



## HR Strategies for Picking Up the Pieces After the Pandemic

A three-part series focused on supporting your employees when they need it most.



**We see the future in you.<sup>SM</sup>**

### Strategy 3 – Create Powerful Connections

White Paper by Vicki Hess

# Picking Up the Pieces After the Pandemic.



**Picking Up the Pieces After the Pandemic** is a three-part series featuring insight and information from Human Resources expert Vicki Hess to help you support your employees when they need it most. Here, we will explore Hess' third strategy, which focuses on creating powerful connections with employees. The two other papers in this series center on additional strategies: *Stress, Burnout & Trauma ... Know the Difference* and *Tap into Your Own Empathy to Support Others*.

Strategy 1    Stress, Burnout & Trauma ... Know the Difference

Strategy 2    Tap into Your Own Empathy to Support Others

## Strategy 3    Create Powerful Connections

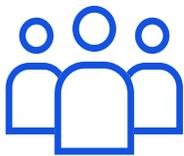
Remember the good old days when you could talk to someone without a mask on? I think we've all lost our edge when it comes to communicating given the need for social distancing and virtual connections.

I'm here today to remind you how important conscious connections are – especially in your HR role. It's easy to stick close to your office and work on the computer instead of spending time with staff. You can also support the formal leaders in your organization by sharing these tactics.

Shortcut #2 in **6 Shortcuts to Employee Engagement** is "Create Connections." This shortcut is a critical part of the leader's role in engaging employees. As humans, we need to connect.



# The importance of community.

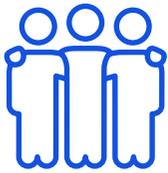


But the news is bleak when it comes to connecting ... here are just a few of the findings from a survey which Cigna conducted of 20K+ U.S. adults (*Cigna 2018 U.S. Loneliness Index*):

- **Nearly half** of Americans report sometimes or always feeling alone or left out.
- **One in four** Americans rarely or never feel as though there are people who really understand them.
- **Two in five** Americans sometimes or always feel that their relationships are not meaningful and that they are isolated from others.
- **One in five** people report they rarely or never feel close to people or feel like there are people they can talk to.

*“The findings reinforce the social nature of humans and the importance of having communities. People who are less lonely are more likely to have regular, meaningful, in-person interactions; are in good overall physical and mental health; have achieved balance in daily activities; and are employed and have good relationships with their coworkers.”*

# What are you doing in your role to promote positive connections?



When I listen to leaders and HR professionals talk about Creating Connections, I hear about two types:

## Chance Connections

Chance Connections are those that are reactive in one way or another. Having an Open-Door (Open Phone) Policy is an example. It's good but doesn't set a very high bar.

Have you ever heard of an organization with a "Closed Door Policy"? Here's what usually happens ... you open your door and sit and wait (and mostly hope that no one stops by so that you can get your "real work" done uninterrupted — haha). It's important to be accessible. So, keep your door open and understand that you are leaving the connection to chance.

The second type of Chance Connection is rounding. In this case, you are the interruption to the staff member. Staff are in the middle of their "real work" and your stopping by might be a welcome break or an annoying inconvenience. Don't get me wrong, rounding is very important because not only do you make connections, you also get a visual of how things are going. Keep rounding with staff, just know that you are still leaving the connection to chance.

# Many leaders struggle with making Conscious Connections.

## Conscious Connections

The most powerful kind of connection is a Conscious Connection — where both you and the team member are proactive and prepared. This happens in a One-on-One (1:1) Meeting (either virtually or in person).

One question I routinely ask leaders in my client needs assessment is *“What do you know you should be doing related to engagement and aren’t and why?”* I’ve asked this question to thousands of leaders and the number one thing they aren’t doing is meeting one-on-one with team members.

The number one reason why they aren’t doing it is that **“there isn’t enough time.”** In follow-up conversations, I hear the second reason it’s not happening is that there’s a perception that it’s not worth the time.

Of course, these two challenges go hand in hand. If you don’t think something is worth your time, then you aren’t going to make time for it.



## Make time for meetings

Here's one thing I know. Your actions and behaviors reflect your beliefs and mindsets. If you believe that meeting 1:1 with your direct reports is important – you will make the time.

Try these ideas:

- 1 Identify your biggest time wasters (email, unnecessary meetings, distractions that are urgent but not important).
- 2 Determine which time wasters you can eliminate to free up the time to spend with your team.
- 3 Put Conscious Connections on your calendar. Stop thinking these meetings will happen on their own.
- 4 Get creative for how to have 1:1 meetings using technology. FaceTime, Zoom and Go to Meeting are all ways to virtually meet with members of your team. Ask IT for help if you're not familiar with what's available.

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## Make the meetings worthwhile

What makes a 1:1 meeting so powerful is that both you and your direct report are prepared for the conversation. It's a Conscious Connection. That alone adds to the value.

Try these ideas:

- 1 Share your "Why" related to 1:1 meetings. Why are they important to you? Why will the employee benefit from them?
- 2 Share the agenda in advance to give everyone a chance to think about it.
- 3 Use the Satisfaction Snapshot™ as a conversation starter. This tool is a powerful way to change the conversation about engagement ... and who is responsible for it.

NOTE: You can download the sample 1:1 meeting agenda and Satisfaction Snapshot at [www.6ShortcutsToEngagement.com](http://www.6ShortcutsToEngagement.com).

Now is the time to create Conscious Connections and positively impact engagement – yours and your team's.

**Enjoy!**

## More About Vicki Hess

Vicki works with healthcare organizations and associations nationwide to mitigate the root causes of employee disengagement. While constantly monitoring industry trends, and doing research on her own, Vicki zeros in on what's working (and what's not) and customizes solutions to complement each organization's culture and place on the engagement journey. She works with organizations and associations across the country to positively impact employee engagement through consulting, workshops, retreats and keynote presentations.

Her unique views on patient and employee engagement are evidence-based, relatable and real world. Organizations that implement Vicki's ideas experience increased productivity, safety, quality, retention, client satisfaction, creativity and more.

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