RewardGateway
the employee engagement people

Employee Engagement for Today's Workforce

Navigating the intersection between people, purpose and platform

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Introduction

Hi,

Something has happened to me, and if you're reading this eBook, it's likely happened to you, too. In what seemed like the blink of an eye, **how we engage employees** has completely changed. Not even 15 years ago, some of the largest social platforms – LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, to name a few – were nowhere to be found. And now, as we navigate a new landscape of how people communicate, much less how we communicate with our employees, one thing is clear: **We're all falling behind.**

As HR professionals or engagement leaders, it can be scary to try new things. And so we rely on pen and paper, static intranets or the one-off email blast to get our messages across. And it's not working. It's time to cross over into this unknown world, and I'm here to help. Working with more than 1,700 companies has taught us that to get ahead of your competition and foster an engaged workforce, you've got to rebel a little. OK, sometimes a lot. We'll walk you through:

- **The reasons employee engagement has drastically changed.**

- **Three key elements of employee engagement strategy: Open & Honest Communication, Purpose, Mission & Values and Recognition.**

- **How you can adapt to the new landscape with a renewed focus on connecting your people to your purpose.**

- **How to stand out to your employees using new employee engagement methods.**

I hope you find this eBook full of useful information to help you figure out which turn to take next, and the breadcrumbs necessary to navigate through the new maze of employee engagement, communications and recognition.

I'll see you at the finish line,

Debra Corey
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The New Landscape of Employee Engagement

You're likely reading this guide because you've noticed a change. One day, all of a sudden, your employees started ignoring you. Or worse, they've left you.

Why did we start to lose this connection with our people? I've got one word for you: **Disengagement.**

The moment you stop working to engage your most important asset – your people – is the moment your organization starts to fall behind.

At this rate, it will take almost 50 years to close the employee engagement gap, which is costing us over $5B a year. There are many ways to begin closing this gap, 10 of which we talk about in our strategic model for employee engagement, the Engagement Bridge™, but for now, I want to talk about how two critical factors that have led to the predicament we're in with a state of seemingly permanent disengagement: **Motivation** and **Technology**.
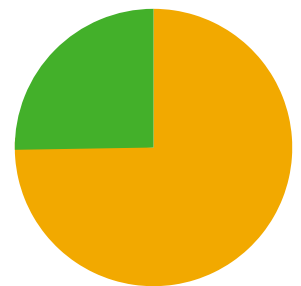
- 71% of leaders say employee engagement is critical

- 24% of the same leaders say their workforce is engaged

We have a 47% gap between what leaders want and what they're getting.

At best, there is a 1% increase in employee engagement per year.

(Source: Harvard Business Review)

Employee motivation drivers changed. Employers didn't.

In the past, employees may have been motivated by one thing, and one thing only: A paycheck. Today, while pay still remains important, employee motivations and therefore reasons for engagement have also changed.

And what are the leading factors that motivate today's workforce?

- **Radical transparency.**

- **Working for purpose.**
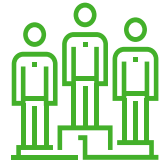
- **Magnifying individual impact.**
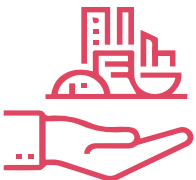
Radical transparency.

Gone are the days of closed-door meetings and hushed whispers as an employee "finds a new opportunity outside of the company." Instead, employees are looking for companies who are transparent from the top-down, so each and every employee understands what is happening with the business, both good and bad. The more informed an employee feels, the more trust is established among employer and employees.

Working for purpose.

As mentioned, workers are no longer motivated by solely money. Knowing how an organization helps the greater good and understanding the strategic direction of a business creates a more engaging environment, where employees *will* and *want* to work efficiently and innovate for the better of the organization.

Magnifying individual impact.

Each and every job within the company is important. That's what we want our employees to feel, right? Unfortunately, many employees don't understand how their individual contributions — whether that's data input, field work, client support or other tasks – fit in with their company's overall purpose.

Recent research proved that **93% of employers** say it's critical to the success of their business that employees understand their mission.

(Source: Reward Gateway global survey, 2018)

A key way to amplify a person's individual contributions is through recognition — motivating employees to live the company's values and add to the mission and purpose of the business can help them understand not only your company's "why," but also theirs.

This all starts with the knowledge of purpose: If employees don't understand their company's very mission statement, how are they supposed to understand how their day-to-day is helping, and perhaps even more importantly, how can they feel empowered to make a difference?

