Understanding male and female motivation in the workplace

PEAKON ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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www.peakon.com
AIMS
To establish the most recent trends in employee engagement, and uncover what is currently motivating men and women in the workplace

OVERVIEW
This report is based on over 230,000 individual survey responses from employees in more than 20 countries. 66% of employees are based in Europe and 28% in North America. 66% of respondents are male and 34% female.

KEY FINDINGS

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DRIVER ANALYSIS
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Most people realise - and most studies prove - that the key to being engaged at work is not just a fatter paycheck. Decades of academic research have explored the complex factors that drive human behaviour and many organisations are now turning their attention inwards, to discover how this knowledge can be used to best engage their workforce.

Our inaugural engagement report has uncovered many trends in male and female motivation at work, but the two standout findings relate to the importance of company values:

- The biggest motivator of both men and women in the workplace is 'Strategy' - faith in the mission and direction of their organisation.

- 'Organisational fit', a measure of the congruence of the values of the organisation and the personal values of the employee, is the second-biggest motivator, and has a 42% greater impact on women than men.

The first of these two findings presents an especially good opportunity for companies to improve their own workplace engagement quickly.

Research by Gallup in 2013 found that only 41% of employees knew what their company stood for and what set it apart from competitors. Similarly, a 2013 report for the Institute for the Study of Labour found that employees who believe in the mission of their organisation are 72% more productive than those who don’t. A strong and effectively-communicated mission statement is, at present, a relatively untapped resource.

In agreement with our second finding, the alignment of employee and employer values has already been shown to grow levels of trust and a sense of corporate community. While all employees would naturally want to work for a company they can trust, the higher influence of organisational fit on women's engagement levels is especially interesting.

Though the direct reason for this is hard to identify, there is no denying that industries with a large gender-imbalance, such as tech and engineering firms, would do well to acknowledge the importance of organisational fit when making themselves attractive to the best female candidates. If they want to attract top talent, they need to create harmonious work environments where the values are clear, and compatible with employees' personal moral compasses.

The importance of strong company values is only going to increase in the coming years, as Millennials begin to make up a larger proportion of the workforce. Research has repeatedly shown that the Millennial generation want to work for companies that inspire them and give them a sense of purpose. According to research by Deloitte, of the Millennials most likely to remain with their employers for a long time, 88% were highly convinced by the organisation’s mission.

Our clients are increasingly asking us to help analyse the way their values affect engagement and productivity within their companies. As more and more studies like ours emerge, and the discussion about workplace engagement increases, organisations should take note that they are in danger of being left behind - unless they start to make people their priority.

Dan Rogers
Co-founder of Peakon
INTRODUCTION

People analytics: the key to a successful business

Understanding employee engagement is vital for modern businesses. Engaged employees are driven, enthusiastic, and play a key role in driving their company towards success.

It has been shown that engaged workforces deliver 33% higher profits, with 44% higher staff retention \(^1\), and 87% of C-level executives recognise disengagement to be one of the biggest threats to their businesses \(^2\). Despite this, only 25% of companies have an employee engagement strategy \(^3\).

Technology gives us our greatest opportunity to improve how our organisations function – creating fulfilling jobs and thriving companies in the process. This is where Peakon comes in.

The Peakon engagement report: uncovering what drives your workforce

Peakon is proud to work alongside a diverse group of pioneering businesses to nurture a culture of engaged and invested employees.

Our inaugural report uses a random cross-section of anonymised data from our database to give an unbiased overview of current trends in employee engagement. Each report will provide deeper insight into engagement by offering a breakdown of the data by an employee or employer attribute.

This report’s attribute, gender, shows us the subtle differences between what is driving men and women in the workplace, as well as highlighting key areas in which they find themselves supported and failed by their employers.

Over 230,000 individual survey responses were used for this report, across more than 20 countries. 66% of employees surveyed were based in Europe and 28% in North America. 66% of respondents were male and 34% female.

We hope you find this report useful. If you have any questions, or would like to know how Peakon can help your business, please visit our website or contact me directly at james@peakon.com.

“What is the single most important thing for a company? Is it the building? Is it the stock? Is it the turnover? It’s the people, investment in people.

