

Ask The Industry: 10 Surprising Trends In Employee Engagement

In this edition of 'Ask The Industry', we asked human resources experts from across the nation to share their best tips for increasing employee engagement.

Here's what they had to say...





1. Connect Employees To Larger Company Goals And Mission

John Moss, CEO at [English Blinds](#)

“We found employees who see a **connection** between the company’s vision and the work they do tend to feel more **engaged**. If their personal values and goals align with those of the company, they find their work more satisfying.”

Lisa Barrington, Founder and Principal at [Barrington Coaching](#)

“**Meaningfulness** – it’s about creating jobs that have a **direct connection** for the employee to the ultimate customer/client – ensuring the employee can see exactly how what they do helps the client – provides a service, creates a product, solves a problem, enhances the customer’s life, etc. When employees see how they are **helping others**, it brings meaning to the mundane part of their job. Sometimes the meaning creation has to be about how that employee helps other employees who ultimately serve this customer - but it’s still about how their work enables others.”

Karen Crone, CHRO at [Paycor](#)

“Employees are more engaged when they have **work that matters**. At Paycor, we help business leaders of small to midsize businesses create capacity to build a thriving business or organization. It’s easy for Paycor employees to see that they are supporting small businesses and allowing those business leaders to do what they are best at. One tip is making sure employees understand and **embrace the vision of the business** and how they uniquely contribute. At Paycor, we call this our ‘winning aspiration’. Better understanding of where and how we win creates room for autonomy and decision making, which employees crave.”

2. Solicit Employee Feedback And Involve Employees In Decisions

Rick Lepsinger, Managing Partner at [OnPoint Consulting](#)

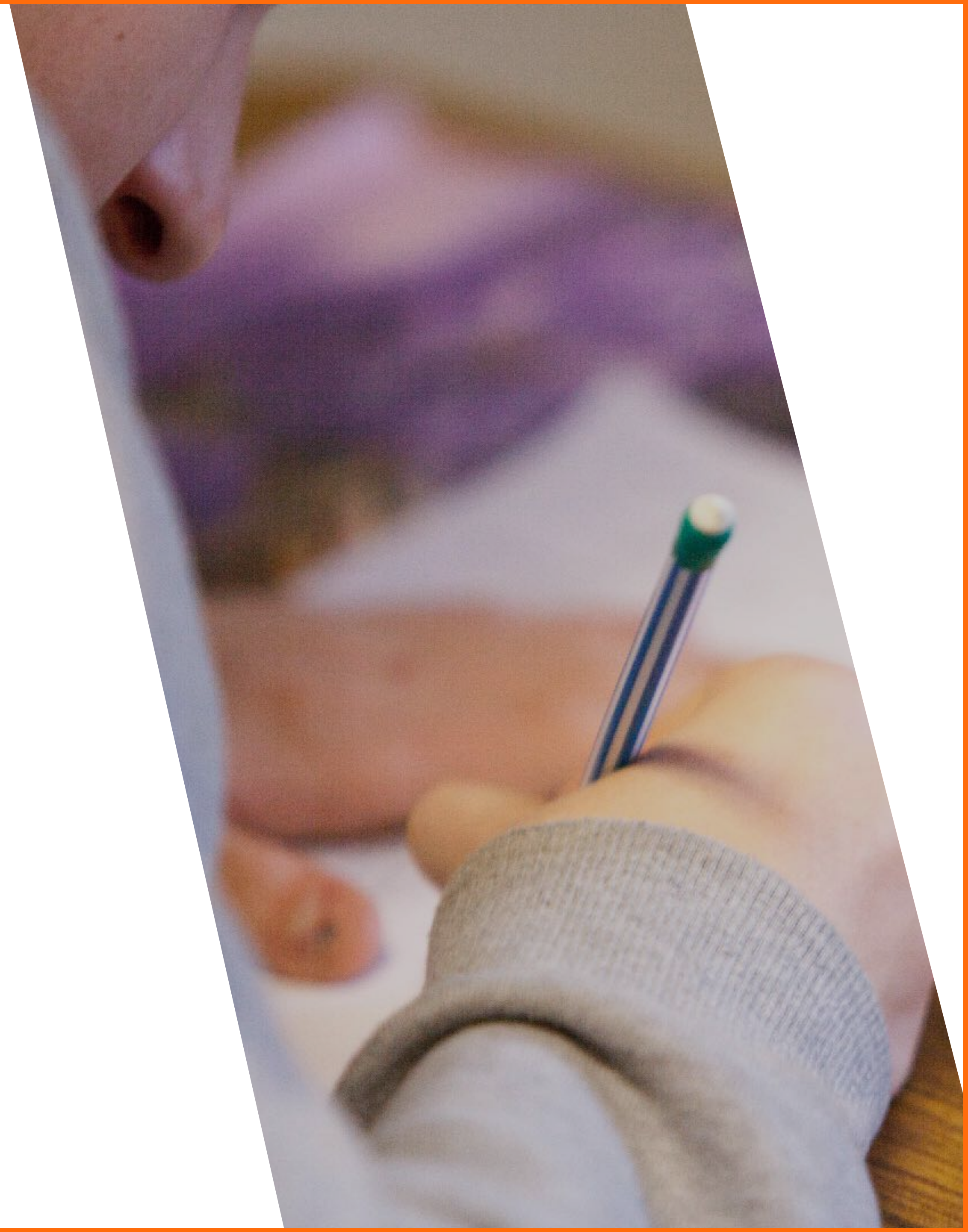
“Making employees a **part of the discussion** when it comes to decisions that affect them is a key part of improving employee engagement. Leaders can solicit employees for input about ways to improve the workplace or ideas of how they’d like to **develop their careers.**”

