



The Employee Experience Survey

A BRILLIANT INK SPECIAL REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

While it is widely accepted that employee engagement is a key driver of organizational performance, its definition can vary depending on the source. In addition, measures of employee engagement can be complex and difficult to translate into action. How do you move from assessing levels of employee engagement to concrete, straightforward steps for an organization to take that will lead to clear results? How do you design a meaningful employee experience – one that leads to real, lasting employee engagement?

The following report, commissioned by [Brilliant Ink](#), an employee engagement consultancy, is based on a national survey of 306 Fortune 1,000 employees or equivalent (minimum company revenue \$1.5 billion), and was conducted in October 2012. The goal of the survey was to examine the key moments that define the employee experience, and correlate them to simple measures of employee engagement.

METHODS

An online survey of 306 knowledge workers at large companies was conducted in partnership with [Versta Research](#) and administered through the Research Now national survey panel from October 1 through October 10, 2012. All respondents were full-time employees in the U.S. at Fortune 1,000 companies or privately held companies of equivalent size (minimum revenue \$1.5 billion) across all industries.

To be considered a knowledge worker, employees had to identify themselves in one of 25 occupational categories, ranging from analysts to senior managers (company or division CEOs and presidents were excluded). Additionally, their work had to involve at least three of the following five elements:

- Reviewing and interpreting information
- Developing new ideas and insights
- Continual learning about an area of expertise
- Independent thinking, rather than following others' explicit instructions
- Using information to develop or refine products or processes

In order to focus on employees less established in their careers and/or companies, respondents were included only if they were under age 50 (average age 33) and had been with their current employer for a maximum of 7 years (average tenure 3 years). The sample included an even number of men (49%) and women (51%).

MEASURES OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

While many conceptualizations and measures of employee engagement exist, they are often both complex and abstract. In addition, different organizations will (and need to) define and measure specific types of employee engagement in different ways. Drawing from the extensive available literature we created an index of employee engagement based on four key dimensions, described in human capital management research conducted by the American Productivity and Quality Center:

- Satisfaction (regarding job and company)
- Advocacy (recommend as great place to work)
- Retention (rarely think about looking elsewhere)
- Pride (in working for company)

The survey included six measures to assess employee engagement. Overall, there were high levels of engagement on all six measures:

- 94% feel proud to work for their companies (50% very proud)
- 90% are satisfied with their companies (47% very satisfied)
- 88% say their work has a clear, meaningful impact on their companies (37% very much)
- 83% are satisfied with their jobs (36% very satisfied)
- 82% would recommend their companies as great places to work
- 50% rarely or never think about looking for new jobs

We created an employee engagement index based on all six measures, and split the sample into thirds in order to compare the least engaged vs. the moderately engaged vs. the most engaged.

FINDINGS

Survey findings have been grouped into six key themes:

- The job hunt: the experience prospective employees have when researching companies
- The hiring process: the interview experience
- Day one: the first day on the job, including orientation
- Onboarding: the first 90 days

Daily grind communications: ongoing company communications delivered to employees

- The path ahead: Career development opportunities and how they are discussed with employees

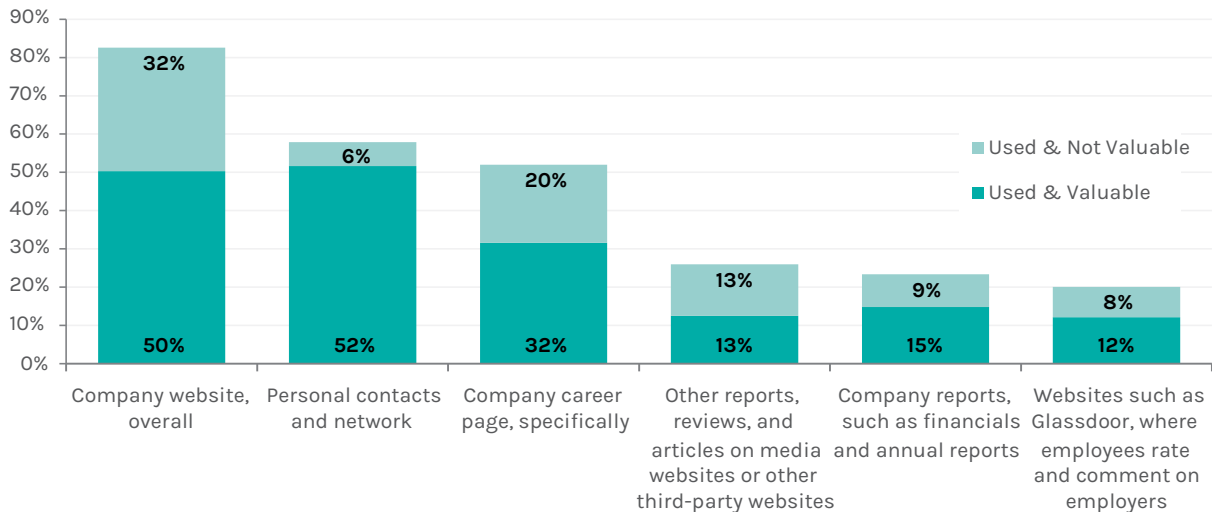
Additional findings related to the role of human resources in ongoing employee engagement, plus a closer look at specific generational findings, can be found at the end of this section.

