



# Focusing inward

How improving employee engagement can help rebuild trust in government

# About the authors

## **Sushumna Agarwal | [sushagarwal@deloitte.com](mailto:sushagarwal@deloitte.com)**

Sushumna Agarwal is an assistant manager with the Deloitte Center for Government Insights, Deloitte Services LP. She researches workforce issues at the federal, state, and local government levels. Her primary focus is on applying quantitative techniques to enable data-driven research insights.

## **Lucy Melvin | [lmelvin@deloitte.com](mailto:lmelvin@deloitte.com)**

Lucy Melvin is a leader in Deloitte's Government Human Capital business delivering organizational strategies to transform mission delivery and prepare for the future of work. She leads large-scale transformations for clients across the US Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, and Department of Veterans Affairs. Melvin holds a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina.

## **David Levin | [davlevin@deloitte.com](mailto:davlevin@deloitte.com)**

David Levin is a manager at Deloitte LLP, helping apply behavioral science-based machine learning and artificial intelligence to business analytics programs/projects. Levin has spent the last 25 years working in the areas of business development, intelligence, law enforcement, national defense, and public policy, with a focus on machine learning/artificial intelligence applications to these areas. He strives to enable colleagues to do their best data science and social science research through generating new work for them, managing teams, mentoring, and creating a stable of satisfied clients/colleagues. He has a PhD in government from American University and is a certified project management professional.

## **Mahesh Kelkar | [mkelkar@deloitte.com](mailto:mkelkar@deloitte.com)**

Mahesh Kelkar is the smart cities research leader for the Deloitte Center for Government Insights. His research focuses on understanding the impact of technology, innovation, and policy on the future of cities. He closely tracks the federal and state government sectors and focuses on conducting in-depth research on the intersection of technology with government operations, policy, and decision-making.

# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Introduction  | 2  |
| Higher employee engagement leads to higher public trust   | 6  |
| Aligning employee skills with the agency's mission<br>can have the biggest impact on public trust   | 7  |
| Teamwork, support for diversity, and strategic management<br>are other employee engagement parameters<br>that appear to impact public trust | 10 |
| Looking ahead   | 14 |
| Appendix  | 15 |
| Endnotes  | 22 |

# Introduction

THE CONTACT CENTER at the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) faced a dual crisis: rising customer dissatisfaction and a nearly 200% attrition rate among its contact center employees. The bureau was alarmed that some disengaged employees frequently used negative language with customers, such as “I can’t do that,” rather than positive language, such as “Let me look into that.” Worse, some provided wrong information to rush customers off the phone.

The bureau realized that in order to improve customer experience, it was critical to improve the employee experience. Armed with this insight, the bureau set about streamlining the scheduling process, offering more breaks to employees, and improving training, among other interventions. Improving scheduling processes gave employees greater flexibility and training helped provide the skills needed to meet one of the contact center’s key missions—customer satisfaction. These changes served as important levers that helped improve employees’ experience at work. As a result, within the first month of implementing these changes, customer satisfaction at the BMV had skyrocketed to 92%.<sup>1</sup>

The Indiana BMV story points to an interesting link between employee engagement and customer satisfaction, and subsequently, public trust—more engaged workers tend to work better, and better work typically gives citizens greater trust in an agency’s competence. Employees are often the face of government for citizens. From visiting the local DMV office to interacting with law enforcement or navigating airport security to using the nearest postal service office, constituents continuously

interact with government employees. So how government employees convey themselves is likely to have an outsized impact on citizens’ perceptions of government. If employees offer good services quickly, citizens are likely to think better of government’s competence. If employees are empathetic and listen to citizens’ needs or complaints, citizens are more likely to see government acting from a place of positive intent. Since competence and intent are key ingredients in individuals’ perceptions of trust, the quality of these interactions can have a bearing on public trust.

Current data indicates that trust in government has been falling. After reaching an all-time high in the 1960s, public trust in the US government has been on a perpetual decline—and was at 24% in 2021 (figure 1).<sup>2</sup>

How can governments address this problem of declining trust? Are there targeted steps governments can take to rebuild trust? In practice, assessing trust and the factors behind it can be tricky, as trust reflects an individual’s perception. Trust is the combination of beliefs, perceptions, and feelings shaped by our individual and collective experiences. In general, however, trust is a function of repeated successful interactions between the customer or constituents (in this case) and the service provider or government agency.

With this conceptualization, Deloitte surveyed about 4,000 Americans to assess their trust in US federal government agencies by looking at two elements—perceived competence and intent (see sidebar for details of our methodology).

FIGURE 1

**For the past six decades, trust in the US federal government has generally declined**



Source: Pew Research Center, “Public trust in government: 1958–2021,” May 17, 2021.