Mark LaScola, Managing Principal at [ON THE MARK](#)

“Employees are intrinsically motivated by their own sense of **power**, leading them to further engage when given more autonomy over their work. By giving employees an opportunity to be a part of the decision-making processes, they **feel higher ownership** over their work and as a result are committed through their contributions. The alternative is a parent-child relationship where management mutes the worker's voice, limits their power and stifles motivation to stay.”

John Moss, CEO at [English Blinds](#)

“It is important for employees to feel **suggestions, ideas and feedback** they put forward are taken seriously and acted upon; otherwise, they can become discouraged or even feel disengaged. Tools such as meetings with Q&A sessions, suggestion boxes and employee forums are great ways to provide opportunities to gather employees’ suggestions and feedback. When employees make the **connection between the visions and goals** of the company and what they do day-to-day, everybody wins.”



3. Hold Regular 1-on-1 Meetings

“With an extremely competitive job market, employees more than ever have options if they are not engaged at work and seeking new opportunities. One way for HR teams to get ahead of this is to have **regular check-ins with top talent** to ensure they’re engaged and working towards their goals. As with almost anything else, it’s easier to **retain star employees** than to try to replace them – particularly in an age where talent is a limited resource. So, communications are key to engagement and productivity.”

Carlos Castelán, Managing Director of [The Navio Group](#)

“After nine years of hard work to go from 0 to more than 100 employees, I can assure you that after having tried several strategies, the one that has given me the best result is 1-on-1 meetings. When I want to engage an employee we must build a long-term relationship. This relationship must be strong and personal. Since we began to implement these 1-on-1 meetings of each manager with their direct employees, **productivity in our company increased by 13.3%** and **retention increased by 21.9%** (yes, impressive!).”

Cristian Rennella, Co-Founder at [elMejorTrato.com](#)

