

# TRENDLINES

*The Employers' Association's monthly whitepaper on essential Business/Human Resources practices*

The Employers' Association (TEA) delivers reports for businesses that contain relevant and up-to-date information based on our work with hundreds of employers each month. TEA is known to produce a number of essential benchmark survey reports every year and we also compile data and observations that provide organizations practical perspectives on important business trends.

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## Employee Engagement Surveys

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### What you should know

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The pandemic of 2020 has significantly changed the needs and requirements for an employee to feel engaged with their job and their company (potentially impacting their desire to remain a long-term employee). For companies, the major issue today is how to find – and more importantly, retain – enough qualified employees to provide the goods and services required by customers.

An Employee Engagement Survey (EES) is a critical tool in the efficient and productive functioning of a company. The level of employee engagement has a direct impact on employee retention, performance, and effort put forth at work each day – factors that directly correlate to employee satisfaction and productivity. Companies can accurately determine employee perceptions and concerns by seeking input from internal “consultants” that know the operation better than anyone else – those working day to day within the trenches and experiencing what “went right” and what “went wrong.” Identifying (and correcting) problem areas drives employee engagement up in a positive way while ignoring problem areas and hoping they “go away” on their own (OR doing nothing once they are identified) drives employee engagement down to the detriment of the entire company.

Now is the best time to assess what is working well and what is not, determine what changes need to be made, and move forward down a the most productive (and positive) path. One critical part of achieving a productive and full capacity work force is to retain the engaged employees you already have so they will not need to be replaced with new individuals. A key to full employment is assess employees you have so you do not have to replace those who might unexpectedly leave.

### What we know

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The Employers' Association's Employee statistically validated Engagement Surveys have revealed critical issues impacting employee hiring and retention during the last 6-9 months – issues that did not exist 18 months ago:

- 70% of workers that worked remotely during the Pandemic “shut down” do not want to return to in-office work.
- 20%-28% of employees will not return to work if forced back into an in-person work environment.
- Most employees did not feel their companies managed COVID-19 responses effectively or with the safety of the employees first.
- Employees are concerned about their safety when returning to in-person working environments.

Economists and those monitoring work patterns have identified a trend that, “Employees are just quitting and getting out of the work force in greater numbers than before.” This is due to people being out of work, re-evaluating their jobs, wondering if there might be a better job out there (grass is greener on the other side of the fence), and simply looking for something more than a paycheck as incentive for working. Nationally, surveys say that:

- Forbes – There is a Mass exodus (employees) leaving for greener pastures.
- Wall street Journal – Employees leaving companies (just leaving not necessarily for another job) is up 60% from a high of 1.6% of the work force a year ago 2.7% this year.
- Microsoft Work Trends Index (and similar surveys in the UK and US) – Between 26% and 40% of current employees are contemplating leaving the workforce entirely OR leaving their jobs to get a better job.

## What it means

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Historically, companies are generally aware of the most common issues that lead to low employee morale, commitment, and engagement – all causes of high employee dissatisfaction and turnover. Companies usually implement traditional remedies to keep the ship of state on an even keel and moving smoothly through the rough ocean of business and employee storms. Our current situation IS NOT common or normal and traditional solutions will not work to resolve our current challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent long-term lockdowns have created significantly different issues relating to employee engagement and longevity in the workplace. A review of the Employee Engagement Surveys results and the business literature, clearly identify today’s issues to be more organizational “culture,” safety, and employee-accommodation oriented.

To address employee concerns, companies need to accurately identify individual issues and address the most critical (those that have the greatest impact) as quickly as possible. If issues are not identified and addressed quickly, the exodus of employees and the negative impact on overall business and productivity will be tremendous.

## What you can do

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The top three employee concerns today include, (1) return to in person work, (2) employee (and by extension, family) safety, and (3) employee accommodation. The first step is to identify specific employee issues by conducting an Employee Engagement Survey. Modify the Engagement Survey with additional Agree/Disagree questions regarding return to work, COVID-19, company culture, intent to stay, and employee safety. Ask open ended question regarding the most important issues, their intent to stay, and what is needed in order to stay. In conjunction with an engagement survey expert, modify the survey to meet the specific and individual needs of your company.

Conduct the modified engagements survey, assess the results, identify employee concerns, and address them quickly and decisively. Show that you have listened and are responding in their best interest. Make changes to increase employee engagement and their desire to stay (and remain productive).

Maintaining and improving employee engagement and employee retention is a critical issue in today’s labor market. The issues of the past still exist, but there are new significant issues that overshadow those of the past. The Employers’ Associating has employee engagement tools to help with you employee hiring and retention challenges. Please contact us at 616-689-1167 or [www.teagr.org](http://www.teagr.org).