Among those people surveyed, the US federal government was found to have the lowest trust among any entity in any sector—including state and local governments and commercial entities.<sup>3</sup> This statistic can be problematic at any time, let alone during a time of public health crises. When the federal government embarks on significant government-sponsored activities such as national vaccination drives, stimulus programs, and digital transformations of unprecedented scale, it relies on public support (trust in government) to act as a multiplier, generating additional engagement in government programs and incentivizing collaboration by private companies.

President Biden recently incorporated trust into his FY22 budget plan, indicating rebuilding trust to be one of the administration’s top priorities. The budget includes citizen trust-building initiatives such as increasing transparency, improving program integrity of government funds, and approaching government program design and delivery with an equity lens. Also, the post-COVID-19 work policy announced by the federal government includes plans to improve trust indirectly by improving federal employees’ work conditions. The work policy aims to implement

remote work, flexible work schedules, and manager training on equitable performance management for hybrid teams in an effort to provide better working conditions to federal employees.<sup>4</sup>

Much of the literature on building trust in government focuses on improving the citizen experience by examining transparency initiatives, citizen engagement, and data privacy practices. But little attention has been paid to the role public sector employees might play in improving public trust.

This article explores how improving among government employees attitudes toward engagement with their work (from this point on referred to as “engagement”) might indirectly increase public trust in government.

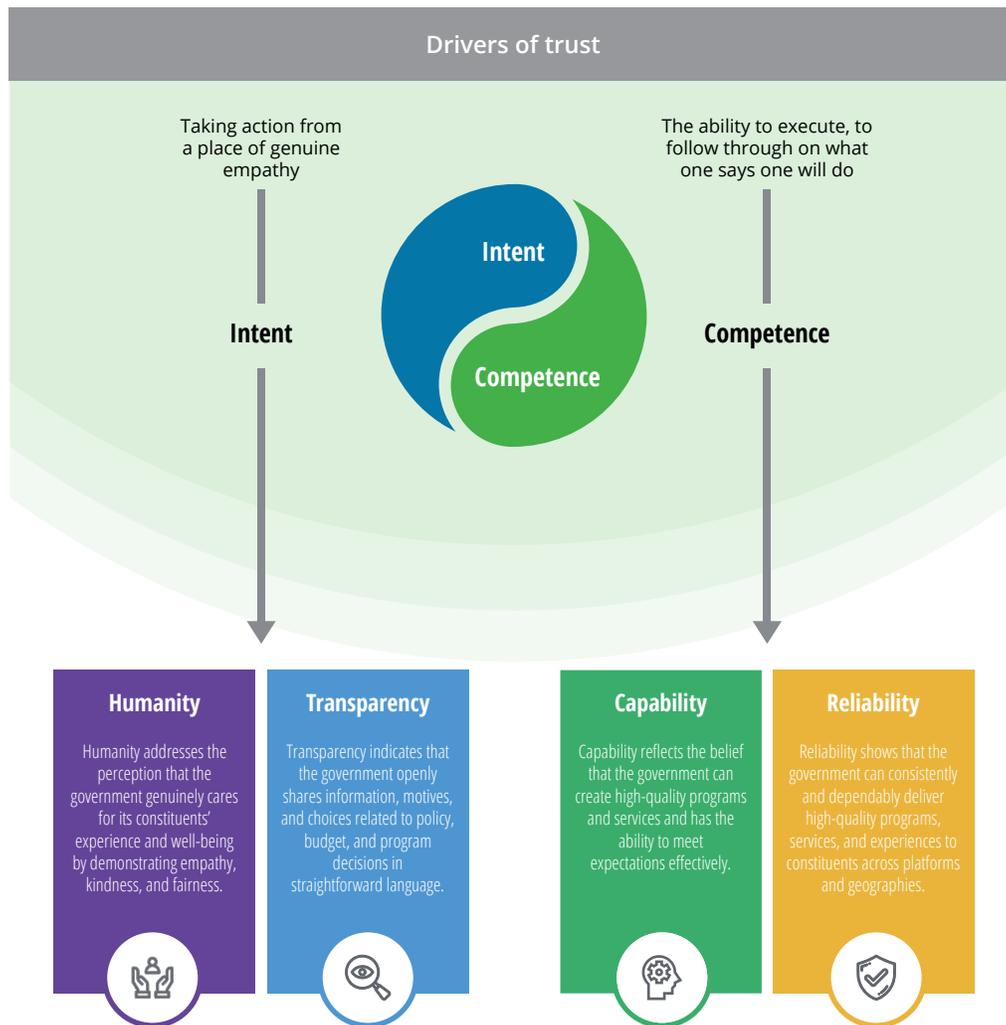
Our preliminary analysis suggests a positive relationship between employee engagement and public trust. We do not claim that this is a definitive study on the topic, but that the initial results warrant further investigation. Studying this area further could influence government strategies to improve employee engagement and, subsequently, public trust.

