile devices?



Look separately at device management.

Consider how many employees have devices holding business data; how those devices are updated for new security threats; and whether any special considerations (such as regulatory compliance issues) apply to your business. As you shop for new devices for employees, look for those designed with best-in-class security in mind, and that will work well with the productivity tools you select.



Why does integration matter?



Easier management.

As your business grows and adds more applications, this can lead to more potential problems. Routine management tasks, such as security patches, updates, tying into data sources, and answering user questions can quickly eat up time and resources.



Flexible, scalable pricing.

With an integrated cloud solution, you have a single cost per user per month — and that cost easily scales up or down, depending on your staffing needs. No more worries about over-investing in on-premises technology that needs to be maintained, or juggling monthly invoices for multiple tools.



Comprehensive security.

With just one company providing your productivity apps, you'll have just one admin panel to manage security. With a cloud-based solution, security updates can be rolled out immediately without concern for testing patches and new software versions.

Conclusion: Are you setting up your business and employees for success?

Running a successful small or midsize business is a tough job. That's why it's so important to uncover ways to simplify your business and support your employees through technology, freeing up time and budget to support growth and opportunity.

Making the right technology choices doesn't just solve one problem: It solves a variety of challenges related to effective collaboration, supporting a mobile workforce, and protecting your business data. Better yet, solving these issues can have a direct impact on whether your employees feel empowered and encouraged to do their very best work.

Consider Microsoft 365 Business to set your business up for success. Microsoft 365 Business brings together productivity, management, and security capabilities in a single integrated solution that is cost-effective, easy to manage, and built especially for growing businesses like yours.



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