



Essentially uninspired

Understanding and addressing the gaps in engaging and inspiring “deskless” employees

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In March of 2020 there was a huge spike in online searches for several terms. One of them, of course, was “COVID-19,” but another related to a group of employees:

“Essential”

We are speaking, of course, of those front-line employees in manufacturing, distribution, healthcare and retail that provided so many necessary—essential—products and services.

One might argue these employees were essential before the pandemic, but we are paying more attention to this important segment of our workforce.

Our attention, however, does not appear to have helped create workplaces for these employees that, in their eyes, is meaningful, motivational and engaging. According to our ongoing proprietary New Rules of Engagement® studies, essential workers are far less engaged and inspired than those who work in offices.

new world new rules of engagement

At BI WORLDWIDE, we define engagement as an employee's reciprocation of the work experience a company provides. If the experience is great, the employee will stay, work hard and be inspired to do better.

These twelve New Rules of Engagement® are what we have found best predict the outcomes companies are after: **commitment, effort and inspiration.**

We are able to call this model “the New Rules” year after year because we are constantly testing new ideas based on how work changes over time. Sometimes the changes are few and only lead to small adjustments for one rule or another. This year, we saw big changes at work and adjusted the model accordingly. Some of these practices have been around for decades, some are brand new and some are a reimagining of things we thought we already knew.

- 1. make it personal**
More than ever, great managing is a matter of intense understanding of each unique individual — knowing their abilities, their aspirations and how they work best. Success on this rule is critical for leading others.
- 2. make money a non-issue**
Money isn't everything. It only gets you so far. But companies that recognize the emotional area will make it a bigger deal than it has to be.
- 3. help them thrive**
Never have work, personal life and health been so intricately connected. Protecting people's wellbeing doesn't just reduce costs, it magnifies the employee and the business.
- 4. realize their potential**
In lieu of permanent placements and pensions, employees are expected to provide growth opportunities. Offering learning and development for employees to be successful will grow your top talent — and your bottom line.
- 5. foster belonging**
Employees cannot fully commit to a company they do not feel a part of. Fostering a sense of belonging within the organization, the team and the work itself is critical for employees to stay and do exceptional work.
- 6. be boldly transparent**
Gone are the days of top-down leadership. The best ideas may come from employees, so listen with an open mind and use those ideas to shape the vision for the future.
- 7. give it meaning**
People need to be part of something bigger than just a job and a paycheck. Meaning drives higher performance.
- 8. see their future**
What people do today is largely motivated by where they think it will take them in the future. Companies that are deliberate about helping employees chart that future will be rewarded with those people's best work.
- 9. magnify their success**
What a company recognizes gets a lot of employees' attention. When the rewards will be multiplied.
- 10. unite them**
People have always been willing to take one for the team but only if they feel others will do the same. With more people working remotely than ever before, it's never been more important to create conditions that foster strong collaboration.
- 11. let them lead**
True empowerment is not just a place to work, it's not just a job, it's not just being told to do it. It's a risk but being supported when the risk does not go as planned. Empowering this way will right inspiration.
- 12. challenge them**
Your best employees are eager to accomplish something incredible together. Challenge, only and support from wholeheartedly and you'll be struck by what they can do.

commitment
effort
inspiration

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BI WORLDWIDE New Rules of Engagement® | 2020

Employees who work in roles such as production, distribution, retail, healthcare and hospitality are **less likely** to agree with the following statements:

- We have a **great company culture** where I work
- Received **learning or development opportunities** to further my career
- Been given the opportunity to have **leaders listen to you**





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- Had a **one-on-one meeting with your manager** to discuss just you or your work
- Received an **update from leaders**
- I receive **excellent benefits**
- I feel **safe expressing my opinion** at work
- My **unique strengths** have been identified and are valued
- My organization takes active steps to **listen to diverse points of view**
- My team **respects me and my unique characteristics**

Several of our New Rules trend lower if you are a deskless employee — **Make it personal. Make money a non-issue. Be boldly transparent. Foster belonging.**

These themes are amplified in the comments of essential employees:

“ My supervisor is a person that I have trouble with. He has no trust in anybody. He makes the job difficult for everybody. He takes credit for everything. **Makes it hard to want to do your best.** ”

I continue to **feel like I’m punched in the gut** with continuous changes coming from upper management, unclear motives and agendas. ”

I feel that **my talents and skills are not fully utilized** in the current position I have. I have many talents and can be productive. ”

The company **won’t let me take training** that will help me be better prepared for a promotion. ”



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They are essential employees, yet too frequently are uninspired and demoralized in their workplaces.

When it comes to recognizing these important employees, the results are equally dismal. Each of the statements below for essential workers is also significantly lower than other employee groups:

- I am confident that if I do good work, **it will be recognized.**
- Recognition is **provided fairly across my organization.**
- I have received **meaningful recognition** in my current job.

Employee comments again give you a sense of the lack of genuine appreciation in the workplace:



In a highly competitive labor marketplace, engaging and inspiring deskless employees can reap significant benefits. Consider:

- Are we investing in managers who, in turn, are building strong relationships that support the growth, development and engagement of their team members?
- Are we providing a total rewards package that fairly represents their value to our success?
- Do we have a listening strategy that gains feedback from employees and a strategy to follow up, so they know we are hearing and addressing their concerns?
- Are we communicating important information that helps our team members do their job and helps them know where we're going—one that offers them opportunities for two-way dialogue?



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- Are we building a culture where employees feel truly valued and where there is a genuine sense of physical and psychological safety?

There are numerous enablement tools that can help you more effectively communicate to these important work groups. And we’ve helped our clients build a business case that shows how investing in programs to engage deskless employees easily delivers a meaningful return in lower turnover and absenteeism, improved safety and better customer experiences.

If they truly are essential, let’s show them.

No excuses.

Learn more about how BI WORLDWIDE can provide recognition and reward programs to support your “deskless” employee engagement strategy:

[Employee Recognition Programs | BI WORLDWIDE](#)

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