## ABOUT THE ANALYSIS

Our analysis relies on two data sets: the Deloitte TrustID survey (public trust data) and Best Places to Work (federal employee engagement data).<sup>5</sup> The Deloitte TrustID survey of federal agencies was conducted between October and November 2020. It provides a composite score for 39 federal agencies and departments based on four trust signals: humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability (figure 2; please see [Rebuilding trust in government](#) for details on Deloitte's TrustID framework).

FIGURE 2

### Four trust signals contribute to greater trust



Source: Based on Deloitte's TrustID framework taken from William D. Eggers et al., *Rebuilding trust in government: Four signals that can help improve citizen trust and engagement*, Deloitte Insights, March 9, 2021.

We pulled employee engagement scores for the same federal agencies from Best Places to Work, which uses the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) data.<sup>6</sup> This annual survey measures employees' perception of the extent to which characteristics of a successful organization their agency possesses. Best Places to Work then uses a proprietary weighted formula to assign overall employee engagement scores to each agency and scores on 14 different categories (figure 3).<sup>7</sup>

FIGURE 3

### Best Places to Work employee engagement categories (2019)



Source: Partnership For Public Service, “2020 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings,” accessed August 26, 2021.

To test our hypothesis—employee engagement drives job performance, which in turn drives customer satisfaction, and subsequently, public trust—we paired public trust 2020 data with lagged employee engagement 2019 data.<sup>8</sup>

The intersection of our TrustID Survey and Best Places to Work gave us a set of 28 agencies. We used Ordinary Least Squares regression (OLS) models to study the relationship between trust and employee engagement. These models use different trust variables and employee engagement categories to study which parameters influence trust most.

# Higher employee engagement leads to higher public trust

**O**UR ANALYSIS FOUND that an increase in employee engagement scores led to an increase in public trust.

One way to understand this relationship is by inverting the lens. Disengagement among employees often impacts job performance, which can lead to poor customer experiences, ultimately challenging public trust in government agencies. Importantly, it is not just frontline customer service workers that matter. Even employee engagement among back-office staff who don't directly interact with citizens can impact trust. It is not just the smile at the counter that can impact trust, but the quality and humanity of

government's work. Regardless of how citizens interact with government, whether in person, online, on the phone, or so on, increasing employee engagement can improve the customer experience, thereby likely increasing public trust. That is the lesson of the Indiana BMV example.

The relationship between employee engagement and trust has important implications for governments. Agencies struggling with low public trust can invest in human capital management practices to increase employee morale and thus create conditions for improving public trust through better employee interactions with constituents.

# Aligning employee skills with the agency's mission can have the biggest impact on public trust

WHILE ALL OF us have different expectations from our workplace, in general, we would like to be involved in activities that are important to our organization. We want to feel that we are part of something important and that our skills support the organization's mission. Our analysis suggests that this is the most important employee engagement parameter impacting public trust.

This parameter is measured in our data through the category "employee skills–mission match," which is defined as:

*"The extent to which employees feel that their skills and talents are used effectively. Furthermore, it assesses the level to which employees get satisfaction from their work and understand how their jobs are relevant to the organizational mission."<sup>9</sup>*

This category is built using five questions from the US Office of Personnel Management's (OPM)

