

Employee engagement in **retail**

How to connect with your people on the
front line



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Introduction

Thanks for downloading this eBook from WorkBuzz on employee engagement in the retail industry. We know HR professionals in this sector have unique challenges – from how to engage a deskless workforce to the lasting impact of ‘The Great Resignation’ – and we want to help.

We’ll cover how to go about fixing these problems, how to effectively reach and engage your deskless employees, and a few ideas for how to improve employee engagement at your organisation.

If you’re interested in talking to us about how we can get your employee engagement strategy moving along the road to success, don’t hesitate to get in touch.

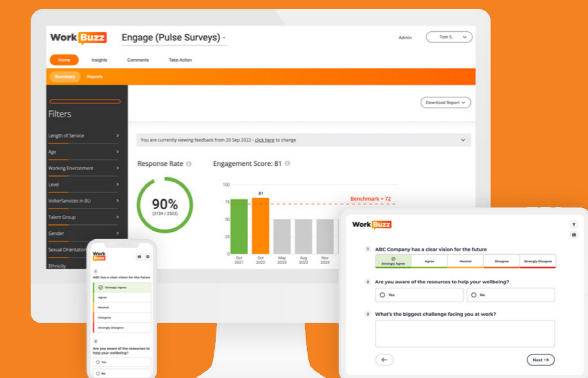


About WorkBuzz

The simple, flexible, customisable way to reach your everyday heroes.

Our employee engagement surveys give you regular, real-time feedback from all your people – wherever they are, and whatever they do.

Listen to your unsung heroes. Understand their concerns. Act on areas of improvement. Build a culture all your people can thrive in.



3 key people challenges in the retail industry – and how to fix them



The retail industry is undergoing a massive shift, with rapid technological advancements and changing consumer behaviour asking serious questions of those operating in this space. Leaders and HR professionals are facing a multitude of people challenges that must be addressed to remain competitive in this ever-changing landscape.

Here, we'll explore some of the key people challenges retailers are dealing with today, and how to solve them. By understanding and mastering these issues, retail businesses can better prepare themselves for success in the future:

1. Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce
2. Leveraging digital capabilities for greater customer engagement
3. Understanding what employees really think about your organisation

Recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce

One of the most pressing challenges faced by retail businesses is finding and retaining top talent. The issue has been exacerbated

by 'The Great Resignation' triggered by the pandemic – as discussed in our eBook on [how to keep employee engagement high in challenging times](#). Scores of people who lost their jobs or were furloughed have since moved on to other roles in different industries, or have decided to leave the working world for good, leaving a gaping hole in the talent pool.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the US, 94% of retailers have since struggled to fill vacant positions. Moreover, with the rise of e-commerce, traditional brick-and-mortar stores are competing with new players in the market, further exacerbating this challenge.

Consumers today are more conscious of brands' social responsibility and are looking for brands that embrace diversity and promote inclusivity, and retail organisations must also have a diverse workforce that represents the communities they serve.

In today's retail landscape, having a diverse workforce is not only important for social responsibility, but it also brings many benefits to the organisation. Diversity drives innovation, enhances customer service, and fosters an inclusive work environment.

This means recruiting and training employees from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultures. This strategy can help retailers tap into new markets and connect with customers who may have specific cultural needs or preferences.

To ensure they have a diverse workforce, retailers must implement an effective recruitment strategy that reaches out to individuals from different backgrounds, cultures, and genders. That might mean collaborating with educational institutions, community-based organisations, and social networks, tapping into new talent pools to reach a broader range of potential candidates.

Retailers should also think about using inclusive language in job descriptions, structuring the interview process to help eliminate unconscious bias, and introducing training and mentorship programmes that promote diversity within the workplace.

Leveraging digital capabilities for greater customer engagement

The rise of e-commerce and digital technology has added a new layer of

complexity to retail. Retail organisations must embrace digital technology to stay connected with customers and maintain a competitive edge. This includes developing e-commerce platforms, mobile apps, and social media channels to connect with customers and promote products.

Retailers can also use data analytics to track customer behaviour and preferences, which can inform product development and marketing strategies, while customer loyalty programs can incentivise customers to engage with their brand and keep coming back.

However, the adoption of such technologies requires a skilled workforce that is trained in the latest digital tools and techniques. It's crucial for retailers to invest in the training and development of their employees to ensure they have the necessary skills to compete in today's digital landscape.

Understanding what employees really think about your organisation

Understanding what your employees think about your company is crucial – especially in retail, where employees often face

long hours, low pay, and demanding customers, which can lead to a high turnover rate if their needs are not met.

