COACHING AUSTRALIA

6 Practical Strategies to Boost Engagement & Leadership Impact

Proven, easy-to-implement approaches to strengthen leadership, lift performance, and create thriving workplaces.

At Coaching Australia, we've spent over 20 years helping organisations build strong leaders and high-performing cultures — and the latest research from Gallup shows why this work is critical:

- Only 21% of employees worldwide are engaged at work.
- Up to 70% of team engagement is driven by the quality of their manager.
- When managers disengage, teams follow — leading to lower productivity, higher turnover, and weaker morale.

These six strategies are practical, proven, and easy to implement to address engagement, wellbeing, and leadership impact.

1 Peer Learning Circles

WHAT? Create small, cross-functional groups of leaders who regularly reflect, problem-solve, and share insights.

WHY? Normalises shared challenges, reduces isolation, and builds collective wisdom — especially valuable for stretched mid-level leaders. Sustains learning over time. *(Addresses: Manager disengagement and lack of peer support)*.

HOW? Run monthly 60-minute sessions with 4–6 leaders using light structure (e.g. themed prompts, rotating facilitation). Even without being part of a larger program, these can be set up as a recurring calendar invite with a clear format — making them easy to run, low cost, and self-sustaining once established.

2 Build an Internal Coaching Pool

WHAT? Upskill a small group of internal coaches to support leaders and teams during change.

WHY? Expands access to support without high cost and builds a culture of development. *(Addresses: Manager overwhelm, wellbeing, and need for scalable support)*

HOW? Select interested staff for foundational coaching training and clarify referral pathways. If formal training isn't possible immediately, start by identifying natural "go-to" people and giving them basic tools.

3 Fireside Chats with Senior Leaders

WHAT? Host informal conversations where respected leaders share real stories of challenge, change, and growth.

WHY? Humanises leadership, builds connection, and creates psychological safety. *(Addresses: Disconnection from leadership and trust gaps)*

HOW? Hold quarterly 30-minute sessions with open Q&A. Keep them candid and reflective, not scripted. Choose topics that address pain points - resilience, wellbeing, career pathways, or setting boundaries - and encourage leaders to share authentic experiences and practical strategies. Can be run in-person or online, for large or small groups.

4 Leader Listening Sessions

WHAT? Have senior leaders commit to a short, concentrated period of structured listening across the organisation.

WHY? Signals that leadership is accessible and willing to hear feedback directly, building trust and connection. (Addresses: Low trust in leadership, disconnection from employees)

HOW? Each leader schedules 3–5 small-group conversations over a month. Keep groups under 8 people, use 3–4 open questions, and follow up with a "here's what we heard, here's what we'll do" summary.

EXAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. If you were in my role, what's one thing you'd focus on?
2. What's working really well in your team right now?
3. If you could change one thing about how we work here, what would it be?
4. Where do you see opportunities for us to work better together across the organisation?
5. Is there anything you need from me or other leaders that you're not getting right now?

5 Recognition

WHAT? Make recognition a consistent and authentic part of everyday leadership.

WHY? Recognition is one of Gallup's strongest engagement drivers. Small, frequent acknowledgements reinforce desired behaviours and boost morale. *(Addresses: Low morale and lack of recognition)*

HOW? Incorporate weekly shout-outs, peer nominations, or "recognition moments" in meetings and newsletters. Encourage leaders to add 30-second "thank you for..." acknowledgements in 1:1s or team settings, making them specific and meaningful.

6 Embed Coaching into Leadership

WHAT? Integrate simple coaching tools, powerful questions, and coaching mindsets (listening, reflection, empowerment) into everyday leadership practice.

WHY? Equips leaders to empower rather than solve, increasing ownership, connection, trust, and accountability while reducing leader overwhelm. *(Addresses: Manager overload, low autonomy, burnout, and ineffective leadership)*

HOW? Encourage leaders to experiment with open, curious questions in 1:1s or team meetings, and truly listen to the answers *(see Powerful Questioning Tips below)*. Add short coaching components to existing programs, role model coaching in leadership forums, and embed coaching behaviours into organisational leadership frameworks.

Powerful Questioning for Leaders

With engagement falling, burnout rising, and managers under pressure, one of the most valuable tools a leader has is a great question — followed by genuine listening.

Here are simple, high-impact questions to try in 1:1s, team meetings, or informal catch-ups. Start with one or two and notice the shift in conversations.

Questions to Explore Engagement & Wellbeing

- What's been energising you at work lately?
- When do you feel most motivated in your role?
- How's your workload feeling right now — and what would make it feel more manageable?
- What's one thing we could stop, start, or continue that would improve your week?

Questions to Strengthen Connection & Trust

- What's one thing you'd like me to understand about your current priorities?
- How do you prefer to receive feedback or recognition?
- What's something we've done recently that's made you feel valued?
- If you were in my role, what's one thing you'd focus on?

Questions to Reduce Silos & Increase Collaboration

- What's a project or idea that could benefit from fresh perspectives?
- Where do you feel disconnected from other parts of the organisation?
- What's one thing we could do to make cross-team work easier?
- Is there someone whose work you admire that you'd like to learn from?

Broader Everyday Coaching Questions

- What's the real challenge for you here?
- What options do you see?
- What's one step you could take this week?
- What's important to you about this?
- How will you know you've been successful?

Tips for Leaders Trying this Out

- **Ask, then pause** — give people space to think.
- **Listen for meaning, not just facts** — notice tone, energy, and what's not being said.
- **Follow curiosity** — a great follow-up is simply, "Tell me more."
- **Don't rush to fix** — sometimes the question is the intervention.