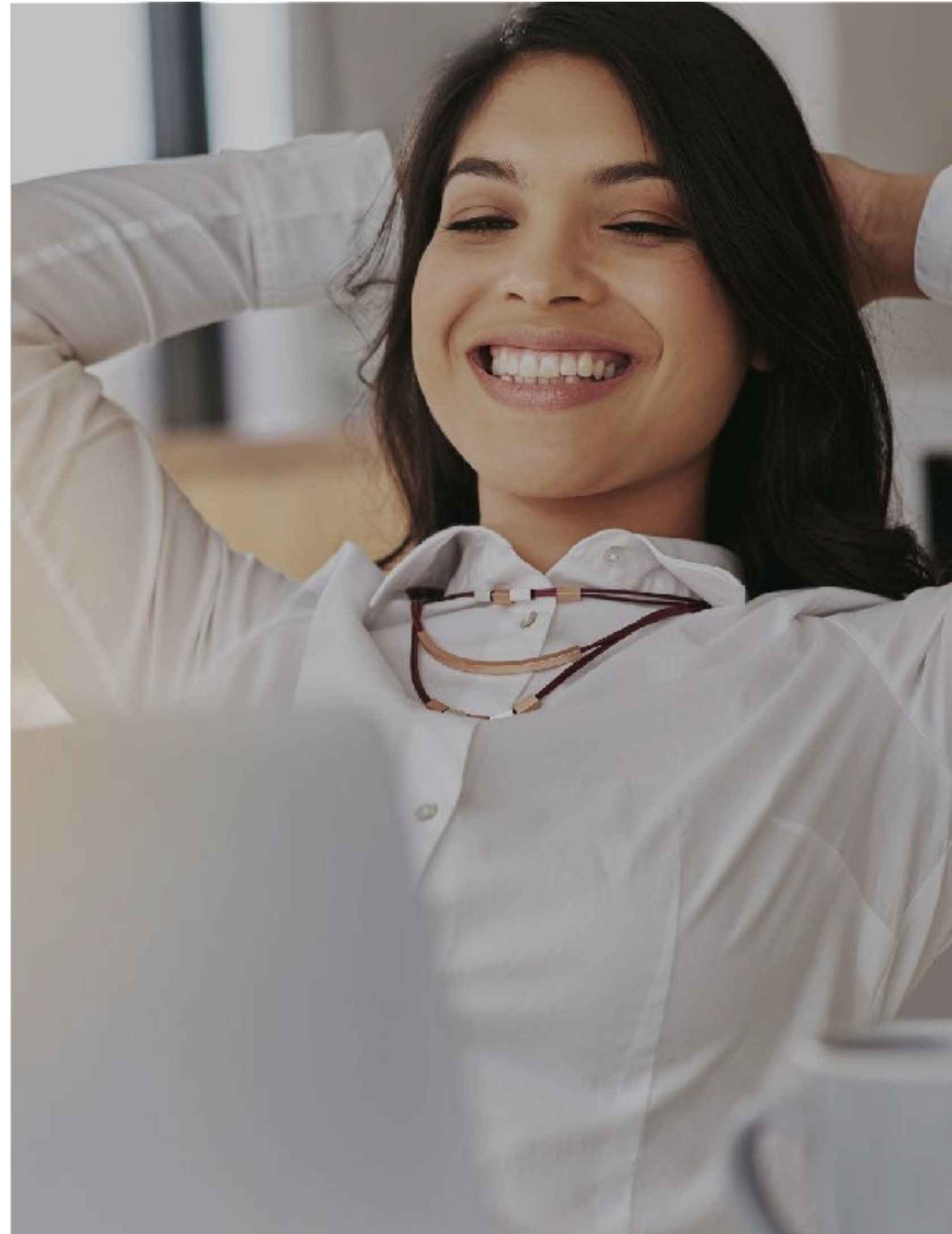
“Having weekly strategy meetings is vital to **securing your workforce**. We go over what work needs to be done. Then, how to do it. Finally, why it is important for our growth. Without these, there is a lot of uncertainty of what the purpose of their task is and how it will help the growth of the business.”

Joseph Robinson, Founder & Chief Consultant at [Green Flag Digital](#)





4. Encourage Employee Recognition



Stacey Scott, VP of People Operations at [Lola](#)

"Recognition by your co-workers is huge. We have something called 'Lola-Pops', which allows anyone to **recognize something special** someone else has done - it can be work-related or just an act of kindness. We read and share them at our monthly company meetings, and we give out different 'pops' like Tootsie Pops, Pop Rocks, etc."

Josh Kuehler, Analytics Manager at [FMG Leading](#)

"Acknowledge employees for doing good work. It's free and **employees** feel 'seen' by leaders, which is an underestimated driver of engagement."

