



White Paper

Technology and Communication:

How to Leverage Technology to Improve Employee Engagement

Presented by ElevatePoint and Eloquor Consulting



Technology and Communications:

How to Leverage Technology to Improve Employee Engagement

Why Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement has evolved from a relatively unknown trend to a term in common usage, which lends itself to a variety of forms and levels of understanding. While employee engagement, as a practice, has crossed into the main stream, there are still a wide a variety of interpretations and definitions around this important business practice. Here are a few examples to get the conversation started:

- The quintessential voice of engagement, Gallup, originally defined engagement in the book *First, Break All the Rules*, as exemplified by employees who “work with a passion and feel a profound connection to their company” and “drive innovation and move the organization forward.”
- According to the [Mercer](#) consulting group, “Employee engagement is about the ability of leaders to inspire and align their people around the way forward at the desired pace, involving a planned communication effort that is integrated with all the other leadership and change activities.”
- Author [Kevin Kruse](#) defined employee engagement in a [recent Forbes article](#), “Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals.”

The Cost of Disengaged Employees

Of the 100 million people who hold full-time jobs, 70 million are not engaged on some level costing the US economy an estimated \$450-\$550 billion annually.

- State of the American Workplace

For the purposes of this white paper, we are subscribing to the Gallup definition, for these reasons:

- It demonstrates the shared responsibility between leaders at all levels and employees
- It harkens to the need for actual action, beyond understanding and emotion
- It speaks to business objectives and individual needs

Despite the variety of working definitions around employee engagement, what can be agreed upon is the impact employee engagement has on organizational performance. From Gallup’s recent [State of the](#)

[American Workplace](#) and [Engagement at Work](#) studies to [Tower Watson's 2012 Global Workforce Study](#), countless white papers, articles and studies have been conducted discussing the importance of employee engagement on corporate performance.

In short, all of these studies concretely identify a link from employee engagement to bottom-line economic performance. Analyzing such factors as productivity, profitability, employee happiness, turnover, customer satisfaction and more, these studies have laid the foundation for an organizational movement around the importance of employee engagement.

This linkage isn't new. [John P. Kotter](#) was researching and writing about this back in the 80s and early 90s. His work also linked the above factors and demonstrated bottom-line value as a result of satisfied employees and customers; the industry just didn't call it "engagement" yet.

But to realize those factors, employee engagement cannot remain a theoretical discussion, but must entail practical and applicable business practice. This requires implementation of strategies and tools that can drive employee action. Ultimately, the business value is in the appropriate action and decision-making of employees, while the intrinsic employee value is in contributing and recognition for that contribution.

Technology can play an important role in making engagement a practical part of everyday work. As companies evolve and move towards a *digital workplace*, understanding the impact of technology on employee engagement is critical.

What is the Digital Workplace?

Definition: The *Digital Workplace* is the digital environment in which we work. It is a collaboration space, a community and a place to find and leverage corporate knowledge. It includes a collection of electronic tools that enable productive, efficient and effective work from anywhere.

The Stats: According to the Workplace of the Future Survey by Teknion Corporation, 88% of companies offer their workforce personal devices such as smartphones and tablets. Nearly 90 percent of companies plan to increase their investment in productivity-enabling technologies such as voice activation and sophisticated videoconferencing by 2015. Organizations are embracing the digital workplace as they search for ways to be more efficient, more collaborative and reduce their physical footprint while realizing higher levels of productivity with their workforce.

Why You Should Care: Companies leading the digital workplace revolution are already realizing bottom-line savings. According to the same report, companies with mature mobility programs, empowering employees to be more productive away from the office, are already generating bottom-line savings of as much as 30% over their peers.

Source: [Forbes](#)

Many believe that newer technology tools represent great return on investment for internal use with employees. Two important reasons this may prove true are:

1. Technology helps us connect with and engage remote or disconnected employees – those with little or no computer or Internet access during their work time
2. Peer-to-peer engagement and dialogue using technology can drive the generation of more ideas, which in turn drives innovation and improvements

Creating an actionable roadmap that fully leverages technology in your employee engagement initiatives can improve bottom-line performance. Technology can help you:

1. Get the most out of your employees
2. Encourage collaboration and social interaction
3. Connect disconnected workers
4. Measure employee engagement

With planning and focus, technology can help you move your organization into the top percentile of employee engagement and corporate performance.

The Strategy of Employee Engagement

But before examining each of the four ways technology benefits engagement, let's look at why engagement is a sound strategy and why it is important to focus on the four areas noted above.

If we assume the Gallup definition of employee engagement to be correct, *and* the ultimate value of engagement lies in sound decision-making and action, then driving good decision-making and action should be a communicator's core strategy. Many communicators are already here, already doing good work to drive action. Not as many, however, look at technology as part of their toolkit for achieving this goal.

