ENGAGE: What Not to Do

We’ve been working with ENGAGE for a while now, but do you know some of the biggest pitfalls to avoid? Here are a few slightly exaggerated examples.

Lack of Preparation
(Scene shows supervisor surprising team member while opening the refrigerator to get lunch)
Supervisor: Let’s ENGAGE!!

Lack of Attention of Interest
(Scene shows supervisor and team member increasingly preoccupied with other items)
Supervisor: So uh, wanted to talk about goals.
Employee: Hmm? Goals?
Supervisor: Yeah, yeah, uh, you uh working on any lately?
Employee: Yeah, yeah, they’re great. Good Goals.
Supervisor: Ah, okay, good,.uh I’m glad they’re going well.
Employee: Hmm? Hmm?

Poor Body Language
(Scene shows supervisor spinning in chair, lack of eye contact and team member with arms crossed)
Supervisor: Uh anything going on this month? Anything noteworthy?
Employee: (silent)
Supervisor: Last month things looked like they were…I don’t know…pretty good. Uh…
Employee: Oh really?
Supervisor: Yeah…yeah, I think that uh meeting you were in last week, you did a pretty good job with.
Employee: That wasn’t me. That was Ted.

Not Timely with Comments
Supervisor: So the report you did for the department turned out really good.
Employee: Thanks. Which report was this? When was that?
Supervisor: Hmm…that one uh…about a year ago.
Employee: A year ago?
Supervisor: Maybe 3, but you rocked it!

Not offering recommendations
Employee: There’s a situation I’m dealing with that I’m really hoping that you have some solutions to suggest because I don’t know what to do. My unit leader isn’t really working out and I’m not sure if you can give me some suggestions on what I should be doing to make this situation better? I mean I’m trying really hard and I tried to make sure that my team is on board with all…
Supervisor: That sounds really good. Sounds like you’re handling this really well. Um…We’ll talk more about it next month. It is taco bowl day at the cafeteria! Let’s go!

For additional information, go to https://oa.mo.gov/engage
Not listening and pushing through conversation
Supervisor: Matt, I’m glad you could make it here today. Wanted to talk to you about your goals.
Employee: Goals? Goals? I got tons of goals.
Supervisor: Wonderful. Wonderful. Wonderful. That’s all we have for today. Thanks for coming to your ENGAGE meeting.

Not Providing Feedback or Just Sticking to “Doing good!”
Supervisor: You doing good?
Employee: Good.
Supervisor: Good?
Employee: Good.
Supervisor: Great.

Focusing on Day-to-Day
Supervisor: So I wanted to talk to you about your professional development. Specifically…
Employee: Oh, I finished pulling all the staples you asked me to do, from those reports.

Piling on
Supervisor: I have just a few critiques I wanted to go over. First off, the report that you did last week, you didn’t get it in on time. Uh, needed to be submitted…Aaand, I noticed that you were 10 minutes late for the meeting with Jaime last week…so you forgot to check that the laptop that you didn’t display a PowerPoint. You gotta check the video drivers before. And uh, I noticed your cube, uh…I can’t even walk through it. I’ll be polite- it’s disgusting. Another thing, you need to feed the office fish. It’s not going to be around long if you don’t.

Defensive or Dismissive
Supervisor: So, I would really like you to give the idea a try.
Employee: Nah, I don’t wanna. No.
Supervisor: Sure?
Employee: Yeah, I’m sure. Not going to do it. (laughing) No.
Supervisor: I’m sorry, you were kind of rude to customers.
Employee: You’re rude to! And you always get the biggest piece of cake on snack day, too!

Insincerity
(Scene shows supervisor with checklist and turns on a tape recorder when the team member sits down)
Supervisor (previously recorded): Hello Jim. Let’s begin.
Employee: I’m Matt.
Supervisor (previously recorded): Today Jim, we’re going to ENGAGE.
Employee: I’m Matt.

Speculating about Motive, Intent, or Attitude
Employee: I am so sorry I’m late.
Supervisor: Yes, you are a few minutes late. And from that, I can deduce, that you do not care about this meeting, you do not care about your co-workers, and you do not care about this job. What do you say about that, sir?

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Employee: Well…it was just a few minutes. I was in the bathroom.

**Not using your Notes**
( Scene shows supervisor and team member each display a copy and watch a frame of the movie, The Notebook)
Supervisor: Matt, thanks for coming to our monthly ENGAGE meeting. First question I have for you, did you bring your notebook?
Employee: Don’t you mean, The Notebook? So are we going to talk about my goals?
Supervisor: Shh…this is my favorite part. Later. Later.

As you saw, the scenes in this video may have been a slight exaggeration of what team members and supervisors might experience. Here a few things to keep in mind to make the most out of your monthly conversations.

- Be prepared and schedule time in advance to reflect on the items that need to be covered.
- Be attentive. Devoting about 20 minutes to the meeting and making the conversation the highest priority.
- Be mindful of your posture, tone, and other non–verbal signals that might detract the open, honest environment you’re trying to create.
- To have the greatest impact, use specific and timely feedback. Offer recommendations and take the time to problem solve together.
- Listen to each other. Don’t interrupt consistently or push through your agenda items. This impacts your ability to develop a trusting relationship.
- When meeting try to dig a little bit deeper than sticking to “Doing good!”
- Make the conversation about the person’s improvement. Daily tasks should be saved for another time.
- Identify and focus on a few goals rather than everything at once.
- Be receptive to feedback because the reality is we can all do something better.
- Be sincere and take an interest in the person you’re engaging with.
- Avoid speculating the person’s motives and attitude. Stick to the observed behaviors.
- And lastly, be sure to use your notebook and capture your progress toward your goals. Right Jim?

Employee: I’m Matt!