Let's make the world a better place to work
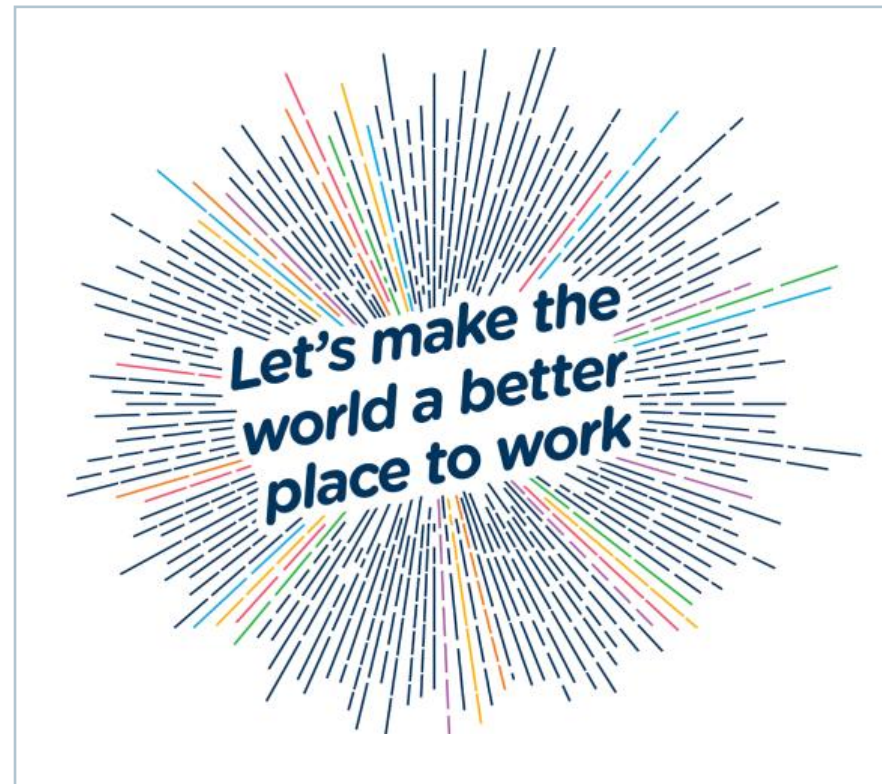
Reward Gateway's mission statement.

Finding alignment in employee engagement

While employee motivators have changed, so have employer desires. Companies want to better attract, engage and retain their people for three key reasons:

1. Engaged employees **make better decisions** for their companies and clients because they understand more.

2. Engaged employees **are more productive** because they like or love what they are doing.

3. Engaged employees **innovate more** because they deeply want their organization to succeed.

And yet, even though employers seemingly desire the same things their employees do, employees feel that their business may just be "talking the talk," as they say. Consider:

94% of employees believe it's **important to feel personally aligned** with their organization's mission and values.

Yet less than half of employees **do not feel personally aligned** with their company's mission (**41%**) and values (**49%**).

(Source: Reward Gateway global survey, 2018)

Multiple studies show that companies with engaged workforces outperform their peers in stock market returns by over 2x. Engaged employees build better, stronger, more resilient organizations. The question isn't "why employee engagement?" but rather, **"why aren't employers doing anything about it"?**

Technology is moving faster. And employers are behind.

When you woke up this morning, you may have turned the alarm off on your phone, scanned through the news headlines of the day and bookmarked a couple of webpages to check out on your commute into the office, all before you even got out of bed.

When you got to the office, you turned on your laptop, slogged through your morning emails and all the while, your phone was likely buzzing with messages and notifications from Facebook or LinkedIn. Dozens, maybe hundreds of emails and messages were deleted, ignored, forgotten or unanswered.

If that's the case for you, why, as employers, are we thinking that these old-school methods of communications are going to break through to our employees, who are often fielding the same mass message minefield as you?

The simple answer is we can't.

Employees, like you and me, want to be engaged at work like we are in our personal lives. We crave real-time communication. We're digitally social, attached to our phones and desire information on-the-go, accessible when and where we want it.

All our employer-to-employee information has to adapt to this new landscape of not only *employee* communications, but communications in general.

With real-time access, though, comes responsibility. The information we deliver must be engaging and relevant to them as we don't want our employees to feel like they are wasting time checking their phones outside of the office.

Just as employee motivation has changed, an *engaged* employee's connection to their employer has shifted. Instead of work-life balance, where employees are encouraged to work their 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. shift and go home and shut off, we've shifted to work-life *integration*, where employers trust employees to make their own schedules to work efficiently and effectively.

Recent research from the Society of Human Resources (SHRM) shows that **56%** of employers offer the option to use flexible work arrangements.

It's time to leave the tools of the past behind, and usher in a new era of employee engagement which motivates and inspires.

And that means receiving information on their own time, and their own schedule — some might prefer reading company updates on their morning commute, others might log in during a 2 p.m. snack break and others might browse right before going to bed at 11 p.m.

But why should employees bother checking in? It all leads back to creating an engaged workforce. Your employees won't *care* about work unless they *love* work.

Fortunately, for employers working to improve their employee engagement strategy, that's what we're aiming for — connecting our employees

to the company's mission, purpose and values in ways that matter.

Integrating recognition for upholding purpose, mission and values and transparently communicating your company's "Why" are key elements to building engagement.