JOB HUNT

Knowledge workers need and want information about prospective employers. They turn to company websites more than any other resource, many of which fall short.

- Only one in four knowledge workers (28%) included in this study knew a lot about their companies before considering them as an employer
- One third (33%) report being a customer of the company before they were considering employment
- Four out of five (82%) reviewed the company’s website to learn about it, with half (52%) visiting the career page specifically
 - Only 24% looked at company reports such as financial or annual reports
- But few found their company’s website to be a valuable resource as they were considering employment:
 - One third (32%) of all respondents felt their company’s website, overall, was not a valuable source of information. This represents four out of ten (39%) of those who actually visited their company’s website for information.
 - One in five (20%) felt their company’s career page, specifically, was not a valuable source of information. This, too, represents four out of ten (38%) of those who actually visited their company’s career site for information.
- Other sources for information used by prospective employees include:
 - Personal contacts and networks (used by 58%, and the most valuable of all)
 - Reports and articles on third-party websites (26%)
 - Employee review sites, such as Glassdoor (20%)
- One in four (26%) were aware of their company being on a “best employers” list when considering employment, and of these, a large majority (77%) say it was important to them

Sources of Company Information for Potential Employees



THE HIRING PROCESS

Most give high marks to the interview process, and those who do are more engaged in their work.

- Nine out of ten (89%) say that interviewing made them excited about working for their company
- Three out of four (77%) felt the process prepared them for the everyday reality of their work
- More specifically, large majorities felt the interview process prepared them for the everyday realities of:
 - Who they would be working with (86%)
 - The aspects of work that interested them (85%)
 - The variety of work in their daily jobs (81%)
 - The level of management support for their work and role (76%)
 - The level of support from other areas of the company or business unit (69%)
- Nearly one in four (23%) felt misled by the interview process, with up to one-third feeling misled specifically about:
 - The support they would get from other areas of the business unit (31%)
 - The level of management support for their work and role (24%)
 - The variety of work in their daily job (19%)
 - The aspects of work that interested them (15%)
 - Who they would be working with (14%)
- An interview process that accurately conveys information about the job, including all that it involves and with whom, is related to higher engagement among employees
 - For example, those who say the interview process was “very consistent” with their first year of work are twice as likely to be highly engaged today compared to others
 - Those who felt misled by the interview process are twice as likely to be among the least engaged today compared to others

	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Interview process created excitement	89%	83%	94%	92%
Interview process accurately portrayed reality of everyday work during first year	77%	61%	84%	89%

Interview process accurately portrayed reality of everyday work in terms of:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Who you would be working with	86%	82%	87%	90%
The aspects of work that interested you	85%	73%	88%	94%
The variety of work in your daily job	81%	70%	82%	93%
Management support for your work and role	76%	65%	76%	89%
Support from other areas of the company	69%	56%	69%	84%

DAY ONE

A positive, well organized first day fosters stronger employee engagement down the road.