- David Brent
ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

What is engagement?

Put simply, engagement is a measure of the emotional, intellectual, and physical commitment an employee has to their company. This occurs when an employee feels respected, supported and aligned with the company’s goals.

When employees are engaged, they care, and they use discretionary effort. This could mean working overtime to meet a deadline without being asked, or going the extra mile to deliver the perfect experience for the customer though no one is watching. Engaged employees are motivated by intrinsic factors such as personal growth and a sense of accomplishment, rather than just by external rewards.

Measuring engagement with eNPS

For the last 10 years, Net Promoter Score® (NPS®)* has been the gold-standard for measuring customer loyalty and satisfaction. More recently, businesses, such as Apple and RackSpace, have adopted a similar measure to track employee engagement - eNPS.

While the traditional NPS® method asks customers how likely they are to recommend a product, using the eNPS approach, Peakon asks employees how likely they are to recommend their place of work.

Responses are given on a scale of 0-10, with a score of 9 or above considered excellent. Employees who give these high scores are classed as company “promoters”. A rating of 7 or 8 is good, and these employees are deemed “passives”. A score of 6 or below is poor and representative of employees who might be considering other opportunities; they are considered “detractors”.

Peakon calculates the overall engagement level of a team, business or industry as the average response score given to the eNPS question. This makes the link between engagement and the factors that drive it, identified in subsequent questions, easier to understand. However, the traditional method of NPS® scoring is also offered.**

Learn more about how Peakon uses eNPS in our eNPS management guide.

“Employee promoters power strong business performance because they provide better experiences for customers, approach the job with energy which enhances productivity and come up with creative and innovative ideas for product, process and service improvements.

- Bain & Company
ENGAGEMENT ANALYSIS

SIX-MONTH ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

The average engagement score over the last six months allows us to establish a benchmark for typical engagement levels.

By looking at the scores of the highest and lowest performing percentiles of companies, we are also able to establish benchmark scores for businesses that are excelling and failing at engaging their employees.

Overall engagement stable, top 10% of companies have an average engagement score of 9.2/10

The last six months show typical employee engagement levels to be stable, with the average score hovering around 8/10. The top ten percent of Peakon clients have a very strong average engagement score of 9.2 over the last six months. At the other end of the spectrum, the poorer performing organisations struggle with average engagement scores of around 6/10.
DRIVER ANALYSIS

DRIVERS: THE FORCES BEHIND ENGAGEMENT

Measuring employee engagement is half the battle, understanding what drives it is where the real value lies. At Peakon we’ve built our approach around decades of academic research, drawing inspiration from Ryan & Deci (Self-Determination Theory), Herzberg (Two-Factor Theory) and Kahn (Employee Engagement) to name but a few. From this extensive body of work, we’ve identified 14 unique drivers that underpin employee satisfaction.

The drivers fall into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.

Intrinsic motivators, such as accomplishment, stem from an internal desire to undertake a task because it is found to be personally gratifying. Extrinsic drivers form the more traditional means of motivation through external factors such as salary.

Each driver is measured using a series of related questions and, like engagement, rated on a scale of 0-10. From this we can glimpse into the psyche of the workforce, identify priority areas where drivers are underperforming within a segment of employees, and calculate the contribution of each driver to the overall engagement level.

The result is actionable insight into how to increase engagement efficiently and effectively.

Intrinsic drivers

ACCOMPLISHMENT
Do employees feel like they are achieving things on a day-to-day basis?

AUTONOMY
Do employees feel they have the ability to get their work done unhindered by micro-management?

GROWTH
Do employees feel they have personal and career development opportunities?

MEANINGFUL WORK
Do employees consider their work to be valuable to themselves, the company, and society?

RECOGNITION
Do employees feel their work is valued by the organisation?

Extrinsic drivers

ENVIRONMENT
Do employees believe their physical environment has a positive effect on their work and how it’s done?

FREEDOM OF OPINIONS
Do employees feel they are able to express their opinions without fear of retribution?

GOAL SETTING
Do employees understand what is expected from them?

