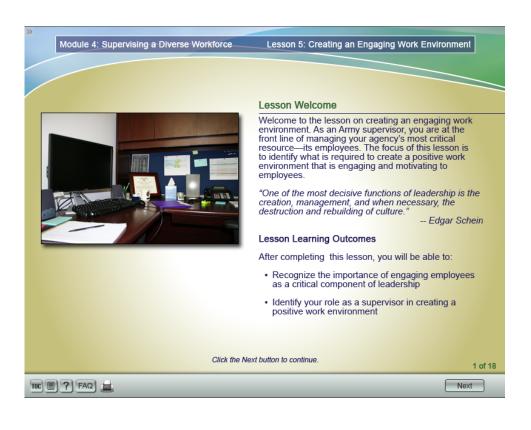
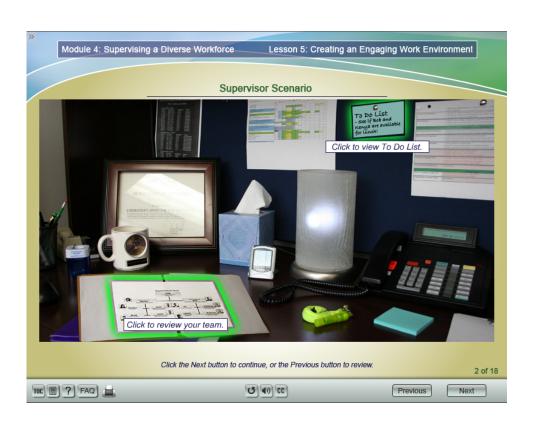
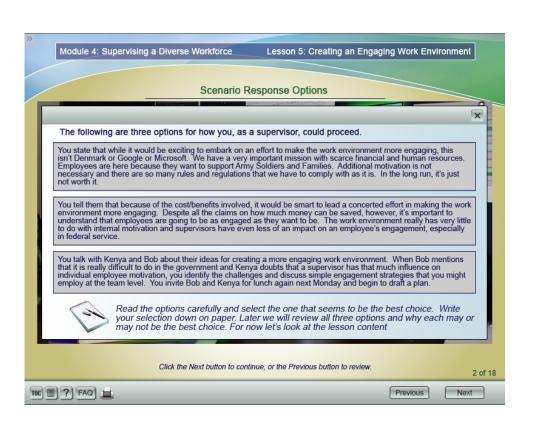
AMSC Supervisor Development Course Army Management Staff College, Fort Belvoir, VA Module 4: Supervising a Diverse Workforce Lesson 5: Creating an Engaging Work Environment

