Belonging:
Engagement Resource Guide

Defining a "Sense of Belonging"

When staff feel recognized and cared for, when they have opportunities to learn and grow, when they can share their opinions, that creates **belonging**. Belonging is an individual-internal experience; a sense of one's self in relation to a community, organization, or institution. An individual's sense of belonging is supported by the demonstration of inclusion, from being acknowledged when passing in hallways, to seeing one's image reflected in publicity, and having tangible opportunities for everyone to participate and contribute.

Measuring Inclusion

One measure of how we're doing in this area is collected in the UCSF Employee Engagement Survey. The survey asks Gallup's famous "Q12:" twelve internationally researched questions proven to effectively indicate staff engagement levels. Four out of these twelve questions are about inclusion and belonging:

- **Q04**. *In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.*

- **Q05**. *My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.*

- **Q07**. *At work, my opinions seem to count.*

- **Q12**. *This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.*

Fostering Engagement

While action is critical at the organization level to support increased belonging across UCSF, individuals can also influence the sense of belonging within their teams. The following guides are Gallup's modules that speak directly to each of the four questions above, including best practices and ways to spark engaging conversations. Whatever the makeup of your team and wherever your team's sense of belonging may be today, keep in mind our organizational focus on **anti-racism** and be sure to incorporate that into your engagement action plan.

More resources for increasing and sustaining belonging, including our organizational action plan are posted online at: Learning.ucsf.edu/Belonging.

Creating a workplace that works for us all.

LEARN MORE. Visit us on the web: learning.ucsf.edu

Q04. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.

Help Me See My Value

This element of engagement may represent one of the greatest lost opportunities for leaders. Staff rely on praise and recognition to better understand their leaders' expectations and values. Praise and recognition are tools that leaders can use to communicate what is important and help staff see their value.

Gallup's research shows that leaders who do not use the power of positive feedback hamper their own effectiveness and diminish the power of staff and teams.

Globally, in the typical workgroup Gallup has studied, about four in 10 employees strongly agree that they have received recognition for doing good work in the last seven days.

Employees who are not adequately recognized at work are twice as likely to say they'll quit in the next year.

Individuals who receive recognition and praise increase their individual productivity, boost engagement among their colleagues, are more likely to stay with their organization, and receive higher loyalty and patient satisfaction scores.

Globally, **four in 10** employees strongly agree that they have received recognition for doing good work in the last seven days.

At any given company, it's not uncommon to find between **one-fifth** and **one-third** of people saying, "My best efforts are routinely ignored."

Great leaders know that they can never give too much recognition if it is honest and deserved.

The most effective leaders always look for opportunities to recognize and praise individuals. This creates a workplace where individuals know the value of their work and the emotional reward that comes with it.

As a leader, you should routinely ask yourself:

- ✓ Do I regularly praise staff for their efforts?
- ✓ Have I created and supported an environment in which staff are encouraged to recognize one another for doing good work?
- ✓ Do I know how each team member likes to receive recognition? Given this knowledge, do I then individualize my approach to providing that recognition?
- ✓ How often do I celebrate our team's success? Do I make it a priority?

Three Attributes of Effective Recognition

Authentic Recognition that feels genuine, real and heartfelt

Meaningful Praise that highlights the value of the work and the person doing it

Motivating Recognition that taps into what matters most to the individual

Helping Staff See Their Value

The best leaders consistently offer recognition. They build an environment in which staff are empowered and encouraged to give and receive recognition and praise. This positive feedback helps every team member see the value in their work. In short, outstanding performance is a result of authentic, meaningful and motivating recognition that is individualized, deserved, specific and timely.

Engaging Conversations

Leaders who fail to deliberately use the power of positive feedback are not only handicapping their own effectiveness, but they are also diminishing the power of their teams. The challenge is that what is meaningful recognition to one person may not be as valuable to the next. Asking staff the following questions can help identify what motivates them:

- How do you like to receive recognition?
- What is the best recognition you have ever received? What is the best recognition you have received in the past six months?
- What type of recognition do you prefer? What are you most comfortable with?
- From whom would you like to receive recognition?
- Think of three colleagues who help you most in your job. How have you thanked them or recognized them for their help?
- Who are your biggest cheerleaders at work? Who helps you believe in your success?
- As a team, how can we build a culture that encourages and values recognition and praise?

