The Engagement Gap

Creating a Culture People Want to Be Part Of

Brianna Campbell · HRPCPA Annual Conference · November 4, 2026

Same organization. Same branch.

Two very different employee experiences.





What happens when the real engagement problem is leadership itself?

SHOW OF HANDS

How many of you have been responsible for improving engagement...

...without having direct authority over the leaders influencing it?

Engagement isn’t a program we implement.

It’s an experience we help create.

01 **Listen** → 02 **Understand** → 03 **Act**

70%

of the variance in team engagement is attributable to managers.

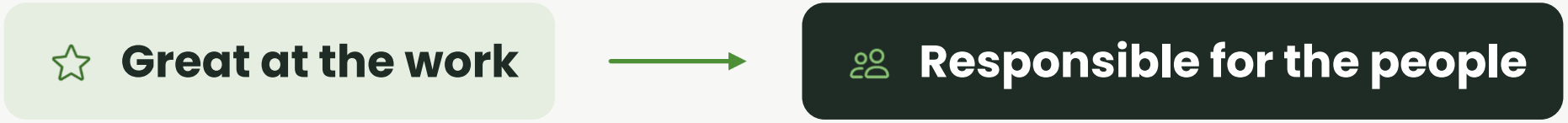
Culture may be shaped at the organizational level — but it's experienced at the team level.

Source: Gallup, How Managers Impact Team Productivity (2026)

THE PETER PRINCIPLE

We promote people for what they do well.

Then expect them to excel at something entirely different.



Source: Benson, Li & Shue, Quarterly Journal of Economics (2019)

PROMOTED FOR
Technical expertise
Individual performance
Experience and results
Task execution

→

EXPECTED TO DELIVER
Coaching
Team performance
Difficult conversations
Motivation and development

We changed the expectations. ***Did we change the support?***

TABLE CONVERSATION · 2 MINUTES

Think of a leader you've seen grow into their role.

What support, experience, or investment helped them become more effective?

If we want to change culture, we have to support the people shaping it.

EQUIP • SUPPORT • HOLD ACCOUNTABLE

What do people need most from leaders?

01 **Trust**

02 **Compassion**

03 **Stability**

04 **Hope**

Source: Gallup, Global Leadership Report: What Followers Want (2025)

LET'S VOTE

Which need was mentioned most often?

A
Trust

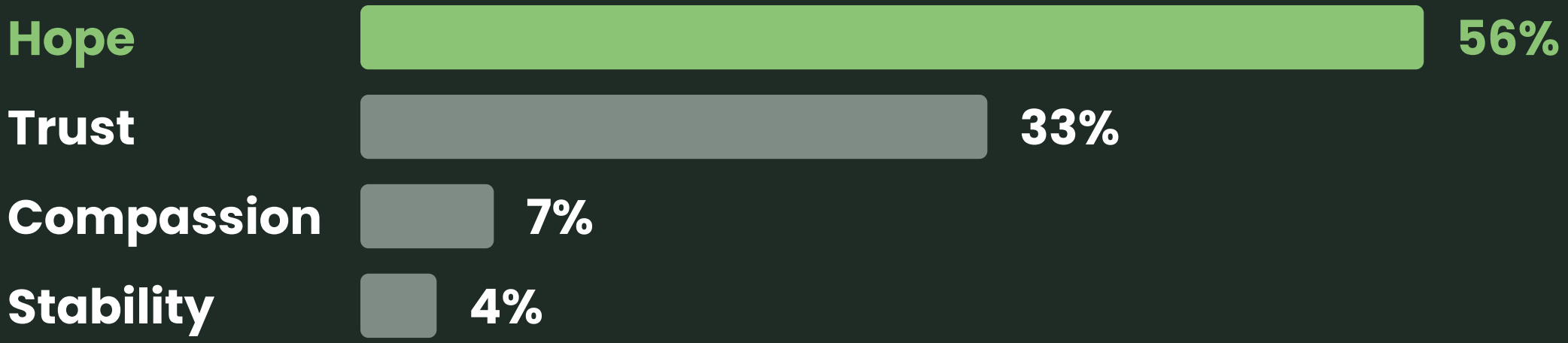
B
Compassion

C
Stability

D
Hope

The Four Needs of Followers

Share of positive leadership attributes mentioned worldwide



Source: Gallup, Global Leadership Report: What Followers Want (2025)

TRUST

Can I believe you?

Consistency · Integrity · Follow-through

COMPASSION

Do I matter?

Care and accountability are not opposites.

STABILITY

What can I count on?

Stability doesn’t require certainty. It requires clarity and consistency.

HOPE

Is there something worth working toward?

Hope is not pretending everything is fine. It’s helping people see a meaningful path forward.

From human needs to leadership behaviors

TRUST

Follow through

COMPASSION

Listen and demonstrate care

STABILITY

Communicate clearly

HOPE

Connect work to purpose and progress

And managers need these things, too.

Where is your greatest opportunity?

TRUST	Where do we need more follow-through?
COMPASSION	Where do people need to feel more supported?
STABILITY	Where do we need greater clarity?
HOPE	Where do people need a stronger sense of purpose or progress?

Choose one.

Closing the engagement gap

01

Equip

Develop and support managers

02

Connect

Normalize meaningful conversations

03

Act

Close the feedback loop

01 · EQUIP

Equip the people shaping culture.

- Are we selecting people for leadership potential?
- Are we developing the skills we're expecting?
- Are we supporting managers after the training ends?

SUPPORT + ACCOUNTABILITY

02 · CONNECT

Make meaningful conversations the norm.

RECOGNITION

“What am I doing well?”

COLLABORATION & SUPPORT

“What help do I need?”

PRIORITIES

“What matters most right now?”

STRENGTHS

“Where am I growing and contributing?”

Source: Gallup research on meaningful manager feedback (adapted)

If meaningful conversations matter so much, what's getting in the way?

- Time
- Confidence
- Distance
- Workload

Don't just ask managers to do more. Help remove the barriers.

03 · ACT

Close the feedback loop.



Employee voice matters when it leads to meaningful response.

CLOSING THE ENGAGEMENT GAP

A culture people want to be part of.

Built through **trust**. Strengthened by **compassion**.
Grounded in **stability**. Inspired by **hope**.

Brianna Campbell



LET'S STAY CONNECTED

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