- Nearly all (92%) felt welcomed on their first day of work, but fewer felt immediate engagement in terms of:
 - Motivation to do great work (77%)
 - Having a clear sense of purpose in working for the company (62%)
- One-third or more characterized their first day negatively, saying it was:
 - Disorganized or confusing (43%)
 - Dull (41%)
 - Stressful (31%)
- Importantly, an employee's experience on the first day of work is strongly related to engagement with the company:
 - Negative experiences are associated with lower engagement
 - Positive experiences are associated with higher engagement

	% agree	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
I felt personally welcomed on my first day on the job	92%	92%	84%	96%	96%
My first day on the job motivated me to do great work	77%	77%	63%	82%	88%
My first day on the job gave me a clear sense of purpose in working for the company	62%	62%	48%	64%	76%
My first day on the job was disorganized or confusing	43%	43%	55%	43%	30%
My first day on the job was dull	41%	41%	47%	48%	30%
My first day on the job was stressful	31%	31%	36%	31%	26%

The content and quality of orientation programs are strongly related to employee engagement

- Three out of four (77%) participated in a new employee orientation program, and those who did are more engaged

	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Participated in a new employee orientation program	77%	67%	80%	85%

- Orientation programs typically involve in-person meetings (84%) and virtual meetings via WebEx or video (63%)
 - One in four (24%) involved self-guided programs, such as watching videos or reading manuals

- Nearly all employees (93%) describe paperwork as being part of their orientation, and most got a broad view of the company, as well, including:
 - Learning about what the company does and how it is organized (82%)
 - Learning about company resources, tools, and computer systems (75%)
- Far fewer learned about matters more immediate to their work, including:
 - Learning about their business unit (41%)
 - Learning about their specific job (29%)
- Although few orientation programs included an opportunity to learn about one's specific job, it was, by far, the most valuable aspect of orientation for those who did (90% rating it as valuable)
- Half (52%) received a presentation or welcome from a senior leader in the company, of whom half (46%) felt it was valuable (the lowest rated value of all orientation elements)

Orientation included:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged	% Citing as Valuable
HR and benefits paperwork	93%	96%	92%	91%	72%
Learning more about the company, how it is organized, what it does	82%	71%	86%	88%	72%
Learning about company resources, communications tools, computer systems	75%	65%	74%	84%	73%
A presentation or 'welcome' from a senior leader in the company	52%	42%	52%	60%	46%
Learning more about the business unit I would be in	41%	38%	38%	45%	75%
Learning more about the specific job I would be doing	29%	22%	29%	35%	90%

- Most employees describe orientation as organized (81%) and helpful in learning about the company (80%), but fewer describe it as inspiring (66%)
- About two-thirds say that their orientation program was relevant to specific work needs (60%) and that it helped them learn how to navigate the company for information and resources (68%)

The orientation program was:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Inspiring	66%	42%	68%	85%
Organized	81%	79%	70%	91%
Relevant to specific work needs	60%	49%	53%	76%
Helpful in learning about the company's history and culture	80%	67%	86%	87%
Helping in learning how to navigate the company to get needed information and resources	68%	53%	68%	81%

- The content and quality of orientation programs are strongly related to employee engagement:
 - Content that goes beyond paperwork is associated with higher engagement
 - Content that is relevant to work needs (learning about one’s job, learning how to navigate) is associated with higher engagement
 - Inspiring orientation programs are associated with higher engagement

ONBOARDING

Almost half of knowledge workers report little or no structure during their first three months of onboarding, especially those who feel less engaged.

- Nearly half (44%) report little or no structure during the onboarding process, and as many (43%) felt that their first three months on the job were disorganized and/or uninspiring (36%)
- A structured onboarding process with training and meetings is clearly beneficial; nearly all who have a structured onboarding describe it as:
 - Relevant to their specific work needs (94%)
 - Helpful in learning about the company’s history and culture (84%)
 - Helpful in learning how to navigate the company for needed information and resources (85%)
- Better onboarding begets higher employee engagement
 - If the process is organized, structured, and inspiring, and if it provides relevant and helpful learning, employees are more engaged

