

Levers to Drive Engagement

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In this eighth article of a nine-part series started with ‘Exploring the Dynamics of Employee Engagement,’ we look at the next section of the Jabian Engagement Framework: how implementation levers influence engagement.

Implementation levers are the management levers applied when we want to make change happen or when we want to influence change. They are the tools available to support the people who do the work in an organization and the tools we turn to first to get things done. There are eight implementation levers:

PROCESS The flow and step-by-step tasks we follow.

TECHNOLOGY The tools we use.

COMMUNICATIONS How we transmit knowledge and information.

TRAINING How we learn and build skills.

POLICY How we establish rules, clarify expectations, and set boundaries for acceptable behavior.

COMPENSATION How we receive tangible value in exchange for effort and expertise.

ORGANIZATION DESIGN How we establish lines of authority and accountability for work.

INFRASTRUCTURE The physical environment in which we work.

Like each section of the Engagement Framework, these levers apply to individuals, teams, groups, organizations, and even society as a whole. Also like with each of the other sections, leaders should consider each implementation lever when undertaking any new project or transformation. Too often, we fail to consider all the levers at our disposal when driving improvement and change, whether in business or our personal lives. It is important to use all the tools at your disposal when attacking a particular challenge.

To help do that, the following table provides examples of the implementation levers and how they might affect the engagement drivers, either positively or negatively. As you can see, each of these levers can influence the engagement drivers in different ways. Creative application of these levers can result in a rich set of actions and ideas that will enhance any project, change, or transformation.

LEVER	LEVER EXAMPLES	GROWTH	RELATIONSHIPS
PROCESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process flow or a detailed, step-by-step way of doing things. • “Ways of working” within your team or company culture. • Career path definitions. • Examples of personal processes might include “Always put your keys in the basket when you walk in the front door,” journaling, a workout program, a recipe, etc. • A habit is an automatic process that starts with a cue, triggers a routine, and results in a reward. That reward is the positive feeling you get from one of the engagement drivers. Both good and bad habits follow this process. 	Processes provide the flow of tasks for us to complete, which in turn gives us a sense of accomplishment and positively influences the Growth driver.	Processes can influence Relationships. For example, an employee onboarding process can require meetings with people with whom the new employee will need to work, thus encouraging Relationship-building.
TECHNOLOGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand tools are simple examples of technology, e.g., a hammer, a screwdriver, etc. • Personal technology includes watches, eyeglasses, contact lenses, prosthetics, etc. • High technology includes phones, computer networks, laptops, the internet/cloud, etc. • Drugs (both medical and recreational), medical devices, etc. • Any tool/device that enhances performance of the user. 	Technology can improve or degrade the ability to accomplish things, affecting the Growth driver.	Relationships can be enhanced or degraded with the use of technology (e.g., virtual meeting platforms, mobile phones, cookware, etc.).
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything that transfers knowledge from one person to another via our senses is a form of communication. • Written communication, including texts, emails, newspapers, newsletters, signs. • Auditory communication, e.g., verbal communication, ringtones, alarms. • Tactile or haptic communication, including Braille, vibration, electrical stimulation, etc. • Nonverbal communication, including posture, facial expressions, gestures, etc. • Smells can communicate and inform about situations (e.g., it’s time to eat, or watch out, there’s a skunk nearby!). 	Communication in the form of recognition can result in a feeling of accomplishment and Growth. Communication in the form of criticism can have the opposite effect.	Communication is critical for developing and maintaining Relationships. Poor communication can ruin Relationships.
TRAINING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training is used to develop skills. • Training can take many forms, including classroom training, virtual learning, coaching, mentoring, reading, and studying. 	Training helps build skills that let us accomplish tasks, enhancing the Growth driver. Learning anything new is Growth.	Training in relationship-based skills can help us enhance Relationships.
POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy is any type of rule that we put in place to establish consistency of action. • Company policy. • Laws. • Standards. • Regulations. • Corporate values. • Religious laws and practices. • Personal rules (I always do, I never do). 	Policies can help to encourage or even enforce Growth. Mandatory training, for example, is a way to drive Growth through learning.	Policies can help improve Relationships by establishing clear expectations about how others should be treated.
COMPENSATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation is a special form of policy that we designate as its own lever in the Engagement Framework. We define compensation as anything of value exchanged for effort or expertise. Note that compensation itself is not a driver of engagement. Rather, it’s what you do with the compensation once you have received it that results in engagement. 	An increase in compensation in and of itself is an accomplishment, resulting in positive impacts to the Growth driver. Conversely, a demotion or reduction in salary will affect the Growth driver in a negative way.	Money can be spent on others (for example, putting your children through school or buying a gift for a loved one) which can improve Relationships.
ORGANIZATION DESIGN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Also a special form of policy, organization design is the hierarchy of who reports to whom, and it is established by some level of leadership. Because it is such a common implementation lever, we’ve included it in the list of levers in the Engagement Framework. 	Organization design can help inspire Growth by helping people see how their careers can evolve. It also provides for clear promotion points, each of which is a positive influence on Growth.	Organization design helps to communicate the key Relationships that people in the organization should look to foster.
INFRASTRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure encompasses the space and physical environment in which we work, including walls, ceilings, lighting, desks, air quality, noise, etc. 	Without the right infrastructure and environment, it can be difficult to accomplish tasks, resulting in a negative hit to Growth. For example, if we are assembling electronic components and the lighting is dim, we won’t be as productive, affecting Growth.	Open workspaces can increase collaboration, improving Relationships, and Innovation/ Growth.

