INCENTIVE SERVICES, INC.®
Maximizing Performance Through People

The Role of Virtual Engagement in a Non-Virtual Culture

Companies have become extremely creative at keeping their remote employees engaged by ramping up their virtual engagement strategies.

However, many people are not "working from wherever." They are still showing up to work in healthcare, retail, and other essential businesses. Is it possible to apply some of these virtual engagement strategies to your on-site team? Absolutely! Virtual engagement is still relevant and important to building a strong employee experience for those who are still going to work outside of their home.

Defining Engagement

Employee engagement, in any company culture, can be defined as the process of gaining trust and commitment (emotional and rational), while creating connections between a company and the people who work there. Virtual engagement is an extension of this - using the same strategies with the benefit of technology to reach people who are not all in one place.

Five Best Practices

1) **Match your virtual engagement strategy to your unique employees, company culture and brand.**

Understanding your employees and what they want, knowing the culture of your company and what your brand stands for should drive your virtual engagement strategy. Whether or not your employees are on site or working remotely isn't the issue. It's important to take into account what THEY might appreciate, say, after a 12-hour shift. Is it a virtual workout class upon returning home? A post-work virtual bonding with teammates? Or a sincere "thank you" from their manager with reward points? In other words, get to know your employees. You may be surprised that a little recognition goes a long way.

2) **Don't let technology replace the essence of human interaction.**

Many employees who are working on site, in office, or in store may feel overwhelmed, tired and uptight. Virtual engagement strategies offer a low pressure, efficient, on-demand way to keep them motivated. But don't go overboard. Using technology can be a great complement to human connections but can't replace them.

Upcoming opportunities for virtual connection!

Employee Appreciation Day
Friday, March 5, 2021

National Hospital Week
May 9 - 15, 2021

www.IncentiveServices.com | 1.800.875.8284

Five Best Practices (Cont'd)

3) "Communication" isn't the same thing as "conversation."

People today want more than communication. They're looking for conversations to feel emotionally connected, empowered and engaged with their employer. They're looking for opportunities to share feedback, help develop product solutions and cross-recognize teammates. TextNow, a technology company, uses a virtual tool to automatically pair up two employees for a video coffee conversation. This helps people learn about what the other person does, and helps new hires feel more connected within the organization. The virtual engagement tool is the common denominator.

4) Determine what the "moments that matter" are for your on-site employees and then determine how virtual tools can be used to complement them.

For those people who are headed into work each day, do you understand what's important to them? As Aaron McEwan of Gartner said, "In short, emotions matter. While there is no 'magic' moment, most moments that matter elicit a strong emotional response and have a lasting effect on employees' opinions of their organization." So, think about those moments when virtual recognition can complement an in-person high five; those moments when connecting with teammates cross country can be done through a peer recognition tool; and finally, when an employee needs support, think about using your virtual resources to make things easier.

5) Begin with the end in mind.

If the ultimate goal is employee engagement, no matter how you get there, consider what works best for everyone. "Redefine (don't redesign) your culture for the virtual workplace. While organizational norms can show up differently in a virtual or hybrid work environment, a well-functioning culture is consistent across all modes of work."[1] The right virtual engagement strategy can lead to a more positive emotional state, which leads to stronger company engagement, which in turn can lead to a stronger customer and employee experience. The point is - be consistent no matter where your employees do their job.

Three Categories of Virtual Engagement Strategies:

Virtual Recognition Program Examples

Years of Service Celebrations

—

"On the Spot" Recognition

—

Peer-to-Peer, Manager & Discretionary Recognition

—

Social Recognition

Virtual Connection Program Examples

Special Interest Group Chat Rooms

—

Leadership Conversations, Fireside Chats, Interactive Town Halls

—

Team Building: Happy Hours, Trivia Nights, Workout Sessions

Virtual Support Program Examples

Job-Specific Training Curriculums

—

Health & Wellness Resources

---

[1] https://www.gallup.com/workplace/322307/redefine-don-redesign-culture-virtual-workplace.aspx