

10 WAYS TO MAXIMIZE ENGAGEMENT



1. **Provide motivating projects and activities.** Engaged individuals can get lost in what they're doing – in a good way! They find their assignments/work fascinating, stimulating, and appropriately challenging.
2. **Offer meaningful opportunities.** Whether the opportunities are to grow and develop, work with interesting and talented people, or fully contribute their own unique talents, many individuals are looking for projects that matter and seem worth doing.
3. **Recognize the importance of “fit.”** A great project or activity for one individual may be completely overwhelming or uninspiring to another. Similar tasks in different settings may “fit” differently and something that provided endless opportunities a year or so ago may be less in demand in a changing context. Fit may encompass skills/ competencies, degrees/credentials, personal style and individual characteristics, interests, values and/or attributes unique to a specific context.
4. **Equip key influencers to support engagement.** Many teachers, volunteers, coordinators, parents, or supervisors/managers want to promote engagement but don't have any idea how to start. Leaders play a crucial role in retaining and engaging individuals across various settings (e.g., school, home, community groups, work); provide the tools and resources they need to develop and fully engage the people they influence and/or lead.
5. **Strengthen peer relationships.** Although teambuilding / team strengthening activities may seem like “nice to haves” or optional perks, engagement is enhanced by positive relationships with peers and a sense of fitting in well with one's team or family/friends. To maximize engagement, it's important to address conflicts, foster strong relationships, and create a safe environment that embraces diversity and has zero tolerance for harassment or bullying.
6. **Provide relevant resources.** Engaged individuals have the tools, resources, and supports they need to be the best they can be. Budgets and/or resources/supplies are adequate, demands are reasonable for their available time, and people in leadership roles are understanding and supportive.
7. **Continuously monitor alignment.** When individuals have to compromise their deeply held values, navigate interpersonal conflicts, or jeopardize their health, their engagement will be impacted. Keep open lines of communication and explore tensions or non-verbal cues that may indicate a values conflict, toxic environment, relationship challenges, or other related issues that may detract from health and wellbeing.
8. **Facilitate balance/sustainability.** Role conflicts impact many students and workers, as they concurrently juggle a number of complex life roles. “I need more time” is an oft-heard complaint and when roles collide, people may cut back on sleep, sacrifice healthy eating and exercise, and feel guilty about not spending enough time with family and friends. Work-life imbalance isn't sustainable long-term – to maximize engagement, support individuals to achieve a lifestyle that meets their needs.
9. **Respect boundaries.** Especially in roles that depend on technologies like email, social media, texting, and mobile phones, it has become increasingly unclear where work or school begins and ends each day. Although working remotely can contribute to work-life balance, working 24/7 will take a big toll. To maximize engagement, ensure that demands are reasonable for the number of hours or days available. Encourage supervisors/managers, teachers, and others to respect boundaries and model a healthy and sustainable workload.
10. **Align challenge and capacity.** The level of perceived challenge in one's work (and life) is directly impacted by both individual and organizational capacity. Although too much challenge is overwhelming, too little challenge results in a sense of being underutilized. Long term extremes at either end contribute to disengagement. To maximize engagement, support individuals to take on new challenges to match their capacity and provide the resources they need to successfully handle the challenges connected with their constantly shifting roles.

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604.856.2386
info@lifestrategies.ca
www.lifestrategies.ca