

The Managers' Guide to Best Practices in Employee Engagement



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Introduction



New data released by InterCall reveals - or rather confirms - the non-work activities that people do while half-listening on conference calls.

Among the results:

40% said they had dropped off a call without saying so, and pretended they stayed

27% admitted to falling asleep

13% said they had been “outed” for not being in the location they’d claimed to be

5% said they’d had a friend take a conference call in their place

To the management team running the calls, this may come as a shock. But to employees actually on the calls, it’s no surprise.

According to Gallup, employee engagement is at an all time low. It’s no wonder people aren't all that interested in conference calls (or work for that matter).

In this eBook you will learn what employee engagement is, why it’s important, and best practices for managers to engage their workforce. In addition, we’ll dive deeper into the cultures of companies who successfully engage their employees through great management and processes.

Let’s dive in.

Chapter 1:
**What is Employee
Engagement?**

Successful employee engagement creates better processes and enables better management so employees are happier and more productive at work.

This ultimately leads to better employee morale, more satisfied customers, higher quality products, less employee turnover, and higher profits for organizations.

Here are some key characteristics that you'll find in engaged employees:

- ✓ They love their job and want to contribute as much as possible
- ✓ They share their opinions and aren't afraid to respectfully disagree
- ✓ When they do disagree they offer thoughtful alternatives
- ✓ They ask for help when they're stuck
- ✓ They're always striving to do better and improve their skills
- ✓ They provide mentorship for anyone who asks (and sometimes when they don't).



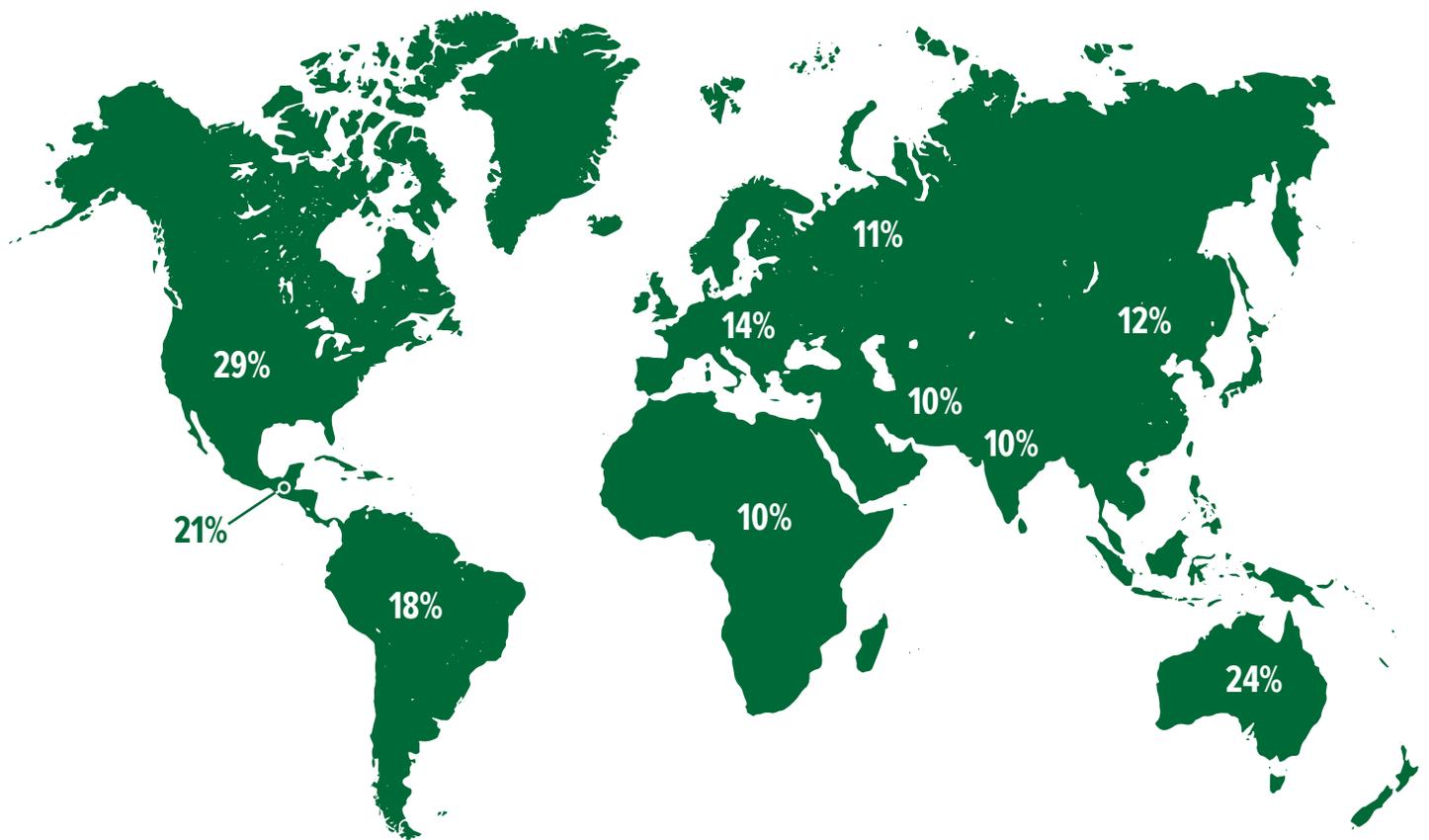
Most of all, engaged employees have a broader vision of how their contributions connect to a larger mission, and are more motivated to work harder to pursue that mission.