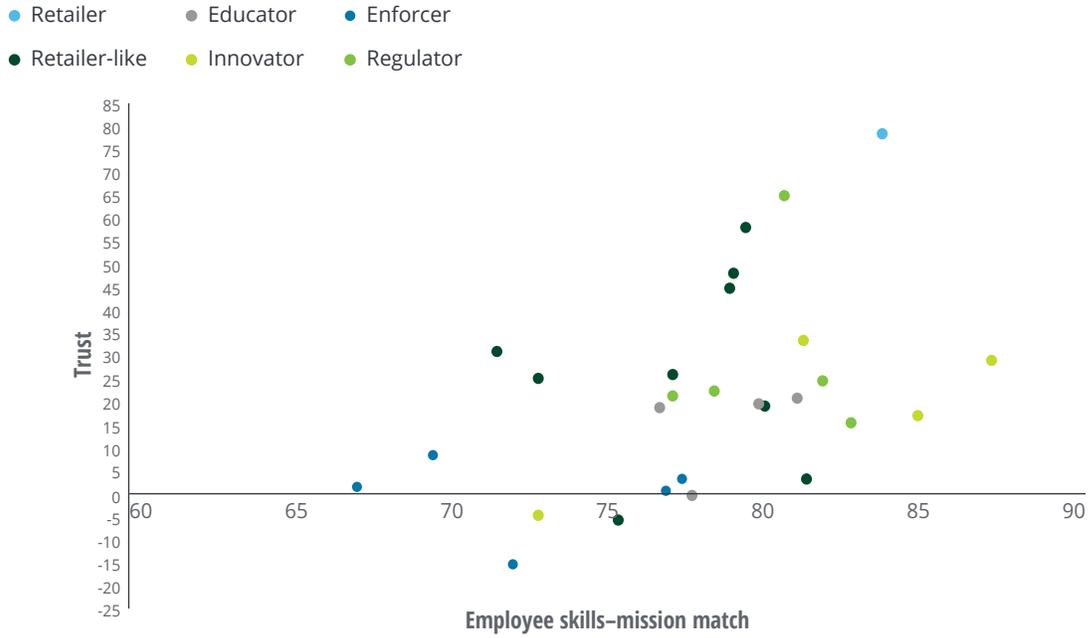
Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS), which measures whether a job matches an employee's talent and skill, how important it is to the agency's mission or goals, whether it fosters a feeling of personal accomplishment, and whether the employee views the job as important.

Of the 14 categories, we found *employee skills–mission match* to have the strongest effect on public trust. In other words, employees who like their work, feel that their talent is being used well, and consider their work to be important, tend to put agencies in a better position to build public trust.<sup>10</sup>

Figure 4 shows a scatter plot of agency scores on employee skills–mission match and trust. The colors of the dots represent the agencies' mission area according to Deloitte's retail-to-regulator (R2R) framework, which categorizes government mission areas into six broad archetypes (figure 5).<sup>11</sup> (Read more about Deloitte's [R2R framework](#).)

FIGURE 4

### Data shows a positive relationship between employee skills-mission match and public trust



Source: Deloitte analysis.

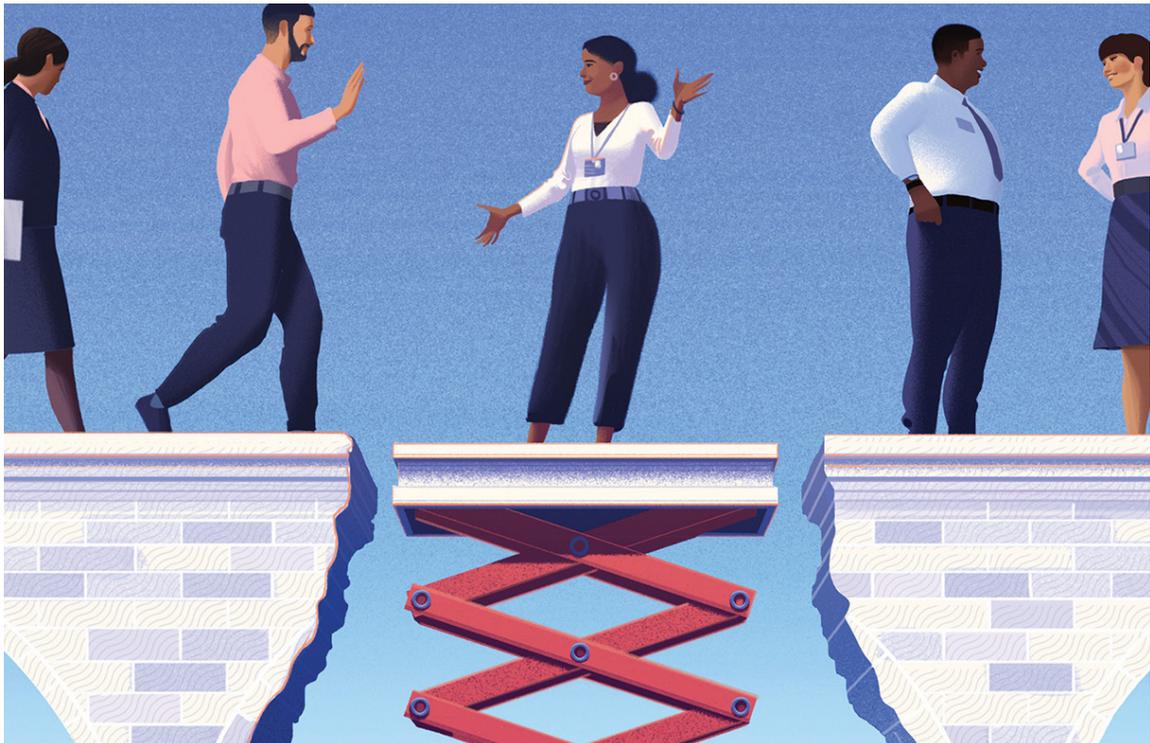


FIGURE 5

## Government missions fall on a spectrum of six archetypes



### Retailer

Offer goods and services to external customers or staff in a competitive environment, e.g., United States Postal Service (USPS).



