Engagement Pulse

Discussion Guide

Resources for Deepening Team Discussion & Identifying Actions

Understanding engagement is critical in driving team performance. The Engagement Pulse in Team Space is eight questions, distilled from years of research, that are the best indicators of team engagement. If we can move the needle in these eight key areas of engagement, then we can boost individual and team performance.

The Engagement Pulse items help to capture the experience of the team at a moment in time and provides an opportunity for conversation about the ways the individual and collective strengths of a team can be leveraged for greater outcomes.

This guide provides an overview of each Engagement Pulse item and offers sample debrief questions to help leaders learn more about their team, the environment, and themselves. These insights should then lead to collective creation of actions to boost engagement.

General Tips for Conducting an Effective Debrief

1. The value of an Engagement Pulse Survey debrief discussion isn’t about the numbers – the richness is in the discussion your team has about ways to positively impact engagement, collectively and individually.

2. Be Curious: Come prepared with questions to spark conversation and uncover greater understanding. Pay attention to the openness of the discussion as a measure of safety and trust in your team.

3. Co–create actions: Lean into your team for ideation and creative problem solving. Where appropriate have all members of the team share responsibility for improving the team experience by committing to new actions and behaviors.

Follow up: Allow space during 1-on-1s to continue the discussion. Some individuals may be more candid with you in a more private setting. Continue the conversation and discuss individual commitments.

Team Space Engagement Pulse Items

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<th>&quot;We&quot;</th>
<th>&quot;Me&quot;</th>
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<td>1 Purpose</td>
<td>I am really enthusiastic about the mission of my company. (Purpose)</td>
<td>2 At work, I clearly understand what is expected of me. (Alignment)</td>
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<td>Excellence</td>
<td>3 In my team, I am surrounded by people who share my values. (Shared understanding of excellence)</td>
<td>4 I have a chance to use my strengths everyday at work. (Best of me now)</td>
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<td>Future</td>
<td>7 I have great confidence in my company’s future. (Communication &amp; Leadership Confidence)</td>
<td>8 In my work, I am always challenged to grow. (Best of me in the future)</td>
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**Item 1: I am really enthusiastic about the mission of the company.**

Understanding the Item: Cisco’s mission is to “Shape the future of the Internet by creating unprecedented value and opportunity for our customers, employees, investors, and ecosystem partners.” But this item is not intended to gauge awareness of our literal mission; it is measuring whether there is an understanding of and an enthusiasm about Cisco’s collective purpose.

The responsibility for promoting the mission of the company is a shared responsibility among immediate team leader and organizational leadership. Great Team Leaders help their team members discover how their role and daily tasks contribute to the realization of the organization’s mission and Organizational leaders can clarify and promote the organization’s mission and reinforce stories of the benefits that come from that mission.

**Understand**

- How would you describe Cisco’s mission?
- How would you describe the purpose of our team?
- Do you feel connected to the mission of the company?
- Do you feel that you are able to contribute to the mission of the company?
- Do you feel that our team is contributing to the mission of the company?
- What about the mission are you (or are you not) enthusiastic about?

**Take Action**

- What information can I provide to help with your understanding of Cisco’s purpose?
- What can we keep doing as a team (or do more of) to support our mission?
- Is the work we are doing contributing to the realization of Cisco’s mission?

**Item 2: At work I clearly understand what is expected of me.**

Understanding the item: This question focuses on work expectations. Team Leaders have the responsibility of making the expectations of team members transparent and clear. Team members who understand their expectations are better able to execute and more engaged with their team leader and organization as a whole.

Team Leaders need to provide guidance and define expectations of the team member’s role; partnering with each team member to set those expectation. Team Leaders should regularly provide clarity and paint a picture of how the team member’s work aligns to the work of team, the function, and the company. These conversations should include frequent reactions to the work, especially when individuals are at their best, to help lift their performance and reach their goals. Leaders having these conversations weekly have team members who are more likely to be engaged.
Understand

- What is expected of this team? Of you in your role?
- Where are expectations communicated come from?
- How are expectations communicated to you?
- Do we, as a team, all have similar expectations?
- What are our expectations of one another?
- How do you know when you are meeting expectations?
- Do you understand the quality of work you are expected to deliver?
- Knowing the type of work we do, is it possible for us to gain more clarity around the expectations of our team?
- Are the expectations we have as a team reasonable?