On the contrary, disengaged employees are frustrated by unclear (or unrealistic) expectations. They are fed up with a lack of resources, and worry that their input and strengths are not taken seriously. They think they are undervalued and underpaid, and don't believe their hard work is recognized or really worth it.

52% of workers in America and 63% of workers worldwide aren't engaged in their jobs. That only includes the people not engaged in their work and this doesn't even account for those who are actively disengaged - which clock in at 19% of workers in America and 24% of workers worldwide. This is why that distinction is important: People who aren't engaged in their jobs are doing just enough to scrape by and not get fired. However, actively disengaged employees are purposefully trying to harm your company. That's a big problem.

Employee Engagement Rates Worldwide

* Data provide by Gallup



One may look at these facts and simply think it's a case of bad attitudes among employees. Isn't it on them to turn it all around?

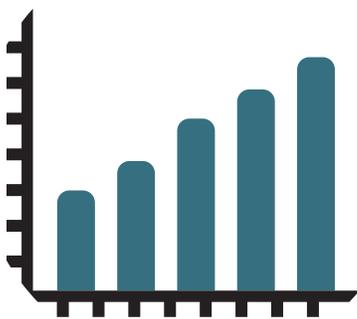
While bad attitudes happen, and employees surely do have to take some ownership, it's to a company's benefit to help employees become more engaged.

Chapter 2:
**Why is Employee
Engagement
Important?**

There are dozens of reasons why employee engagement is important, but here are the top three reasons your organization should pay attention.

1) ENGAGED EMPLOYEES ARE MORE PRODUCTIVE.

Engaged employees simply get more done. In a [2012 Gallup study on employee engagement](#), Gallup's Chief Scientist of Employee Engagement and Wellbeing Dr. Jim



Harter explains:

“When you ask people about their intentions during a recession, it’s pretty clear that disengaged workers are just waiting around to see what happens. Engaged workers, though, have bought into what the organization is about and are trying to make a difference. This is why they’re usually the most productive workers.”

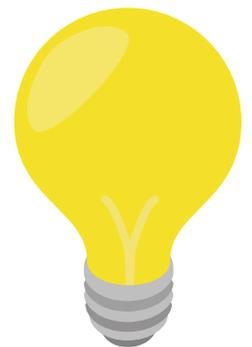
“ENGAGED WORKERS, THOUGH, HAVE BOUGHT INTO WHAT THE ORGANIZATION IS ABOUT AND ARE TRYING TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.”

2) ENGAGED EMPLOYEES HAVE GREAT IDEAS.

POST-IT NOTES AND GMAIL ARE AMONG THE GREAT PRODUCTS WE HAVE TODAY THANKS TO THE IDEAS FROM ENGAGED EMPLOYEES.

these new ideas can be highly profitable for their organizations. [Post-it Notes and Gmail](#) are among the great products we have today thanks to the ideas from engaged employees.

Being productive isn't just about getting the bare minimum completed. Engaged employees bring new ideas and ways of doing things to the table, and



3) REPLACING EMPLOYEES IS EXPENSIVE.

Disengaged employees quit, and **according to the Center for American Progress**, employee turnover is expensive. For all jobs earning less than \$50,000 per year, or more than 40 percent of U.S. jobs, the average cost of replacing an employee amounts to fully 20 percent of the person's annual salary. This doesn't account for the cost of damaged employee morale caused by a well-liked employee leaving.



