EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: ENGAGING EMPLOYEES AT WORK PLACE

Dr. Enid Masih
Sr. Assistant Professor, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences, Allahabad

Vijay Pratap Singh
Research Scholar, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences, Allahabad

Manish Roy Tirkey
Assistant Professor, Sam Higginbottom Institute of Agriculture, Technology & Sciences, Allahabad

ABSTRACT

The engagement has been described as a fulfilling, positive work-related experience and state of mind, and has been found to be related to good health and positive work affect. These positive experiences and emotions are likely to result in positive work outcomes. An individual’s expressed intention to leave their organisation is generally regarded as an important measure of how they are feeling about their work. Engaged employees are likely to have a greater attachment to their organisation and a lower tendency to quit. Engaged employees are less likely to leave their employer. Researches have found that employee engagement is on the decline and there is a deepening disengagement among employees today. According to Buckingham such employees were “intent on sharing with colleagues the many reasons for which they believe their organisation is such a rotten place to work”. The study also found that the longer employees remained with an organisation, the more disengaged they became. According to Brim (2002) such evidence indicates that for most employees, the first year on the job is their best and thereafter it is ‘downhill’. One challenge for employers is to find ways of renewing employees’ engagement levels through the duration of their employment. Employee involvement suggests that the root of employee disengagement is poor management, whereby employees do not have good working relationships with their managers and are denied the opportunity to communicate and have some power in decision-making, let alone receive information from their managers. Employees are in need of managers who care and who are seen to be committed to their organisation. Only then can managers lure employees into putting discretionary effort into their work.

Keywords: Work engagement, Employee Engagement, Leadership, Rewards and compensation.
INTRODUCTION

Engagement: Macey and Schneider (2008) discuss work engagement as having conceptual overlap with job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and empowerment. Work engagement is comprised of positive affective states and cognitive beliefs about the work. The affective component of work engagement can be defined as a positive energetic relationship with the work defined by dedication, an abundance of energy, satisfaction, and positive emotional states. The cognitive components of state engagement can be defined as competence or perceived self-efficacy, performance self-esteem, absorption, and a sense of meaningfulness. Employee engagement has been defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organisation (Baumruk 2004, Richman 2006 and Shaw 2005) or the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their job (Frank et al 2004). Although it is acknowledged and accepted that employee engagement is a multifaceted construct, as previously suggested by Kahn (1990), Truss et al (2006) define employee engagement simply as ‘passion for work’. Employee engagement is a measurement of the level of discretionary effort employees employ in an organization. It leads to the Empowered employees maximizing discretionary effort to achieve the organization’s goals and objectives.

WHY BOTHER WITH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

Some business leaders and Human Resource professionals may ask, “Why should I bother with Employee Engagement?” we are doing fine. As the quoted from the legendary business leader Jack Welch, “If you’re running a business, though, whether it’s a corner store or a multi-product multinational, we would say there are three key indicators that really work: employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and cash flow.”

Jack Welch says employee engagement measurement is the most important. Many organizations do not measure employee engagement at all or make the mistake of measuring employee satisfaction, two connected but completely different measurements. Employee engagement is a leading indicator of overall organizational performance, study after study continues to confirm and reinforce that organizations with increasing employee engagement have improving levels of organizational performance that links directly to the bottom line. This is the reason Jack Welch the legendary GE leader considers this the most important measurement. Jack Welch goes on to say “Employee engagement first. It goes without saying that no company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in the mission and understand how to achieve it. That’s why you need to take the measure of employee engagement at least once a year through anonymous surveys in which people feel completely there are safe to speak their minds.”; Jack Welch, “A Healthy Company?” Business Week Magazine, (May, 2006).

IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement is important for managers to cultivate given that disengagement or alienation is central to the problem of workers’ lack of commitment and motivation (Aktouf). Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment from one’s work (Thomas and Velthouse). In such conditions, individuals are thought to be estranged from their selves (Seeman, 1972). Other Research using a different resource of engagement (involvement and enthusiasm) has linked it to such variables as employee turnover, customer satisfaction – loyalty, safety and to a lesser degree, productivity and profitability criteria (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002).
Categories of Employee Engagement

According to the Gallup Consulting organization there are different types of people:

**Engaged**--"Engaged" employees are builders. They want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and exceed them. They're naturally curious about their company and their place in it. They perform at consistently high levels. They want to use their talents and strengths at work every day. They work with passion and they drive innovation and move their organization forward.