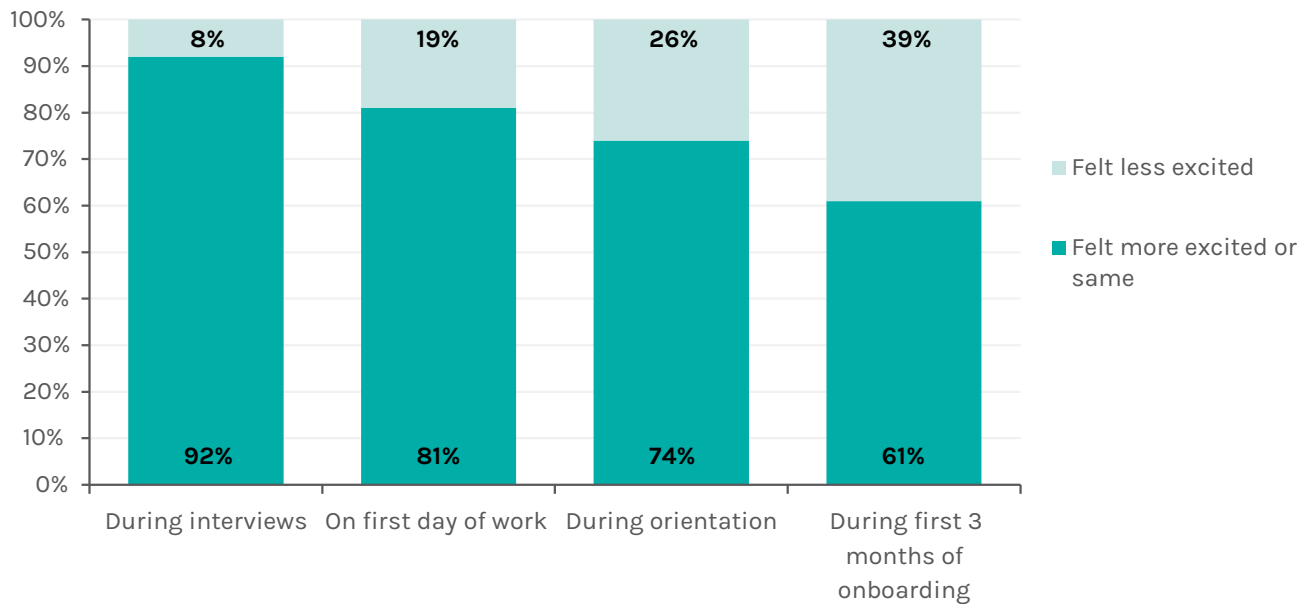
The first three months of onboarding was:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Inspiring	64%	41%	67%	86%
Organized	57%	39%	59%	75%
Structured training	56%	44%	58%	67%
[if structured] Relevant to specific work needs	94%	92%	90%	97%
[if structured] Helpful in learning about the company's history and culture	84%	75%	92%	86%
[if structured] Helping in learning how to navigate the company to get needed information and resources	85%	73%	90%	90%

- Employees are split on how they prefer to engage during their first three months of work:
 - Half (47%) prefer to get a major work assignment to make an immediate contribution
 - Half (53%) prefer taking the first three months to learn and assess

For those who become less engaged, excitement diminishes steadily from their first interactions with the company to their first few months on the job.

- Even among those who are less engaged, nine out of ten (89%) felt excited when they first start considering employment at their new companies
- But the interviewing and onboarding process took its toll:
 - By their first day on the job, one in five (19%) already felt less excited
 - One in four (26%) felt less excited during their orientation program
 - And by the end of month three, two out of five (39%) felt less excited

Disengagement During the First Three Months



DAILY GRIND COMMUNICATIONS

Knowledge workers need and value clear communications about what their companies are doing and the decisions that are being made, all of which strengthens their feelings of engagement.

- Most communications from leadership are read thoroughly (45% of all communications) or at least skimmed (39%)
 - Just 17% of communications from leadership are ignored
- Most employees give high marks for leadership communications being believable (87%) and relevant (80%)
- Fewer (but still a majority) feel that communications are simple and direct (65%) and/or inspiring (63%)
- Effective communications in terms of believability, relevance, simplicity, and inspiration, generate much higher levels of employee engagement

% saying that leadership communications are:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Believable	87%	72%	93%	98%
Relevant	80%	66%	83%	93%
Simple & direct	65%	49%	64%	84%
Inspiring	63%	34%	69%	89%