AUTONOMY	SECURITY	FAIRNESS	WELL-BEING
Processes, if they are onerous or tedious, can negatively affect the Autonomy driver. Even good new processes tend to negatively affect our Autonomy, but the effect goes away once those new processes become habit.	Processes provide clarity on the work to be done, positively influencing the Security driver.	Processes can positively or negatively affect the Fairness driver. "Due process under the law" is intended to provide for a fair process.	A morning routine can include time set aside for journaling, meditation, or exercise, all of which could contribute to an increased sense of Well-Being.
Technology can help reduce tedium, which enhances Autonomy (e.g., scanning ballots, report generation, spreadsheets, etc.). Technology can enable Autonomy and flexibility (e.g., virtual meeting platforms, mobile phones, wheelchairs, prosthetics, etc.).	Surveillance technology and weapons held as a deterrent can enhance Security. Technology can also be used by one party to hinder the performance of another party (e.g., weapons, cyberattacks, etc.).	Technology can be used to drive Fairness. For example, a digital lottery can be used to randomly distribute a limited number of available seats to a concert when more people requested seats than are available.	Exercise machines, medical technology, and drugs can help improve Well-Being.
Clear communication around expectations is the foundation for delegation and allows those delegated to the opportunity to work, make decisions, and solve problems independently.	Communication helps to reduce uncertainty, enhancing Security. Propaganda can also be used to reduce Security.	When communication is withheld from someone, it can result in feelings of unfairness.	Communicating knowledge and creating awareness about unfair treatment of individuals and groups can improve Fairness. Communication can affect Well-Being by creating joy and fun.
Skills provided to their team members can help leaders manage less and delegate more, improving Autonomy.	Without skills, taking on a complex work can create insecurity. Training can create certainty and Security around work performance.	Withholding training can be viewed as unfair, resulting in a negative hit to the Fairness driver.	Training someone to properly exercise and eat will improve Well-Being.
Policy can create freedom (for example, by establishing the right to assemble), thus improving Autonomy.	Policy improves Security by establishing rules and standards designed to create a level of certainty about how others will behave.	Perhaps most importantly, policies help to ensure Fairness by ensuring fair allocation of resources, fair treatment, etc.	Individual policies, such as "I never eat sweets," can result in a healthier lifestyle. Collections of policies can help create a system of living that results in a sense of Well-Being for those who adhere to those policies.
Additional compensation can be used to pay down debt, which enhances Autonomy.	Additional compensation can be saved for the future, which enhances Security.	An increase in compensation can help right a wrong, increasing Fairness, e.g., "I should be making the same amount she does because we do equal work." Be careful with this one, though, as increasing one person's compensation over others can be seen as unfair.	Compensation can also be spent on enhancing Well-Being, e.g., with a fitness club membership, a massage, surgery to heal an injury or illness, etc.).
A new organization design can result in a hit to Autonomy for someone who has not been managed or led consistently.	Organization design creates clarity about who employees can turn to for help, who they are accountable to, and to whom they can delegate work, improving Security.	A new organization design can be perceived as unfair if we believe that we deserve a higher position, or that we shouldn't be at the same level as someone we consider to be less talented or experienced.	A well-designed organization removes friction, minimizes conflict, and balances workload, which in turn reduces stress and improves health.
Infrastructure can be used to limit Autonomy (for example, prisoners locked up in a cell).	In the case of using infrastructure for a prison, it is interesting to point out that one person's limited Autonomy is another person's enhanced Security. We can also use infrastructure to enhance our physical Security at home, for example, by locking a door or building a fence.	Infrastructure can enhance Fairness. For example, the United Nations Security Council meets at a round table, limiting any implied positional authority to individual members.	Aesthetics and beauty can have a significant impact on Well-being and joy. This is one reason the corner office with floor-to-ceiling windows is highly desirable (along with, of course, the status that office projects, which is a Growth effect).