MANAGEMENT SUPPORT
Do employees feel they receive sufficient support from their direct manager?

ORGANISATIONAL FIT
Do employees feel like the culture and values of the organisation match their own?

PEER RELATIONSHIPS
Do employees have strong professional and personal relationships with others in the organisation?

REWARD
Do employees feel their level of financial compensation is fair?

STRATEGY
Do employees understand and agree with the overall strategy for the organisation?

WORKLOAD
Do employees feel their workload is manageable or a cause for stress
DRIVER ANALYSIS

DRIVER SCORES AND PERFORMANCE VS. BENCHMARK

To understand driver performance it is necessary to provide context to the scores - some drivers always tend to receive more favourable responses than others. To do this we use the average response score to create a benchmark against which we measure the performance of each driver.

For use with internal employee segments, such as departments, the Peakon platform measures against a company-wide average, whereas for understanding the overall company performance versus competitors, an industry benchmark is used. For this analysis we will be benchmarking against the average driver scores for all employees in our database.

Employees often feel their efforts are not sufficiently acknowledged by their employers

Reward, recognition and workload are the three poorest performing drivers, with reward and recognition also scoring below 7/10. Together these drivers encompass an employee’s desire for a fair exchange of effort (workload) for intrinsic (recognition) and extrinsic (reward) acknowledgement.
Workload and reward are typically the more difficult drivers for an employer to get right. Balancing financial resources alongside customer or client demands is a fine art and ultimately defines the success of a business. It is therefore no surprise to see that many employers are cautiously under-serving their employees in these areas.

“Companies with a ‘recognition-rich culture’ have 31% lower voluntary turnover rates”

However, extrinsic rewards such as salary aren’t always the best forms of motivation. In his Two-Factor Theory of Motivation*, Herzberg suggested that while insufficient extrinsic rewards will adversely affect an employee’s level of motivation, over-rewarding with extrinsic factors will not increase motivation above a certain point. Extrinsic rewards are a case of diminishing returns.

Far better, he suggested, is to reward workers with intrinsic recognition, demonstrating to them how their efforts have contributed to the company’s goals and highlighting their achievements among their peers.

As the second-poorest performing driver, recognition presents a great opportunity for many business to improve their engagement score. Research by Bersin by Deloitte highlights the effectiveness of the driver, finding that companies with a ‘recognition-rich culture’ have 31% lower voluntary turnover rates.

For some ideas on improving recognition in your company, see our management guide on low-cost rewards employees actually want.

Employees typically know their goals and are happy to collaborate

Goal setting and peer relationship receive the most positive responses and are the only two drivers to score above 8/10, showing that employees tend to understand what they are expected to achieve and are confident that they can rely on the support of colleagues when required.

Goal setting theory, developed by Edwin A. Locke in 1968*, was designed as an alternative to cognitive behaviourism, which had previously argued that external and extrinsic factors were key to influencing human behaviour.

“Close work friendships improve employee satisfaction by 50%, while people with a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be highly engaged in their job”

Locke asserted that conscious goal-setting is one of the most efficient means to increase productivity while avoiding procrastination. Businesses can greatly benefit from clear and attainable goals; for more information on goal setting, see our management guide on the importance of goal setting in business.
Women tend to feel financially under-rewarded, whereas men are more confident that their opinions are appreciated

Free opinions, meaningful work, autonomy and reward are all areas in which we see large discrepancies between men and women, with men rating all four significantly higher than their female colleagues.

The data suggests that women feel they are given less responsibility by their employers, with a lack of autonomy and free opinions indicating that micro-management could be an issue.

In developing Self Determination Theory, Ryan & Deci showed that reducing autonomy eliminates an employee’s intrinsic motivation - their ability to complete tasks for personal pleasure, without the need for extrinsic compensation.

Meaningful work, one of seven intrinsic drivers we measure, would undoubtedly be affected by low levels of autonomy. Without a sense of personal responsibility for their work, employees are inclined to consider it less valuable to themselves and their company.

Peer relationship measures the health of an employee’s relationship with others in the organisation. Strong peer relationships foster an environment of trust. Employees that care about each other on a personal level tend to share values and support each other. They are more inclined to go the extra mile and more likely to work as a team.