Companies that are most effective at decision making and execution have been shown to generate as much as [six percentage points more in shareholder return](#) compared to those that are poor at decision making. Good decision-making is driven, in part, by the availability of good information. Valuable information can come from any part of the organization. Collaboration pulls information from the mind of the employee into the open where it can combine with other ideas into something greater.

Even employees who are less digitally connected at work can contribute great ideas that improve their work situation and organizational productivity. Examples of ways technology helps to leverage this available, but underutilized, knowledge include:

- One employee posts about a project he is working on, another employee in an office on the other side of the world sees the post and realizes she is working on a similar project. If the two teams combine their efforts, they can solve the singular problem and the company gets a global solution. Had it not been for the technology allowing one employee to share and the other to be informed, the two projects would have continued working in isolation. All team members contribute and feel more connected to the company as a result.

- A young tech savvy employee starts writing articles on the corporate intranet about using some of the new digital workplace tools. She writes very short pieces with screenshots and sometimes video. Each piece is narrow and focused on using just one small technology capability. Executives – who may not be as tech savvy – can quickly read a post and learn one new thing about the company’s digital workplace – without demonstrating their lack of savvy publically. She’s contributing her knowledge and the executives get more productive.
- An engineer nearing retirement begins documenting a career-worth of explorations and findings on a team site. He answers questions and gives suggestions to the younger engineers who will carry on when he’s gone. Not only is this fulfilling for him, but it also helps to engage the younger group, solidifying their commitment to and pride in the organization. The organization is rewarded with better-educated young engineers who may bring bigger innovative ideas as a result.

The corporate intranet has always been an important decision tool for business; at least it’s always had the potential to be such. Today, the digital workplace stands to be the *most* important decision tool for business. The ability for any employee to contribute what they know is perhaps the most important reason why corporate intranets today are stronger decision tools than when they were static and not interactive. Being able to contribute, being listened to and being recognized for expertise make the technical capability of sharing an important engagement method. Why? Because it hits some of [Gallup’s Q12 important questions](#):

- I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
- At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
- At work, my opinions seem to count.

The flip side of contributing information is consuming information. Consumption of shared information relates to several more of Gallup’s Q12 questions:

- My associates or fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
- The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
- This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

So, getting people to actively share and actively consume what is shared helps move them to better decisions and action. Above all, contributing and consuming alike must be very easy for the employee or adoption, comprehension and ability to take action will likely suffer. However, this doesn’t mean it’s easy to create and implement such technology and therefore requires a deliberate and focused effort.

Communicators can make these elements of engagement the core of their functional strategy. They must champion the technology that can make a difference, redirect others from technology that won’t and ensure employee users are involved early and often in planning and design. Communicators then become important strategists and planners for the digital workplace, with a view of the entire organization and its needs. Planning is important and presents a great topic for another white paper. For now we recommend you look into [technology-enabling your communication strategic planning process](#).

Knowledge Sharing: Getting the Most Out of Your Employees

In the State of the American Workplace Report by Gallup, Communication and Knowledge Management are defined as core components of organizations successfully engaging their employees. According to Gallup, “Leaders in the best organizations take a strategic approach to aligning their employee engagement communication efforts. They find ways to communicate engagement’s impact throughout the year and share engagement tools and best practices within the organization.”

Today, companies are adopting strategies of transparency and engagement over the old command-and-control management style. To manage this strategic transition, it is essential to find ways to embrace collaboration and knowledge sharing without losing complete control of how information is shared and developed. New technologies such as social, cloud and other internal collaboration tools have opened up a new ability to extend the breadth of organizational knowledge to a wider audience. By combining these new technologies with process best practices, organizations are radically improving productivity, reducing risk and positively impacting the bottom-line.

Knowledge Sharing Process

[Knowledge Management Tools](#), an educational website describes knowledge management as, “making the right information available to the right people at the right time.” To effectively tackle this challenge, organizations must begin by clearly identifying the core types of information that must be shared to align and engage employees and bring about maximum organizational benefit. What critical organizational information should all employees access? What types of knowledge are suitable for collaboration? What informational silos exist today and how are these pockets of information affecting business performance?

What is Knowledge Sharing?

Articulation: The ability of the user to define what they need

Awareness: Awareness of the knowledge available

Access: Access to the knowledge

Guidance: Knowledge managers are often considered key in the build-up of a knowledge sharing system. They must help define areas of expertise of the members of the firm, guide their contributions, assist users, and be responsible for the language used in publications and other communication material. This is so to avoid an information/knowledge overload.