Best Practices

The most effective leaders promote a recognition-rich environment with praise coming from every direction and with everyone knowing how others like to receive recognition. They do this by incorporating the following behaviors into their management and work style approach:

- Praise staff for doing good work.
- Recognize staff for achieving their goals.
- When praising staff, emphasize why the recognized act was important.
- Recognize team members' individual talents and strengths.
- Recognize outstanding customer service when you see people on other teams or in other departments performing it.
- Introduce a unique way to facilitate and encourage individualized recognition.
- Learn how each team member likes to receive praise, and tailor an approach to meet each individual's recognition needs.
- Encourage staff to recognize one another and their partners on different teams or in different departments.
- Identify how each team member likes to receive recognition.
- Make recognition an agenda item at regularly scheduled meetings.
- Be an advocate for your team by promoting their areas of competence and expertise.

Q05. My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.

Care About Me

Staff need to know that they are more than just a number. They need to know that someone is concerned about them as people first and as staff second.

Gallup's research indicates that employees don't leave companies; they leave managers and supervisors. Great leaders know that it is not enough to put the right people in the right roles. They are aware of their staff's needs and manage with each person's engagement in mind.

In high-turnover organizations, teams in the lowest quartile average 22% higher turnover than those in the top quartile. In organizations where resignations are less common, the difference rises to 37%.

When Gallup asked employees what they were thinking about when they responded to this item, employees used words like acceptance, trust, fairness, consistency, understanding and authenticity.

If you truly understand and appreciate each staff member's unique strengths, motivations and workplace needs, you can create and support a caring and productive workplace. A caring environment is one in which each person feels safe — safe enough to experiment, to challenge, to share information and to support others — and in which staff are prepared to give leaders and the organization the benefit of the doubt. None of this can happen if team members do not feel cared about.

Only 27% of workers strongly agree that they can talk with their leader about nonwork-related issues. Only 37% of workers strongly agree that they can approach their leader with any type of question.

Great leaders build caring and respectful relationships at work to strengthen their team's performance.

The most effective leaders make each person feel valued, respected and genuinely cared about as a person.

As a leader, you should routinely ask yourself:

- ✓ Do staff believe I care about them as people?
- ✓ What am I doing to increase my understanding and appreciation of each individual on the team?
- ✓ How do I let team members know that I am here to support them?
- ✓ What can I do to foster a caring work environment?

Three Aspects of a Caring Work Environment

Each person feels like a valued member of the team and organization.

Employees treat one another with respect.

Valued

Respected

Genuine
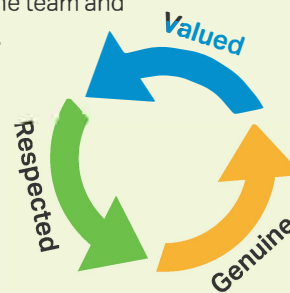
Each person believes that his or her supervisor or leader takes a personal interest in him or her.

Building a Cohesive, Cooperative and Collaborative Team

Each day provides opportunities for team members to identify ways they can help and support one another. This happens when you encourage cohesion and cooperation among team members and genuine support for one another. When this happens, team members will start to rely on one another to get work done.

Engaging Conversations

Each person might have a different idea of how someone demonstrates care. The best leaders listen to individuals and respond to each one's unique needs. Asking staff the following questions can help ensure that you learn more about the issues at hand — and, more importantly, discover what they are looking for from you and from others:

- What makes you feel like a valued member of this team? What is your unique contribution to the team?

- What could we do to let our team members know that we care about their accomplishments?

- How do you show your team members that you respect and care about them?

- What could we each do to more effectively set up our team members for success?

- Who cares most about your success?

- Can our patients or internal partners sense an uncaring environment? How does this feeling affect their wellbeing or engagement?

Best Practices

The most effective leaders build a culture of cooperation and collaboration by incorporating the following behaviors into their management and work style approach:

- Reinforce each team member's strengths and the value they bring to the team. On a regular basis, tell staff how and why you value their contributions. Treat everyone with respect. Respect their values.

- Value their opinions.

- Encourage people to share their ideas and opinions with one another.