Taking a proactive approach to employee engagement, and preventing employee turnover in the first place, could save you a ton of money.

Chapter 3:
**Best Practices
in Employee
Engagement**

By now you should be convinced that employee engagement is an important initiative for your company. However, you may not know exactly where to get started.

The actual implementation of these strategies looks different for each company and their unique culture, but these key points are a great place to start.

1) LISTEN TO EMPLOYEES' IDEAS

Fostering an engaged workforce is just as much the responsibility of employees as it is the organization they work for. However, staff needs the right tools to share their ideas in order to be helpful.

How it's done:

- **Employee Suggestion Programs.** Similar to customer feedback programs, ESPs establish an employee suggestion program at your organization. This initiative invites employees to voice concerns and share ideas for solutions.
- **Replace the Old Suggestion Box.** Many companies already offer employee suggestion programs, but they don't take advantage of technology to ensure it's as effective as possible. A wooden suggestion box placed on the wall is a good start, but suggestions aren't always checked regularly. This risks resentment and confusion. Switching to a digital solution increases accountability and improves the process for listening to employee suggestions.



2) CREATE BETTER PROCESSES

There's a funny thing about process: If there's too much of it, you can't get anything done. If there's too little of it, you can't get anything done. Many

companies don't find the happy medium when it comes to structure, which leads to frustration and disengagement among the workforce.

If you're working somewhere with great processes, you should be able to answer the following questions:

- What is expected of me in this role?
- Who can I ask for help if I have a question?
- How should I ask for help?



The answers to these questions change depending on the organization. However, the important part is that the answers are clearly communicated through employee training and documentation.

For example, job expectations differ depending on company size and culture. Traditional organizations might have very specific job descriptions. Small tech startups may have more of a “create your own role” opportunity for workers. So long as the expectations are clearly communicated during the hiring process, the right employee theoretically will be engaged in that environment.

How to do this:

- **Employee Suggestion Programs.** Your employees are on the frontlines. They deal with your organization's processes each day. They know which ones work, and which ones can be improved. A digital suggestion box like Vocoli is one way you can collect ideas and continuously audit your company's processes and make them better.
- **Onboarding for New Employees.** The first few weeks of a job is when you are getting “set up.” There's no better time to introduce employees to company systems and protocols.
- **Regular Check-Ins With Managers.** Knowing what is going on, what is

expected of you, and how to get the help and resources you need are things any employee should be concerned about. An open and continuous conversation with managers is how your organization can keep processes top of mind so employees are empowered to do their jobs to their fullest ability.

3) ENABLE BETTER MANAGEMENT

As we discussed earlier, employees should know who to go to with questions and ideas, and how to communicate concerns. Whether this actually happens often comes down to great (or bad) management.



Managers come in many shapes and forms. Some are more nurturing while some are stricter. Depending on the team, both approaches can lead to great results. No matter the style, there are ways that companies can help managers perform.

How to do this:

- **Management Training.** It's a common scenario: People are promoted to management because they were great individual contributors - not because of any prior track record that indicates leadership potential. To add to the potential trouble, the only point of reference they have for how to be a good manager is what their managers did (which weren't necessarily good or bad approaches). When you think about how common this approach is, it's no wonder there are so many bad bosses.

But it doesn't have to be this way. To stop the cycle of bad management, a formal training program can help managers discover and refine their own leadership styles and be effective in their roles.

- **Give Managers Time to Manage.** Managers often get roped into so many strategic meetings with other managers that they don't have time to interact with their teams. While meetings are unavoidable, neglecting ones' team

isn't. Companies can enable managers to be great by allowing them a set number of hours a week for meetings with their teams.

- **Clearly Defined Management Roles.** Employees should know who they report to, and managers should know who reports to them. To some, this sounds obvious. But anyone who has worked in a high growth company or new department knows that these lines often get blurred. You can't be a great manager if you don't know who you manage, and having clear management roles is one way companies can enable great leadership.

4) REWARDS AND RECOGNITION



Everyone gets a paycheck. But how can you further reward your employees for a job well done?

According to Entrepreneur, every company needs a strategic reward system for employees that addresses these four areas:

1. Compensation
2. Benefits
3. Recognition
4. Appreciation

Usually though, the company misses one or more of these elements. Or, the rewards they choose aren't aligned with the company's goals.

