

BARRIERS and obstacles to engagement

This tool provides ideas on how organizations can identify both “visible” and “invisible” barriers to engagement.

IDENTIFYING barriers and obstacles to engagement (Part 1)

Linking Culture and Results	Step 1: Establish the Relationship Between Culture and Results
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do employees perceive the work environment?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do these perceptions affect action, behaviors, and the bottom line?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify <u>symptoms</u> of a derailing culture. (See item “A” below)
Understanding the Culture	Step 2: Identify the “Visible” Components of the Organization’s Culture
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an employee survey of the work climate.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the organizational charts, communication guidelines, policies and procedures, recruiting strategies, and recognition programs.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>See item “B” below</u> to view examples of “visible” components.
	Step 3: Identify the “Invisible” Components of the Organization’s Culture
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview employees confidentially using impartial consultants.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek information on the nature of the relationships, unwritten rules, influences of opinion, stories that describe what the company values.
Revealing Cultural Barriers	Step 4: Identify Cultural Barriers to Engagement
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a focus group comprised of employees and impartial consultants to identify cultural barriers.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask open-ended questions to gather more information. For examples, <u>see Item “D” below</u>.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct activities that encourage candid discussion. <u>See Item “E” below</u> for sample activities.

Source: Caterpillar Inc.; Corporate Leadership Council research

SYMPTOMS of a derailing culture (Item A)

- Absenteeism
- Attrition
- High level of grievances
- Inability to attract most qualified candidates
- Increase in injuries
- Inventory shrinkage
- Low level of employee input
- Low levels of volunteerism
- Low productivity
- Resistance to change

EXAMPLES of “visible” components (Item B)

Visible aspects of culture are characteristics easily identifiable in a facility’s operations. Three “visible” aspects of culture:

1. **Communication** – policies conveyed by management to employees

- **Communication** – Generating understanding with employees
- **Policies and Procedures** – Rules and processes supporting desired behaviors
- **Measurement** – Determining if the organization is on track to reach goals

2. **Learning** – consists of formal people-related policies

- **Learning** – Providing employees with needed knowledge to act effectively
- **Decision-Making** – Clarity and acceptance of decision-making structures
- **Leadership** – Effective modeling, guiding and coaching of desired employee behavior
- **Accountability** – Clarity and acceptance of accountability structures

3. **Reinforcements** – indicate how an organization sustains its culture

- **Rewards** – Rewarding desired behaviors
- **Recognition** – Recognizing desired behaviors
- **Selection** – Recruiting employees who support desired behaviors

EXAMPLES of “invisible” components (Item C)

Invisible aspects of culture do not appear in survey data; instead, they manifest in employees' behavior. Caterpillar groups invisible aspects of culture into three categories:

Roadmaps – provide cues about what the organization values

- **Symbols** – Nonverbal communication that explains what is valued
- **Rites and Rituals** – Ceremonies or events that highlight what is important
- **Stories and Myths** – Stories that describe what the company stands for
- **Values** – What the organization cares about most

Relationships – relationships between employees

- **Norms and Routines** – Day to day ways people interact
- **Power** – Influencers of opinion (not necessarily linked to position)
- **Structure** – Relationships, communications and power
- **Roles and Responsibilities** – What is expected of people and their performance against expectations

Reinforcements – how these cultural aspects perpetuate themselves

- **Assumptions** – The unwritten rules accepted as facts
- **Systems and Rules** – The methods that control, measure and reward behaviors

EXAMPLES of open-ended questions (Item D)

Discussion: Let's talk about five cultural traits within organizational cultures: communication, integrity, innovation, flexibility and customer focus.

- Tell me about communication within this organizational culture.
- Let's talk about integrity within this organization. Who has comments?
- How innovative is this organization? Is innovation encouraged?
- Is this organization flexible? Give examples.
- What would you say about this organization's commitment to customer focus?

EXAMPLES of activities that encourage candid discussion (Item E)

Parking Lot

- Give all attendees a sticky note pad.
- Announce the discussion topic, such as, "Identify Organizational Barriers to Performance" and instruct them to write down one idea per note.
- Collect all notes and group them into categories. May post sticky notes on "parking lot" on board or keep on desk.
- Begin a discussion on each category.
- Notes are anonymous

Round Robin

- Announce discussion topic. Go around the room and give each individual equal opportunity to contribute.

Partner Work

- Divide group into pairs. Give each team a discussion topic. Give them time to discuss.
- Each team reports to the group.
- Group comments.

IDENTIFYING solutions to barriers in engagement (part 2)

This tool provides ideas on how organizations can identify solutions to barriers and obstacles to engagement.

	Step 1: Identify Solutions to Barriers to Engagement
Finding Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create action planning teams representing different levels of the workforce to determine solutions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present executive summaries of findings of organizational culture assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorm potential action items and prioritize recommendations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree on a 120-day action plan with executive team
	Step 2: Implement Action Items to Remove Cultural Barriers
Implementing Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate action plan to organization
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign clear accountability of identified actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide organizational support from HR, impartial consultants and senior leaders
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update employees on progress toward implementation actions
	Step 3: Maintain Cycle of Cultural Improvement
Continuous Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct online survey and collect qualitative feedback to assess improvements following implementation of action items
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze results from post-assessments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create new action items for further cultural improvements and assign accountability

www.performanceSolutions.nc.gov/motivationInitiatives/WorkEnvironment/EmployeeEngagementTools/IdentifyingBarrierstoEngagement.pdf

Source: Caterpillar Inc.; Corporate Leadership Council research