Completeness: Access to both centrally managed and self-published knowledge. The former is often more scrutinized, but takes longer to publish and is not as hard-on. Self-published information on the other hand runs the risk of not being as reliable.

Source: [Knowledge Management Tools](#)

To address these questions, it is important to understand the current culture in your organization and how it supports or restricts knowledge sharing. Is your culture currently supportive of knowledge sharing or are there barriers in place prohibiting the necessary communication to increase overall knowledge? If your organizational culture is not supportive of knowledge sharing, figure out why. Until you can answer this question, you can't move to an environment which promotes knowledge sharing and organizational collaboration.

When analyzing your environment for knowledge sharing, take the time to understand knowledge sharing objectives and how to get employees collaborating on information that empowers them to be more successful and therefore more engaged. Remember, anyone can serve in this knowledge management role as long as they are contributing relevant and engaging information. Create a culture that embraces and supports this objective to ensure buying from all levels of the organization. And remember, information overload is as bad as a lack of information.

Knowledge Sharing Technology

Today's technology environment provides organizations a wide variety of choices in how to successfully implement technology systems to deliver on their goals to be more agile in terms of sharing and collaborating on organizational knowledge. Selecting the right type of technology can make a major impact in the success of your knowledge-sharing program.

As discussed above, proper decision making is heavily driven by the availability of good information. Without the availability of appropriate and actionable information, good decision making cannot exist. When looking to the source of the information which drives good decision making, it is always the employees that are at the core of this information.

In the past, undocumented organizational knowledge was handed down from employee to employee much like tribal clans handed down stories to retain their history. In the past, spoken word and one-on-one trainings were the only way to pass down this critical knowledge. Today's digital workplace has vastly improved the way organizations capture, share and collaborate on organizational knowledge thus improving decision making at all levels of the organization as a natural result.

With the act of sharing organizational knowledge such an important part of employee engagement, it is critical that this premise be used as a foundational element of your technology selection criteria. While social technologies have gained prominence, it is important to focus not just on the flash of the technology itself, but how that technology empowers better organizational knowledge capturing, sharing and collaboration. When looking at any new technology to improve organization knowledge transfer and employee engagement for your employees you should consider the following questions:

- How does the proposed technology create templates for information sharing? Are they easy to use for people of all levels of the organization?
- How does the technology solution you are examining help employees get work accomplished? (This is especially important when examining enterprise social technologies)
- How can the technology provide more information about company vision, people, business processes? (Social tools must create organizational alignment to be effective.)

- How does the technology empower the collaboration and versioning of company documents?
- How effectively does the technology support key organizational scenarios such as identifying the best talent for a particular department or initiative?
- Does the technology enable remote connectivity through mobile devices or computers outside of your firewall?
- Once documented, how does the solution distribute organizational knowledge to ensure effective long term storage and easy access by all relevant employees?
- How does the proposed technology integrate or replace existing organizational knowledge processes?
- How can you leverage the proposed technology to create content approval processes to reduce information overload?
- How will you manage or govern the technology to evolve it over time?

Case Study: Health Care Productivity

Based on the experience of Eloquor and Coldwater Software's client engagements, healthcare may be the toughest industry in which to drive collaboration and use of newer technologies. This is because of a quirky cultural phenomenon driven from time-keeping systems and the commitment to "deliver patient care." In the past, some time-keeping systems literally labeled time not spent in front of a patient as "unproductive."

This, coupled with the obvious commitment by healthcare providers such as registered nurses, respiratory therapists, physical therapists, etc., reduces interest in activities that don't directly involve the patient. Anything that requires the use of the computer, aside from documenting notes in a patient's chart, is viewed as unproductive.

In most healthcare systems today, the oncology nurses in one facility never interact with those at other sister facilities. Imagine what could happen if they engaged in dialogue, shared their ideas and challenges and brainstormed solutions together? A few healthcare organizations are beginning to use technology for just this type of collaboration, but the industry overall has a long way to go and perhaps the greatest amount of potential to gain productivity, facilitate improved communication and drive engagement.

Collaboration and the Rise of Social Technologies

Some executives and employees alike run the other way when they hear words like "social," "blog," "wiki," or "tweet." Communicators openly complain about this at conferences: "I can't get my execs to even pay attention when I use the word 'social.'" Unfortunately, by trying to name everything, the industry has created imagined barriers to business improvement. "Collaboration" often is a more familiar and productive word to use.