In a 2015 report, Gallup found that close work friendships improve employee satisfaction by 50%, while people with a best friend at work are seven times more likely to be highly engaged in their job. Additionally, the research showed that organisations with engaged workforces are around 150% more profitable.

Intrinsic factors are vital for employees to be highly engaged, and it has been shown that limiting autonomy limits productivity. In their 2014 Freedom Report, LRN found that only one fifth of businesses exhibit high degrees of employee freedom, with those who do 10 times more likely to outperform their more traditional competitors in the short term and 20 times more likely in the long term.

“If employees feel they are being under-rewarded compared to their peers, their motivation and engagement levels will decline to address the imbalance.”

Lower levels of satisfaction for reward in women is unsurprising, given the widely-reported gender pay gap. A recent study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies indicated that women in the UK still earn on average 18% less than their male counterparts, an effect that is especially increased when women return to work after childbirth.
Understanding male and female motivation in the workplace

DECI: EXTERNAL REWARD ON INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

In 1971, Deci conducted an experiment in which participants were asked to complete a series of puzzles on a Soma cube over three sessions. The participants were split into two groups: test and control. Deci monitored the amount of time the participants continued to work on the puzzles when left alone during an eight minute free-time period between sessions. The control group was offered no external motivation to complete the puzzles, whereas in session two, the test group were rewarded with a dollar for every puzzle completed. The introduction of an external monetary reward was used to influence the participants’ behaviour and reduce their sense of autonomy over the task.

In session three, the monetary reward was removed for the test group and Deci found that, whereas the reward had increased the time test participants spent working on the puzzle after session two, once the reward (and a sense of autonomy) had been removed, time spent on the puzzle in the free time period after session three reduced to levels below that of session one. Comparatively, the motivation levels (time spent) of the control group remained relatively consistent throughout the experiment.

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This is concerning as Adams’ Equity Theory* asserts that employees seek to maintain equity between the contributions they make towards their work and the rewards they receive in return, with the perceived contributions and rewards of others. If employees feel they are being under-rewarded compared to their peers, their motivation and engagement levels will decline to address the imbalance.

Forward-thinking businesses such as Pinterest and SumAll have sought to implement radical practices to address such issues. Both advocate an open salary policy, where employee earnings are available for everyone in the business to view. The transparent nature of the policy forces a business to address any instances of reward discrimination and increases the trust between the workforce and the organisation.

Read more about open salaries in our management guide on pay transparency.
DRIVER AND ENGAGEMENT RELATIONSHIP

It is important to note that the biggest contributors to engagement aren't necessarily the drivers that score highly or poorly; nor are they those performing best or worst against the benchmark scores.

While these measures highlight employee attitudes towards different aspects of their work life, and the extent to which employers are matching employee expectations, the actual impact that the drivers have on bottom-line engagement levels is hidden below the surface.

We are able to identify the extent to which each driver contributes to the engagement score through the use of a statistical model. For this analysis, we took over 230,000 individual survey responses and aggregated the end-of-month engagement and driver scores for each employee for the last six months. We then applied a multinomial regression model to the resulting dataset.

The model assigns a coefficient to each driver: the higher the coefficient, the stronger the driver’s influence. A coefficient of 0.3, for example, tells us that by increasing the driver score by 1, we can expect to see a 0.3 increase in engagement.
Strong leadership is the biggest driver of employee engagement across both genders

Strategy is a measure of the faith that employees have in the leadership of senior management and the mission of the organisation. Our analysis shows that strategy is the largest contributor to employee engagement, with an average coefficient of 0.33.

Strategy is also one of the lower scoring drivers across our dataset, with an average score of 7.2 as of August 2016. This is not to say that companies lack a robust business strategy, but that they may be failing to communicate it effectively and rally employees around their mission. Research by Gallup in 2013 found that only 41% of employees knew what their company stood for and what set it apart from competitors.

In a 2013 report for the Institute for the Study of Labour, Carpenter & Gong found that employees who believe in the mission of their organisation are 72% more productive than those who don’t. Faith in the mission, they found, also negates the need for employees to be ‘bought’ with costly extrinsic rewards.