Summary of Comments on engaging_printable.pdf









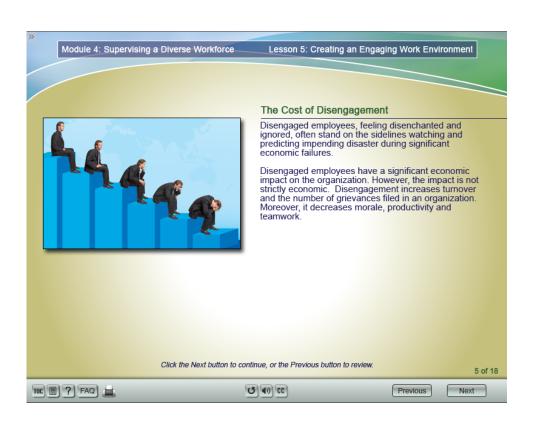


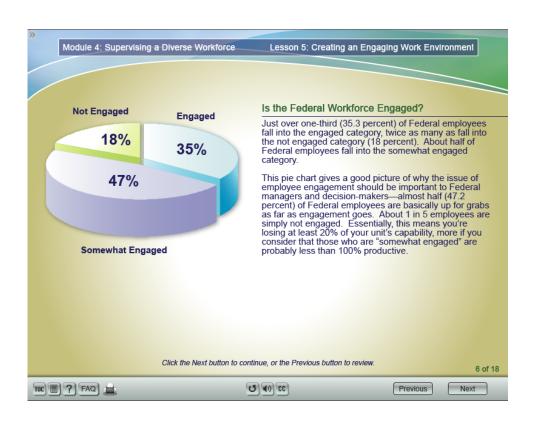


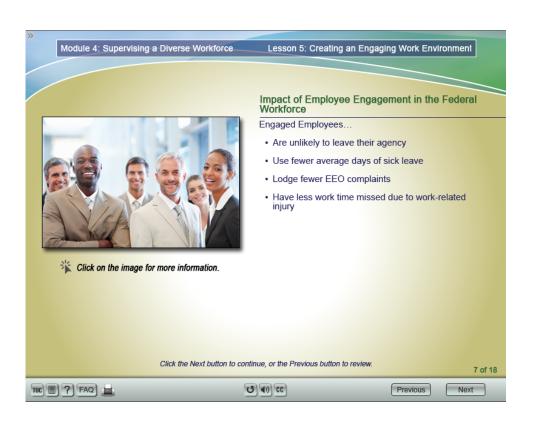
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On the rational side, it is largely about getting enough compensation and development opportunities to make it worth your while. Emotional commitment is the ever-elusive love of your job and love of your manager and organization.

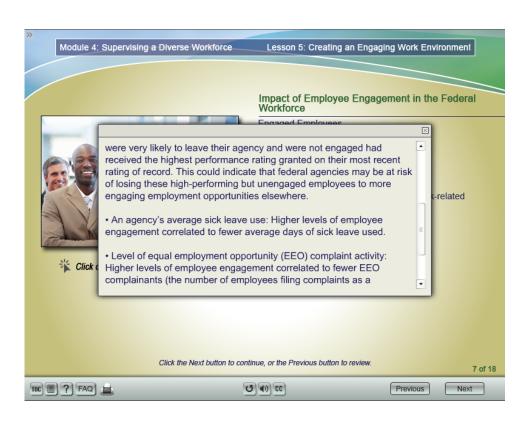
Engaged employees identify with the organization, embrace its values and commit discretionary effort to help make the organization successful, where discretionary effort is described as the difference in the level of effort one is capable of bringing to an activity or a task, and the effort required only to get by or make do.