- Over half of employees (58%) say they have received communications from senior leadership within the last three months that they felt were inspiring, and if they have, they are far more likely to feel engaged
- One out of five (19%) among the least engaged employees, say they have never received an inspiring communication from senior leadership (data not shown in table)

	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Received inspiring communication from senior corporate leadership in last three months	58%	36%	60%	80%

- Virtually all knowledge workers (95%, regardless of engagement level) feel it is important for them to know about the company's business strategy, including corporate and financial issues
 - Half (56%) feel it is very important
- Most feel that managers and leaders are successfully communicating company strategy and connecting it to work being done at multiple levels, including the specific work they do (see table below)
- At the same time, four in ten (39%) say that managers and leaders have not connected their specific work to company strategy within the last six months
- Workers who report clear communications about the link between company strategy and work being done have much higher levels of engagement

Within last six months, managers or leaders have communicated clear and specific connections between company strategy and ...	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
... the business that your company is engaged in	86%	75%	89%	95%
... the work that your business unit/division does	82%	69%	87%	93%
... the work that your dept./workgroup does	74%	58%	78%	88%
... the specific work that you do	61%	41%	70%	76%

- Two-thirds of knowledge workers (68%) rely on their immediate manager for company information even beyond their own workgroup or business unit, especially employees who are in their first year (84%)
- The more that immediate managers communicate important and relevant information related to all levels of a company, the more engaged their employees are

Percentage who rely on their own manager for information about:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
... department/workgroup	88%	79%	93%	94%
... business unit/division	84%	75%	85%	93%
... company as a whole	68%	60%	67%	76%

Most know their company's mission and values. The more these are communicated and connected to employees' work, the more likely they are to feel engaged.

- Nine out of ten knowledge workers (90%) are very or somewhat familiar with their company's stated mission and values
- Nearly all (92%) say their company's activities are consistent with its mission and values
- Four out of five (82%) say their company's mission and values were formally introduced to them and discussed during their first three months of work

	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Familiar with company mission & values	90%	80%	96%	95%
Company activities are consistent with mission	92%	81%	95%	100%
Introduced and discussed in first 3 months	82%	75%	80%	93%

- Four out of five say that managers and leaders have offered examples of their company's mission and values, and have made clear connections to specific activities during the last six months, including:
 - Company business activities (85%)
 - Work activities within business units (81%) and departments (77%)
 - Community activities (79%)
- Fewer (but still a majority) report managers making clear connections between their company's mission and the specific work they do (68%)
 - Fewer than half (47%) of the least engaged employees report managers connecting mission and values with their specific work (versus 88% of the most engaged)

Within last six months, managers and leaders have communicated examples of mission/vision/values and shown clear connections with:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
The business that your company is engaged in	85%	70%	92%	97%
The work that your business unit/division does	81%	66%	87%	94%
The company's external community, charity, and sponsorship activities	79%	63%	86%	92%
The work that your department/workgroup does	77%	60%	80%	93%
The specific work that you do	68%	47%	73%	88%

- On every measure of communication and consistency regarding company mission and values, better communication and more consistency is associated with higher employee engagement

Seven out of ten knowledge workers say their companies have adopted social media for internal communications, but only half of them are actually using it.

- More than two-thirds (70%) work in companies that are using any type of social media for internal communications, including:
 - Online discussion forums (45%)
 - Social networks (35%)
 - Blogs (33%)
 - Wikis (29%)
 - Micro-blogs (21%)
 - Photo or video sharing (10%)
- Social media are more commonly used for company-wide communications rather than within business divisions, work groups or departments

	USED	LEVELS AT WHICH USED		
		Company	Division	Department /Group
Online discussion forums	45%	33%	17%	12%
Social networks	35%	27%	10%	8%
Blogs	33%	24%	17%	7%
Wikis	29%	15%	16%	12%
Microblogs	21%	17%	6%	7%
Photo or video sharing	10%	8%	3%	2%

- Just half (49%) of employees who have social media available are actually using it, however
 - Only one in ten (11%) use it a lot
 - Engaged employees are more likely to be using social media than less-engaged employees (61% vs. 37%)
 - In addition, men are more likely to be using social media for company communications than women (56% vs. 42%) and employees in their 40s are more likely to be using it compared to others (65% vs. 45% if under age 40)
- Reasons for not using social media vary, although most feel they do not have time and/or prefer to communicate in other ways:
 - Not enough time (42%)
 - Prefer to communicate in other ways (40%)
 - Content not really relevant (26%; especially if under age thirty, 38%)
 - Feel uncomfortable posting things (23%)
 - Other people are not using it (21%; especially if under age thirty, 30%)
 - Content not organized or managed well (20%)
 - See no value (19%)
 - Not sure how to use it (6%)