By embracing communication and recognition so it feels natural and normal to employees' you can drive positive change in your organization.
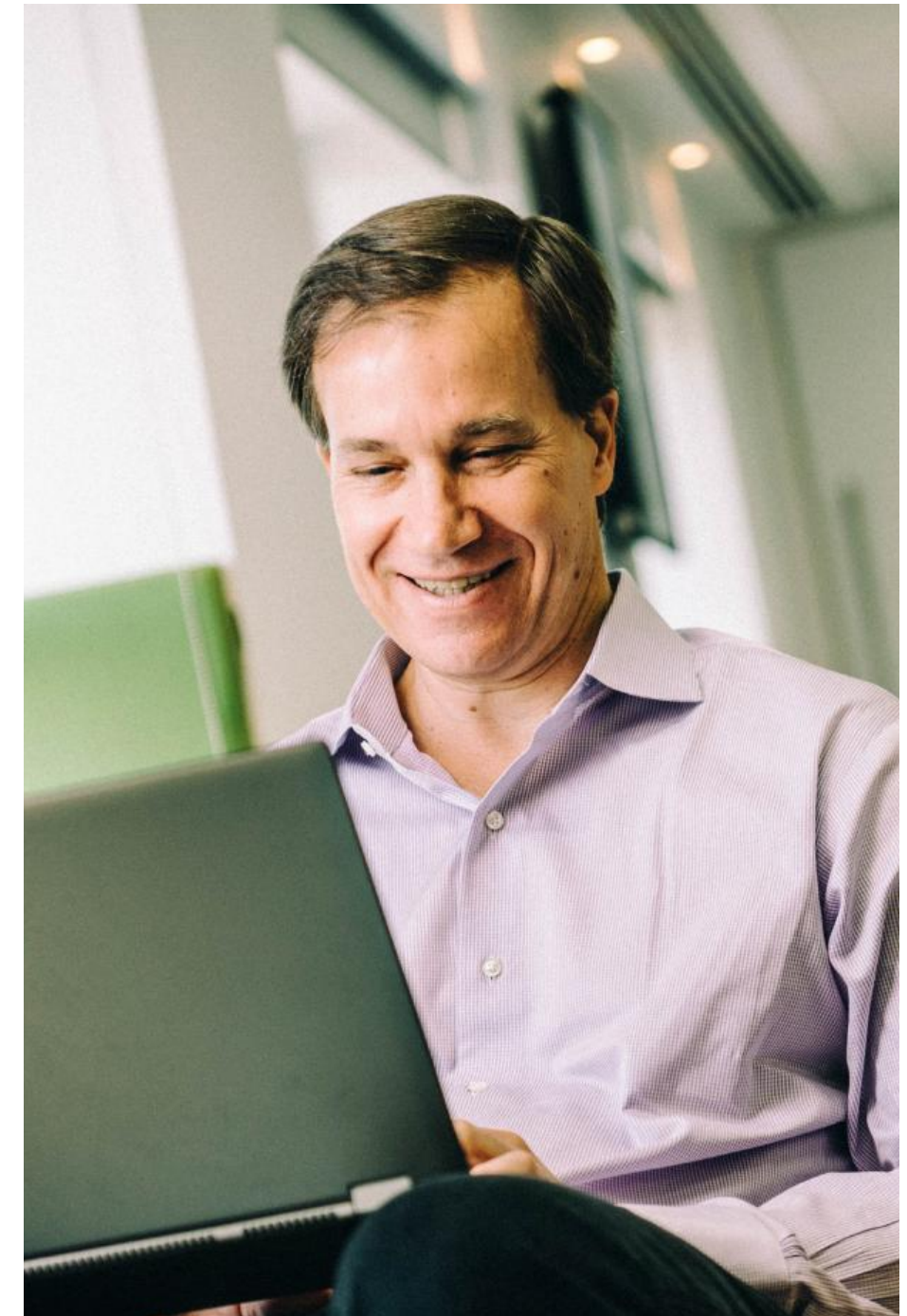
Three Key Elements of Employee Engagement Strategy
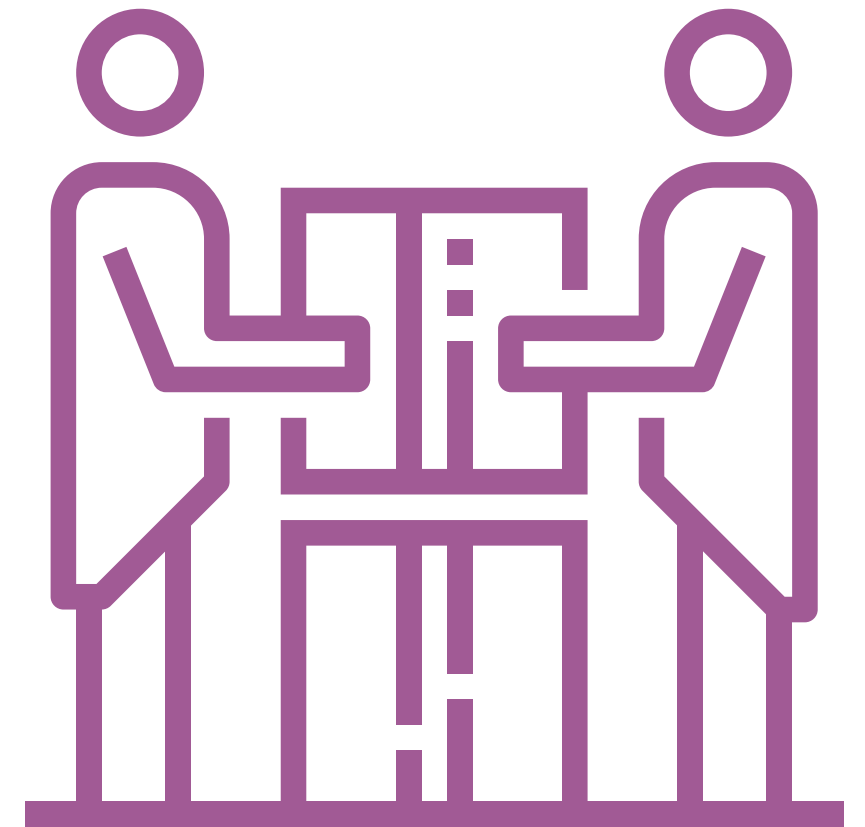
The Engagement Bridge™: 10 elements to improving employee engagement