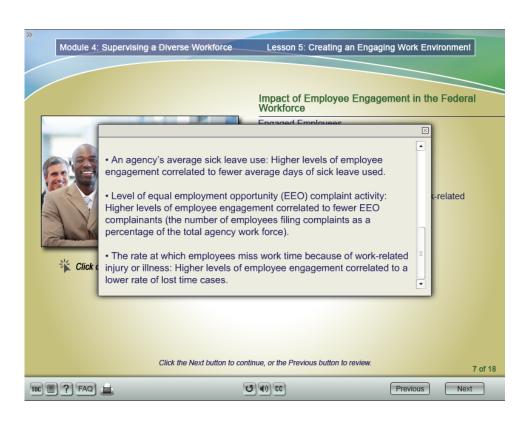


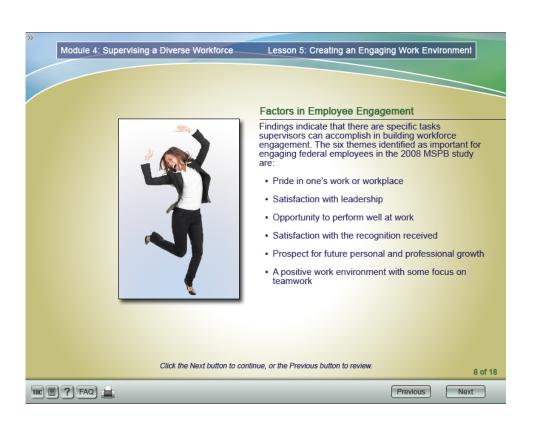






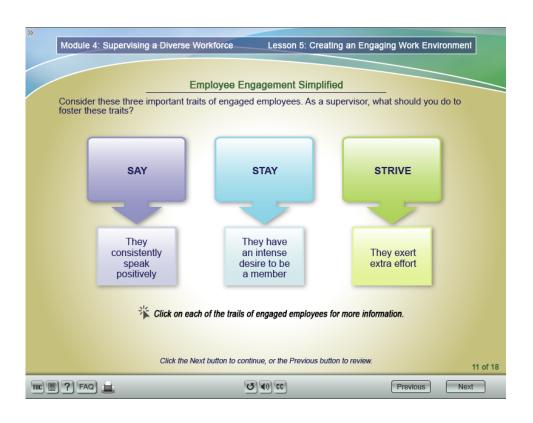


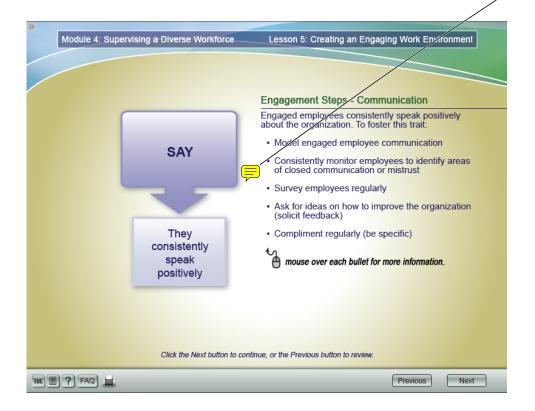












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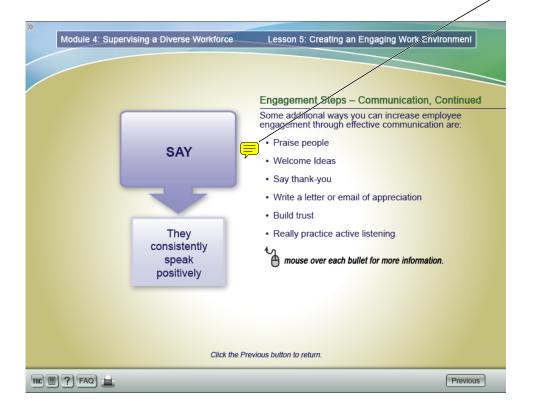
Communication is key in increasing employee engagement. If you want employees to consistently speak positively about the organization, then you, as a supervisor should model that same behavior.

Consistently monitoring employees to identify when they are or aren't giving you information and finding out why the communication channels may be blocked is also key in helping employees become more engaged.

Regularly surveying employees is another means for identifying gaps in communication that lead to disengagement. These surveys do not have to be formal, but can easily be conducted in an informal manner.

Soliciting feedback and asking for ideas on how to improve the organization can go a long way to enhancing employee communication. A critical factor here is actually implementing suggestions so that employees see that there is action associated with the ideas you are listening to.

Compliment employees regularly and do so in specific ways. There is a big difference in a generic, "good job" vs. "your contribution to the X-project was invaluable. Your recommendations helped to ensure that it was completed in time."



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Look to "catch people doing it right"

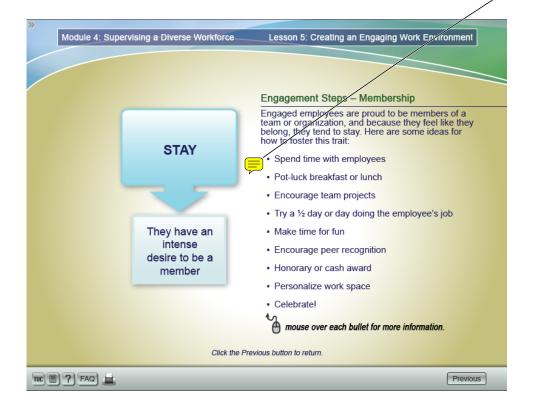
Employee morale improves when people feel they are valued

Even when there's no money that changes hands, it can be extremely rewarding for an employee to know that the supervisor appreciates the work they are doing

This type of communication carries a great deal of weight in exchange for very little effort on the part of the supervisor

Maintain confidential communication

Be a good listener and allow employees to vent and express their concerns



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Simply spending time together with the opportunity to say thanks and to exchange ideas is valuable

Have a pot-luck breakfast or lunch. This is something that everyone can participate in and enjoy. The cost is manageable and it provides an opportunity for some enjoyable interaction

Encourage groups to work together in small teams to accomplish their tasks.

