



Autonomize Your Team

**Empower employees and
managers with self-service**



When it comes to engaging managers and employees, it's not just about pulse surveys and perks – you need to empower them to do their work.

Employee self-service (ESS) technology can help you do just that.

Perhaps you already think of ESS – that is, a web-based tool through which people can access information and perform certain transactions – as a means to ensure greater efficiency. But ESS isn't solely about automating transactions. It's time to expand your view of what an ESS platform can accomplish in your organization.



An ESS platform can improve how your people work in three overarching ways. It:



Empowers them
by providing
ready access
to information



Enables them
to accomplish
administrative tasks
more easily, quickly,
and accurately



Ensures that
employees focus on
the aspects of their
work they enjoy,
adding true value
to the business

Essentially, an ESS platform is itself an empowerment tool because it gives people autonomy to address their needs and the needs of your organization on their own terms, giving them greater control over their work. It's the efficiency that frees them to be more effective – and more engaged.



The Role of Autonomy: Engagement

Autonomy is a central driver of employee engagement. It can be defined as the need to control one's life to fulfill one's desires. As in life, so in the workplace.

Numerous notable researchers – Edward L. Deci, Richard Ryan, and Daniel Pink – advocate for some form of the self-determination theory of motivation, which heavily focuses on people's need to have greater control over their work to thrive and to be engaged.

“Control leads to compliance. Autonomy leads to engagement.” – Daniel Pink

To be fair, there are numerous drivers of employee engagement – like compensation, role of leadership, brand reputation, etc. – but a top driver will always be the work itself. Indeed, Gallup defines engagement as “an employee's involvement with, commitment to, and satisfaction with work.”

In other words, you can deploy all sorts of employee engagement initiatives, but if people aren't able to work productively in ways that provide satisfaction, engagement will not improve – and neither will business results.

By leveraging ESS technology in the right ways, you can enable your people to access information they need, focus less on time-consuming administrative tasks, and concentrate more on what they love doing.



Research by the Aberdeen Group showed that increased autonomy provided by ESS software can lead to **18 percent** higher employee engagement scores.



Another study revealed that employees who felt they had more autonomy were not only more satisfied with their jobs but less likely to leave their roles.

Further research showed that people were more than twice as likely to take a job with more autonomy than one with more influence. In other words, people want control over their own destiny more than they want to control that of those around them.

“Successful organizations know how to energize employees by giving them the ability to make decisions that affect their work. Empowering employees in this way provides them a greater sense of control, more say in how work gets accomplished, and more opportunities for learning.”

— [SHRM Foundation](#)

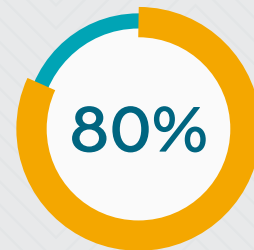




ESS as an Engagement Tool

ESS systems enable employees to handle numerous basic tasks, like updating personal data, accessing benefits and pay details, and so on. If employees had to involve HR professionals to help them with such administrative actions, they would take far longer. The phone calls, emails, and redundancies would be too energy- and time-consuming – and wouldn't necessarily yield accurate results.

Over 80 percent of organizations think that HR service delivery is important to employee satisfaction and engagement.





ESS is not just for front-line workers. Here's a sampling of how different groups can leverage ESS:



Executives: Senior leaders can access dashboards and metrics to help them with decision-making, forecasting, budgeting, and succession planning. The right ESS software puts this information at leaders' fingertips rather than making them consult with multiple stakeholders and waste days, weeks, or months waiting for data to be pulled.



Managers: Managers can access metrics, analytics, staffing reports, PTO information, performance, promotions, raises, and other information. This enables them to make quick, real-time decisions, as well as handle approvals in a timely fashion. All of which frees them to focus more on their own work, as well as coach their employees. At the same time, managers can get views of past and planned attendance to make more informed staffing decisions.



Employees: Employees have access to benefits (enrollments and plan details), pay, retirement planning, organizational information, onboarding, offboarding, real-time PTO view, and more.

Employees don't have to call HR or speak to a manager to answer basic questions and handle routine tasks. They're able to get in, get out, and get their work done with impact. No one wants to click or call around for an hour just to view a recent pay stub. People can also view their vacation time and overtime, access team schedules to inform decisions on PTO, and track their time from anywhere with the devices of their choice.