### Retailer-like

Provide a service, often for a fee, but no competitive alternative exists, e.g., Passport Services, Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV).



### Innovator

Drive new ways of thinking and doing; or support the innovation of others through investment, e.g., National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).



### Educator

Impart knowledge, skills, and resources to inform, influence, or drive an outcome, e.g., Census Bureau, Voice of America.



### Regulator

Develop rules and regulations that effectively deter undesired or illegal behaviors, e.g., Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).



### Enforcer

Enforce rules and regulations by detecting wrongdoing and enacting consequences, e.g., US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), law enforcement agencies.

Source: Deloitte Digital, "Retail to regulator: A new framework to improve customer service for citizens," 2015.

We found that enforcer agencies generally lie on the lower end of the plot, indicating low employee engagement and low public trust. At the other end, we found that one of the retailer agencies in our sample enjoys both high employee engagement and high trust.

It can be easier for retail agencies to match employee skills with their agency's missions. This is because retail agencies, generally, have a clear and straightforward mission: to provide services to a defined set of customers.

However, the same cannot be said about enforcer agencies like local and federal law enforcement agencies. In most of these agencies, employees face competing priorities like national security, protecting people, but also showing empathy and focusing on constituent experience. Such dueling priorities can dilute their mission and create a skills mismatch for their employees. When employees who are primarily trained in security and enforcement are asked to fill a customer services role, such as processing refugees

seeking asylum or dealing with incoming travelers at airports, the discrepancy in what they are trained for and what they are asked to do can lead to low employee engagement.

Additionally, we found that employee skills—mission match is the most important engagement parameter, impacting all four trust signals—humanity, transparency, capability, and reliability. Its relationship with each of the other signals is statistically significant.

Our research indicates that government agencies should take clear steps to align employee goals with team goals—and with agency goals—to ensure employees understand their roles and feel aligned with the agency's mission. That means not only training employees in the right skills for their tasks, but also showing employees how their tasks help accomplish the larger mission. Our analysis suggests this one change can have a large impact on improving public trust levels.

# Teamwork, support for diversity, and strategic management are other employee engagement parameters that appear to impact public trust

A GOOD EMPLOYER CAN make employees feel part of something important and keep them happy. Research shows that organizational culture has a strong influence on employee performance.<sup>12</sup> Our analysis reveals that three important categories that touch on an organization's culture—teamwork, support for diversity, and strategic management—can influence public trust through its impact on employee engagement.

An emphasis on teamwork can promote better communication and cooperation between

employees. Similarly, an organization that supports diversity can help employees feel valued, respected, and welcomed. Meanwhile, strategic management practices should ensure employees have the right skills to do their jobs competently and confidently. These are all important parameters that again connect to delivering the mission. For instance, organizations that promote teamwork and support diversity have been shown to be more innovative, in general, than their counterparts, and could therefore deliver the mission more effectively.<sup>13</sup>

FIGURE 6

### Three other employee engagement categories seem to impact public trust



**Teamwork**

Extent to which employees believe they communicate effectively, share knowledge, and create a friendly work environment.

**Support for diversity**

Extent to which employees believe that actions and policies of leadership and management promote and respect diversity.

**Strategic management**

Extent to which employees believe that management ensures that they have the necessary skills and abilities to do their jobs.

Source: Partnership For Public Service, “2020 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings.”

Further, we found that along with the three categories described above, “effective leadership: supervisors,” “effective leadership: fairness,” and “effective leadership: empowerment” also have a positive relationship with humanity, while “effective leadership: supervisors” and “effective leadership: fairness” have a positive impact on the capability trust signal (see figure 7 for definitions of these categories).

Sports teams are a great example of the impact of effective leadership on employee engagement. When coaches invest in their players, player performance tends to improve, resulting in more wins and happier fans.<sup>14</sup> The United States National Collegiate Athletic Association found basketball teams that trusted their coaches won 7% more games than those that did not.<sup>15</sup> A similar dynamic seems to be at play in the workplace, where trust in leadership typically leads to better employee engagement and higher public trust.

FIGURE 7

## Effective leadership categories impact humanity and capability trust signals



### Effective leadership: Supervisors

Measures employee opinion about supervisor's job performance, extent to which supervisor supports employee development and provides worthwhile feedback.

