

Executive amplitude: how top leaders have a major impact on employee engagement



Background

Truist Leadership Institute's research indicates that executives' leadership training affects employee engagement through four drivers:

- **Meaning**, the feeling that the work you do makes a positive difference for people in the wider world
- **Executive Connectedness**, or satisfactory communication with and trust of your top leadership
- **Values Congruence**, the sense that your personal values match your company's values
- **Change Certainty**, an understanding of the rationale for your company's decisions and changes

Why is this important?

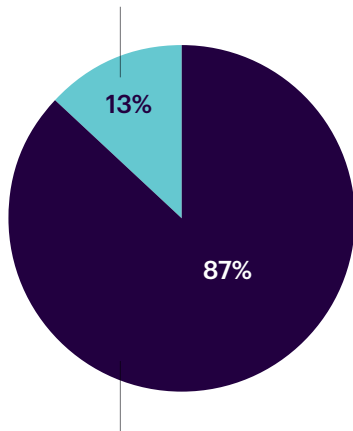
Higher employee engagement means better health, motivation, and well-being for employees. Engagement is also connected to crucial organization-wide outcomes like lower turnover, better individual and business-unit performance, and positive culture.

Executives should understand engagement is not solely driven by the immediate manager. Optimizing executives' influence on employee engagement could be a low-cost, high-return strategy to promote well-being and organizational success.

Owning these results:

Have you identified all the ways you can drive higher engagement at your organization?

Organizations in which **Executive Connectedness** was *not* one of the top five drivers of engagement



Organizations in which **satisfactory communication with and trust of your top leadership** was one of the top five drivers of engagement

In addition to the research that led to the conclusions about the four drivers, we also analyzed employee engagement data in 15 samples and over 20,000 respondents.

Our results show employees' perceptions of their top leaders is a major driver of engagement: employees' feelings about their top executives were a top driver of engagement in 13 of our 15 samples.

Appendix: methods used for these findings

- **Finding 1:** Individuals who are led by an executive who had completed Truist Leadership Institute (LI) training (N = 11,841) had higher mean scores on our engagement index than individuals who were not led by LI graduates (N = 12,097; $t = 4.434$, $p < 0.001$). Engagement was measured on the November 2018 BB&T (now Truist) organization-wide engagement survey. Depicted in all graphics are the favorability scores (instead of means). The 2018 engagement survey included 15 drivers; we hypothesized top executives strongly influence four of them (and front-line managers more strongly influence the rest). We conducted a mediation analysis by first regressing mean scores on engagement onto the dichotomous indicator variable for Mastering Leadership Dynamics (MLD) attendance and the effect was significant ($B = 0.038$, $p < 0.001$). Our next model included the 11 drivers we hypothesized front-line managers more strongly influence and the training effect was still significant ($B = 0.024$, $p < 0.001$). Our third model included the four hypothesized drivers, and the training effect became nonsignificant ($p = 0.577$), supporting the idea that these four drivers mediate executives' influence on engagement.
- **Finding 2:** Dominance analysis was conducted on 15 organizations (12 functionally distinct divisions in one corporation, plus three unaffiliated organizations) using the 15 drivers as predictors of engagement. In all but two organizations, Executive Connectedness was among the top five ranked predictors.

To learn more about these methods and other LI research, please join the conversation at truistleadershipinstitute.com.

Truist Leadership Institute

During the past half-century, Truist Leadership Institute, and its predecessor firm Farr Associates, have developed and refined approaches to business leadership through collaborative work with clients throughout the United States. Truist Leadership Institute provides organizations with a leadership development partner who helps create dynamic and effective leaders, increase employee retention, and improve the bottom line.