

EBOOK

How to inspire high-performing teams



A talent optimization approach to teamwork and management

Once you make a great hire, your job isn't done. You still need to inspire and motivate that employee to perform, as well as engage and retain them. A [2018 study](#) conducted by Jobvite found that almost 30% of workers quit within the first 90 days. With the [average time-to-fill](#) lasting 42 days, giving new hires a reason to stick around is important.

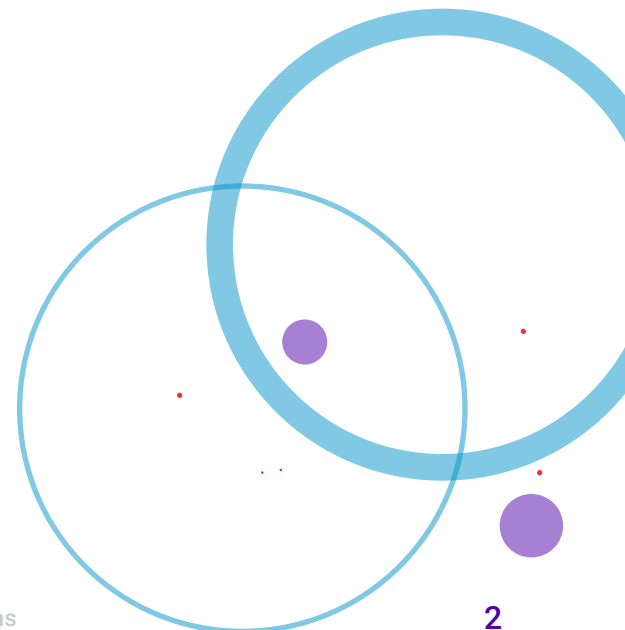
Unfortunately, too many organizations hire and hope for the best. Not you, though. You picked up this e-book because you know there's a better way to optimize talent for better results.

When you take a talent optimization approach to teamwork and management, you increase your odds of engaging, retaining, and motivating employees to peak performance.

The Inspire aptitude of talent optimization is all about managing and inspiring your people to perform at max capacity. Within Inspire, there are four activities:

1. **Create new jobs and career paths.**
2. **Develop your leaders.**
3. **Protect your culture.**
4. **Create high performing teams.**

Let's look at each in practice.





Create new jobs and career paths.

Two of the top 10 drivers of turnover intent relate to career development, according to the [2019 Employee Engagement Report](#). Employees want to know there's an opportunity for them to learn and grow within the organization. In addition to improving engagement and retention efforts, anticipating future needs—as driven by your strategy—gives you time to groom and nurture talent.

Follow this three-step process to create new jobs and career paths:

1. Identify new roles needed as your organization grows.

When you make a new hire, you outline job requirements. Similarly, you need to map out all of your positions—current and future. Which roles are currently available? Which roles will need to be created and filled as your organization grows and matures?

Future roles should be based off your business strategy. Each department head is responsible for forecasting any roles they'll need to successfully execute the strategy. For example, if your small business is growing, you may have a need for more leadership positions, whether that means team leads, managers, or executives.

2. Create compelling career paths and refresh job roles.

Whereas traditional career pathing views jobs and people as static—annual performance reviews and promotions, new positions filled by new hires, etc.—a talent optimization approach is different. Roles are assessed regularly based on changes to your overarching business strategy.

Use these five best practices for developing career paths and refreshing job roles:

- **Look to the future. Which positions will be needed and how will roles change as your organization grows and matures?**
- **Create opportunities to move laterally. Not everyone wants to be in management. Some just want to try something new.**
- **Treat future jobs the same way you treat active jobs. Always capture the behavioral and cognitive profiles needed for success in the role.**
- **Reassess and redefine roles regularly. Amorphous roles happen, but ambiguity can lead to confusion and frustration. When redefining roles, consider if the person currently doing the work is a good fit or if they'd be happier in another role.**
- **Make transitions smooth. If an employee moves to another team as part of their career path, support a smooth transition.**

3. Communicate advancement opportunities.

It's important to be transparent regarding advancement opportunities. Make sure all new and existing positions are available for anyone to view. Ensure promotable employees and those looking for new opportunities are known across the organization. And remember that continuous job changes are a good thing—they indicate employees are choosing to stay at your organization than leave to pursue another opportunity.



Develop your leaders.

Effective leadership competencies are a strong driver of employee engagement—and valuable as your organization grows and develops.

To maximize your leadership impact, take the following three actions:

1. Create leader self-awareness.

Great leaders are aware of their capabilities and their blind spots, and they continuously develop themselves to maximize the former and minimize the latter. But self-awareness isn't reserved for senior leadership. It's the key to fostering positive team dynamics at all levels—including for more junior employees with little to no leadership experience.

Self-awareness can be gained through people data, such as 360 reviews, [behavioral assessments](#), or leadership competency rubrics.

2. Manage to the individual.

It should come as no surprise that not everyone works the same way—and so not every employee should be managed the same way. In addition to self-awareness, leaders need to be aware of the needs of others and tailor their interactions accordingly. For example, if you're a manager who likes to figure things out as you go, you might need to stretch beyond your comfort zone to outline how something should be done for an employee who values structure and process. By understanding how each person thinks and operates, managers and colleagues alike can create better working relationships.