Will Craig, CEO at [LeaseFetcher](#)

"A good leader will **shoulder the blame** when things go wrong and **share the praise** when things go well. Unfortunately, the rise of the middle manager has put a stop to this. Nowadays, managers will shirk responsibility and horde accolades in an attempt to climb the ladder. This is probably the easiest way to erode employee engagement as people see their contributions ignored and their mistakes highlighted. To promote engagement, encourage your managers to **acknowledge successes** in their team. It's one of the quickest ways to build trust and re-energize a flagging workplace."



5. Invest In Professional Development And Mentorship Programs

Greg Furstner, Senior VP of Human Resources at [SkillPath](#)

"Our employees attend at least **one seminar or conference** each year. Additionally, they have access to an online library with hundreds of webinars, on-demand videos, articles, training resources and more."

Jon Hayes, Marketer at [Authority Hacker](#)

"It's no secret that a **robust training and mentoring program** is pivotal to getting the most out of your staff. However, I do believe the way in which this is approached can make a huge difference. During the training process, I believe one of the key ways to engage my staff is to fully train them on how to troubleshoot and solve issues on their own. By **empowering them to find solutions** by themselves, not only does it increase the efficiency of our workflow, but also encourages them to think for themselves and come up with their own solutions, which is often highly satisfying for them and does a lot to help increase their engagement."

Dave Pople, President at [Psynet Group](#)

"What we found, and what is clearly supported by the research is that people will be more engaged if they feel like they are being paid fairly and are learning and/or growing as a person. This includes **great training opportunities** and **stretch assignments**."

6. Allow Time For Passion Projects And Innovation

Stephanie Troiano, Content Marketing Manager at [The Hire Talent](#)

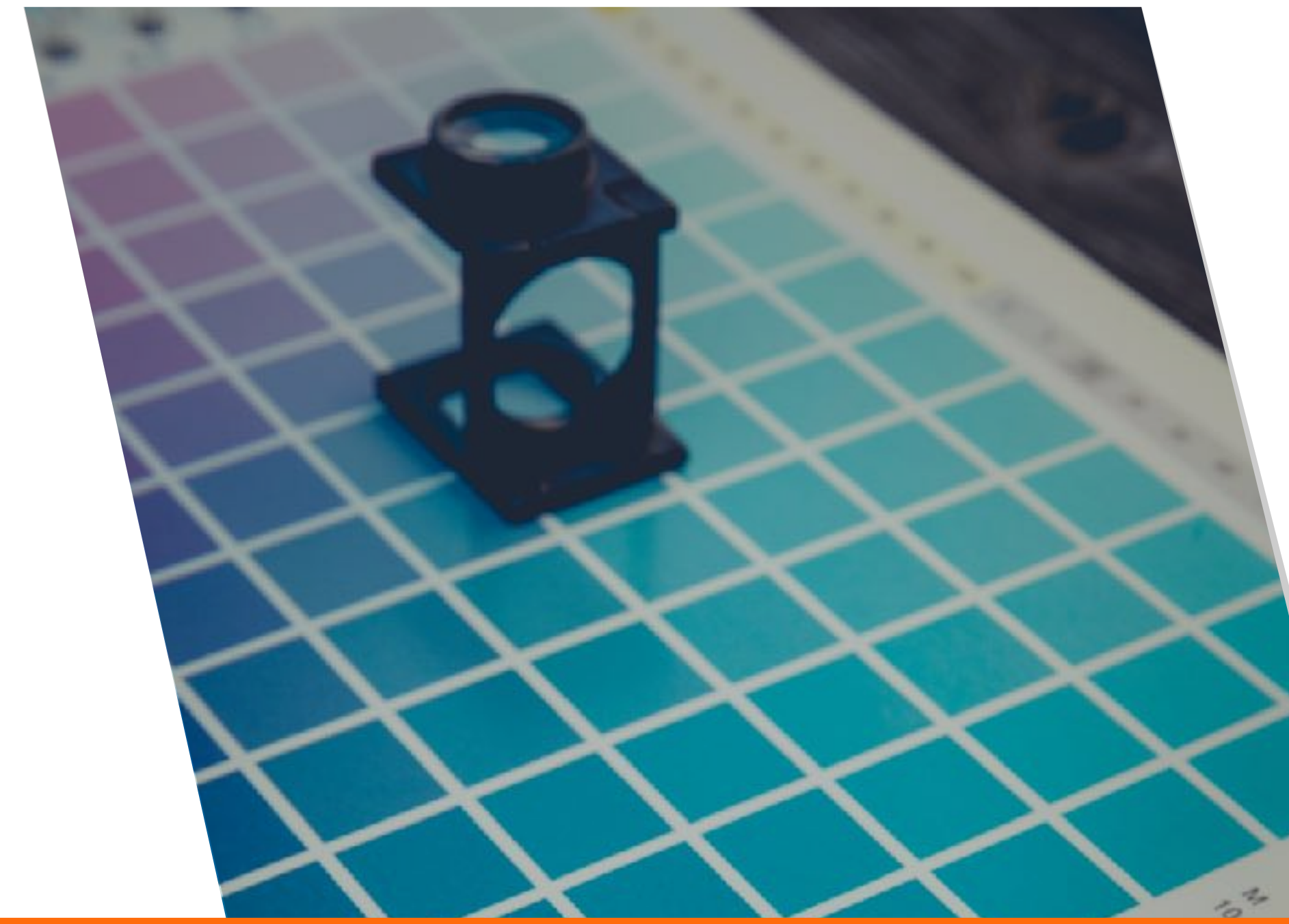
"A key to increasing engagement is allowing employees a bit of work time to focus on something they enjoy, like a passion project. **Something they're in charge of** and are interested in implementing or are driving forward that's not a part of the regular business activities. Making space for employees to work on something that they're in charge of and passionate about provides a **deeper sense of connection to the business**. It also highlights the point above and allows employees to feel like their work matters and is respected, even if it's something outside of the scope of day-to-day activities."