Social technologies are, in fact, simply different ways of interacting, sharing and collaborating. The work place is really not more “social” than it ever was. We’ve just traded the raucous holiday party for an online conversation about the patient benefits of a new in-room information display at a hospital. We socialize in a different way at work now. The newer “social” way is more conducive to:

1. Employees realizing their need for expertise recognition and contribution
2. Business benefiting from the socialization through improvements and innovations, resulting in potential improvements to customer satisfaction

According to a [new study from McKinsey](#), use of social technologies can improve organizational productivity by 25%. This, like our penchant for naming every new technology that comes along, reinforces social as a separate category. But, it’s not.

Social technology is another way to accomplish productive collaboration. What the McKinsey study doesn’t separately look at is the extent to which the so-called “social” technologies are fully embedded in the employee’s digital experience. Rather than separating them, it’s far more valuable to look at where in the workflow a social capability could make the job easier. This is where communicators, executives and IT experts need to focus. In this way, a company can realize far more value from the various social technologies. Wondering what this looks like?

- While exploring the new benefits plans, an employee can visit a forum to chat with others about a particular plan
- While browsing current company news, an employee can rate and engage in discussion about an article, enabling it to be crowd sourced as popular for other employees
- After uploading results of a current engineering procedure, an employee can chat with engineers at other sites about findings, suggestions for different approaches and new techniques
- While attempting to build a new working group around a key initiative, employees can be identified based upon a rich social profile that includes skills, experience, work history and other details

The first part of each of these examples is nothing new. The second piece is the social part. Notice that in each example, the employee needn’t go to a singular center or space to interact with others. The social experience is built naturally into the user’s experience where it creates a high level of value.

It is important to note that as the Forrester Groundswell research finds, different people will adopt different online social behaviors at different rates. One individual will author, where another will just rate other person’s content, while still another will only read. Each one of these persona’s unique characteristics should be considered when planning how to integrate social technologies into your organization.

The communication team meanwhile must remember that these social methods of communicating are simply that, methods. They are not strategies or channels in and of themselves. They are simply different approaches, and one cannot rely exclusively on them alone to communicate effectively with employees.

Moreover, they should be fully integrated with more traditional communication methods such as town halls, newsletters, magazines and video.

Every organization has a set of content that must be shared and published to encourage organizational alignment, often communicated through these traditional communication methods. What role can technology play in encouraging collaboration around this material? Technology can:

- Help leaders communicate more quickly and transparently
- Support those working to create relevancy for front-line employees through dialogue
- Target key groups of employees to drive specific action
- Empower leaders at any level (including executives) to communicate effectively via:
 - Storytelling
 - Case studies
 - Examples of high performance discovered during travel to other offices
 - Recognition of those doing a great job

All of these help employees feel knowledgeable, cared about, recognized and able to achieve. Employees are ultimately engaged and able to contribute to bottom-line success.

Case Study: Global Logistics Company Collaboration

A group of HR and communication professionals at a global logistics company wanted to understand more about what the different functions in the business needed from the corporate intranet to be effective. After a series of interviews with many of the business functions, one finding stood out: managers wasted a lot of valuable time because they didn't know where to find what they needed to manage effectively. This singular finding resulted in the creation of an online community being created just for managers.

The space brought together links and resources for all aspects of a manager's role, including tools to help them respond to employee questions about a myriad of topics, such as:

- Recruiting guidance
- Responding to benefits questions
- Helping an employee pick development opportunities
- Navigating a country transfer

For the first time, managers had just one place to go to find everything they needed. They didn't have to navigate to 12 different sites and they didn't have to pick up the phone to get answers. More importantly, they could connect with each other and those with special expertise on management issues (i.e., legal and human resources experts).

The social aspects enable them to teach and learn from each other. The immediate interaction in online chat with experts reduced the time to resolve questions and issues. Those who provide feedback indicated it took them less time and made them more effective.

This particular organization used Microsoft SharePoint to create this space, but it could be created in almost any intranet platform with some basic social capabilities. In the end, this type of approach saves time for the experts in HR and Legal, and enables the manager community to support itself.

Connecting Disconnected Workers

Reaching employees with limited access to the Internet during work hours is crucial to business success. Whether yours is a manufacturing business or one in commodities extraction, or even global logistics, your remote workers matter. They may be disconnected, but every day they make decisions that contribute to the bottom line. Eloquor has found in client research that these remote workers want access to more information and content than they have today.

When you think about disconnected or remote workers, there are some important characteristics to consider:

- Shift workers may be away from the workplace for several days in a row
- One-on-one time with a supervisor may be limited
- Supervisors hold the key as a trusted source of relevant information

Technology is making reaching these employees easier, but it is important to put several assumptions behind us.

1. Just because they aren't big technology users during work hours doesn't mean remote employees don't use technology on their own time. It is not safe to assume these employees have zero access or interest.
2. Whether remote employees are in operational or customer facing roles, they need the right information and connections in the organization to contribute and make decisions. It is again risky to assume that having good access to information and other people doesn't matter to the frontline.