Ensure that you spend a day or ½ day doing the employee's job (it will give you a new perspective)

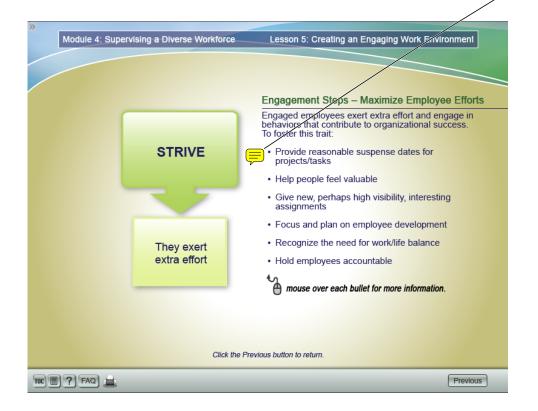
Make time for fun. Incorporating some fun into your workday is a terrific morale booster

Encourage peer recognition. "People like to be recognized personally by their peers"

Remember to use the recognition mechanisms available to you as a supervisor

Encourage people to 'decorate' or personalize their working space – people perform better in comfortable surroundings

Celebrate peoples birthdays. Empower managers to 'do something different' for each person, help them feel special.



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Provide reasonable suspense dates and ask for regular updates on progress toward a project. Provide feedback and constructive guidance throughout the process, rather than solely at the end.

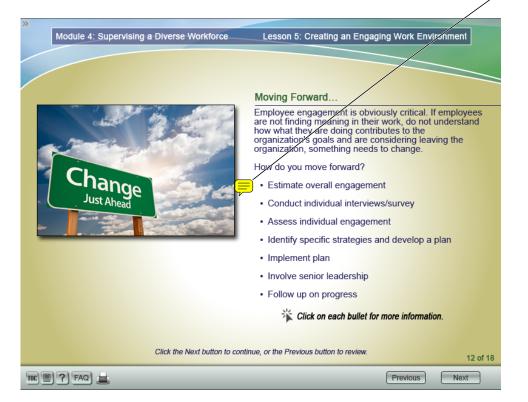
Talk with employees about the types of projects, training, or experiences they would like to have.

The key here is to make sure it's something interesting to the employee. Sometimes all that's needed to boost morale is a little bit of variety and a change of pace

Create a development plan that build extra competence in employees and positions them for increased responsibility and send them to training regularly that helps them grow toward those competencies

Recognize that employees can't give 100% to the organization all the time. Acknowledge and encourage a work/life balance.

Ensure that you hold individuals accountable for the accomplishment of their duties. When an individual is completely disengaged, it is easy to just ignore the behavior, but it is difficult for employees who are constantly going 'above and beyond' to see those doing the bare minimum receive the same performance ratings. Ensure that the expectation is established that you expect employees to work together and be engaged.



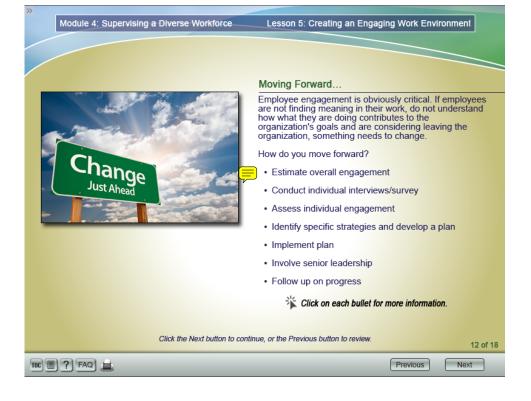
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Begin by estimating the levels of engagement (by percentage) of the employees in your organization. This will help you assess where you see your organization and also help compare your estimates with the actual survey data.