Ross Cohen, Co-Founder at [BeenVerified](#)

"A positive and motivational company culture will **inspire your employees** to work hard and grow with the company. Make it easy for your team to test out new ideas and innovate. We teach our employees to not be afraid or hesitant to **bring new business ideas to the table**. We also show our team members that there are very few obstacles if they want to try out a new project or method of doing something."

Adrian Ridner, CEO of [Study.com](#)

"Give employees time to **innovate**. It can be easy to get stuck in the daily grind. Having designated times to **test out new ideas** can inject more excitement into the workplace. At Study.com, we have two 'hackathons' a year where the entire company has 24 hours to work on any project they want that they think can add business value."





7. Embrace Transparency And Open Communication

“The employees’ **direct manager** is the most critical piece of employee engagement. Employees need a manager who is **transparent, caring** and holds the team to performance standards. When an employee has that type of manager, the engagement level can be through the roof! While free lunches can be nice, it doesn’t relieve the pain of a bad, uncaring manager.”

Keri Ohlrich, CEO
at [Abbracci Group](#)

“Clearly communicating expectations. Every employee should know what is expected of them. Great leaders are able to convey the when, what, why, where and how of tasks to employees so **no one feels lost or left behind** after a meeting.”

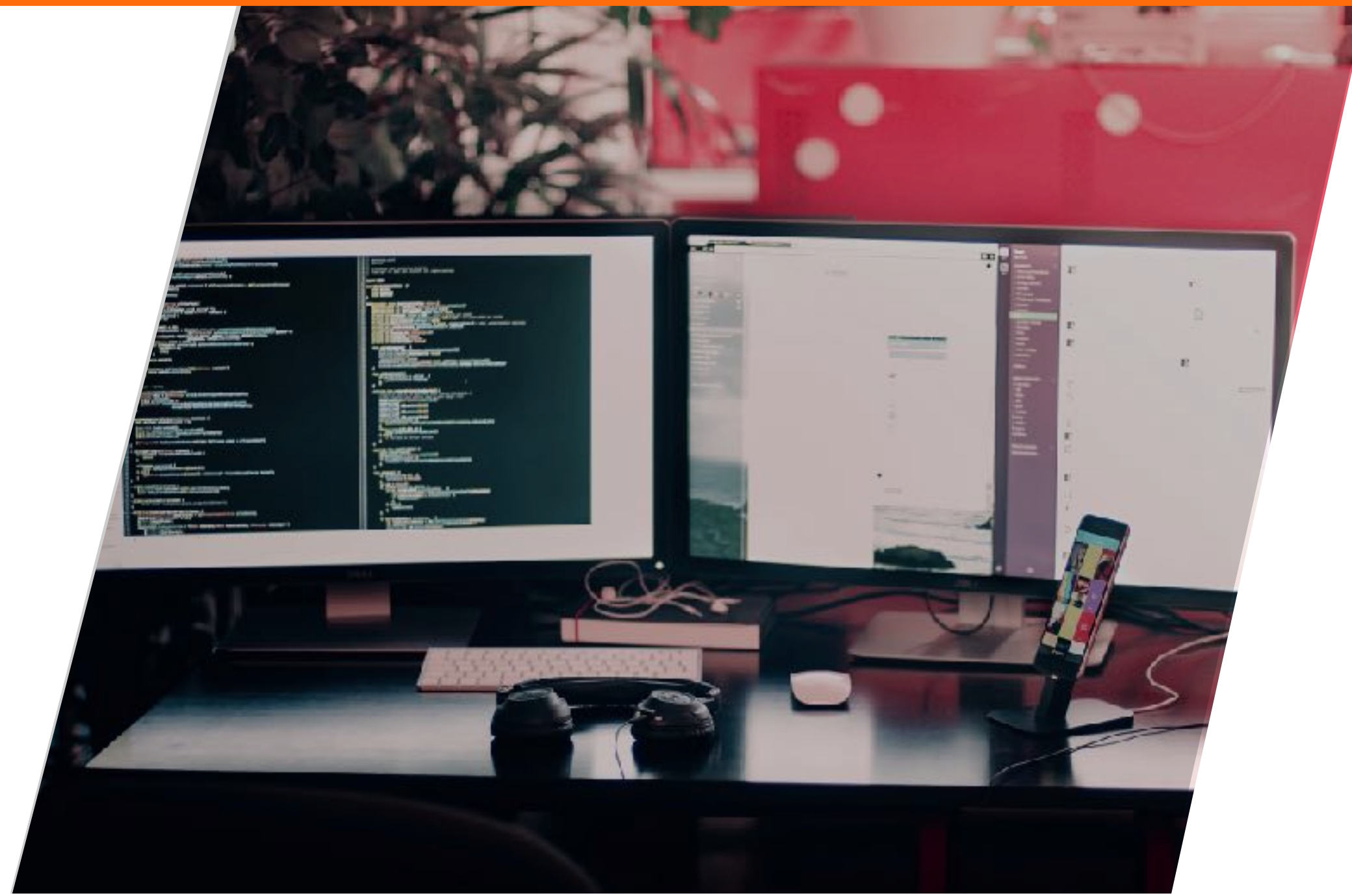
Rick Lepsinger, Managing Partner
at [OnPoint Consulting](#)

“From a communication perspective, companies that inform their employees on a need-to-know basis are going to have a hard time earning their employees' trust. Employees who don't trust their employers are never going to be as engaged or hardworking as those who do. With that in mind, I always try to be as transparent as possible with my employees. If there's good news to share, I share it, and if there's bad news to share, I share that, too. Employees can only be engaged **if they know what's going on**, so **never keep them in the dark** if you don't have to.”

Peter Yang, Co-Founder at [ResumeGo](#)

“We have both challenged and assisted our clients with implementing a **year-round employee communication strategy** to increase engagement. It’s simply impractical to expect employees to absorb and retain all of the detailed and complicated benefits information that is dropped on them once a year at open enrollment. Instead, repetitive and regular communication **sparks interest and understanding.**”

Heather Rabinowitz, Manager of
Employee Communications at
[Northwestern Benefit Corporation](#)



8. Empower Employees With The Tools They Need To Succeed

Andrew Rawson, Chief Learning Officer at [Traliant](#)