Organisational fit has a 42% greater impact on women’s engagement than men’s

Organisational fit is a measure of the extent to which an employee’s personal values align with those of their employer and the workplace culture. Our analysis shows it to be the second largest motivator of employee engagement for both men and women, as well as the driver with the biggest difference in influence between genders.

“Getting organisational fit right increases employee job satisfaction while decreasing turnover intention”

With a coefficient of 0.35, organisational fit has around a 42% greater impact on women than it does on their male colleagues (coefficient of 0.24).

High value congruence implies a strong culture and shared values among coworkers, and according to Boon & Hartog* this can translate to increased levels of trust and a shared sense of corporate community.

Additionally, research by Cable and Judge (1996) has shown that getting organisational fit right increases employee job satisfaction while decreasing turnover intention. The same report also found that perceived organisational fit is key to a business’ attractiveness to potential candidates, and plays a large role in attracting the best talent during the recruitment process.
Personal growth and accomplishment affects engagement levels more in men

The growth driver relates to the level of personal and career development opportunities employees perceive are available to them, and features in almost every theory on motivation and engagement.

Our model shows growth to have around a 50% greater influence on engagement levels in men than it does in women.

Growth is linked to the concepts of self-esteem and self-actualisation. This includes desires to be creative and productive, and to complete meaningful tasks. According to Existence, Relatedness and Growth (ERG) Theory*, growth-need can fluctuate depending on career stage or individual preferences; some employees may just expect a job to pay the bills.

Despite the prevalence of growth in employee engagement theories, Tower Watsons’ Global Workforce Study reports that only 46% of employees say their organization provides useful career planning tools.

Accomplishment, a measure of how much an employee feels they achieve on a day-to-day basis, is also shown to have around a 50% greater influence on engagement levels in men than it does in women.

“Only 46 percent of employees say their organization provides useful career planning tools”

Accomplishment is based on “competence”, one of three motivational needs defined in Self Determination Theory, in which Ryan & Deci asserted that if an individual begins to perceive himself or herself as incompetent at an activity, then his or her intrinsic motivation is undermined. Additionally, Ryan & Deci found that giving unexpected positive feedback on a task increases intrinsic motivation as the feedback fulfils the need for competence.

For some ideas on how to create a sense of accomplishment in the workplace, please see our management guide.
COMMENT ANALYSIS

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY

In addition to a 0-10 rating, Peakon gives employees the opportunity to leave additional comments in response to engagement and driver questions. This gives us the ability to dig even deeper into unique or precise engagement issues that might be affecting a segment of employees.

We receive around 2000 comments each month and identify internal topic trends for each customer. Topics are chosen by identifying uncommon nouns that appear with a higher-than-expected frequency. These words carry the most company and event-specific information and highlight any issues of interest. The sentiment surrounding each topic is then calculated using the average driver score given with each associated comment.

Additionally, Peakon can also ask open-ended questions for employees to make suggestions and voice ideas. One such question, “If you had a magic wand, what one change would you make at [company] to improve your productivity?”, brings pressing issues to the surface. Below are the top five issues on the minds of employees.

1. Employees would change the space around them
   14% of all responses | 11% of male responses | 16% of female responses

   Of all the issues raised in the last six months of magic wand questions, the biggest topic of contention was the office with 14%. Suggestions ranged from changing office locations towards city hubs, to fun additions to the workplace such as foosball and table-tennis. Comfort was also a priority for employees: 1/8th of office-based comments referred directly to chairs and desks.

   A 2005 study commissioned by the British government concluded that the link between environment and productivity was “so profound” that innovation in office design was essential. See our management guide for 4 easy ways to improve your office space.