That's where employee surveys come in. They can provide valuable insights into how your people perceive their work environment, job satisfaction, and opportunities for growth, and help retailers to identify problem areas and address them in a timely manner.

High levels of employee engagement translate to increased productivity, higher customer satisfaction, and lower turnover rates. Through employee surveys, employers can identify areas that may be causing low engagement levels and take corrective measures to address them.

Employee surveys also provide a platform for employees to voice their concerns and provide feedback on their work environment – including things like the effectiveness of training and development programmes, which we've already highlighted as a focus area.

By listening to their employees' feedback – and acting on it – retail organisations can identify workplace issues and implement changes or interventions that lead to a better work environment. Addressing workplace issues can enhance employee satisfaction and boost morale.

High employee turnover can significantly impact a retail company's performance and customer satisfaction. Employee surveys can identify factors contributing to high turnover rates, such as inadequate compensation, lack of opportunities for growth, or a poor work environment. By addressing these factors, retail companies can reduce turnover rates

and retain top talent.

Finally, as long as your organisation makes a clear effort to address the feedback received, employee surveys can strengthen communication and trust between employees and their employers. By seeking their employees' feedback and responding to their concerns, retail companies can enhance their employees' sense of value and investment in the company – which, in turn, can improve loyalty and retention.

Why should you focus on employee engagement?

Employee engagement is a deep rational and emotional connection to your organisation and the work you do. It's the outcome of a great employee experience, and starts during the recruitment process – before you even turn up for your first day.

Engagement is important because it unlocks the potential of each individual, their motivation, and maximises their discretionary effort. If they're engaged enough to become advocates for your organisation, engagement can live on long after employees leave – which has a tangible impact on commercial outcomes for your business.



How to reach and engage deskless employees in the retail industry ▶▶▶▶▶

There are unique employee engagement challenges for the retail industry, not least due to the large number of employees working on shop floors, in warehouses, or in other 'deskless' roles not based in head office.

Organisations in this sector must use innovative strategies to ensure their workforce is engaged, motivated, and productive.

The importance of listening to your employees

Employee surveys are a great way for organisations in the retail industry to understand employee sentiment and motivation, as well as to identify employee engagement issues.

Surveys can be used to gain feedback on policies, job satisfaction, employee recognition programs, and much more. They can also provide invaluable insights into employee morale and engagement levels.

Organisations should strive to regularly run employee surveys to ensure they're staying ahead of employee engagement issues and

providing a positive work environment.

Making employee engagement programmes more accessible to deskless workers

Having a great employee engagement programme is a waste of time if your employees can't take part. It's important to make employee surveys accessible for deskless employees in the retail industry.

Many of these workers are unable to access employee engagement tools due to them being inaccessible or difficult to use on a smartphone or tablet – and many won't have access to a corporate email address.

To ensure employee engagement is successful, organisations should provide mobile-friendly resources and leverage platforms like WorkBuzz, which offers a 'kiosk' mode and unique entry code so employees can access surveys from their own device.

This approach should also extend to your wider communication strategy. How do you better connect head office, leadership and the deskless workforce?

What you need to know to better connect with a deskless workforce:

- Who your deskless employees are**
Build a picture using demographics, role descriptions and the challenges they face.
- Why you need to talk to them**
What information will you need to share?
- When you'll communicate**
Take into consideration different shift patterns and time zones.
- How you'll communicate**
Choosing the right channel is essential – specifically designed apps, internal communications tools (like Slack or SharePoint), kiosk stations, printed materials, bulletin boards, in-person conversations, texts and calls are all options.
- What you'll say**
Tailor the content with clear impact and outcomes for your deskless audience.
- Make it a two-way conversation**
Ensure your strategy includes methods for employee feedback, either through regular pulse surveys or on an ad-hoc basis.

Digital platforms like **WorkBuzz** can be powerful tools for improving employee engagement in the retail industry. Organisations should look to leverage these platforms to listen to their employees, understand their needs, and act on their feedback.

5 ways to improve employee engagement in the retail industry ▶▶▶▶▶



Employee engagement is a critical factor in the success of any organisation, including those in the retail industry. With 49% of UK deskless workers saying they're open to new opportunities, retailers must take active steps to improve engagement before it's too late.

Fortunately, there are several practical strategies that can be implemented by employers in the retail industry to solve employee engagement challenges. From offering flexible working hours to introducing employee surveys and employee engagement platforms, here are six ways to help increase employee motivation, satisfaction, and engagement.

1. Provide recognition for employees' efforts

Acknowledging employee performance with recognition can go a long way in boosting employee engagement. Regularly recognising employee efforts and successes can increase motivation, morale, and engagement levels.