As I've mentioned, at Reward Gateway, we've used our 10-element strategic model to employee engagement to help more than 1,700 companies boost engagement at their organizations. We often start our conversations with what I'd consider the backbones of the Bridge™: **Open & Honest Communication** and **Purpose, Mission & Values**.

Without these two, your engagement strategy is only relying on tactics that aren't core to an engaged workforce.

Open & Honest Communication

This is the foundation of the Engagement Bridge™ — creating an open and honest culture is incredibly important. What we mean by this is building an open and transparent communications culture, so your people understand the "why" behind your decisions, they understand "how" it will impact them, you've created two-way feedback routes and you've fostered an environment where your people trust your decision and your leadership.

Purpose, Mission and Values

Are you giving your employees something bigger to work towards, and do they understand your organization's contribution to both your industry and society? Your purpose, mission and values are your guiding light. They help with strategy, decision-making and employee behaviors to lead the company to greater success.

The right kind of recognition program builds on the backbones of the Bridge™ by fostering a culture of continuous recognition that recognizes employees for significant contributions toward a company's purpose, while demonstrating values.

Four MUSTs for employee recognition success

Make it **Meaningful**, make it **Unified**, shine a **Spotlight** on it … and make it **Timely**. Here's a little more on your four MUST-haves:

M

Meaningful
Make moments of recognition matter by making them detailed and meaningful. Why does your fellow colleague deserve recognition? Ensure the person knows specifically what they've done, and how they've helped you.

U

Unified
Make sure to build an initiative that allows for all to give *and* all to receive recognition under one brand to better connect your people.

S

Spotlight
Shine a spotlight on moments of recognition, either through social capabilities or other public means, to celebrate achievements and to reinforce habits for the rest of the company.

T

Timely
Make recognition more impactful by sending moments of recognition instantly that are easily accessible anytime, anywhere.

The Engagement Bridge™

Along with the backbones of engagement, organizations can choose which other elements to work on. Developing better relationships with your people starts with expertly communicating your purpose and rallying your employees behind your purpose, mission and values, but it's only the start.

Building your bridge with critical elements of employee engagement like recognition, which can link back to your purpose, mission and values and shine a spotlight on what your employees are achieving, can help forge even deeper and more meaningful connections to employees.

Learn more at rg.co/ebridge

Tackling the Employee Engagement Gap
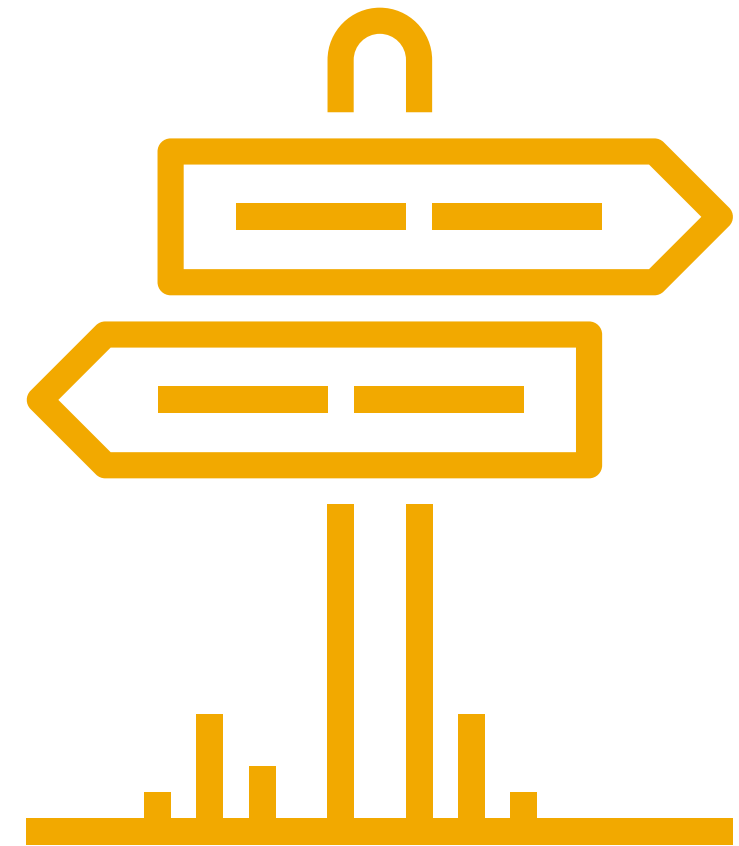
We've identified the two main drivers which have shifted our way of approaching employee engagement so dramatically — **employee motivators** and **technology**.