Mobile may be the most important opportunity available to reach disconnected workers. Recent statistics are impressive:

- [58% of all US consumers already own a smartphone](#)
- [Global mobile traffic now accounts for 15% of all Internet traffic](#)
- [25.85% of all emails are opened on mobile phones](#)
- [Mobile-based searches make up one quarter of all searches](#)
- [Mobile Internet traffic will eclipse desktop traffic in 2014](#)

But mobile isn't only about smartphones. You can use plain texting to reach those without smartphones. For those who do have smartphones, you can provide access to an app native to the phone's operating system, or provide a web-based app they use with their smartphone browser (typically serves multiple phone browsers).

Many organizations start with feeds of news to remote workers. This is how one large global consumer products company began engaging their remote workers. This organization created a native app for the iPhone – their corporate smartphone of choice – that delivered a standard news stream. From here, many organizations add personalization options that enable employees to make the stream truly relevant.

Another best practice is to leverage your central news space for content for your mobile stream. Eloquor's research demonstrates that employees prefer to have one central place on the intranet to go for news. They also want:

- To see which articles others like most
- To be able to filter and sort the news based on channels, departments, geography, etc.
- Be able to review news published within a certain period of time (great for shift workers)

A good example of this is [ElevatePoint News](#), a news center solution for SharePoint on which Eloquor and Coldwater Software collaborated.

Now some organizations are even incorporating an activity feed generated by their intranet platform. This might be delivered via a mobile device or just on the corporate intranet. Either way, it gives a real time view into what's being published. But, don't count on the activity feed alone. It's a very transient approach; here today and gone with the next 4 posts. Remote employees don't typically have the time to monitoring activity feeds all the time.

Finally, it would be remiss not to discuss the importance role supervisors play in effectively engaging remote employees. There are ways to use technology to support the supervisors as well. For example, supervisors require special tools and resources to make information relevant for their teams. These leaders still represent the most important channel for disconnected workers. Effectively connecting with their leader peers is an important strategy and can easily be facilitated with social technology (discussion group, blog, etc.) By providing supervisors with the right information at the right time, and coordinating their efforts, you can establish a sense of continuity and high levels of employee engagement for your remote workers.

In fact, technology can play a role in all 4 parts of a successful manager/supervisor communication program:

1. Recruit and hire for communication skills: use an online test or game to discern communication skills during the recruiting process; include interview questions about use of social technology
2. Train communication skills: training can be online or make use of online meeting tools
3. Provide great support tools and resources: a space for managers and supervisors to interact with each other, find resources, ask questions, etc., is very useful; they can support and mentor each other
4. Measure through performance management program: even this process can be put online, with performance incentives available for use in an online store

So critical are supervisors in the communication process with remote employees, they may be the primary reason so many companies still use the old cascade communication process. But, this process is badly broken in most companies. So, while supervisors and leaders at all levels are still important, the cascade process needn't be retained. Instead, provide content and tools to anyone with people reporting to them. Don't wait for it to trickle down, but send to all the people with a communication role at once.

And remember that part of the leader's responsibility is to be connected even if you have to put a smartphone in their hand. They are your most valuable tie to disconnected employees.

Case Study: Creating a New Team

A global mining organization had engineers at each of their global sites responsible for the blast operations, or blowing up parts of the mountain. These experts would study the targeted blast area, determine the optimal approach and direct the blast operations. Following a blast, they are the first ones back in to the site to study and document blast results, often taking pictures and video.

While these individuals did the same job and receive a paycheck from the same company, they had never interacted with each other. Some didn't even know the names of their counterparts at other sites. They work in remote regions and tend not to be in front of computers for much of their workday. They are what is now called remote or disconnected employees.

As part of a series of pilot projects, the organization launched an intranet site for this group of engineers. They were able to upload photos and videos, discuss results and query each other about findings and approaches. Several were overwhelmed by the value they found in the new connections and colleague insights. Most found the experience to be extremely valuable.

While no specific studies of ROI have been done on this example, there is potential that it could result in cost savings and productivity improvements over time.

Employee Engagement Measurement and ROI

Organizations operating on the highest levels of engagement hold their managers and leaders accountable not only for high levels of employee engagement, but also for the resulting organizational performance. For many communicators and organizations worldwide, the challenge remains how to effectively demonstrate the impact of employee engagement and how these efforts impact the bottom-line.

In today's corporate world, corporate communication teams are among the most challenged and least supported groups in the organization. Constantly asked to do more with less, corporate communicators often don't have enough time, money or resources to create the kind of employee engagement they know is possible. Part of the problem is ensuring senior leadership understands how an engaged workforce can lead to dramatic bottom-line organizational improvements. If you could prove how an engaged employee is a more productive employee and creates a more profitable business, would your leadership pay attention?