How it's done:

- **Identify the Behaviors You Want to Reward.** Are you rewarding hours at the desk or are you rewarding fresh ideas? Make the behaviors you want to reward reflective of your company goals and culture.
- **Think Broader When it Comes to Benefits.** The benefits your company provides (like health insurance) will surely be compared against other companies by potential employees. Many companies think big with their

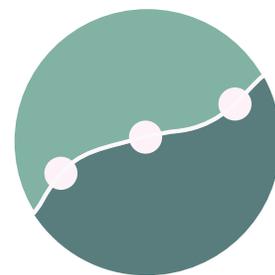
benefits these days. **For example, The Huffington Post has nap rooms at their offices.**

Today's typical picture of work is different than 10, 20, or 50 years ago. Things once thought of as extravagant and unrealistic privileges (like nap rooms or telecommuting) are so common now that many workers regard them as standard benefits. It may not make sense to "reward" people just for showing up. However, these perks show employees their time is appreciated and motivate them to do greater things later on.

- **Use Recognition and Appreciation Wisely.** Recognition means acknowledging someone in front their peers for specific accomplishments. Appreciation, however, is expressing gratitude and can be done privately. Both are great ways to reinforce model behavior and reward employees for stellar performance. A mix of both recognition and appreciation is ideal in order to appeal to different personality types on your team.

5) GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES

Nobody wants to be stuck in the same job for 20 years - especially Millennials. Gen Y is notoriously ambitious and eager to progress. Their attitudes about work are drastically different than those of Baby Boomers or Gen X'ers. Attitudes of previous generations, who were likely to stay at the same job for many years in hopes of a lifetime of security and stability, don't apply. **According to a Future Workplace survey** of nearly 2,000 Millennials, 91% expected to stay in a job for less than three years. Growth opportunities are a huge factor.



Obviously, automatically guaranteeing a raise and a better job title every six months isn't possible - or even good for companies. However, there are ways to motivate younger employees by making them feel as though "a light is at the end of the tunnel" and growth opportunities are in their future.

How It's Done:

- **Offer Lateral Opportunities.** **HubSpot**, a tech startup in Boston, MA, proudly lets high performing employees “quit their jobs” and transition to other jobs in other departments. It’s not uncommon for an employee to work in three different departments over the course of a few years. The constant change challenges employees and guarantees they will always be learning something new. How do they do that? They market jobs internally through signage and email newsletters so that people know what new opportunities are available.
- **Promote From Within.** When employees see their colleagues getting promoted, it gives them faith that those kinds of opportunities are available to them as well.

6) MEANINGFUL WORK



Most employees want to work on projects that matter and they feel connected with. BUT the reality is that not every company can be working to cure cancer and save sick kittens. Focus on constantly communicating your organization's larger mission at hand.

- **Communicate From the Top.** Knowing that a committed leader is at the helm, guiding the company vision, is highly motivating. Some companies use internal wikis, newsletters, or quarterly all-hands meetings as a platform for CEO’s to communicate regularly with the company and share that vision. For example, in a recent interview, marketing agency **Edelman’s CEO** Richard Edelman stated that the CEO should also be the “Chief Engagement Officer.” It is key to be transparent with both your employees and your consumers.
- **Encourage Cause-Based Initiatives.** As we mentioned earlier, not every business directly has a charitable mission, but profits may enable them to pay it forward and do charitable things - even if it’s an indirect result of

the company's day-to-day activities. This is another area where employee suggestion programs can have broad and lasting effects, as they give employees a platform where they can suggest cause-driven activities. For example, Crayola has a program called **ColorCycle**. They collect used markers from consumers (Crayola pays for shipping) and then turn them into clean burning fuel. It's not only environmentally friendly, but helps children who participate understand the importance of recycling.

7) HELP EMPLOYEES VOICE THEIR OPINIONS

The best types of companies have employees that collaborate with each other regularly and share their ideas. That collaboration is how an individual's concerns about process, management, or a desire for more mission-driven work can be brought to the forefront and possibly acted on.



How it's done:

- **Digital Suggestion Boxes.** Replace the old, tired, wooden suggestion box on the wall and switch to a digital platform. This will give you a much more organized and strategic approach to listening to employees' ideas.

Chapter 4:
**How Other
Companies
Handle This**

It's easy for us to sit here and list all the best practices of employee engagement. But there is nothing like a real-life example to drum up inspiration.

Let's take a look at what other companies do well when it comes to employee engagement.