### Effective leadership: Fairness

Extent to which employees believe disputes are resolved fairly and if employees feel comfortable reporting illegal activity without fear of reprisal.

### Effective leadership: Empowerment

Extent to which employees feel empowered with respect to work processes and how satisfied they are with their involvement in decisions that affect their work.

Source: Partnership For Public Service, "2020 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings."

## DID THE PANDEMIC IMPACT THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT–PUBLIC TRUST RELATIONSHIP?

In June 2021, Best Places to Work released employee engagement scores for federal agencies using the FEVS survey administered between September and November 2020. This data is slightly different from the previous years due to two primary reasons. First, survey questions were added, removed, or modified to understand the impact of the pandemic on employee engagement.<sup>16</sup> Second, Best Places to Work changed its method of calculating category scores. Due to these changes, some categories such as strategic management and support for diversity, were not a part of the new data set.

We did another round of analysis to see if employee engagement during the pandemic impacted public trust. For this, we combined Best Places to Work 2020 with Deloitte Federal Trust survey data conducted in May 2021 for the same 28 agencies. We found that the overall employee engagement parameter did not have a significant impact on public trust. However, at the category level, employee skills–mission match continued to be the most important parameter impacting public trust—composite trust and the four trust signals. In addition, we found two COVID-19–related categories had a strong positive relationship with public trust:

- **COVID job resources:** This category measures the extent to which employees think their organization supported their work during the pandemic by providing consistent communication, training, equipment for working remotely, and IT support.
- **COVID employee well-being:** This category measures the extent to which employees think their organization supported their physical and mental well-being during the pandemic by providing flexible work schedules, expanded leaves, and expanded physical and mental health resources.

The results are consistent with our hypothesis that happy, satisfied employees are more engaged and can help improve public trust by providing a better experience to constituents.

.....

# Looking ahead

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IS ultimately about how individual people view their work. To improve engagement, and therefore trust, governments can apply a range of human-centered design *tools and approaches* such as segmentation, journey mapping, human-centered service design, personalization, and co-creation to improve employee experience and engagement. These tools might not only improve employee experience, but the human-centered design approach can provide them a peek into what matters to its customers, thus possibly helping to improve customer experience and public trust. Additionally, *diversity, equity, and inclusion* practices are associated with fostering employee engagement and building a trusting climate. Focusing on these principles can improve teaming, coaching, and the

relationship employees have with those they work with on a day-to-day basis.

It is no secret that improving employee engagement can lead to positive workplace outcomes. According to a Gallup analysis of 50 years of workplace data, employee engagement impacts everything from productivity to profitability.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, higher employee engagement has been found to correlate with higher retention rates in the federal government.<sup>18</sup>

Through our analysis, we found employee engagement could impact yet another critical government objective—public trust. This relationship is worth investigating further as it can open a new and important route for governments in rebuilding public trust.

# Appendix

THE ORDINARY LEAST Squares (OLS) models used for this analysis are all one explanatory variable models. This means that in each OLS model, we have used public trust as the dependent variable and only one employee engagement category as the explanatory variable. Due to this, the R-square values in the model are relatively modest. If we were to include other explanatory variables in the model—that can impact public trust—then the overall model fit (R-square) would likely improve. However, our focus was not to

explain as much of the variance in the dependent variable as possible (maximizing R-square), but to establish that a relationship likely exists between trust and the explanatory variable. Therefore, we kept the OLS models as minimalist as possible.

In the figures below, we have included only those employee engagement categories that have a significant relation with composite trust as well as the four trust signals at 95% or 90% confidence levels.

## OLS analysis results using employee engagement 2019 and public trust 2020 data

FIGURE 8

### OLS of composite trust on overall employee engagement (significant at 90% confidence level)

| Variable                    | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-----------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Overall employee engagement | 0.66        | 1.73    | 0.09    | 0.103     |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 9

### OLS of composite trust on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 2.14        | 2.58    | 0.01    | 0.204     |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 10

**OLS of humanity on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 2.64        | 3.12    | 0.004   | 0.27      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 11

**OLS of transparency on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 1.82        | 2.20    | 0.03    | 0.15      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 12

**OLS of capability on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 2.15        | 2.59    | 0.01    | 0.20      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 13

**OLS of reliability on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 1.97        | 2.22    | 0.03    | 0.15      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 14

**OLS of composite trust on employee engagement categories that are significant at 90%**

| Variable              | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Teamwork              | 1.25        | 1.75    | 0.09    | 0.105     |
| Support for diversity | 1.03        | 1.73    | 0.09    | 0.104     |
| Strategic management  | 1.007       | 1.712   | 0.09    | 0.101     |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 15