Take Action

- What means of communication should I use to deliver expectations?
- How often should I communicate my expectations to the team? To individuals?
- What can I as a leader do to increase clarity of expectations?
- How can we as a team deal with ambiguity when defining our own goals and expectations?

Item 3: In my team, I am surrounded by people who share my values.

Understanding the purpose of the question: This item focuses on a shared understanding of excellence. Trusting that one’s coworkers share a commitment to quality is vital to excellent team performance. Team members who work in an environment where there is mutual trust and respect for one another’s efforts increases team performance. This starts with a deep awareness of work standards and team expectations.

Successful teams consciously shape and monitor these team “norms”. Setting norms is an opportunity for the group to express its values. It creates a model that brings clarity about each other’s intentions, increases trust, saves time, decreases politics, and sets a clear operational compass for the rest of the organization. And having a codified understanding of excellence for your team is also handy for newcomers who want to quickly get a sense of how a group operates.

Understand

- What values are important to you at work? What is valued by our team?
- Do you know your team members’ values? Do they know yours?
- How is your time at work influenced by your values?
- What values would you like to see emerge more in our environment?
- How do our shared values contribute to the success of our team?
Take Action

- How can we support each other’s work values?
- How can we communicate our values with new team members as they join?
- How can we align our values as a team?
- What is our plan of action for handling conflicting values, or situations where a team member’s values are challenged?

Item 4: I have the chance to use my strengths every day at work.

Understanding the purpose of the question: This question focuses on whether each person has the opportunity to use their strengths. Each member of the team has their unique strengths and when great leaders know the strengths of their people and use this knowledge to match the right person to the right role that will make best use of the person’s talent and skills, team members can provide outstanding performance for the organization.

Being able to work to one’s strengths is one of the most important factors considered by people evaluating other career opportunities. Therefore, great leaders know that the best way to attract, engage and retain employees is to give people an opportunity to do what they do best.

Understand

- Does everyone know what their strengths are?
- Do you feel equipped to utilize your strengths on our team?
- Does the type of work you are doing align with your strengths?
- Does our team distribute work according to individual strengths?
- Where are we very strong as a team? How can we do more of the activities we are good at?
- How do our diverse strengths contribute to the success of our team?

Take Action

- Let’s create a team ritual where we call out when someone is playing to their strengths.
- How can we create a work environment that energizes us?
- What are some ways we can communicate our strengths to each other so we can better distribute work?
- How can I as a leader do a better job of playing to your individual strengths?
- How can we use our strengths in the way we do our work, when the work itself may not align with them?
Item 5: My teammates have my back.

Understanding the item: This question focuses on working together and developing relationships that allow team members to feel supported. People thrive in an environment where there is mutual trust and respect for one another’s efforts and results. When team members know they can count on each other, and understand that their contributions are valued, it can create an environment in which morale increases, productivity sees an upswing and work product becomes exceptional in its quality.

Relationships that enable trust and bring exceptional results don’t happen unless there’s a conscious intention to make it happen. As a leader you can model trustworthy behaviors and hold your team accountable to do the same by taking a genuine interest in their team members, communicate with full transparency, encourage inclusiveness, empower team members to make decisions, and find ways to make the team feel supported.

Understand

- What are some benefits of having a trusting community? How can this positively impact our work?
- What are some behaviors you see [on our team] that convey trust?
- What are barriers to supporting one another in our work?
- What would you expect from a teammate who “has your back?”
- What are some behaviors that can break trust?
- What are some barriers to building trust on our team?
- Describe a time when it has been crucial to trust someone at work.

Take Action

- What behaviors can we show to indicate that we are trustworthy?
- What are some ways we can show support for each other at work?
- How can I as a leader demonstrate my trust in you?
- When things aren’t going well, how can we support each other while still acknowledging the issue at hand?
- What team activities or events can I lead to help build trust?

Item 6: I know I will be recognized for excellent work.

