

Maximising Engagement

Over many years, we have identified some common themes and insights:

Goal-directed Engagement project

The assessment and maximisation of engagement can be seen as an Impact Research Project with a purpose e.g. *‘what are the primary causes of high and low engagement amongst your current and future team members? Or ‘Why do so many new team members quit after only 2 years?’*. The engagement survey (which we suggest should be individually designed for each client and each objective) is just one possible mechanism for getting appropriate and useful data. We have also deployed, for example, turnover data, exit interviews, recruitment stats (time and cost for example), staff forums, appraisal and other reports, social media (where the company has a big enough presence), focus groups, interview, direct observation and so on. The research design determines the research process, mechanisms and timescales and can itself offer useful insights.

Engagement/motivation is an outcome of expectation versus [perceived] reality

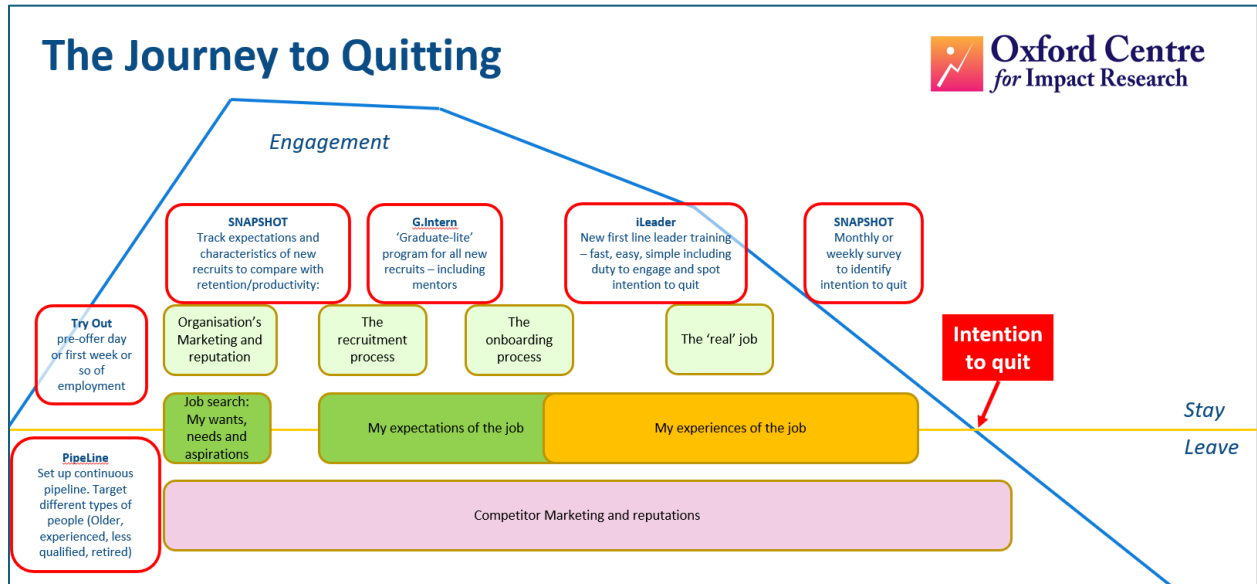
In an army, a new recruit might expect tough discipline and conditions; in Google a new AI expert might expect exciting new technical challenges and innovative culture; in a pharmaceutical company, a new researcher might expect professionalism and semi-academic working environment; in a frontline medical charity, a new nurse might expect gruelling conditions and emotional toll but highly meaningful work. So, what expectations do new team members have when they join your organisation (including psychological contract etc)? Has anybody asked? How does the reality match up to these expectations? Has anybody asked?

Engagement and marketing

Perceptions of reality are only partially informed by reality so the positioning and reputation of the organisation and inputs such as social media etc are important factors in engagement. Perception management in relation to employees is a crucial part of engagement process - otherwise the organisation has no influence over the impressions their employees receive from a million different sources. So, for example, the way the engagement process is launched and the messages and expectations it sets are crucial. Ongoing engagement management can incorporate tools from marketing – e.g. social media sentiment analysis, nudge, reputation management and PR. The management of perceptions is an important part of managing engagement.

Engagement over the Journey

It is useful to see engagement as a journey from joining to leaving. We have used this framework for specific objectives such as apparent low engagement and high turnover of new recruits during their first year.



Engagement is 'here' and 'now'.