That doesn't have to only mean paying them

more money. Show them they're valued in other ways by creating moments that matter throughout their employee journey.

These moments impact how your employees engage with you as an employer. They cover every stage of the employee lifecycle – from initial attraction and onboarding right through to exit – but, as every employee has unique circumstances, it's important to properly measure, rather than assume, what these moments are.

2. Implement career development programmes

Investing in employee development is one of the best ways employers in the retail industry can improve employee engagement. Providing employees with training opportunities, access to mentorships, or continuing education courses can help them build on their skills and foster a long-term emotional connection with your organisation.

3. Build strong relationships with employees

Creating a culture of open communication

between employers and employees is essential in improving employee engagement. Listening to employee feedback and responding to employee concerns can help employers better understand what motivates team members, leading to higher engagement levels.

An open, honest culture helps build employee engagement, improves retention, helps attract the best talent, and has a positive impact on the bottom line. And, while building this culture is challenging, it's far from impossible.

There's no quick fix, but enabling a connection between deskless employees and their line managers will help build a better working environment and culture for all.

4. Create a positive work environment

A positive work environment that values employee contributions is key for employee engagement. Employers should also focus on creating a workplace culture of collaboration and respect, where employees feel valued and appreciated.

In the retail industry, much of that positive environment comes from employees feeling physically and emotionally safe. Retail employees are often required to work long hours on their feet, handle heavy merchandise, and interact with a large number of customers.

In addition, the pandemic brought health and safety concerns to the forefront for many employees, who were at increased risk of exposure due to their frequent interaction with customers and co-workers.

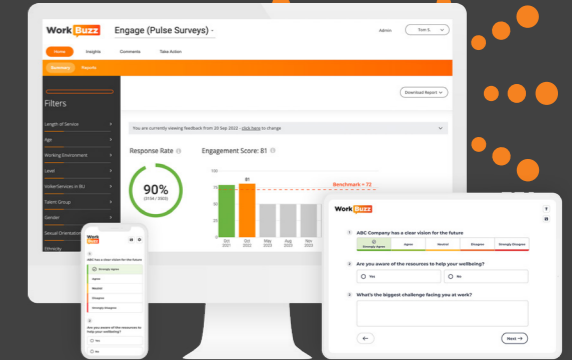
This heightened strain often results in more health and safety incidents, many of which go unreported and could be avoided if communications channels were more open and effective.

Running regular pulse surveys can help your frontline workers become more confident in speaking up about safety standards and wellbeing concerns. They can also help your organisation identify areas of the business that may be experiencing increased risk, not just from a physical health perspective,



About WorkBuzz

Employee engagement surveys to reach everyday heroes in the retail industry.



but from a mental health, resourcing and inclusivity perspective, too.

5. Take action

Failing to act on feedback can have a negative impact on employee engagement, retention figures and overall customer experience. Employee surveys help deskless workers to be heard, but this should be more than just a box ticking exercise.

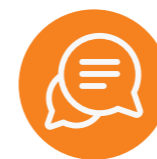
Surveys should be used as a means for gathering insights and data over time – and these insights should be aligned to your organisation’s KPIs, providing detail on key issues and highlighting opportunities for change and innovation.

Tailoring your surveys to your deskless workforce – as covered earlier in this eBook – means you’ll get better response rates and more actionable insights that can ensure fair and inclusive decisions for all your workforce, regardless of their schedules and locations. Engaging your deskless workforce is essential if you want your retail organisation to provide

the best customer experiences. To build better engagement, employee listening needs to be a constant activity within organisations, it helps leaders to identify what is – or isn’t – working, to respond to sources of disengagement, and to nurture a healthy culture.



WorkBuzz helps you gather real-time feedback from your people, improve employee engagement and build a culture your team are proud to be part of – wherever they are, and whatever they do.



Listen to your employees at a frequency to suit your business – with annual surveys, pulse surveys and on-demand polls available as standard.



Understand key staff challenges around employee wellbeing, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, and employee retention. Use our best-practice question libraries or work with our team to create your own.



Act on feedback and implement positive change. Work with our team to understand what your data is telling you, and which actions you need to take. Benefit from an engaged, more productive workforce, and see an improvement in employee wellbeing, performance, and retention.

“Great service and easy to do business with. The WorkBuzz team are adaptive, attentive, professional and act as a true partner. Expertise within the team is also a big plus – providing useful insight into the wider world on what is/can impact on the employee experience.”

Ronnie Calderwood-Duncan, EDI Manager, Highways England

Give your Everyday Heroes a voice -
get started with a demo of the [WorkBuzz platform](https://www.workbuzz.com)