- Be an active listener. Give staff plenty of time to share their ideas, frustrations and concerns.

- Greet staff at the start of each day.

- Encourage staff to get to know one another. Create opportunities for team members to get to know one another beyond who they are at work.

- Address each person's concerns and model supportive behavior during times of change or turbulence.

- Be supportive, and individualize your approach. Doing these things will help communicate that you are not just focused on the numbers, but that you genuinely care about each person and his or her success.

- Use the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment. Have one-on-one discussions with each person about his or her Clifton StrengthsFinder report. Share your strengths report. This is a great way to build trust. Talk about each team member's talents, strengths and valuable contributions.

- Maintain a calendar of important dates for each individual, such as family members' birthdays, work anniversaries and wedding anniversaries. Send notes to the family members on these occasions.

- Learn more about team members' lives and their interests. Connect with them on a more personal level.

Q07. At work, my opinions seem to count.

Hear Me

This element of engagement can be viewed as a staff member's "internal stock price." It measures the sense of value that staff put on their work and their organization.

Staff want to feel valued. They want to know that their input is important and that they are making a significant contribution and a difference to the environment in which they work. This feeling creates a greater sense of inclusion among workers and reinforces their sense of self-worth.

On average, fewer than one in five workers strongly agree that they receive meaningful feedback when they make a suggestion about improving performance. Improving the proportion of your staff who rate this item highly can have a substantial effect on patient satisfaction, productivity, employee retention, safety and profitability.
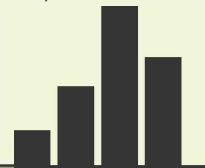
Asking for individuals' input and considering it can lead to better decision-making in two ways:

First, staff are typically closer to important matters than the leader is, so their ideas are often good ones.

Second, when people feel involved in making a decision, they typically have a greater sense of responsibility or psychological ownership of the process, which can mean better business results.

Nearly half of employees who say their opinions count at work also feel their current job brings out their most creative ideas. Among those who are neutral or negative on this element, **only 8%** feel their creativity is well-employed.

The ways in which a leader listens and processes a team member's thoughts and ideas shape whether they feel valued for their contributions.

Sometimes the ideas you hear won't be the best. But listening to and giving feedback on ideas helps staff feel like you heard them and considered their opinions. Appreciating and responding are what's important. It makes staff feel valued.

As a leader, you should routinely ask yourself:

- ✓ How do I show my appreciation for staff's opinions and ideas?
- ✓ What do I do with team memebers' ideas or opinions?
- ✓ How do I follow up on team members' opinions and ideas?
- ✓ How often do I ask how team members feel about their work?
- ✓ How am I making sure team members feel comfortable sharing their feedback or ideas with me?

Three Ways to Create a Culture of Idea Sharing

Accepting Be open to each team member's opinions and feedback.

Proactive Regularly contact others to get their opinions.

Responsive Provide feedback on opinions you solicited.

Creating a Greater Sense of Responsibility and Ownership

The best leaders are always listening to what's happening on the ground floor. Asking for staff's input is valuable because it shows staff that their leaders care about what they think. It promotes open, creative dialogue between leaders and staff. Asking for opinions also fuels new ideas that can positively influence business results.

Engaging Conversations

Staff engagement depends on the circulation of ideas and opinions that make the team more effective in meeting the demands before them. Discussing, refining and implementing new ideas is productive and invigorating. It builds staff's confidence in their roles, creates a sense of belonging, and helps staff see that their efforts can and do make the organization and everyone it provides services to better. Asking the following questions can help leaders ensure that staff feel like they count:

- What makes you feel valued here?

- How do you know your opinions matter?

- Who needs to hear your ideas?

- In the past six months, when have you felt your opinions mattered?

- Do you have any ideas or suggestions on how the team can improve the quality of service we provide to our internal partners and customers?

- Do we need to add quality checks? Are there areas in which you see risk of errors or mediocre performance?

- What is your best idea for improving our team?

- Are there areas in which you see room for improvement? How do you think we should fix these areas?

- Do you feel comfortable enough to tell it like it is? How can I make you feel more comfortable with sharing your thoughts and ideas?

Best Practices

The most effective leaders make staff feel like their opinions count at work by incorporating the following behaviors into their management and work style approach:

- Be open and receptive to feedback.