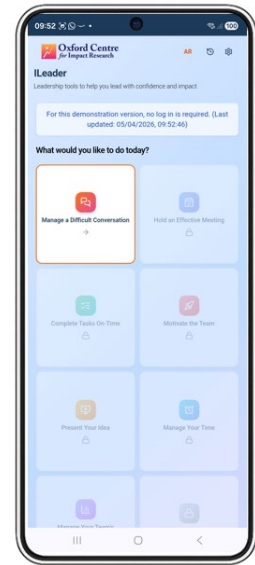
An individual's overall engagement comprises a lot of short-term experiences that occur directly to them and engagement can be highly variable over quite short time-frames. For the majority of employees, the primary influences are the hour to hour experience of their day-to-day work and day-to-day colleagues – especially their immediate leader (see below).

Some people are more 'engageable' than others

Another large part of reported levels of engagement is caused by the individual's own 'propensity for engagement'. There is a book on this ([Scott-Jackson and Mayo](#)), but in brief it means the positivity and optimism that a person brings to work and which is part of their personal learned attribution style. If an organisation wants to maximise engagement then this attribute should be a criteria in recruitment selection but, interestingly, it can also be developed for everyone to benefit.

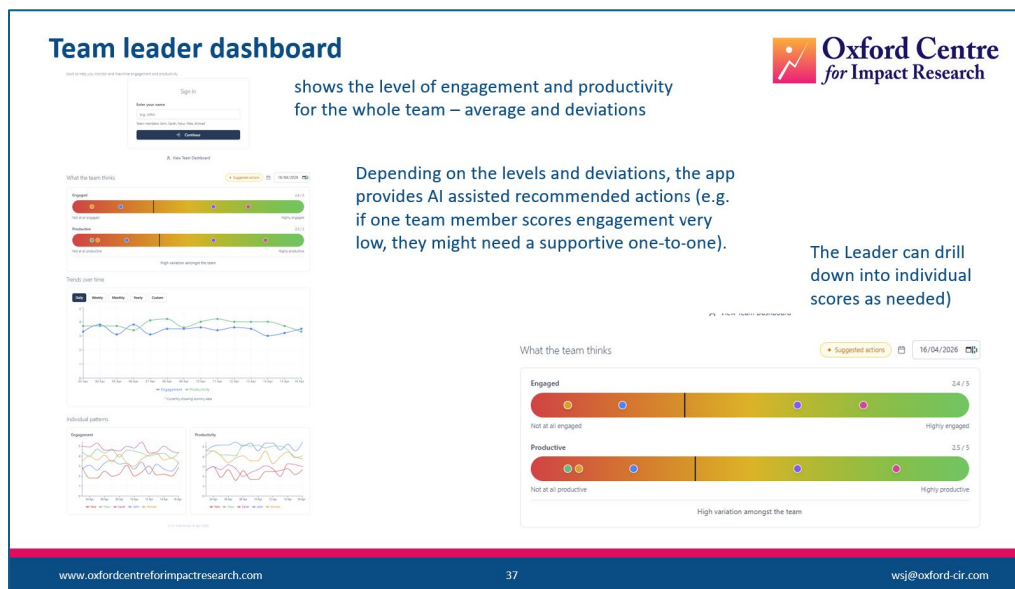
The major cause of low engagement.

Across numerous studies we find that the most significant cause of low engagement is the person's immediate leader (the leader's effect on high engagement is more diffused alongside other causal factors). We then analysed (with companies like BP and QBC) what these leaders were doing that had such devastating effects. Amazingly, what they were doing wrong could be defined as leadership tasks and they could be taught how to do these tasks well without any changes in personality, charisma, authenticity or anything very complex. We were even able to develop an app 'iLeader' which acts as an intelligent buddy to 'do' these tasks alongside the leader. The leader learns by doing and, relatively quickly, may no longer need the app. This replaces expensive and ineffective training.



The Engagement Dashboard

Given that engagement is here and now, it is more useful to have some kind of continuous monitoring, rather than relying on one snapshot on one day of the year. The mechanisms for this should be designed to suit your context and needs (rather than 'off the shelf'). We developed an app for this which starts by providing simple tips for a leader and their team but can then be aggregated upwards, instantaneously, to provide various dashboards for HR and business leaders at all levels. This illustration shows just the main screen



How can we help??

We tend to work as a partner with clients and are able to fit in wherever is needed. We can manage a complete project or help with any sub-components – we are very flexible and very easy to work with. We are happy to work with the client's existing suppliers to leverage their strengths and our own. In general, we tend to be involved in:

- Identifying the key objectives and success measures of their people projects,
- Researching and diagnosing the key causal levers and the interrelationships (in engagement for example)
- Identifying the action areas with the greatest potential impact (and least cost/time)
- Designing innovative solutions to make a real difference, together with appropriate measures etc (we are not an IT company, but do occasionally develop simple web or app-based tools)
- Implementation support.