

Don't fall for these five myths of staff engagement

As a manager, you know that the more engaged your team is, the better they perform. Higher levels of employee engagement in health care are associated with a stronger culture of safety, higher patient satisfaction, and lower staff turnover.

Engaging your team is the right thing to do, but it can feel impossible sometimes. The good news: Many assumptions we make about why we can't engage staff aren't as true as they first appear. If you find yourself thinking one of the five myths below, look to the right to learn the truth about how you can keep your team engaged.

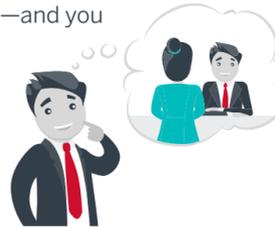
"I want to work on engagement, but..."

...I'm a drop in the bucket—there's a limit to what I can do."



Focus on high-impact areas.

Think back to a time when a manager engaged you during challenging circumstances. That manager likely focused on one of the six areas shown here—and you can do that for your team too.



How has a manager made me feel engaged?

- Connecting to mission and values
- Giving recognition and feedback
- Offering support
- Fostering professional growth
- Asking for input
- Promoting teamwork

...my people want things that I can't give them."



Uncover missing context

from your staff's requests. Before you say no, think about what you can do to meet their underlying needs.



Ask your team member

- Can you help me understand what about the current situation is not working for you?
- If I can't meet this request, is there something else I could do that would help?



Ask yourself

- What support can you give that they might not have thought to ask for?
- If you were in their shoes, what might lead you to make this request?

...to do it well requires time I don't have."



Identify microshifts or small changes in your regular approach to a situation that can have macro results. Here are two examples.



The Mute Button

When you discover a problem or face an unexpected question about how to proceed, wait for input from at least one person before offering your own suggestion or direction.



Open Door 2.0

Find a task on your to-do list that doesn't require intense concentration. Work on it in a public place—the lunch table, the nurses' station, even in the hall—where you can be visible and available for informal questions and conversation.

...not everything is sunshine and roses at the moment."



Directly address uncomfortable situations to help your team. Here are three reasons why it's worth the effort it takes to talk about tough situations.



1 It benefits me

- Lets your team play a role in improving tough situations, easing your burden
- Helps your team accomplish more, which reflects positively on you

2 It supports my people

- Gives people the confidence that their work truly matters
- Gives useful context to compete with the rumor mill

3 It contributes to a positive culture

- Sets a precedent that it is okay to bring things up
- Reinforces that you have confidence in your team's abilities

...there are more urgent things I need to address."



Counter the pressure

proactively with these sample tactics that will help you engage your team even when you're feeling stressed.



How to engage when...

...time is tight.

- Make it micro:** Choose an engagement tactic that takes five minutes or less.
- Share the work:** Delegate components of tasks or projects as stretch opportunities to reliable individuals.

...you've had a tough day.

- Make it easy:** Work on an engagement tactic that feels easiest in the moment.
- Save it for later:** Flag an engagement opportunity to double down on later that week.

...senior leaders are watching.

- Lower the stakes:** Instead of delegating full ownership to a team member, talk to them about what you did so they can still learn from it.
- Get top cover:** Let your leader know in advance that you're letting someone else take the reins as a learning opportunity.