Get input from your people. They know what's contributing to the low engagement and have good ideas about how to fix it. They just need to be asked – in the right way. You need to decide whether these will be casual conversations or more formal interviews. For interviews with employees about a sensitive subject such as engagement, you may need an outside consultant that employees feel they can trust to preserve their confidentiality. After all, how honest would you be about your intent-to-stay at your organization if you knew the interviewer represented the supervisor? You need a skilled interviewer who knows how to help employees speak openly while obtaining the input you need to move forward. In fact, many times the benefits of the interviews begin as soon as discussions are being scheduled. Again and again employees will say, "I'm impressed that they've asked you to talk with us. That tells me they do care." Of course, the interviews alone won't suffice. It's critical to acknowledge and follow up on identified issues. Failure to do so could lower morale even further. Assess individual engagement based upon the discussion/interview/survey results. As you seek to understand why employees are feeling so negative, you may learn about people and actions that make you angry and upset. Resist the temptation to confront individuals about specific events. That kind of confrontation will lead to a backlash of blame that will only make employees reticent about speaking up in the future. Instead, focus on what about your culture is spawning negative behavior. Address the cause to enable improvement. Don't get hung up on survey benchmarks. Your organization is unique – with its own culture, strategy and goals. If your employee survey results indicate a pattern of low satisfaction levels, you know there is a need for improvement. Review your survey results yourself and with senior leaders - the goal is to understand the main themes, identify the key strengths of your organization and decide the primary opportunities for improvement. Be honest about the findings with employees and be straightforward. Employees know what they told the interviewer and if important issues are omitted from what is shared with them or packaged in a cutesy way, they will know it and distrust the organization. Obviously, this will not help improve engagement. It's important to candidly report the key issues that emerge and then develop and announce an action plan to make improvements.

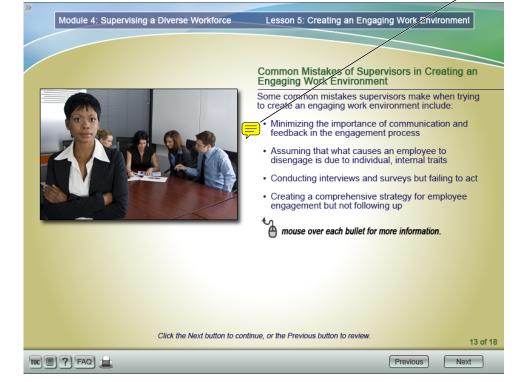
Identify specific strategies and begin formulating a solid plan for addressing the specific elements of employee engagement in your organization. After the survey findings are in, and employees are interviewed, the hard part really begins. It's critical to make some

Comments from page 22 continued on next page



changes. Does this sound obvious? Unfortunately, there are organizations that, upon completion of the research and identification of interventions, do not proceed with the most difficult part – implementing change. Some companies make plans to re-survey their employees one year after the original survey to gauge improvement, even though they have done nothing differently since the original survey. It is a recipe for disaster. If an organization has identified engagement issues after a baseline survey and does nothing about them, conditions will definitely be worse one year later. While sharing the survey findings with employees is an important step in the process, it is not enough on its own. It is absolutely critical to commit to making changes and then to proceed with implementation before any follow-up research is conducted. Involve senior leadership in the process. Engagement is a serious business. This is one of those subjects that employees need to hear about from leadership. Leaders need to encourage employees to participate in the research. Leaders need to communicate research findings. And leaders need to wholeheartedly endorse and participate in interventions.

After plans have been implemented, conduct follow-up research to gauge progress. Allow a year to 18 months for change to be effective, and then re-survey employees and conduct interviews for further depth. This may seem like a significant time period to wait for results, however, change in organizations (particularly federal organizations) can be somewhat slow, particularly as these changes may alter the culture of the organization.



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It is important to communicate to employees that you are trying to improve the workplace and then actually follow through. Walking the walk is important but so is talking the talk.

Another common mistake supervisor's make in creating an engaging work environment is to assume that what causes an employee to disengage is due to individual, internal traits. It is far easier to assign blame to the disengaged employee rather than identify what might be wrong in the organization that may be causing the disengagement.

Research and first-hand experience reveals that after an employee survey has been conducted, employees are much more interested in SEEING action taken than they are in hearing the results of the survey. In short: Employee surveys have little or no value if nothing is done to make improvements at the organization -- which is why effective action planning is a critical component of successful employee surveys.

Finally, a common supervisor mistake is starting out strong by creating a comprehensive strategy for employee engagement, but then not doing proper follow-up or follow-through.