- Think of new ways to solicit feedback, opinions and ideas from team members.

- When a team member asks to talk about something, immediately schedule time to listen.

- Schedule regular times to talk with team members to specifically ask for their opinions.

- Follow up regularly with team members about their ideas, even if action did not occur.

- Provide open and honest feedback on team members' opinions and ideas.

- Advocate for team members' good ideas. Get others to consider their opinions and suggestions.

- Create a safe environment for ideas. Make sure every team member is comfortable enough to tell it like it is.

- Celebrate the implementation of staff-generated suggestions or ideas.

Q12. This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Challenge Me

The desire to learn and grow is a basic human need. One way staff can learn and grow is to find more efficient ways to do their jobs. The best teams are never quite satisfied with their work. They always strive to find better, more productive ways to work. And where there is growth, there is innovation.

Staff who have an opportunity to learn and grow at work are twice as likely as those on the other end of the scale to say they will spend their career with their company.

On average, business units in the top quartile of this element score 9% higher on customer engagement and loyalty measures and 10% higher on profitability metrics than business units in the bottom quartile.

Challenging employees to meet goals motivates higher performance. Teams that score high on this element of engagement produce more innovative ideas, build and maintain better patient relationships, and have higher financial metrics.

About half of employees in the typical workgroup Gallup has studied worldwide strongly agree that they have had opportunities at work to learn and grow in the past year.

When staff feel they are learning and growing, they work harder and more efficiently.

The most effective leaders continuously discuss progress and opportunities for growth and development for staff.

For many people, progress in a role distinguishes a career from employment that is "just a job." To improve and progress, staff need to feel someone or something is challenging them. As a leader, you should routinely ask yourself:

- ✓ How am I creating an environment in which my staff can grow and develop?
- ✓ What have I done in the last six months to help my team learn and grow?
- ✓ What are the staff's goals? Do I know them, and am I helping them actively achieve those goals?

Three Ways to Challenge Employees to Learn and Grow

Continuous An environment that encourages continuous learning

Expanding Short-term "stretch" goals that motivate staff to expand their current knowledge or skill set

Aspirational Career-oriented development plans that align with each person's strengths and aspirations

Learning, Developing and Growing

The best leaders know that an organization's growth depends on staff's capacity to learn, develop and grow. These leaders create a structure for learning and opportunities to align and challenge staff with new tasks. These opportunities encourage and motivate staff to develop and grow — sparking innovation and positive business results.

Engaging Conversations

People want to know that they are developing and progressing in life. Leaders can empower staff to feel that they have had a chance to grow at work by helping them identify learning opportunities and encouraging them to develop. The most effective leaders make time to discuss growth with staff by asking some of the following questions:

- Are there things you need to learn to do your job better?
- How can we build a team environment that emphasizes acquiring new knowledge?
- In what situations in the past six months have you felt that you were learning new things?
- What are you looking forward to in your job this year?
- What experiences are you challenging yourself with this year?
- What types of learning opportunities are you interested in?
- What goals do you have right now? How can I help you accomplish these goals?
- What was your most significant accomplishment in the past year? What was your most significant accomplishment since you have been here?

Best Practices

The best leaders create learning opportunities at the individual level. These leaders understand that learning and growing is a never-ending process and look for ways to align individuals' current capabilities with their long-term goals and aspirations. Leaders do this by incorporating the following behaviors into their management and work style approach:

- Invest time in getting to know team members' career goals and strengths to help match each one with the right opportunities to grow and develop.
- Involve the entire team in charting the team's completed learning outcomes. Identify individuals who are subject-matter experts whom others can call on to help answer questions.
- Consider partnering team members with complementary strengths to work on a task together. These partners might learn something new that they did not know before.
- Match a new team member with a veteran team member to help the new team member learn about the job more quickly and provide an opportunity for the veteran to take on a new role.
- Create personalized development paths with staff. Check in on their progress often and ask them what they are learning and how they are applying it to their roles.
- Help staff find opportunities to use their strengths and talents to meet the needs of their jobs and move forward in their careers.
- Create stretch goals for team members. These goals should involve acquiring new knowledge and skills that already align with team members' goals.