**OLS of humanity on employee engagement categories that are significant at 90%**

| Variable                          | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Teamwork                          | 1.53        | 2.04    | 0.05    | 0.14      |
| Effective leadership: Supervisors | 1.27        | 1.82    | 0.08    | 0.11      |
| Support for diversity             | 1.24        | 1.99    | 0.05    | 0.13      |
| Strategic management              | 1.15        | 1.8     | 0.07    | 0.117     |
| Effective leadership: Fairness    | 1.11        | 1.93    | 0.06    | 0.12      |
| Effective leadership: Empowerment | 0.87        | 1.81    | 0.08    | 0.11      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 16

**OLS of capability on employee engagement categories that are significant at 90%**

| Variable                          | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Teamwork                          | 1.26        | 1.76    | 0.08    | 0.107     |
| Effective leadership: Supervisors | 1.16        | 1.76    | 0.08    | 0.107     |
| Support for diversity             | 1.09        | 1.84    | 0.07    | 0.11      |
| Strategic management              | 1.08        | 1.86    | 0.07    | 0.11      |
| Effective leadership: Fairness    | 1.02        | 1.87    | 0.07    | 0.11      |

Note: There are no employee engagement categories that are related to transparency and reliability trust signals at the 90% level.

Source: Deloitte analysis.

**OLS analysis results using employee engagement 2020 and public trust 2021 data**

FIGURE 17

**OLS of composite trust on employee engagement categories significant at 95% level**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 1.49        | 2.43    | 0.02    | 0.18      |
| COVID job resources           | 1.69        | 2.35    | 0.03    | 0.17      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 18

**OLS of humanity on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 1.73        | 2.89    | 0.01    | 0.24      |
| COVID job resources           | 1.61        | 2.19    | 0.04    | 0.16      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 19

**OLS of transparency on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable            | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|---------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| COVID job resources | 1.85        | 2.51    | 0.02    | 0.19      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 20

**OLS of capability on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| COVID job resources           | 1.76        | 2.33    | 0.03    | 0.17      |
| Employee skills-mission match | 1.64        | 2.57    | 0.02    | 0.20      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 21

**OLS of reliability on employee engagement categories that are significant at 95%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| COVID job resources           | 1.54        | 2.16    | 0.04    | 0.15      |
| Employee skills-mission match | 1.40        | 2.32    | 0.03    | 0.17      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 22

**OLS of composite trust on employee engagement categories significant at 90% level**

| Variable                  | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| COVID employee well-being | 1.14        | 1.84    | 0.08    | 0.12      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 23

**OLS of humanity on employee engagement categories that are significant at 90%**

| Variable                  | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| COVID employee well-being | 1.17        | 1.88    | 0.07    | 0.12      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 24

**OLS of transparency on employee engagement categories that are significant at 90%**

| Variable                      | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|-------------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Employee skills-mission match | 1.19        | 1.79    | 0.09    | 0.11      |
| COVID employee well-being     | 1.15        | 1.79    | 0.09    | 0.11      |

Source: Deloitte analysis.

FIGURE 25

**OLS of capability on employee engagement categories that are significant at 90%**

| Variable                  | Coefficient | T-value | P-value | R-squared |
|---------------------------|-------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| COVID employee well-being | 1.23        | 1.91    | 0.07    | 0.12      |

Note: There are no employee engagement categories that are related to reliability trust signal at the 90% level.

Source: Deloitte analysis.

## Endnotes

1. Andrew Conner, "How motor vehicle agencies are adapting to meet growing customer expectation," American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators, August 2019.
2. Pew Research Center, "Americans' views of government: Low trust, but some positive performance ratings," September 14, 2020; Pew Research Center, "Public trust in government: 1958–2021," May 17, 2021.
3. William D. Eggers et al., *Rebuilding trust in government*, Deloitte Insights, March 9, 2021.
4. Stephanie Rapp-Tully, "How federal agencies will proceed with hybrid workplaces," Bloomberg Law, July 8, 2021.
5. Partnership For Public Service, "2020 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings," accessed August 26, 2021.
6. Ibid.
7. Office of Personnel Management, "Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey," accessed August 26, 2021; Partnership For Public Service, "2020 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings."
8. It can take time for any feedback process—such as the one described in our hypothesis—to show in aggregate attitudinal data. For example, a person's perception of government in 2020 was likely due to interactions with government that they had in the past. So to better measure the relation between trust and factors like employee engagement that influence trust through government-citizen interactions, it is better to compare trust data from 1 year with employee engagement data from at least a few months prior.
9. Partnership For Public Service, "2020 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings."
10. To fully test the direction of causality, we need to check the relationship between employee engagement and lagged public trust. However, due to lack of data, we were not able to check for this.
11. Deloitte Digital, "Retail to regulator: A new framework to improve customer service for citizens," 2015.
12. Dan Pontefract, "If culture comes first, performance will follow," *Forbes*, May 25, 2017.
13. Kwasi Mitchell et al., *To be more innovative the DIB needs to be more diverse*, Deloitte Insights, June 30, 2021.
14. Punit Renjen, *The value of resilient leadership*, Deloitte Insights, October 8, 2020.
15. Sandra J. Sucher and Shalene Gupta, "The trust crisis," *Harvard Business Review*, July 16, 2019.
16. Office of Personnel Management, *Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey: Governmentwide management report*, 2020.
17. Gallup, "What is employee engagement and how do you improve it," accessed August 26, 2021.
18. Kristina J. Calecas, "Job satisfaction, employee engagement, and turnover intention in federal employment," Walden University, 2019.

## Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank **William Eggers, Bruce Chew, and Joe Mariani** for their critical inputs in drafting this report and **Kannan Thirumalai** for his support on data analysis.

The authors would also like to thank **Jesse Goldhammer, Sam Korta, Joshua Knight, Lauren Savoy, Forest Richardson, Susan Hogan, and Katie Javorsky** for contributing their time and insights into the report.

## Contact us

*Our insights can help you take advantage of change. If you're looking for fresh ideas to address your challenges, we should talk.*

### Industry contact

**Lucy Melvin**

Principal | Deloitte Consulting LLP  
+1 571 814 7779 | lmelvin@deloitte.com

Lucy Melvin is a leader in Deloitte's Government Human Capital business delivering organizational strategies to transform mission delivery and prepare for the future of work.

### The Deloitte Center for Government Insights

**William Eggers**

Center director | Deloitte Services LP  
+1 571 882 6585 | weggers@deloitte.com

William Eggers is the executive director of Deloitte's Center for Government Insights, where he is responsible for the firm's public sector thought leadership.

## About the Deloitte Center for Government Insights

The Deloitte Center for Government Insights shares inspiring stories of government innovation, looking at what's behind the adoption of new technologies and management practices. We produce cutting-edge research that guides public officials without burying them in jargon and minutiae, crystalizing essential insights in an easy-to-absorb format. Through research, forums, and immersive workshops, our goal is to provide public officials, policy professionals, and members of the media with fresh insights that advance an understanding of what is possible in government transformation.

### Trust in government

It's time to recognize the importance of trust in our public institutions. When trust in government declines, it becomes harder for government to execute on essential tasks. Trust helps government connect with residents and encourages voluntary compliance with rules and regulations.

Trust can elevate government, improving performance and connecting with the common good. Now more than ever, governments should be thinking about trust as an essential component of performance. Deloitte can help public officials measure, enhance, and amplify trust in government agencies. To learn more, visit [Deloitte.com](https://www.deloitte.com).

# Deloitte.

## Insights

Sign up for Deloitte Insights updates at [www.deloitte.com/insights](http://www.deloitte.com/insights).



Follow @DeloitteInsight

### **Deloitte Insights contributors**

**Editorial:** Ramani Moses, Aparna Prusty, and Dilip Poddar

**Creative:** Jim Slatton, Hazel Raj, Govindh Raj, and Anoushriya S Rao

**Audience development:** Hannah Rapp and Nikita Garia

**Cover artwork:** Sam Chivers

### **About Deloitte Insights**

Deloitte Insights publishes original articles, reports and periodicals that provide insights for businesses, the public sector and NGOs. Our goal is to draw upon research and experience from throughout our professional services organization, and that of coauthors in academia and business, to advance the conversation on a broad spectrum of topics of interest to executives and government leaders.

Deloitte Insights is an imprint of Deloitte Development LLC.

### **About this publication**

This publication contains general information only, and none of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, its member firms, or its and their affiliates are, by means of this publication, rendering accounting, business, financial, investment, legal, tax, or other professional advice or services. This publication is not a substitute for such professional advice or services, nor should it be used as a basis for any decision or action that may affect your finances or your business. Before making any decision or taking any action that may affect your finances or your business, you should consult a qualified professional adviser.

None of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, its member firms, or its and their respective affiliates shall be responsible for any loss whatsoever sustained by any person who relies on this publication.

### **About Deloitte**

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee ("DTTL"), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as "Deloitte Global") does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the "Deloitte" name in the United States and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see [www.deloitte.com/about](http://www.deloitte.com/about) to learn more about our global network of member firms.