The question then, is where to start. How can you demonstrate the importance of improved employee engagement to your leadership team? Many communicators attempt to gather data through surveys, interviews, email open rates and more. The challenge with this data is that although senior leaders can see

trends in the data, they are not clear on how this data impacts bottom-line organizational success. For senior leaders to embrace employee engagement as an area of strategic importance, it is essential to tie employee engagement efforts to critical organizational and economic metrics.

To close this gap and move from a culture of limited measurement to a metric driven environment, executive support is required. Before you have any chance of obtaining executive level support it is critical that you are able to outline a business case which accurately reflects the challenges that both leadership and the employees are facing – the barriers between organizational vision and execution. Work with senior leaders and your employees to understand the unique challenges facing each group. Document this information to formulate the beginning of an effective business case. Some important questions you can ask when preparing your business case:

- What is the current company vision and direction as set by the leadership team?
- What current employee issues may be hampering the ability to execute on the company vision?
- How are employees currently capturing, collaborating and sharing organizational knowledge?
- What current efforts are being made to engage employees and create organizational alignment?
- How are current employee engagement efforts measured and how do they impact other bottom-line organizational metrics?

When talking with leadership, focus on establishing a sense of urgency. A great way to do this is to make visible the lack of decision-making data currently available for employee engagement. Help your leadership see this lack of data is impeding your ability to improve communication, employee engagement and thus the bottom-line. As executives begin to see there is a problem, work with them to establish a clear vision for an engaged employee workforce and how that can impact the bottom-line. Referencing scholarly data such as the Gallup's State of the American Workforce or Towers Watson's Global Workforce Study is an excellent way to present a case based on empirical data.

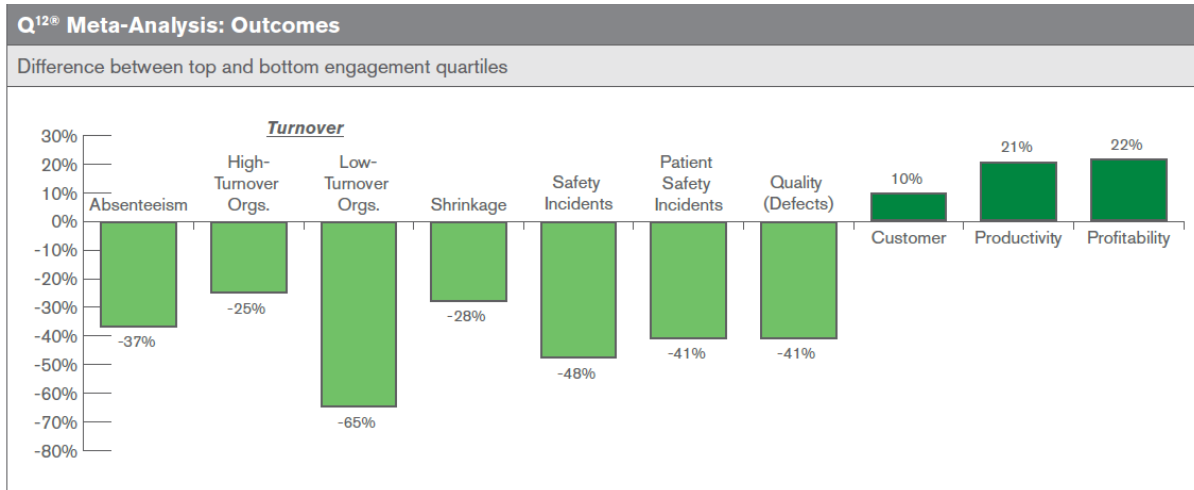
Plenty of information is available about how to initiate change, but one strategy that has withstood the test of time is John Kotter's [Eight Steps to Change Model](#). This model provides actionable advice to increase your chances to improve senior leadership adoption of your employee engagement initiative.

Tie Employee Engagement to ROI

Once you have senior leadership support, it is time to identify ways to directly relate employee engagement metrics to other, supported organizational performance metrics. In a recent blog post, [Measuring ROI on Employee Engagement](#), we discussed the importance of effectively measuring your employee engagement strategy to understand how your efforts are affecting the bottom-line organizational performance. This message was further reinforced at a recent IABC Colorado event where speaker and IABC Chair [Robin McCasland](#) spoke on "Global Trends in the Communication Profession". During her presentation, Robin discussed the importance of creating actionable insights by analyzing not only the numbers, but also the trends that impact those numbers.