1) CHIPOTLE



When you walk into Chipotle for your lunchtime burrito there's one thing you can't ignore: Those employees have energy, smiles on their faces, and they are eager to serve you. They really do have some of the most engaged employees and the "happiest" company culture we've witnessed. Here are some of the things they do to achieve that kind of employee satisfaction.

How Chipotle does it:

1. They Promote From Within

One of the programs Chipotle is most famous for is the [restaurateur program](#). Chipotle believes that some of their best managers come from within the existing staff. In fact, 97% of their managers started out "rolling burritos." They rarely hire management externally, which means there is great growth opportunity within the company. Knowing there is upward career mobility at your company is highly motivating and engaging for employees. It gives them confidence that their hard work can be recognized.

2. They Don't Micromanage Franchises

Chipotle hires great people, and then gives them a lot of trust to run each

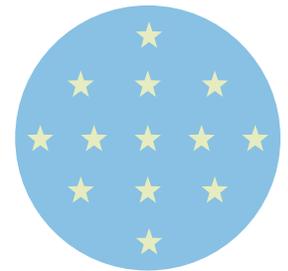
store without micromanagement from corporate.

Employees also have the ability to recognize their peers. Through the restaurateur program, Chipotle employees can nominate other employees who have done a great job to move up in the rankings. This autonomy creates a culture of support and a great team environment.

3. They Hire For Culture

Chipotle has a list of 13 qualities they want their employees to have: conscientious, respectful, hospitable, high energy, infectious enthusiasm, happy, presentable, smart, polite, motivated, ambitious, curious, and honest. They focus on finding people with these qualities because they are the types of people who will continue to develop their culture.

By attracting and hiring these people they create the foundation for a strong company legacy.



Key Lessons from Chipotle:

Chipotle has a well-defined strategy for how they engage and retain talent. For them, a more hands-off approach with franchises and individuals works. In addition, they've found a way to motivate employees by offering a clear career path at the company.

2) WEGMANS

Wegmans is a large grocery store chain in the Northeast that was founded in 1916. They have appeared in **Fortune's annual "100 Best Companies to Work For"** list since the lists creation in 1998. The results

don't lie: Wegmans knows what they're doing when it comes to employee engagement.

How Wegmans does it:

1. Employees Come First

Wegmans has a proven track record of encouraging their employees with career development. They want their employees to thrive and grow with

LAST YEAR ALONE THE CORPORATION AWARDED \$4.5 MILLION IN COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS TO EMPLOYEES.

Wegmans. For example, deli managers have the opportunity to travel to Wisconsin, Italy and a variety of places to learn about cheese. This doesn't just extend within the realm of store training. Last year alone the corporation awarded **\$4.5 million in college scholarships** to employees.

2. They Emphasize Career Development

Wegmans has a specific **career growth timeline** that allows employees to see where they can grow within the company. Every employee from trainee to manager has the opportunity to develop their career at Wegmans. This is one of the reasons Wegmans' turnover rate is about 50% less than their leading competitors.

3. A Big Company Acting As A Small Company



You know those stores where you ask a question to which the employee then replies: "I don't know, I have to ask my manager if it's ok." That's not Wegmans. Instead, each employee has the power to do whatever it takes to keep customers happy without having to involve a manager higher up on the chain of command. This type of autonomy is one of the reasons that Wegmans is **#1 in customer satisfaction** among grocery store chains.

Key lessons from Wegmans:

Employee engagement and company culture is a huge priority for Wegmans. Similar to Chipotle, giving employees freedom to make their own decisions and interact with customers works. In return, their employees work hard to create a high quality grocery store with a knowledgeable and friendly staff. Additionally, by providing career growth opportunities, they entice people to take pride in their work with career.

3) FULLCONTACT



FullContact is a small 36-person startup out of Denver that was founded back in 2011. They are seeking to “solve the world’s contact information problem”

by creating an organized contact software for individuals, businesses and developers.

How FullContact does it:

1. They Want You To Go On Vacation

Employee burnout is a common problem for employees today. One company, **FullContact**, recognizes the value of well-rested employees and knows that their employees are humans and **need some time away from work**. So, on top of paid time off, FullContact pays for their employees (\$7500 to be exact) to go on vacation.



Seems crazy, right? But it work because employees are required to completely disconnect. Employees come back to work feeling refreshed, invigorated, and ready to get back to their responsibilities. All this can happen without having to worry about what’s going on at work. FullContact has established that work happens at work and life happens at home (and on awesome paid vacations.)

