Here are the ‘top motivations’ for people in these 4 career stages

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Employees fall into four distinct career stages — “Newbie,” “Sophomore,” “Tenured,” and Sage.” This is what motivates each group the most.

Independent public relations and communications company Padilla recently released the Engage by Stage Research Report, breaking down employees into four distinct career stages — namely, “Newbie,” “Sophomore,” “Tenured,” and Sage,” showing what factors motivate each group the most.

The research found that two in five workers were “completely disengaged” from their workplaces. It also found that “alignment between personal and company values” was the key driver to spark engagement.

The report hammered home that even though two workers are close in age, they might be in different stages, so they should be catered to differently.

Julie McCracken, senior director in Padilla’s Employee Engagement group, commented on the research in a statement.
“Overall, to ensure all employees are and remain engaged, organizations must have a compelling vision and mission that is shared, embraced and brought to life in the workplace,” she said. “However, it doesn’t happen overnight. It’s a long-term commitment and strategic undertaking that needs leadership backing and support.”

SMS Research Advisors, Padilla’s independent market research firm, surveyed 1,500 employees for the research. Here are just a few things you need to know about each group.

**What drives newbies**

Newbies were employees with a maximum of three years the their company — the average age was 34, and this group was made up mostly of millennials.

A few of their main motivations were to pick up “new skills or gain new knowledge” (59%), to “feel pride in having accomplished a task or output; a job well-done” and to “contribute to your organization’s overall mission or goals” (both 56%, respectively). “Public recognition for ... accomplishments” was the least popular choice at 20%.

**What keeps sophomores going**

Sophomores have four to seven years at their employer, and the average age was 38.

“At this career stage, employees pay more attention to ethics, transparency and honest communications, expect more frequent communications from supervisors and place the highest value on work-life balance,” according to the report.

Of sophomores' top motivations, being deeply satisfied with a work outcome stood at 63% and to “prove to yourself that you could accomplish certain tasks” was at 59%. “Public recognition for achievements was on the low end of the spectrum at 22%.

Some of the things sophomores struggle the most with are having money for the most important aspects of life and putting away money for retirement (both at 50%) and “paying off student loans or debt,” at 29%.

**What motivates the tenured crowd**

The tenured group has 8-10 years at their employer under their belt, and the average age was 42.
Among the top motivations were to “contribute to your organization's overall mission or goals” (58%) and feeling good about an achievement (56%).

Fifty-two percent said putting money away for retirement was the toughest challenge they face.

What keeps the sage group going

As the group with the longest amount of time put in at their employer, people in this category have worked at their company for a minimum of 11 years. The average age was 50, with baby boomers (ages 53-72) being the largest demographic.

Among the “top motivators” were feeling good about getting something done (63%) and making it personally clear that you can do certain tasks (58%).

Putting enough money away for retirement also weighs heavily on those in the sage group, with 52% choosing it as their biggest challenge. Conversely, chances to advance their careers and “staying up-to-date in workplace trends” were both 22%, respectively.

What employees at all stages largely share

The report also went into what people in all career stages ranked similarly in terms of having the most impact on how engaged they were at the office.

One of the top three for “company values” was encouraging “a positive workplace culture.” The most preferred management style was a collaborative approach, while people liked the “delegator” the least. One of the top two preferred team styles was “small teams, but with individual tasks.”

“People are more alike than different, but it’s human nature to overemphasize differences,” the report says. “When creating an employee engagement program, choose to focus on universal truths or foundational concepts across your employee population, and then customize to meet the needs of specific employee groups.”