



# WHAT EMPLOYEES WANT FROM MANAGERS

Gallup first began measuring and reporting on U.S. workplace engagement in 2000 and has consistently found that less than one-third of Americans are engaged in their jobs in any given year. We define engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. But the majority of employees are indifferent, sleepwalking through their workday without regard for their performance or their organization's performance. As a result, vital economic influencers like growth and innovation have all but flatlined.

**One in two employees have left their job to get away from their manager.**

Gallup research shows that managers account for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores across business units. Given the troubling state of employee engagement in the U.S. today, it makes sense that most managers are not creating environments in which employees feel motivated or even comfortable. A Gallup study of 7,272 U.S. adults revealed that one in two had left their job to get away from their manager and improve their overall life at some point in their career. Having a bad manager is often a one-two punch: Employees feel miserable while at work, and that misery follows them home, compounding their stress and putting their well-being in peril.

But it is not enough to simply label a manager as “bad” or “good.” Organizations need to understand what managers are doing in the workplace to create or destroy engagement. In another study of 7,712 U.S. adults, Gallup asked respondents to rate their manager on specific behaviors. These behaviors — related to communication, performance management and strengths — strongly link to employee engagement and give organizations better insights into developing their managers and raising the overall level of performance of the business.

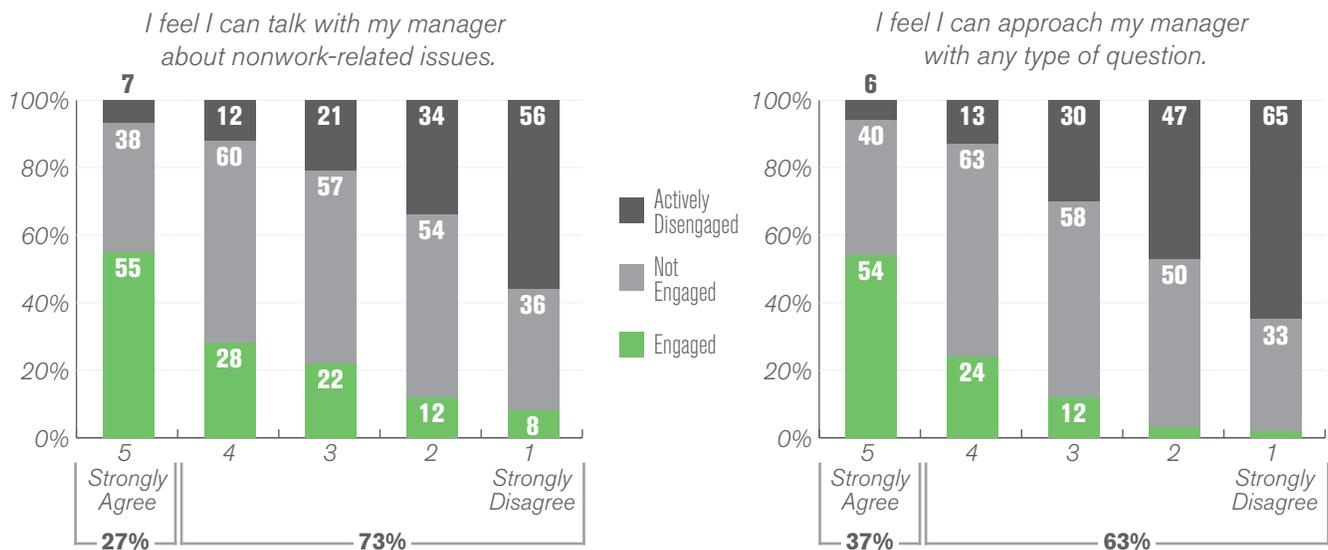
### RELIABLE AND MEANINGFUL COMMUNICATION

Communication is often the basis of any healthy relationship, including the one between an employee and his or her manager. Gallup has found that consistent communication — whether it occurs in person, over the phone or electronically — is connected to higher engagement. For example, employees whose managers hold regular meetings with them are almost three times as likely to be engaged as employees whose managers do not hold regular meetings with them.

The frequency of meetings is less important to employees than the fact that they happen at all. However, Gallup has also found that engagement is highest among employees who have some form (face-to-face, phone or electronic) of daily communication with their manager. And while all forms of communication are effective, managers who use a combination of face-to-face, phone and electronic communication are the most successful at engaging employees.

