

### 3 strategies for boosting employee engagement

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Employee engagement has plummeted to its lowest level in over a decade, with many companies reporting that just [21% of employees are actively engaged](#). At the same time, worker burnout and exhaustion are soaring. Combined, these issues are costing organizations a staggering [\\$8.8 trillion](#) annually.

According to [Gallup's annual U.S. employee engagement](#) trends, the top three drivers of disengagement are unclear expectations, feeling uncared for at work, and limited professional development opportunities.

[Employees who feel valued](#) and supported in their growth are more productive, innovative and likely to stay in their job. That's not just good for company culture — it's good for business.

Leaders who align recognition and skills development as part of the organization's strategy, rather than as isolated perks, are seeing measurable improvements in performance and retention. Here's how they're achieving these outcomes.

#### **Prioritizing real-time recognition**

Recognition is one of the most immediate (and affordable) ways to boost morale and motivation. Many companies default to monetary rewards – bonuses, gift cards, raises – but it's not just about the money.

While financial rewards are essential, [recognition and feedback rank as top reasons](#) employees choose to stay with or leave an organization. Without it, employees say they are [twice as likely to quit their job](#).

“People are spending a lot of time at work and putting in a tremendous amount of effort,” said Irina Mocanu, senior talent management and organizational development advisor for Workleap. “There is a need to know, ‘Am I going in the right direction?’ and ‘Am I doing the right thing?’”

The key is making recognition meaningful, specific, and part of [the organizational strategy](#), rather than a tool. It should have a cadence, such as once a week or every two weeks, and be tied to the individual’s impact and growth.

“I see leaders giving recognition every hour or every day. That’s not exceptional and it then becomes taken for granted,” said Cyril Boisard, Workleap’s people director. “It also needs to be tied to the impact or growth you’re trying to build in that person.”

Personalizing recognition is crucial. Some employees appreciate a public shoutout, while others prefer private praise, a few extra hours off, or being trusted with a stretch project.

### **Investing in skills development**

Burnout isn’t just about being overworked; it’s also about feeling stuck. Employees begin looking elsewhere when they can’t envision a future in their current workplace. Nearly [two-thirds of Gen Z and Millennial employees would leave a job](#) that lacks skill development.

“Giving flexibility for employees to learn what matters most to them is important,” Mocanu said. “At Workleap, managers make sure employees’ interests and ambitions are aligned with what is needed in the organization. When there are skills or expertise they are interested in related to our goals and ambitions as an organization, we make sure they have access to what matters to them.”

Boisard added, “Flexibility starts with knowing your people. Build strong connections—especially with your managers—because they’re the ones guiding, coaching, and helping their teams grow every day and perform.”

Regular 1:1s, coffee chats and performance reviews tied to business goals are powerful tools for building those connections. When people feel safe enough to ask for help, they’ll also be more open about gaps in their skills or resources.

A [talent management platform](#) can help managers provide staff the training they crave while providing managers visibility into what people are learning and how that aligns with organizational priorities.

“The platform should serve your strategy and not detract from it,” Boisard said. “It should be easy enough for you to adapt it to your strategy and the needs of the company.”

### **Strategically leveraging AI**

AI tools are beginning to influence well-being in the workplace. When implemented strategically, technology supports a more balanced workload by offloading once tedious and time-consuming tasks.

However, messaging about AI usage must be strategic, as [many employees fear AI will replace them](#).

“We have to talk about how AI helps the company and the person using it,” said Mocanu. “Talking about how AI can bring more purpose to the work they’re doing can create more of a positive cycle.”

Boisard added, “AI is not going to replace people unless they don’t develop their skills related to AI. It’s as much a responsibility from the organization as it is the individuals to learn these new skills.”

Beyond operational improvements, [AI can help with performance management](#). AI consolidates unbiased data for a comprehensive summary of the previous year’s events, guiding employee self-reflection and manager reviews.

### **Engagement drives results**

Engaged employees don’t just stay in their jobs longer; they contribute more fully, innovate more often and are more resilient in times of change.

Discover how [Workleap’s talent management platform](#) can transform your employee engagement strategy and boost performance.