According to Gallup, employee engagement affects nine organizational performance outcomes. Compared with organizations functioning in the bottom quartile of employee engagement, top quartile organizations have:

- 21% higher productivity
- 22% higher profitability
- 10% higher customer metrics (customer satisfaction)
- 37% lower absenteeism
- Between 25%-65% lower turnover
- 28% less shrinkage
- 48% fewer safety incidents
- 41% fewer patient safety incidents
- 41% fewer quality incidents (defects)



*Gallup "Engagement at Work" Report

While some of these metrics have industry specificity, many of the metrics can relate to any organization. Profitably, productivity, turnover, safety and customer satisfaction are metrics that most organizations track to determine organizational performance. With a clear tie from engaged employees to improvements in these areas, these metrics are a great place to start.

Depending on your organization, HR, Finance, Operations or other departments may be responsible for reporting these type of metrics to the leadership team. Coordinate your efforts to ensure employee engagement is tracked on the same level as these other metrics. As employee engagement improves, track that to other metrics. If you are able to demonstrate a clear relation between employee engagement and other critical organization metrics, leadership support will surely follow. Examples of ways employee engagement can impact bottom-line organizational performance:

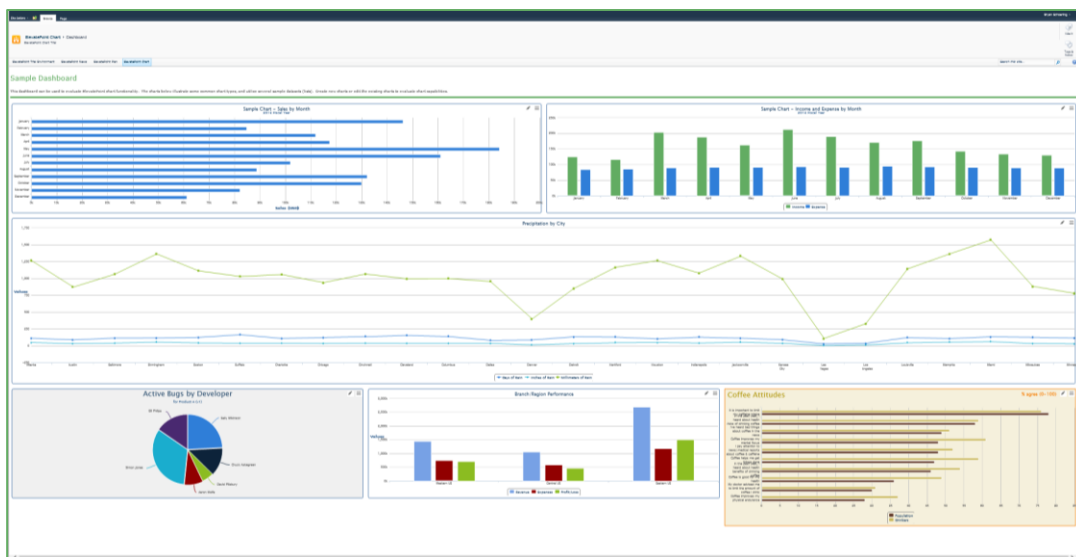
- A global manufacturing company was looking to improve their safety record through better communication on their corporate intranet. Last quarter, the amount of unique article opens and total article opens on the corporate intranet improved by 30%. During this same time period safety incidents dropped by 10%. Due to the heavy outflow of communication efforts around improved focus on safety in the workplace they were able to demonstrate a clear correlation between improved employee engagement and improved organizational performance.

- A major distribution company was concerned about high levels of turnover. Last year turnover hovered around 25%. Based on exit surveys, many of these employees were unhappy with management, communication and opportunities for professional development within the organization. This year, the company made an increased effort to communicate the strategic vision, highlight personnel success stories and provide clear access to organizational knowledge through the corporate intranet. Article access, email opens and recent survey results have told us the employees are responding more and more each month to these efforts. As a result, this year turnover was down to 10% and job satisfaction taken from the survey is at the highest in years.

Examples like these can win the hearts and minds of not only employees, but those senior leadership to ensure continued support you need to effectively measure and deliver on your employee engagement efforts.

Once support is in place, tracking metrics can be readily enhanced through technological offerings. Whether you are communicating with email, SharePoint or newsletters, make sure you have clear insight into how these communications are received and responded to by your employees. Technology exists across the board to track this information.

While technology solutions continue to evolve in terms of measurement and insight, any technology claiming to focus on employee engagement would be remiss without a detailed set of analytics to track employee engagement efforts. Whether SharePoint, SaaS offerings or email tracking, make sure that your technology solution can provide you with detailed data tracking to ensure your employee engagement efforts are effective. Check to see if the solution you are looking at has a dashboard component to provide regular visual insight into your corporate communication strategy. An example of how we do this with our [ElevatePoint Chart](#) solution demonstrates how to measure data right within your existing SharePoint environment.