HR professionals: Data and dashboards help HR practitioners make a wide range of talent decisions around recruitment, retention, performance, and many other KPIs. Such quick access to live data enables them to focus on strategic elements of their work in ways that help other business leaders throughout the organization.



ESS systems work toward enabling, empowering, and engaging the entirety of your workforce to focus on the mission: getting the work done. The important piece of that, however, is having an *engaged* workforce.

To increase engagement with ESS, it's good practice to include a variety of dynamic elements, including:

- **Simple, intuitive navigation:** Including seamless integration of videos, tip sheets, menus, and other data creates ease and efficiency.
- **Personalization:** Employees should be able to personalize settings to have access to the information they need most. That can include shortcuts to information (like bookmarks) or control over the on-screen layout of different devices. Additionally, the right ESS system can tailor information according to an employee's role and other demographics.
- **Notifications:** Leveraging push notifications can serve as effective reminders.
- **Decision support:** Access to data is one thing; effective ESS systems should also offer tools and guides to help people use the platform, as well as help them make decisions based on the information.
- **Search:** Search functionality is key toward hitting on the right information for the right person at the right time. Remember, it's about getting in, getting out, and getting back to work, and a robust search feature may be the best way to make that happen.





3 Key Ways ESS Creates Autonomy to Build Engagement

Of course, engagement is more than just an employee accessing information. The real power of an engaged workforce is what happens after they find the information. Culture and trust improve dramatically, as employees take responsibility over their work when they're given the choice.

The following is hardly an exhaustive list of how ESS empowers employees, but it highlights some of the top ways that the right ESS software can infuse greater autonomy in your organization to improve engagement.





1.

Fostering Culture

The days of when an ESS platform was merely about efficiency are over. Today, ESS can be a powerful culture and communication tool. Having a central gateway of information about the company for employees to tap can be tremendously useful in helping them forge stronger ties to the organization.

Employees can use an ESS platform to access organizational information, whether it's an org chart, company news, explanations of MVV (mission, vision, values), CSR (corporate social responsibility) initiatives, and so on. This helps build greater connections among employees, as well as with the company itself – all of which help drive higher engagement.

And sure, you may already have a variety of communication channels to convey messages. ESS doesn't replace those – it complements them. This is especially important since **77 percent** of respondents to a survey believe email (the longtime, preeminent channel for communication) is no longer a viable tool for effective communication.

Having relevant and personalized information for people via your ESS platform respects the notion that people want to access information on their time, and not always on yours.



Onboarding Builds Culture

An employee's first days and months at an organization are likely to set the stage for the person's ongoing engagement. Consequently, this is one of the most important times to provide a world-class employee experience.

New hires are ready to soak up information like sponges. They crave learning about the organization and their departments, as well as accessing relevant information to take care of important housekeeping tasks (benefits enrollment, setting up payment structure, tax forms, etc.).

ESS can give new employees the autonomy to accomplish these tasks in numerous ways that may include:

- Going through an online checklist of activities
- Creating a community of new hires to foster better connections
- Personalizing content about the organization
- Automating the provision of computers, security passes, uniforms, etc.
- Checking numerous compliance boxes

Granting autonomy from day one instantly conveys respect to new hires and shows them that you trust them with the ability to make decisions around their jobs.

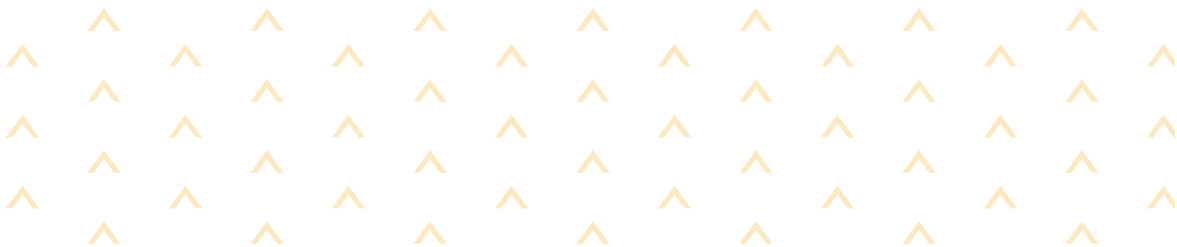




2. Building Trust

Trust is perhaps your greatest **workplace currency**. And trust, it turns out, is built through transparency. People value transparency in an organization. When employees feel like information about their benefits, pay, and other details are gated from them, they're more likely to feel fear, resentment, and isolation. Transparency – a conduit of clear communication – eliminates this fear, as it does in all healthy human relationships.