The old ways of working just aren't working anymore. But where do we go from here?

It's time to get out of the cavern of engagement abyss, where you're throwing paper airplanes, even screaming and shouting. No matter how loudly you shout, all you can hear is, well, yourself.

You're not reaching your employees, and something must be done.

The next era of employee engagement needs to be:

Interactive	**Inclusive**
Accessible	**Social**

It integrates your core engagement elements of Open & Honest Communication, Purpose, Mission and Values, and Recognition to build bridges in your organization to drive deep, meaningful relationships between employee and employer. Let's dive a little deeper into these pieces...
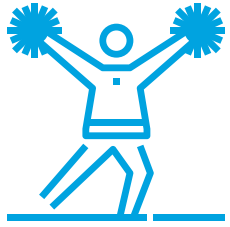
Interactive,
two-way engagement opens up opportunities.

To figure out how to make your business an attractive place to work, where employees are excited and want to shout about it from the rooftops — *you've got to understand what they're thinking.* On-the-spot, real-time communication with reactions and comment threads can give opportunities to your employees to speak up and express excitement, encouragement or yes, even disappointment. Each and every piece of employee input you gather can help your business make more informed decisions, from the top-down, and do it quickly — before it's too late.

Connecting your employees to both your message and to one another by highlighting specific people within your messages — and giving employees an opportunity to recognize them – helps bridge the gap among employer and employee, and also across teams, offices and remote locations.
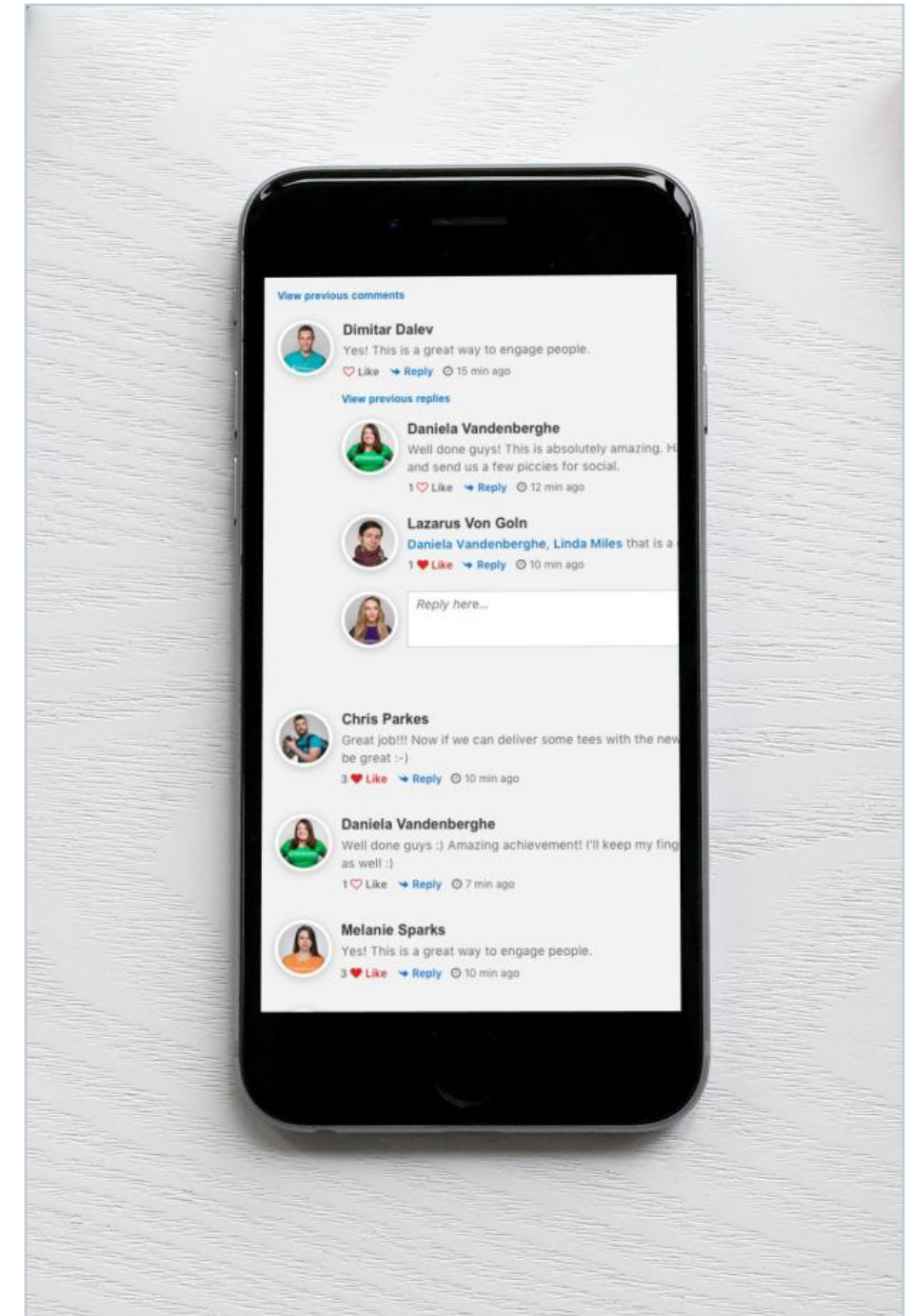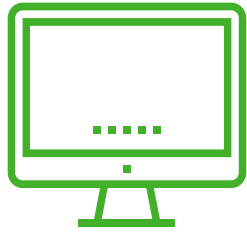
Accessible,
visible employee communications reach people where and when they want to be reached.