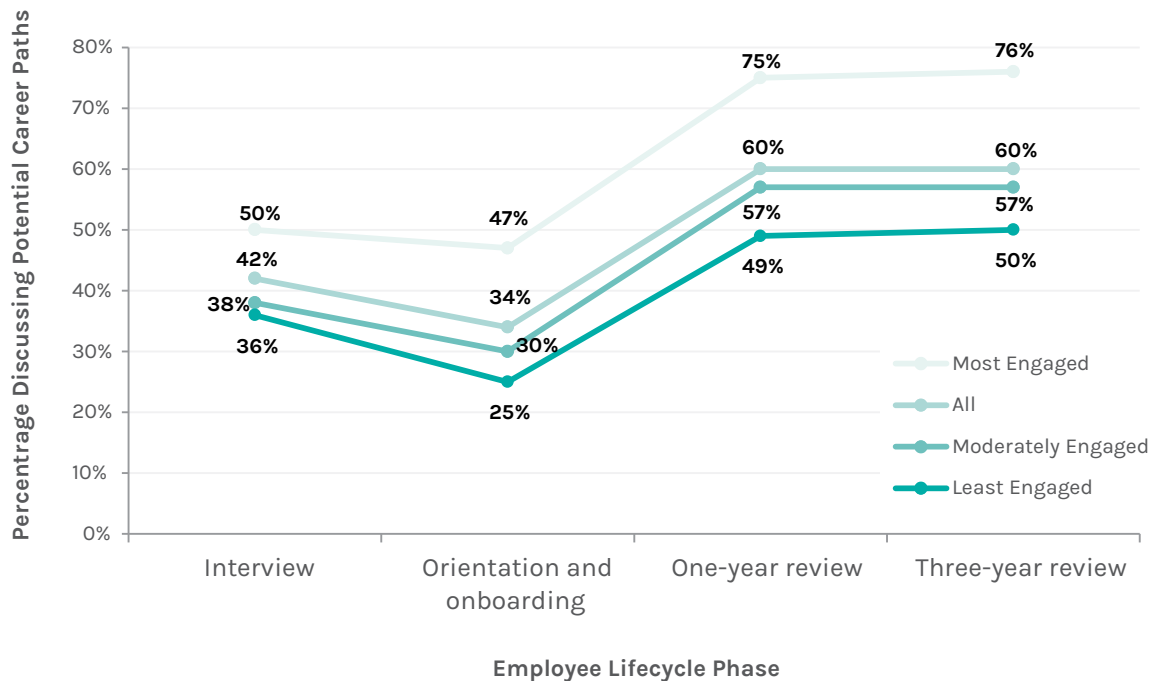
THE PATH AHEAD

While most knowledge workers see opportunities for advancement, many are not being shown a path that would help them advance and engage more fully.

- Three out of four employees see opportunities for career advancement at their companies (72%), and they see others advancing in their careers as well (75%)

% citing HR as helpful with:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Feel there are genuine opportunities to advance own career at company	72%	42%	83%	96%
See others advancing their careers at company	75%	51%	83%	95%

- But more than half of knowledge workers are not being shown potential career paths during interviews (58%) and onboarding (66%)
- In addition, four in ten (40%) are not being shown future career paths at their regular performance reviews
- Seeing a future career path and discussing it at each point in the employee lifecycle is associated with much higher levels of employee engagement



- A fully engaged employee reports, on average, that 76% of his or her personal and professional passions, skills, and interests are being utilized in his or her job
- A less-engaged employees reports, on average, 51% of his or her passions, skills, and interests being utilized

THE ROLE OF HR

For most knowledge workers, HR provides little direct value beyond the initial phases of hiring and onboarding, which represents a lost opportunity to build ongoing employee engagement.