Transparency is also part of an overall trend toward democratization of data. You can talk endlessly about valuing trust in your organization, but ESS is a great way to show that you trust your people with information and give them the ability to use it to satisfy their individual needs.





Further, with such autonomy comes responsibility and accountability. Empowering people to use ESS shows that you have faith in your people to proactively take actions that you require of them. Whether that means accurately reflecting attendance or accessing certain training information, enabling people to access information and take action implicitly creates expectations of your people – which creates a healthy circle of trust and communication.

“Want productive employees? Treat them like adults.”

– Tony Schwartz, *Harvard Business Review*

Of course, that doesn't mean every employee has access to all company information. It's OK and prudent to set up different levels of access for security reasons.

“Autonomy is the antithesis of micromanagement.”

– Joan F. Cheverie, *manager of professional development programs, EDUCAUSE*



3.

Creating Choices

More than ever, people expect to access data on their own terms, in their own ways, on their own time. Increased convenience and flexibility are foundational for modern organizations. In other words, the center of the employee experience is – the employee.

Researchers **point out** that to feel autonomous, “an individual must experience a sense of choice when engaging in activities.” Of course, it’s something they’re used to outside of work, with consumer-grade experiences across multiple channels and devices that enable them to efficiently and effectively look up information.

People ultimately want access, control, and responsibility. It’s part of being human. An effective ESS solution satisfies all three desires, whether it’s requesting PTO, accessing benefits or compensation details, or performing any other number of tasks. Employees should be able to take care of tasks or look up information at any time (24/7), wherever they are (remote or on-site), and on multiple devices.

At the same time, a good ESS solution will help people make the best choices for their individual needs. It’s not enough to simply provide information; employees truly feel empowered when they feel like the information is shown in context. They need to have the right information at the right time. Dumping information on people is the opposite of granting autonomy.



Companies are increasingly likely to be committed to improving access and empowering employees through self-service.

Choices in Benefits

Employees feel empowered when they can make their own choices about healthcare and other benefits. Meanwhile, facilitating benefits enrollment is a challenge for every company, partly because employees will always have many questions about their choices. Employee self-service puts the power to investigate options and choose wisely in the hands of employees, where it belongs. The best ESS software will clearly present options, steps to take, deadlines, and tools to help with making the best decisions.

Choices in Learning and Development

A key driver of engagement is having opportunities for growth and development. An effective ESS platform gives people the autonomy to search for learning options that relate to their unique needs.

Employees can track which development opportunities they've taken, which they plan to take, and share this information with their managers – which helps strengthen bonds between managers and direct reports.

Likewise, managers can focus more time on developing their direct reports. With less effort and time spent on filling in and accessing information about their people, they can use that time to have more valuable conversations with employees about performance and development.



Get in, Get Out, and Get Back to Work

The name of the game is engagement, and the way to engagement is autonomy. An ESS platform empowers employees, ensuring they have what they need to do their work and keeping them engaged throughout their workday.

An ESS platform also liberates employees to do more strategic work and take control over their activities, giving them autonomy over how they structure their day. It frees them from the burden of administrative tasks, so they can focus on more interesting and impactful aspects of their jobs.

In short, people prefer to perform tasks that push their careers, teams, departments, and organization forward. They don't want to be burdened with unnecessary administrative tasks that can be automated away. They want to manage tasks on their schedule, from their device, from their location – and not be subject to the schedule of administrators performing manual tasks on their behalf.

Empower your people by providing ready access to information. Enable them to accomplish administrative tasks more easily, quickly, and accurately. And ensure that your employees focus on aspects of their work that they enjoy, adding true value to the business. After all, employees simply want to get in, get out, and get back to work.



Human Capital Management Experts.