2. Communication is key
   9% of all responses | 8% of male responses | 11% of female responses

   Effective communication is the backbone of an engaged workforce. 9% of issues raised were directed towards improving communication methods between teams, of which a quarter addressed meetings directly. Employees are keen for more feedback from managers and greater levels of transparency throughout their organisations. Simple steps, such as more frequent 1-on-1 meetings with line managers make a big difference in how connected employees feel to their employers.
Employees want leaders who inspire
8% of all responses | 8% of male responses | 8% of female responses

Management, leadership and strategy featured in 8% of employee responses, with employees highlighting the need for a strategy and mission they can believe in. Senior and direct managers are vessels for these messages, adding further support to the need for clear and effective communication. See our management guide for tips on how to communicate strategy effectively.

Show me the money
6% of all responses | 6% of male responses | 8% of female responses

6% of comments were about pay and benefits. Though a small amount may be tongue-in-cheek, the prominence of words such as “fair”, “competitive” and “adequate” only further highlight previous findings in this report. Insufficient extrinsic reward, or a perceived imbalance in reward schemes, strongly impacts engagement levels and undermines employees’ ability to become motivated intrinsically.

The way to employees’ hearts is through their stomachs
5% of all responses | 5% of male responses | 4% of female responses

To be productive, employees need to be fuelled, and high on their agenda is their sustenance. 5% of comments are about refreshments and lunch facilities, 1 in 8 of which are requesting free or improved coffee facilities. Many companies are now taking it upon themselves to provide their employees with free food, most notably Google, who are rumoured to have a rule stipulating no employee should be further than 150ft from a food source.

A 2011 study by Staples found that 57% of US office workers have to buy their own refreshments at work, with around 50% of workers leaving the office at least once a day to do so. The study estimated that this amounts to around 2.4 billion hours a year in lost productivity in the US alone.
SUMMARY

Whilst it’s important not to generalise - everyone is an individual after all - when it comes to employee engagement, decades’ worth of academic research has identified many fundamental ‘laws’ underpinning motivation.

As employees we respond to how we are treated and made to feel by our employers. When we feel valued, supported and proud of our organisation, we excel.

It is important to bear this in mind when interpreting the findings of this report, and the differences identified between men and women. To conclude that men and women are fundamentally different in their approach to work is to also ignore the unmistakable fact that there are large disparities in the treatment of men and women in the workplace.

Every business is unique, with its own personality, goals and structure - there is no one-size-fits-all approach to employee engagement. The ability to continuously measure engagement levels, understand the drivers and identify issues in your business is a powerful tool. That’s why top companies worldwide have chosen Peakon to help them build a high-performance culture.

“Weak has become an invaluable management tool for Delivery Hero. Having a quantitative and qualitative overview on the feedback of hundreds of employees and then drilling into any issues they have is a revelation.

We hope that you have found this report informative. If you have any questions, or would like to learn more about how Peakon can help your business, please visit our website or contact me directly at james@peakon.com.

For more customer case-studies and testimonials, see our customer success page.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

James is a data scientist at Peakon. Having previously worked in marketing, helping some of the world’s biggest brands to better understand their customers, he is now applying his expertise to employees. James has a bachelor’s degree in Physics from the University of Bristol and a background in applied mathematical modelling. When not at the office, he can be found taking things apart and putting them back together.

Tanya is a writer at Peakon. She’s currently working on a PhD in social sciences about disadvantaged women and caste in India. She has a background in sociology, with a master’s degree from London School of Economics. In 2006, then Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam presented her with a National Award for Excellence in Creative Writing. She is a keen linguist and passionate about writing, travelling and working with people.

Dan is a co-founder of Peakon. After starting his career as an analyst in the City for JP Morgan, Dan decided to put his analytical and quantitative ability to better use in London’s nascent startup scene. After helping build two of Europe’s most successful startups - Songkick and Qype - he had the epiphany that employees, not customers or product, were the key to business success, and thus Peakon was born. Dan has an MBA from London Business School, a degree in Software Engineering, and enjoys cycling in his spare time.
*Net Promoter, Net Promoter Score, and NPS are trademarks of Satmetrix Systems, Inc., Bain & Company, Inc., and Fred Reichheld.

**In the traditional NPS methodology, respondents are divided into the three segments: ‘promoters’ (9-10), ‘passives’ (7-8) and ‘detractors’ (0-6). The NPS is then calculated by subtracting the percentage of detractors from the percentage of promoters. Scores range from -100 to 100.