Say it with me: Communications are never "done." Now say it again: Communications are never "done." You can't rely on only one message, so why rely on only one approach? Mobile and tablet-friendly communications help you reach employees that may not be at their desktop computer, or that have a personal preference on communications channels. Use technology to help you segment messaging so you're reaching the right audience, and schedule out your messages to help you reach them at the optimal time. Everyone digests information differently, so make sure you're using a platform for employee engagement that can support everyone's individual style.
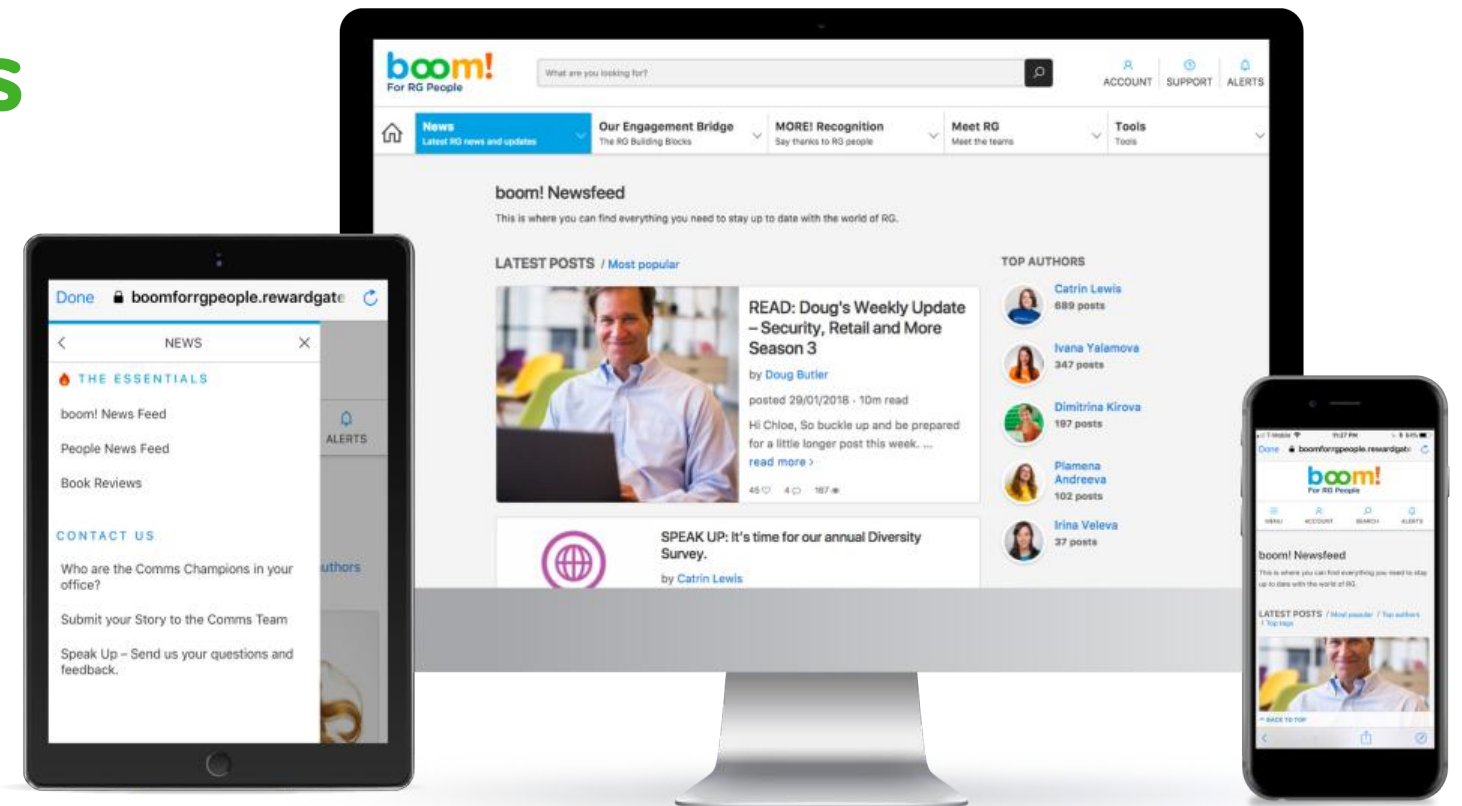
Inclusive
engagement means everyone, everywhere has a voice to listen to — and to speak up from.

How can you tell if people are listening? While looking at data points on page views and content interactions are important and shouldn't be absent from your engagement strategy, the real evidence is in the volume and variety of voices you're hearing. Giving the power to publish (with certain limitations) to more employees than just your HR or marketing teams means more voices can be heard. Your "team" is your entire workforce, working together to shout successes, failed innovations and more, from the rooftops.