Based on feedback from customers and partners, ElevatePoint Chart now effectively measures:

- Unique article opens
- Total time spent on a given article
- Number of news stories created by a segment (person, department, news channel, etc.)
- Number of comments or ratings to a particular article
- Highest rated articles, most commented articles and more

We continue to improve our measurement capabilities within the ElevatePoint suite due to the heavy demand of requests in this area from our clients.

Remember, once something is measured it can validate your efforts and provide insight into how those efforts impact corporate performance. Closing the loop between leadership vision and employee action through measurable employee engagement activities can help your business make the leap to the next level.

Case Study: Employee Engagement Improves Bottom-Line Performance

Global mining organizations may face some of the toughest challenges in terms of connecting and collaborating with employees across disparate regions. Such distance causes major challenges in the ability to search, share and collaborate on the latest versions of documents which often leads to increased calls and poor productivity from managers across the organization.

A global mining company led an enterprise-wide push to centralize management functions around the world. The client wanted an intranet portal that would enable global collaboration and content sharing while having industrial strength search capabilities. The first stage of the intranet would focus on critical employee resources.

After 3 months spent migrating content, the new intranet was launched in September 2011. Within 5 weeks over 5,000 unique page views were registered, after 7 months that number jumped to 37,000. Employees engaged with the new system and found a single location for spreading HR and Policy components throughout the organization.

On top of the measurable employee engagement improvements, as a result of the new intranet, there was a dramatic decrease in phone calls and email to the HR department. Managers now had the ability to have a master location for all HR policies streamlining the managerial process to support employees. With this project, the leadership was easily able to see how employee engagement improvements directly impacted core bottom-line metrics such as productivity, quality and safety improvements.

Conclusion

Corporate attitudes towards employee engagement have come a long way since John P. Kotter first began connecting the impact of satisfied employees to bottom-line performance. The good news is that the technology has finally caught up with the philosophy. With technology constantly evolving in this field it is now the responsibility of corporate leaders in all disciplines, and communicators alike, to take a proactive approach toward engaging their employees to deliver organizational success to their shareholders and stakeholders.

Through an effective use of both process and technology, the time has never been better to spearhead a campaign for employee engagement in your organization. Having worked with companies large and small the best advice for companies looking to embark on this mission is to start small. Identify the problem, listen to the challenges your company currently faces, assess the roadblocks and begin to climb over them one by one.

If you can remember to look at employee engagement as a holistic activity which directly ties in with other, often measured, corporate activities then you too can get the most out of each and every one of your employees, encourage collaboration and social interaction, connect disconnected workers and effectively measure employee engagement to realize tangible results.

If you have questions, we would love to talk with you further. Feel free to reach out to [Eloquor Consulting](#) or [Coldwater Software](#) at any time. Good luck and happy engagement!

About Eloquor

Founded in 2001, Eloquor helps organizations communicate more effectively with employees, with a particular focus on using technology and communication effectively to drive business results. The firm helps global Fortune 500 clients create usable digital workplaces and the governance models that support them long term. Eloquor also provides methodology to improve online content creation, migration and management. Stacy Wilson, ABC, president of Eloquor, has nearly three decades of experience in employee communication and helps her clients get the most from their technology investment to drive employee engagement.

In addition, Eloquor provides change communication support for technology change, and strategic employee communication planning and implementation. Clients include Newmont Mining, Pitney Bowes, XL Group, ConocoPhillips, Ingram Micro and Freeport McMoRan.

Eloquor contributed strategic direction and process expertise to the ElevatePoint Plan and ElevatePoint News products provided by Coldwater Software.

About Coldwater Software

Coldwater Software is a software and IT services company based in Denver, Colorado. Founded by a group of Microsoft Alumni, we create solutions built on Microsoft and other renowned technology platforms to empower better communication and collaboration at the enterprise level. Our team has decades of combined software development and technology services expertise having worked in the

Microsoft Office, Dynamics, SQL Server and Windows Live teams at Microsoft. As a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, we combine industry best practices, technical expertise and cutting edge design to deliver high performance solutions customized for your business.

ElevatePoint products extend the capabilities of Microsoft SharePoint. Designed for IT and communication professionals, ElevatePoint products build upon the core capabilities of SharePoint to provide maximum value to your existing SharePoint investment. Built by SharePoint experts with a deep understanding of key business challenges and designed hand in hand with communication and business leaders, ElevatePoint products solve real word problems so you can get back to focusing on your business.