



The Most-Revealing Performance Indicator Most Organizations Never Measure

By Raphael H Cohen, Managing Director, Getratex S.A

Engagement surveys measure effort. They should measure outcomes. The gap is costing you.

Most organizations measure performance. Very few verify whether that performance is the best it could be. That blind spot has a name: the absence of meaningful engagement measurement.

This is not a soft HR concern. It is a governance failure.

PwC has estimated that engaged employees deliver up to 35% more productivity and profit than their disengaged counterparts.¹ The implication is stark. Any level of performance delivered by a less-than-fully-engaged workforce is, by definition, suboptimal. You may be hitting your targets and still leaving a third of your potential on the table. Boards and executive teams that do not correlate performance results with the engagement levels of the people producing them are not optimizing. They are guessing.

Satisfaction Is Not Engagement

The instinctive response is to point to the annual employee survey. Many organizations run one. Most believe it covers engagement. Most are wrong — including those who label their survey an “engagement survey.”

Satisfaction and engagement are not the same thing. An employee can be perfectly satisfied — comfortable, undisturbed, not actively looking for another job — while having no particular desire to give their best. Engagement is about discretionary effort. It is the difference between showing up and actually caring about the collective outcome.

Traditional climate surveys compound this confusion. They are long. They mix heterogeneous dimensions. And critically, they measure inputs or means — whether managers listen, whether employees feel empowered, whether the culture feels inclusive — rather than the outcome itself. You can score well on every one of those proxies and still have a disengaged workforce. Measuring a selection of the means does not allow you to reliably deduce the result. Only the result counts.

Three structural biases make this worse. A **prudence bias**: because surveys are run by HR or management, employees who doubt confidentiality give politically safe answers. An **interpretation bias**: measuring behaviors that should produce engagement is not the same as measuring whether engagement was actually produced. An **accountability bias**: when results go to HR and the C-suite, the implicit message is that they are responsible for fixing things. Manager accountability dissolves in the minds of respondents before the survey is even closed.

Who Actually Drives Engagement



Research Outlook

of the variance in employee engagement scores across business units — in other words, the manager is the single biggest factor explaining why engagement differs from one team to another. The remaining 30% is shaped primarily by broader organizational conditions — compensation, culture, strategy — that HR and senior leadership influence directly.

This distinction matters enormously. It means that most of the engagement problem sits at the manager level, not the policy level. Any measurement tool that conflates the two is not just imprecise. It is actively misleading. It points remediation effort in the wrong direction and lets underperforming managers hide behind organizational averages.

A Four-Question Alternative

When I found that no existing tool on the market allowed organizations to measure this distinction cleanly and at low cost, I built one. That is how EazyMirror came to exist — not as a commercial venture first, but as a practitioner's answer to a gap that was costing my clients real performance.

The FEI — Fostered Engagement Index³ — measures one thing: the outcome. Not the behaviors that might or might not produce engagement, but the engagement actually fostered. It does so with four questions, answered in under five minutes, with absolute anonymity guaranteed.

Two questions address the employer:

- How much would you recommend a friend to work for your employer?
- How much do your employer's work conditions and strategy make you want to give your best?

Two address the direct manager:

- How much would you recommend a friend to join the team led by your manager?
- How much does your manager make you want to give your best?

That separation is the core innovation. It isolates what the organization fosters from what each individual manager fosters. You know whether your employees are ambassadors for the company. You also know whether each manager is actually mobilizing their team — independently of the organizational context they operate in.

A Process That Shifts Accountability Where It Belongs

The delivery mechanism is as important as the measurement itself.

Each manager receives only their own score, alongside an anonymized average of their peers. HR and senior leadership receive only consolidated results — no individual manager scores during the grace period. This is not a performance review. It is a mirror.

After a defined grace period — typically three to four measurement cycles — individual scores become visible to relevant stakeholders. Managers know this from the start. That knowledge creates intrinsic motivation to improve. It is categorically different from the extrinsic pressure of a top-down evaluation. Managers who want to improve their score



Because each manager is the only person to receive their personal score initially, the message is unambiguous: fostering engagement is part of your job, and you are fully responsible for your result. The mirror does not judge. It informs. And only the manager can act on what it reveals.

A Governance Instrument, Not Just an HR Tool

The FEI does not replace diagnostic surveys. Those remain valuable for understanding why engagement fostered by HR policies sits where it does — and their results rightly go to HR. The FEI answers a prior and more fundamental question: is engagement where it needs to be, and who is responsible for the gap?

That makes it relevant well beyond HR. Boards and audit committees can verify whether leadership decisions and policies are fostering the engagement required to deliver optimal performance. They can identify management casting errors before they become performance crises. They can hold the organization accountable for the gap between the performance it achieves and the performance it could achieve — a gap that rarely appears in any board report today.

Employer branding teams should also pay attention. There is little point investing in an attractive employer brand if the employees that candidates will work alongside do not actually appreciate their manager or their organization. A strong FEI score is a more credible signal to candidates than any marketing campaign built on an employer brand promise that current employees do not recognize.

The Metric You Are Missing

Organizations that measure performance without measuring the engagement of the people producing it are answering only half the question. They know what was delivered. They do not know whether it was the best that could have been delivered.

The FEI closes that gap. It is fast, inexpensive, repeatable, and — unlike most engagement tools — it measures what actually matters: the result, not the recipe.

The bottom line is in the score.

*Prof. Raphael H Cohen is the creator of the Fair & Caring Leadership Framework and a pioneer in measuring manager-fostered engagement. A keynote speaker, professor, serial entrepreneur, and advisor to Fortune 500 executives, he has spent decades helping senior leaders build teams that are both high-performing and deeply engaged. He is the author of several bestsellers and of the forthcoming “**Driving Employees Engagement: The Leader’s Blueprint with Proven Practices for Team Excellence**” (Springer, 2026).*

The FEI (Fostered Engagement Index) is available at www.eazymirror.com/FEI.

Footnotes

¹ PwC, *Global Human Capital Survey*, March 2003. Note: this figure is widely cited in engagement literature but the original 2003 report is no longer publicly accessible for independent verification. For a more recent and traceable source, see: Gallup, *State of the Global Workplace 2023*, which consistently shows highly engaged business units achieving



² Jim Harter & Amy Adkins, "Employees Want a Lot More From Their Managers," *Gallup Business Journal*, April 8, 2015. The study found that managers account for at least 70% of the variance in employee engagement scores across business units (www.gallup.com/workplace/236570/employees-lot-managers.aspx).

³ The FEI (Fostered Engagement Index) is available at www.eazymirror.com/FEI.