Empowering your employees drives the critical engagement factor which we talked about earlier, and that's employee motivation. Make individual contributions count even more by linking your people to your purpose *and* your engagement platform.

Social
media transforms employee communications to employee *conversations.*

According to Forrester, 76% of Facebook users log in daily, and 60% of these users log in up to *eight times* a day. Employees are continually expressing themselves on these social platforms, and it's become a natural part of their every day. Organically integrating these features into your employee platform with emoji-driven reactions, the ability to "tag" fellow colleagues in announcements and within comments makes your employee communications even better — it creates employee *conversation*. Bring the experience to life even more by displaying these moments on a social "wall" to capture the familiarity of social media feeds.
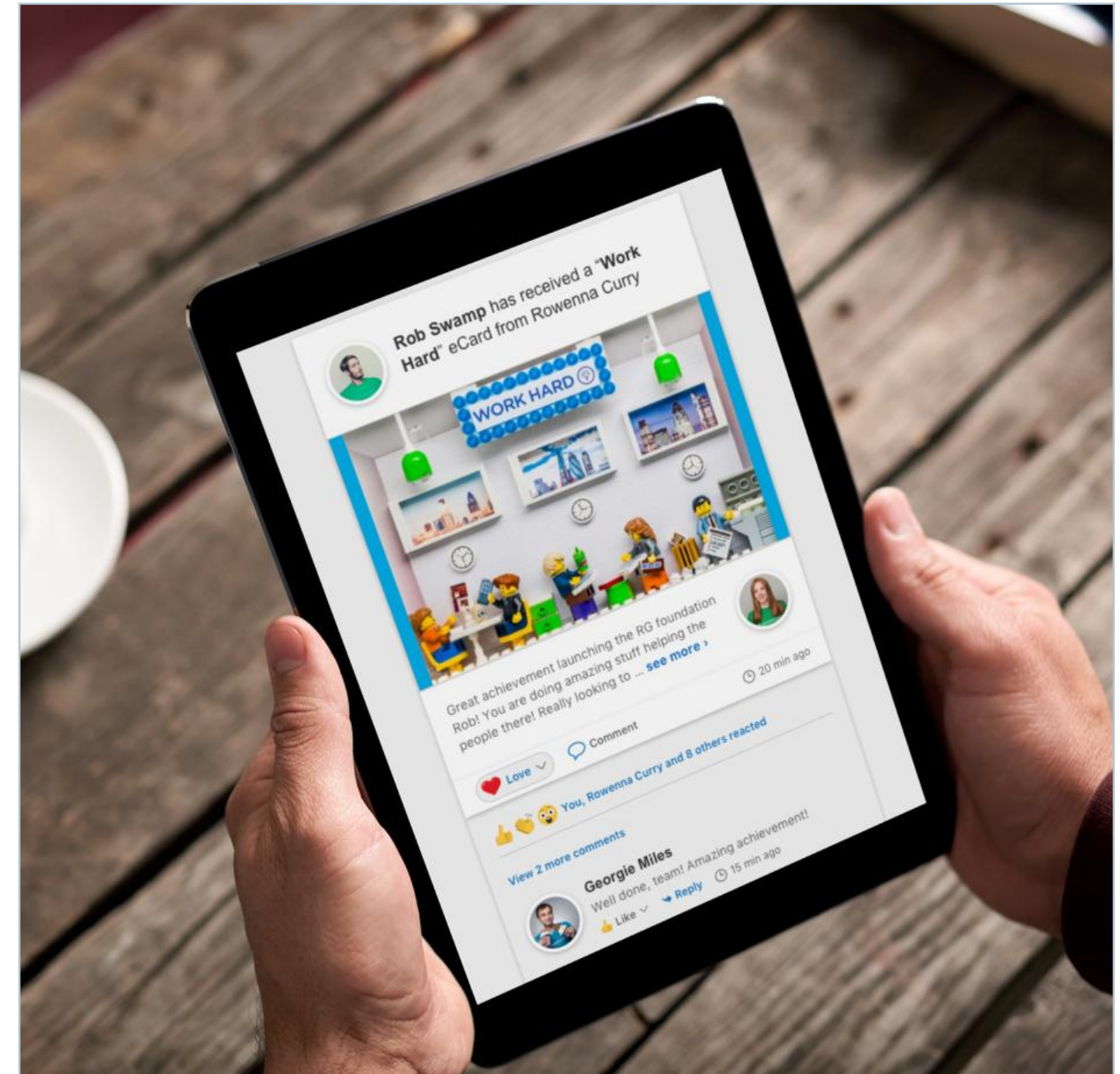
Evolving your employee engagement strategy

Along with outdated communication methods, the entire world of employee engagement is evolving. Whether you think of employee engagement as communications, surveys, recognition or other tactics, evolving your strategy to think of ways to combine these elements into a cohesive strategy to foster more engaged employees is necessary to stay ahead of your competitors.