Employees value communication from their manager not just about their role and responsibilities, but also about what happens in their life outside of work. The Gallup study revealed that employees who feel as though their manager is invested in them as people are more likely to be engaged. Employees who give a 5 (on a 5-point scale, with 5 being the highest) to the statements, “I feel I can talk with my manager about nonwork-related issues” and “I feel I can approach my manager with any type of question” are more engaged than employees who give the same statements even a 4. While these findings are encouraging, the percentage of employees who actually give these statements a 5 is relatively low: 27% and 37%, respectively.

## EMPLOYEES WHOSE MANAGERS ARE OPEN AND APPROACHABLE ARE MORE ENGAGED



Managers who want to build stronger relationships with their employees should make regular meetings a priority, but they should also strive to communicate, in some way, with each team member every day. And this communication should not be limited to employees' work. The best managers make a concentrated effort to get to know their employees and help them feel comfortable talking about any subject, whether it is work related or not. A productive workplace is one in which people feel safe — safe enough to experiment, to challenge, to share information and to support one another. In this type of workplace, team members are prepared to give the manager and their organization the benefit of the doubt. But none of this can happen if employees do not feel cared about.

Great managers have the talent to motivate employees and build genuine relationships with them. Those who are not well-suited for the job will likely be uncomfortable with this “soft” aspect of management. But employees are people first, and they have an intrinsic need for bonding that does not automatically turn itself off between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. The best managers can understand and relate to their team members' inherently human motivations.

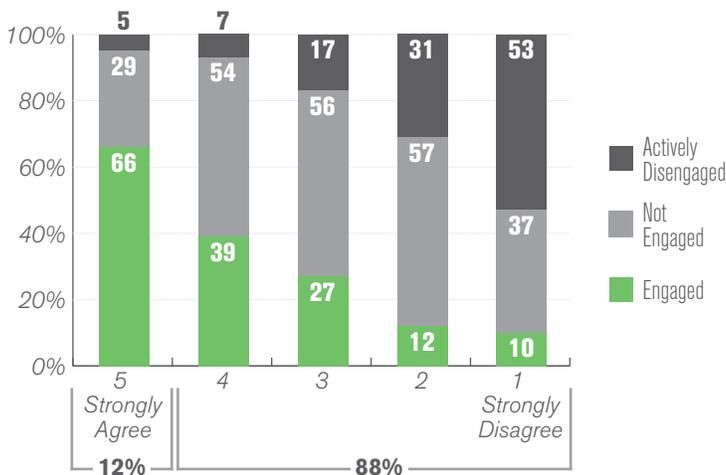
## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BEYOND ANNUAL REVIEWS

Performance management is often a source of great frustration for employees who do not clearly understand their goals or what is expected of them at work. They may feel conflicted about their duties and disconnected from the bigger picture. For these employees, annual reviews and developmental conversations feel forced and superficial, and it is impossible for them to think about next year's goals when they are not even sure what tomorrow will throw at them.

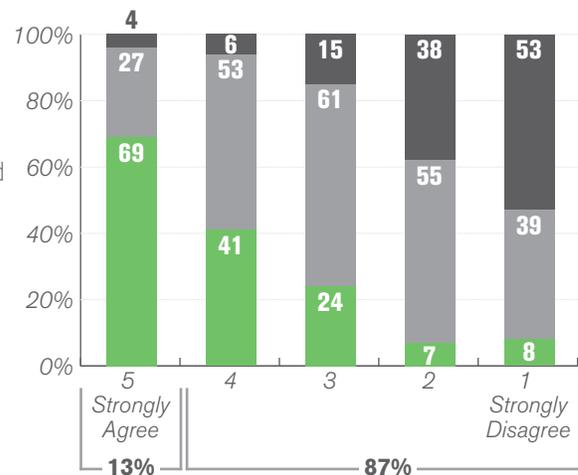
Yet, when performance management is done well, employees become more productive, profitable and creative contributors. Gallup has found that employees whose managers excel at performance management activities are more engaged than employees whose managers struggle with these same tasks. At least two-thirds of employees who “strongly agree” that their manager helps them set work priorities and performance goals are engaged, whereas the slight majority of employees who “strongly disagree” with the same sentiments are actively disengaged. Again, though, the actual percentage of employees who believe their manager is excelling at these tasks is low. Only 12% of employees strongly agree that their manager helps them set work priorities, and 13% strongly agree that their manager helps them set performance goals.

