

RYP Quarterly

How Great Leaders Escape the 60% Engagement Death Zone

Stuck in the 60s? What Flat Engagement Scores Say About Your Leadership Credibility
- And How to Turn It Around



RYP QUARTERLY

No matter how you spin it, cut it or dice it, a staff engagement score sitting in the mid-sixties over a period of time is a measure of mediocrity! You are not poor. And you are definitely not good. It reflects one thing, and one thing only. How the organisation is being led at all levels!

If your staff engagement scores have been sitting stubbornly in the mid-60s for the past three years, it's time for a reality check. This is not just "normal business turbulence." It's not something you can shrug off as "good enough."

It's a signal about your leadership credibility — and it's flashing bright orange.

When engagement scores hover around 65% year after year, they're telling you something critical:

- ✓ People have not fully bought in.
- ✓ Trust in leadership is patchy.
- ✓ The emotional investment of your team is fragile at best.

It's leadership credibility — not communications, not incentives, not perks — that's under pressure.

And pretending otherwise is dangerous.

The vast majority of staff engagement scores for organisations sit in the mid 60's. It is the statistical average. It means you are average!

THE LEADERSHIP MESSAGE BEHIND MID-60S ENGAGEMENT

Engagement scores in the mid-60s are like a polite but firm rejection letter. Not bad enough to cause a mutiny. Not good enough to build a resilient, high-performing culture.

It means leaders are going through the motions of purpose, culture, achievements, and a compelling value proposition, but it is flat, stale, and uninspiring. Well intended - yes. Credible and motivating - no!

HERE'S WHAT FLATLINING STAFF ENGAGEMENT SIGNALS ABOUT YOUR LEADERSHIP:

1. You are seen as competent, but not inspiring.

People think you're capable — but they're not willing to stretch, sacrifice, or innovate for you.

2. You are consistent, but not connecting.

Processes are followed. Meetings happen. KPIs are tracked. But energy, loyalty, and commitment stay transactional.

3. You communicate, but you don't move people.

They hear you. They understand you. They just don't feel you. And they don't feel particularly seen either.

4. You respond to issues, but you don't shift the system.

Surface problems get managed. But deep frustrations, legacy bottlenecks, and cultural inertia remain untouched.

In short: you're maintaining the machine. You're not leading a movement!

WHY THIS ERODES CREDIBILITY OVER TIME:



Leadership credibility is built on two things: trust and belief. When engagement is middling year after year, it quietly chips away at both:

- *People trust you to keep the wheels turning*, but not necessarily to lead them somewhere better.
- *People believe you care about improvement*, but maybe not enough to make bold, difficult changes.

Eventually, the best talent drifts away. The mediocre talent becomes your norm. The sceptics become your dominant culture. And you wonder why results plateau.

WHAT LEADERS MUST DO:

If you want to change the story — and rebuild your leadership credibility — you have to move from managing engagement to rebuilding trust and belief. Here's how:

1. Stop hiding behind “good enough” metrics.

Mid-60s engagement scores are not neutral. They are an early warning. Treat them like the cultural alarm bells they are.

2. Own the credibility gap — publicly.

Tell your teams: *“We’ve been sitting in the 60s for three years. That tells me we haven’t earned your full trust yet. I own that. And it’s going to change.”*

- On the job learning
- Equitable pay and conditions
- Access to Coaching & Mentoring by Colleagues
- Working with good co-workers with a committed Team Culture
- Strong ESG Credentials (not platitudes)

Leadership credibility grows when leaders acknowledge reality without defensiveness.

3. Go after the real issues, not the safe ones. Ask brave questions:

- Where are we falling short on our values?
- Where are people experiencing distrust or fear?
- What broken promises have we left unaddressed?
- Do you believe in our brand promise and value proposition?
- What can we do to build our leadership credibility with you?
- Are you heard? How can we ensure you are heard & empowered?

4. Make leadership behaviours the frontline, not the HR team.

You can't outsource culture repair to a staff survey or a wellness initiative.

Real change happens when every leader model trust-building behaviour: owning mistakes, giving feedback face-to-face, closing loops visibly, actively listening, and demonstrating personal accountability.

Fix the root causes — not just the symptoms.

5. Light a bigger fire.

If people aren't fully engaged, it's often because the vision isn't bold enough, or personal enough, or locally applied enough! Reframe the "why" behind the work. Paint a compelling picture of where you're going — and how every person's work matters. Link and align locally – otherwise it has no meaning or context!

Remember: People don't get inspired by maintenance. They get inspired by meaning and achievement and a sense of progress.

The Hard Truth

Three years of mid-60s engagement scores is not a people problem. It's not a generational problem. It's a leadership credibility problem. You cannot blame the next generations upbringing and attitude to life. That is a cop out! Wallowing in a culture of mediocrity is a leadership credibility issue, not a staff attitude issue!

But Here's The Good News

Credibility can be rebuilt faster than you think — if you're willing to get uncomfortable. The leaders who turn cultures around are the ones who:

- Stop Asking, "How do we get people more engaged?" and
- Start Asking, "What do we need to do to deserve their engagement?"

If you're willing to stop managing the optics and start leading the reality, everything can change. Often all the ingredients such as the Purpose, Vision, Mission, Values, Behaviours, Business Plans, Objective Setting, and Performance Metrics are in place, they have just not been sold to the staff and locally applied and lived by the leaders, so they are not believed.

Where there is no belief, there can be no passion. Where there is no passion, you get staff engagement scores in the mid-sixties!

THE TIME TO LEAD, NOT MAINTAIN, IS NOW.

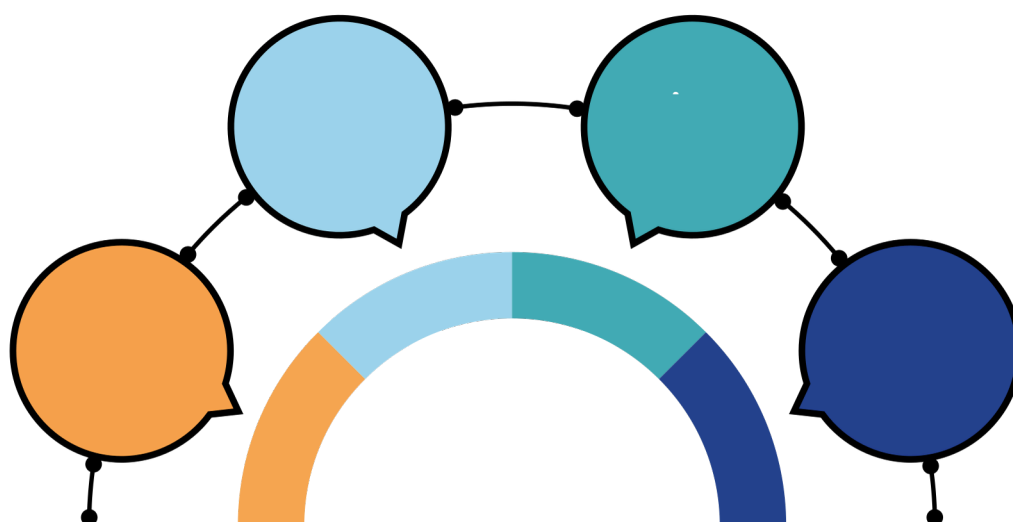
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Leadership Lesson

Talking about your engagement score and trying to nudge it into the 70's is a false line of thinking – it goes nowhere. You need to rethink, refresh, and renew your approach to leadership to build credibility, connection, and local application in a way that motivates and inspires. If the existing leaders cannot do this – you need new leaders! It's time!

Facta Non-Verba – Deeds Not Words

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