Understanding the purpose of the question: This item focuses on timely and meaningful recognition. Great team leaders provide constant feedback to their team members to let them know their work is important and their effort is being recognized and supported.
Workplace recognition motivates employees, gives them a sense of accomplishment and makes them feel appreciated for their work. The act of recognition also sends messages to other employees about what success looks like. In this way, recognition is both a tool for personal reward and an opportunity to reinforce the desired behavior to other employees.

Whether a team member feels recognized or not will also depend on their personal definition of recognition. Different people are motivated by different things, which might include public or private recognition, awards, money, promotions, lunch out with the boss, vacation points or a day off. Great Team Leaders need to ask their team members what makes them feel appreciated.

Understand

- What does excellent work look like to you?
- What forms of recognition are used on this team?
- What does recognition mean to you?
- How do you like to be recognized?
- What impact does recognition have on you?
- Do you feel that I am aware of who deserves recognition on our team?

Take Action

- How often should I recognize excellent work?
- What types of recognition should I deliver (with the resources we have in mind)?
- Where should recognition come from on our team?
- What can we as team members do to recognize each other for excellent work?
- What system can we create to ensure that the right people receive recognition?

Item 7: I have great confidence in my company's future.

Understanding the purpose of the question: This item focuses on security and stability. Team leaders have the responsibility to be the connection/conduit between the organization and the team members. Great leaders convey confidence in the company’s future to team members and provide clarity to the team as to the direction of the company. Team members need to feel comfortable that the company in which they are investing their mind, body, and spirit will be around to support them in the future.

Team members also desire to understand how they fit into the organization’s future plans. They need to believe that their work is contributing to the company’s success in the near term and into the future-- that their skills are required, and that their contributions to the team and the company matter. Team Leaders should help employees create a vision for their future at Cisco.
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Understand

- When you think of the future, what time period comes to mind?
- What information do you use to formulate your view of our company’s future?
- What types of things outside of Cisco might impact our company’s future?
- What internal decisions are shaping Cisco’s future?
- Do you think you have a good idea of where the company is headed?
- How important is the future of the company to you?
- How does the company’s future effect the future of our team? Of us as individuals?

Take Action

- What information can I provide to give you a clearer picture of the direction of the company?
- What do you expect of me, as your leader, to give you more stability about the future of Cisco?
- How can we align our goals as a team to support/improve the company’s future?

Item 8: In my work I am always challenged to grow.

Understanding the purpose of the question: This item focuses on whether the team member believes they are being provided with challenging opportunities that will allow them to advance their skills and expertise. Leaders seeking to create an environment of growth must possess a deep understanding of each individual’s strengths and an ability to pair those strengths with challenging opportunities that address critical business needs. Leader can then work jointly with each team member to prioritize growth opportunities, establish goals that reflect those opportunities and evaluate progress toward them.

Understand:

- What does growth look like to you?
- What development opportunities are available to you now?
  - Do you use them?
- Describe an environment that enables personal or professional growth.
- How does growth contribute to your individual success on the team? To the team as a collective?
- Do you see yourself learning new skills through your work?
- How often do you feel challenged by your work on this team?
- How have you developed personally/professionally since joining this team?
Take Action

• What opportunities for development would you like to see offered? What skills/technologies/tools would you like to learn?
• How can we measure growth on our team?
• How can we set and track goals to measure growth?
• How can we grow together as a team?
• How can I as a leader support your growth?
• How can we improve the environment on our team to encourage individual growth?

Discussion Questions that can be applied to any item:

Understand:

• What does this item mean to you? What were you thinking about when answering this question?
• Ask the team to:
  o Surface potential contributors to high or low scores: “Why do you think [item] is lower than the other areas?” “Why do you think [item] is so high?”
  o Draw Comparisons: “Why do you think the score is higher on [item] but lower on [item]? What could be occurring there?”
• In what ways are the strengths of our team contributing to this/or could be used more to support this area?
• Has anyone encountered this challenge or a success in this area before?
  o What have you seen be successful in the past?
• Follow up question to any statement:
  o What’s the impact of that?
  o What might be possible if that were different?
  o How might we change our perspective on that?

Take Action

• Do you have any ideas that we should consider implementing?
• What should we continue doing?
• Would spending more time and energy in this area be a fruitful activity for us as a team?
• How might we use the strengths of our collective team to overcome this/or how did we use our strengths to excel in this area?