Let's take a look at a few examples of this evolution:

Old	New
Intranet and emails	All-in-one engagement platform
Long-service awards	Continuous employee recognition
Annual surveys	Frequent, accessible employee feedback

Just like employee communications should be frequent, interactive and engaging so should your employee survey and employee recognition programs. **Continuous recognition** reinforces your connection among employer/employee by showcasing and rewarding employees for behavior aligned with your purpose, mission and values while **frequent, accessible feedback** lets you respond to and receive real-time employee feedback through surveys that are easy to administer and analyze.

Combining these elements into one place where your employees can go to recognize their colleagues, read up on important company news or speak up about issues that could have a big impact on your business isn't just *one* way to boost employee engagement, it's the way of the future.

# Break down the silos of employee engagement with technology

Your employee engagement technology doesn't – and shouldn't — do just one thing. By weaving in different employee engagement tactics and solutions, such as communications and recognition, you can amplify engagement quickly and easily from one place.

See how simple it can be:
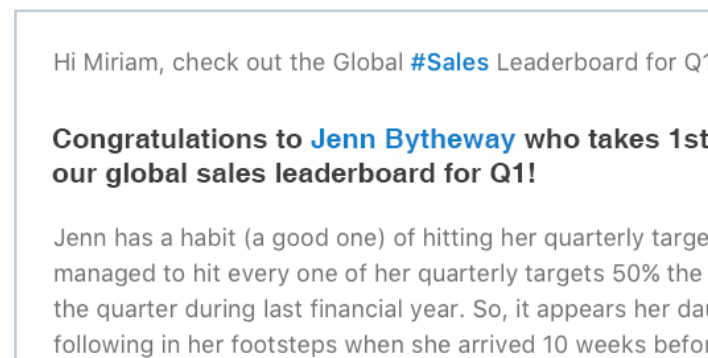
Announce

Company Head of Sales posts up an announcement congratulating the top seller for the quarter, tagging Jenn in the blog.
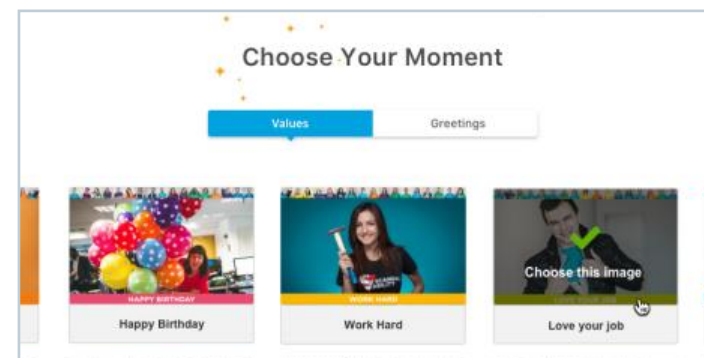
Engage

Jenn receives an alert that she's been tagged in a post, logs into her employer's engagement platform and reads it. She adds a comment thanking the Client Support team, recognizing the help they gave to land tough prospects. The Support team lead then sends eCards to the team, as she saw the comment from Jenn.
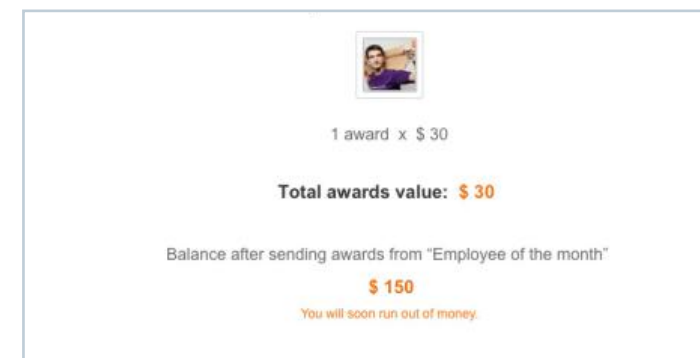
Recognize

The Support team lead decides to use part of her recognition budget to send an award for Employee of the Month to George, who was a superstar in helping Jenn land a client very important to the business.

Repeat!

Mike, who's new to the Sales team, sees the announcement and adds his thoughts and reactions to continue the conversation.

And it goes on and on...

Conclusion

I hope this eBook has given you an idea of the tools necessary to be more strategic when it comes to your employee engagement strategy. If we, as leaders in employee engagement, don't start to innovate and push the boundaries of how we approach tactics to engage our people, we're going to be stuck with old methods that fail not only our employees, but our business, too.

That's why my colleagues at Reward Gateway have developed a solution to create the *only* employee engagement platform that puts communications at the core to amplify your employee engagement solutions, including employee recognition, surveys, perks and wellbeing.

By evolving your employee engagement strategy to stand out and go against the status quo, you can start your own "rebelution" for how to create a more engaged workforce.

If you're interested in learning more ways to engage your employees or how to put in place a platform which links your people to your purpose, get in touch with us.

To better engagement,

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Reward Gateway's engagement products in employee recognition, communications, employee surveys and more are powered by a centralized hub tailored to your organization, giving your employees better access to the engagement tools of the future.

If you're interested in learning more about any of Reward Gateway's and engagement products to help attract, retain and engage your people, we'd love to help you get started.

Get in touch:
E: engage-us@rewardgateway.com