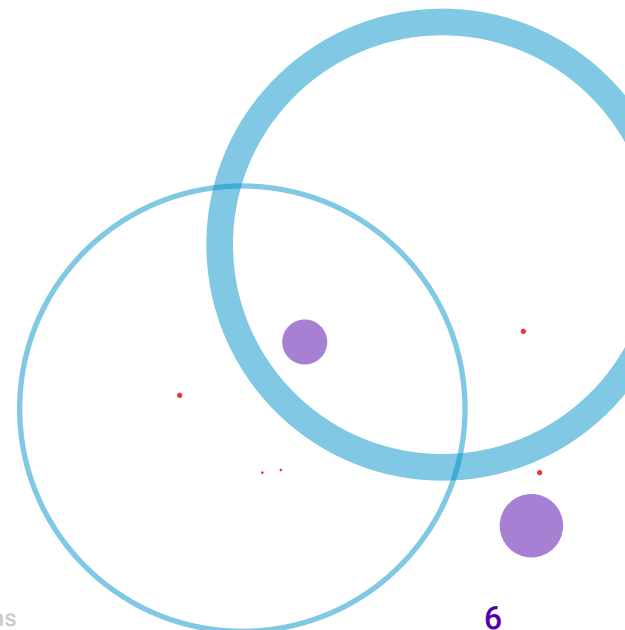
3. Give performance feedback within business context.

A manager's role encompasses both driving business results and developing employees. Unfortunately, too many organizations prioritize one over the other.

Managers must use business context to provide specific, actionable feedback employees can use to ensure they're meeting business goals. For example, instead of telling a customer service representative they did a great job responding to a customer's concern, tie the feedback to an outcome: "Because you did such a great job navigating this conversation, we were able to retain a client that produces \$X in annual recurring revenue."

Managers should also provide employees with a combination of the following:

- **Weekly or bi-weekly check-ins with their direct supervisor**
- **Real-time and periodic coaching that's specific and actionable**
- **Annual or semi-annual performance reviews**
- **360 reviews**
- **Engagement surveys**
- **Post-training certification results**
- **Annual, semi-annual, or quarterly goal setting**





Create high-performing teams.

Teams are essential to organizational success. A clear standard for high performance needs to be set and maintained across the entire organization. This precedent starts with the senior leadership team. When the senior leadership team works well together to execute the strategy, they set the tone for the rest of the organization when it comes to making decisions, collaborating effectively, and taking action.

Here are best practices for creating high-performing teams:

1. Consider each team its own “organization.”

Each team has its own strategic objectives and expected results. While these tie into the overarching business strategy, they stand apart nonetheless.

Team leads should be intentional about their approach to [designing](#) the team. This includes understanding team members’ natural strengths and weaknesses, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the whole group. Based on the strategic goals of the group, team members may need to adapt their natural style in order for the team to reach optimal productivity.

2. Team members need to understand their similarities and differences.

Everyone on the team must have self-awareness of their own behavioral preferences and abilities as well as an understanding of the behavioral preferences and abilities of the other team members. This allows for optimal teamwork. Imagine how much easier your team could communicate and work together with an understanding of how each person thinks and operates.

3. Have team leaders monitor and manage team cultures.

Team leaders are responsible for monitoring and managing the well-being and productivity of their team—and individual team members. Issues often arise when employees don't understand their behavioral differences. For example, one person may think things through by talking them out. But if they're attempting to talk things out with an employee who prefers to process alone, their personalities could clash.

Leaders must help employees understand how each functions best—as well as encourage and support behavioral diversity.

4. Create flexibility and adaptability to change.

To keep up with constant innovation, competition, and disruption, organizations must remain flexible. The best way to maintain flexibility is to build well-rounded teams of people who not only are well-aligned with your business strategy, but who also bring diversity of behavioral styles and thinking to balance your team dynamics.



Reinforce your culture.

Culture can help you achieve your business goals—or it can be the very thing that stops you from reaching them.

Here are four ways to ensure your culture is driving achievement of your business goals:

1. Repeatedly communicate cultural norms.

Culture is not a one-off initiative—it requires long-term dedication. Take every opportunity to share and reinforce your cultural values. For example, if your organization has an “all hands”-type meeting, spend time reminding employees of your cultural values. You might even consider rewarding an employee for modeling your organization’s core values.

2. Take action to address conflicting behaviors.

Inevitably, there will be times when an individual’s behavior is out of step with your company culture. When this happens, address the behavior quickly. Failure to do so sends mixed messages to your organization.

You might be wondering, “What if the person who’s out of alignment is a high performer or executive?” The same response applies: address the behavior swiftly. In these cases, it’s even more important. If leadership isn’t modeling your core values, that trickles down the org chart. And if your high performers aren’t held to the same expectations, other employees will start to feel that your core values are for show only.

3. Encourage employee recognition of culture champions.

While leadership has a responsibility to model core values and recognize cultural champions, employees at all levels should be encouraged to recognize those who embody the organization's core values. This kind of peer recognition reinforces culture. Consider having employees nominate their peers for a monthly award or encourage them to shout out their colleagues on a dedicated Slack channel.

4. Reward desired behaviors to reinforce the culture you want.

In addition to recognition, be sure to reward employees who model desired behaviors. This is another way to reinforce the type of culture you want to maintain. Keep in mind that, when it comes to culture, less is more. There are probably lots of values you'd like your employees to exhibit, but focus on the few that will make the biggest difference. People can only respond to so many prompts at any given time. As with any change, small steps taken in the right direction create big change over time.

Here are a few ways you can reward desired behaviors

- **Training (job specific)**
- **Career development**
- **Internal promotions**
- **Reward/recognition/performance system**
- **Role modeling by leaders and managers**

Remember to offer these rewards in the context of your culture and the desired behaviors you'd like to see. For example, if your culture is centered strongly on teamwork, reward and recognize those who offer to support their colleagues or who rein in their tendency to dominate conversations so that the team can collaborate better.

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