## EMPLOYEES WHOSE MANAGERS HELP THEM SET WORK PRIORITIES AND GOALS ARE MORE ENGAGED

*My manager helps me set work priorities.*



*My manager helps me set performance goals.*



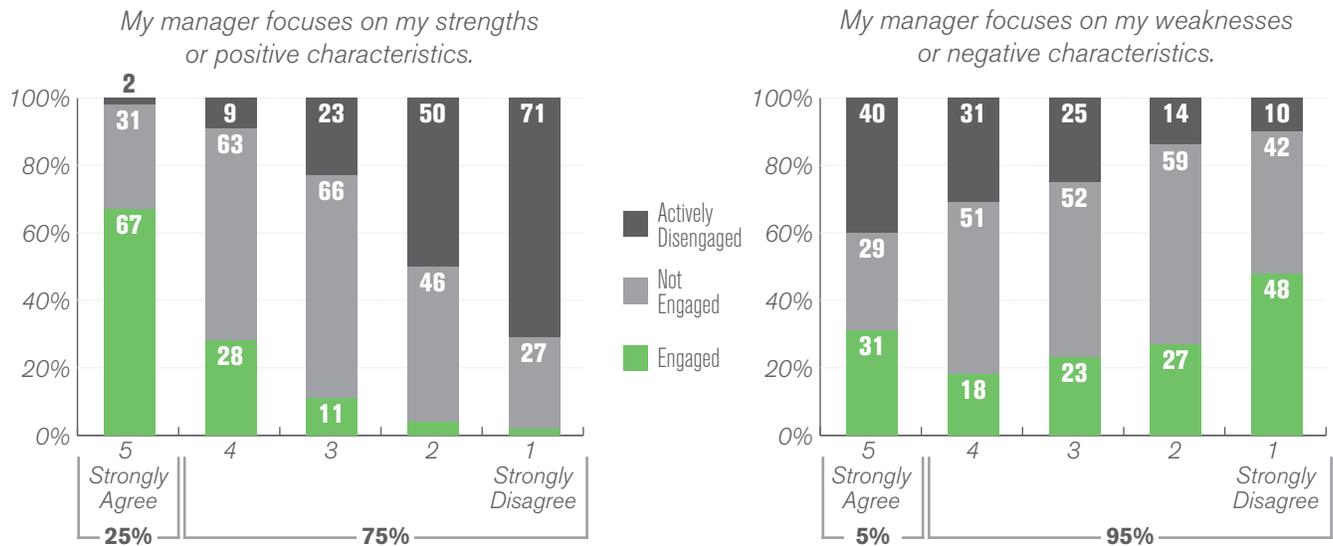
In our Q<sup>12</sup> research, Gallup has discovered that clarity of expectations is perhaps the most basic of employee needs and is vital to performance. Helping employees understand their responsibilities may seem like “Management 101,” but employees need more than a written job description to fully grasp their role. They need to completely comprehend what they should be doing and how their work fits in with everyone else’s work — especially when circumstances change. Great managers don’t just tell employees what’s expected of them and leave it at that; they frequently talk with employees about their responsibilities and progress. They don’t save those critical conversations for once-a-year performance reviews.

### STRENGTHS OVER WEAKNESSES

Gallup researchers have studied human behavior and strengths for decades and have discovered that building

employees’ strengths is a far more effective approach than trying to improve their weaknesses. A strengths-based culture is one in which employees learn their roles more quickly, produce more and significantly better work, stay with their company longer and are more engaged. In the current study, a vast majority (67%) of employees who strongly agree that their manager focuses on their strengths or positive characteristics are engaged, compared with 31% of employees who strongly agree that their manager focuses on their weaknesses or negative characteristics. Although strengths-based development works to engage employees, Gallup has discovered that just 25% of employees strongly agree that their manager focuses on their strengths or positive characteristics. A smaller percentage of employees, 5%, strongly agree that their manager focuses on their weaknesses or negative characteristics.

## EMPLOYEES WHOSE MANAGERS FOCUS ON THEIR STRENGTHS ARE MORE ENGAGED



When managers help employees grow and develop through their strengths, they are more than twice as likely to engage their team members. The most powerful benefit a manager can provide his or her employees is to place them in jobs that allow them to use the best of their natural talents as well as their skills and knowledge to build and apply strengths. G