- Up to three-quarters feel their HR departments were helpful in introducing them to their companies, specifically with:
 - Hiring and interviewing (77%)
 - Orientation and helping get set up (71%)
 - Helping learn about the company (62%)
- However, half or more say HR was not helpful during subsequent phases, including:
 - Onboarding in the first three months (47% not helpful)
 - Ongoing support in navigating the company (54% not helpful)
 - Ongoing career support and development (56% not helpful)
- More support from HR, especially if it continues into later phases of the employee lifecycle, is associated with higher levels of employee engagement

% citing HR as helpful with:	ALL	Least Engaged	Moderately Engaged	Most Engaged
Hiring and interviewing	77%	74%	73%	84%
Initial orientation and set up	71%	60%	75%	81%
Helping learn about the company	62%	46%	64%	79%
Onboarding during first three months	53%	42%	56%	63%
Ongoing support in navigating the company	46%	36%	42%	62%
Ongoing career support and development	44%	26%	43%	65%

GENERATIONAL FINDINGS

Younger employees need and value introductory information, orientations, onboarding, and HR support more than older workers.

- Compared to others who are older, knowledge workers in their twenties:
 - Know less about their companies before considering employment
 - Are more likely to visit a career page for information
 - Feel orientation programs are more inspiring, relevant, and helpful
 - Feel onboarding efforts are more organized, structured, and helpful
 - Feel that managers and leaders are linking company strategy with work
 - Feel that HR is more helpful at all phases of employment
 - See more opportunities for advancement
- Compared to others who are younger, knowledge workers in their forties:
 - Are less likely to use employee review sites like Glassdoor
 - Say “best employer” listings are important to them
 - Pay more attention to communications from leaders and managers
 - Are more likely to use social media to communicate within their companies

See table with relevant age differences on next page

	ALL	Age 18-29	Age 30-39	Age 40-49
Knowledgeable about company before employed	71%	61%	77%	75%
Consulted employer's career page	52%	63%	46%	45%
Consulted websites like Glassdoor	20%	25%	21%	11%
"Best Employers" listing important, if applicable/aware	77%	76%	67%	94%
Orientation involved learning about company	82%	91%	75%	77%
Orientation involved learning about business unit	41%	53%	32%	35%
Orientation involved learning about specific job	29%	41%	24%	18%
Orientation was inspiring	66%	76%	60%	60%
Orientation was relevant	60%	70%	52%	58%
Orientation very helpful in learning history & culture	34%	42%	34%	23%
Orientation helpful in learning how to navigate	68%	76%	67%	58%
Orientation got me more excited	51%	57%	51%	40%
Onboarding was well organized	57%	67%	52%	49%
Onboarding was structured	56%	64%	57%	43%
Mission and values formally presented and discussed	82%	89%	80%	76%
Managers have linked mission with own specific work	68%	75%	63%	67%
% communications from leadership read thoroughly	45%	43%	42%	51%
% communications from leadership skimmed	39%	38%	38%	40%
% communications from leadership ignored	17%	19%	20%	9%
Company strategy linked to business unit work	82%	88%	77%	81%
Company strategy linked to department/group work	74%	81%	68%	73%
Company strategy linked to own specific work	61%	70%	53%	60%
Use social media, if available	49%	51%	38%	65%
HR helpful in hiring and interviewing	77%	83%	72%	76%
HR helpful in initial orientation and set up	71%	77%	65%	73%
HR helpful in learning about the company	62%	70%	55%	64%
HR helpful in onboarding	53%	58%	50%	50%
HR helpful in ongoing support navigating the company	46%	57%	37%	46%
HR helpful with ongoing career support & development	44%	54%	35%	45%
See opportunities to advance	72%	82%	68%	64%
See others advancing	75%	79%	74%	70%
Shown career paths during interview	42%	53%	35%	35%
Shown career paths during orientation and onboarding	34%	44%	33%	21%
Shown career paths at one year review	60%	71%	57%	48%

WHO WE ARE

[Brilliant Ink](#) is an employee engagement consultancy with a simple mission: to inspire brilliant people to perform – brilliantly. We help our clients tap into their employees' collective talent, with the ultimate goal of driving better business performance. Our clients range from fast-growing start-ups with a few hundred employees to Fortune 500 organizations with 20,000 employees or more. Learn more about us at brilliantink.net.



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