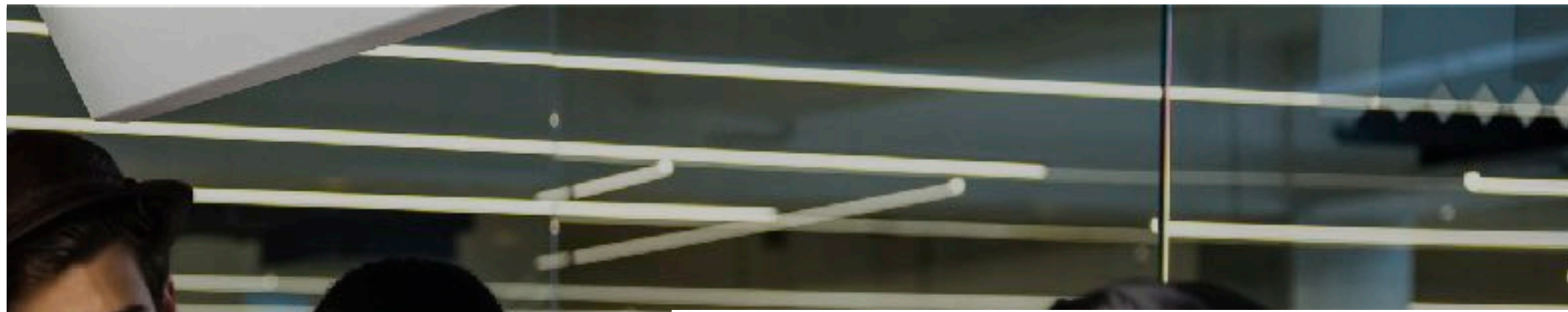
“Increasing employee engagement is one of the top ways to increase retention and overall productivity. One of the top tips to increase the engagement of your workforce is to make sure your employees **have access to the right tools** to get their job done more efficiently and without frustration.”

Anne Brackett, Chief Engagement Officer at [Strengths University](#)

“Make sure your employees have the tools they need to do their jobs effectively. If they’re always running out of inventory or can’t get the software upgrade they need, they’re going to be more likely to think, ‘well if they don’t care enough to get us the tools we need, why should I care.’ Even if they do care, **frustration will eventually wear that away.**”



9. Foster Positive Workplace Relationships



Karen Crone, CHRO at [Paycor](#)

"Employees are most engaged when they work around people who inspire, challenge and lift them. At Paycor, we have a high standard for hiring. One phrase we often use is, '**when you don't know, you know,**' meaning if you are unsure of a candidate, it probably means you can do better. One tip is to introduce more rigor into interviewing practices to get the best view of a candidate and to use interviewers from multiple disciplines who see the whole person, not just the most recent job or accomplishment."

Dave Popple, President at [Psynet Group](#)

"Another method we found, and what is clearly supported by the research is that people will be more engaged if they have positive relationships with co-workers, including friendships. This happens when companies allow **space for people to connect** and there are 'collisions' (spaces where people run into each other)."

Adrian Ridner, CEO of [Study.com](#)

"Employees need to know that they are truly valued. Having happy hours or company-wide lunches **shows you appreciate them**, gives employees a chance to get to know each other better and provides a nice break from the computer screen."

10. Use Tech to Track and Encourage Engagement

“Where I work, we have worked to build a culture that fosters employee engagement. A big part of that is using our own platform for **peer-to-peer recognition and rewards**. Every day, our employees send each other recognition for actions that are tied to our core values. This builds their engagement by building a **sense of connection** across teams and across the company, gives an organic way for employees to see their impact on the organization and fosters a regular sense of appreciation. Because recognition is public on the YouEarnedIt platform, it can turn into a way for everyone across the company to see what’s happening across departments.”

Kim Dawson, Director of Employee Experience at [YouEarnedIt](#)

“Social media is a great way to get a large workforce **involved in fun aspects** of their job. Instagram is a great tool to drive cohesion. Create a private account where only the administrator can allow members of the organization or company to follow and encourage engagement among the group. This will help a team become more engaged and feel valued.”

Dean Campos, Founder of [Clearlegend](#)

“Human Resources 4.0 contemplates new technologies and tools that can measure the employee's experience, analyzing their degree of engagement through the analysis of collaboration spaces that organizations enable (comments on corporate social networks) and analysis of survey results. In short, HR 4.0 makes use of new technologies to know the experience of employees in their workplace.”

Sophie Miles, CEO and Co-Founder at [CalculatorBuddy](#)



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