2. Conversation Is Fluid Throughout The Organization

Since they are a startup, they haven't fully worked out all of the kinks and processes for their organization. Their solution to this is a policy of candor and no sugar coating. When something isn't working, their employees are expected and encouraged to speak their minds. One occasion that they highlighted in [their blog](#) was a junior employee calling out the CEO, Bart Lorang. FullContact has a policy that everyone needs to help out on the help desk ticket items for two days a year. On Lorang's day to help he forgot to apologize to a customer for the inconvenience. The junior employee noticed this and told Lorang that he needs to apologize to every customer who submits a ticket. Lorang thought this was awesome and wrote: "It takes courage to tell the CEO – 'you're f***ing this up' and do it with candor and class." They want this type of honesty and conversation flowing so they can have the best product AND company culture.

3. Teamwork



FullContact trusts their team members and values their ideas and feedback. They work together to solve problems and aren't afraid to ask for help when they need it. As Bart Lorang says on the FullContact blog: "At a startup, you need to [believe in one another](#). Unwavering faith in your teammates, your mission and the belief that together, you will achieve your common goals is unbelievably important."

Key lessons from FullContact:

When you hire someone, you're basically saying that you have faith in them to complete their jobs and you know that they will be a wonderful addition to your team. Full Contact recognizes the importance of this relationship and has set up practices that will engage and retain employees. They created these practices by paying close attention to the issues their employees faced - such as burnout. What problems do your employees face? How can you address those issues and engage your employees with solutions?

Conclusion

If you treat employees as “just another worker” then they will treat you as “just another job.” The best talent has to be nurtured and encouraged. The bottom line is that you need to be engaged in your employees for them to be engaged in their job.

YOU NEED TO BE ENGAGED IN YOUR EMPLOYEES FOR THEM TO BE ENGAGED IN THEIR JOB.

Organized processes, great management, and growth opportunities are among the most important things to employees today. To find out what matters to your employees, all you have to do is ask.

Digital suggestion programs make it easy for any employee at any level of the organization to research an idea and pitch it to the rest of the company. These ideas can be small changes, like the institution of “Bagel Fridays.” It can also be a major initiative or process change that could impact and improve the entire organization.

We mentioned in the beginning that one reaction to all of this employee engagement talk could be the question of whether or not it’s on the employees to engage themselves and improve their organizations. And the truth is, it is. However, unless employees have the right tools to communicate their ideas, it’s incredibly difficult for them to be a part of the solution.

At **Vocoli**, we help our customers establish some of the fundamentals of employee engagement through employee suggestion programs. Building collaboration, fostering innovation, and improving communication are all integral to an engaged workforce. If you would like to learn more about how an engaged workforce and how a digital suggestion program can help you achieve that, **[reach out today to learn more.](#)**

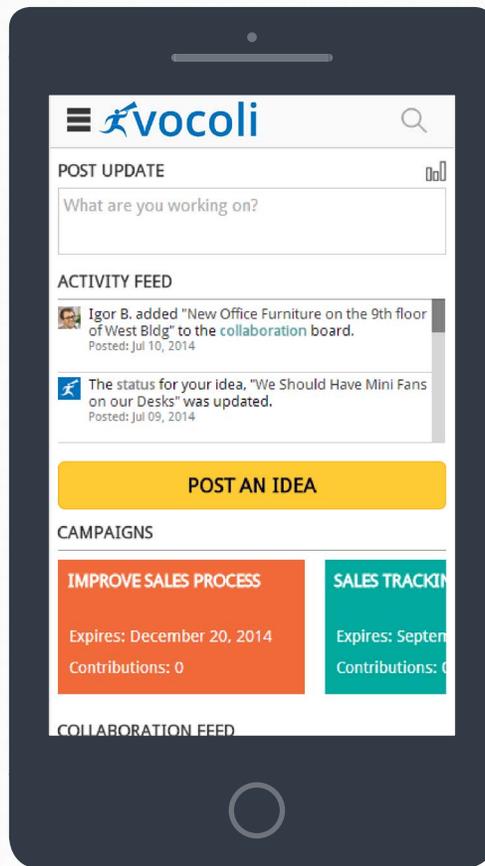


vocoli

 Idea Sharing

 Challenges

 Recognition



 Collaboration

 Reporting

 And more!

Vocoli can help you engage your employees, listen to their ideas, give feedback, and ultimately build better organizations.

Contact us today to learn more and get a free demo.

To request a demo: email sales@vocoli.com today!

For more information visit www.vocoli.com or call us at 888.919.5300