**Not Engaged**---Not-engaged employees tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. They want to be told what to do just so they can do it and say they have finished. They focus on accomplishing tasks vs. achieving an outcome. Employees who are not-engaged tend to feel their contributions are being overlooked, and their potential is not being tapped. They often feel this way because they don't have productive relationships with their managers or with their co-workers.

**Actively Disengaged**--The "actively disengaged" employees are the "cave dwellers." They're "Consistently against Virtually Everything." They're not just unhappy at work; they're busy acting out their unhappiness. They sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity. Every day, actively disengaged workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish. As workers increasingly rely on each other to generate products and services, the problems and tensions that are fostered by actively disengaged workers can cause great damage to an organization's functioning.

**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT MODEL**

- **Leadership**
- **Work Environment**
- **Rewards & Compensation**
- **Empowerment**
- **Communication**
- **Carrier Development**

**Work Engagement**
- High level of Organisational Performance
- Improved Operating Margin
- Improved Talent Retention
- Decreased Absenteeism
- Improved Net Profit

**COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITIES**

These help employees find out what is going on within the company outside of their immediate team. They also help to create an environment of trust and openness within the organisation where they are able to talk openly. Employees who feel they are listened to are able to express dissatisfaction and work together to resolve their causes, without it affecting their performance.
Examples of communications approaches include:

- Communication forums to provide regular feedback to all people, including team meetings, conferences and “away days”
- In-house magazines
- On-line communications, including discussion boards and blogs by company personnel including senior management
- Monthly updates on corporate goals and directions
- Regular employee opinion and satisfaction surveys
- Active soliciting of employee feedback, including opinions and pet peeves

Leadership

According to the Organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al. 1986; Shore & Shore 1995) in order to determine the organization’s readiness to reward increased work effort and to meet socio-emotional needs, employees develop global beliefs concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Perceived organizational support (POS) is also valued as assurance that assistance will be available from the organization when it is needed to carry out one’s job effectively and to deal with stressful situations (George et al. 1993). According to Snyder and Lopez (2002), leaders within an organisation play a vital role in designing a healthy work environment that encourages the talent of the organisation to stay. Furthermore, leadership behaviours have a strong influence on employee and organisational outcomes (Chen & Silverthorne, 2005), including work engagement and turnover intention. Engaged employees are aware of the organisational context and work with others to improve performance within their roles for the benefit of the organisation (Devi, 2009). When employees are engaged, they become less likely to leave the organisation. Baskin (2007) reports similar findings stating that an employee who is not engaged is more likely to leave the organisation.

- Leadership- Clarity of Company Values:
  Employees need to feel that the core values for which their companies stand are unambiguous and clear.
- Leadership – Respectful Treatment of Employees:
  Successful organizations show respect for each employee’s qualities and contribution – regardless of their job level.
- Leadership – Company’s Standards of Ethical Behaviour:
  A company’s ethical standards also lead to engagement of an individual

Empowerment

Macey and Schneider (2008) discuss work engagement as having conceptual overlap with job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, and empowerment. Examples of Empowering employees:

- A strong induction and orientation programme
- Rigorous training and development, from technical to soft skills to leadership development programmes.
- Regular technical/soft-skill updates.
Work Environment
Activities to develop the culture of the organisation

Giving employees a feeling of belonging is crucial in creating a thriving organisation that people feel committed to and others want to join.

Common approaches includes:
- Clear and humane HR policies
- Pro-social corporate objectives and Corporate Social Responsibility
- Equal opportunities policies and practices
- Initiatives to maintain the quality of worklife and a balance between personal/professional lives
- Developing a safe, clean and inspiring work environment
- Demonstrating a commitment to employees’ well being

Team building activities:
Culture-building activities are great for generating a feeling of belonging, but all organisations are built out of smaller teams who can get on and work together.

Popular approaches include:
- Small team recreational activities, such as bowling, skating, trips to the cinema (or the pub!)
- Social activities, such as family gatherings and barbeques
- Community outreach activities such as volunteering and fund-raising.

REWARDS AND COMPENSATION

Maslach et al. (2001) have suggested that while a lack of rewards and recognition can lead to burnout, appropriate recognition and reward is important for engagement. Reward schemes are an important part of a company's overall employee engagement programme. Studies have long shown that, while money in itself is not a motivating factor, the absence of financial reward can be a significant demotivator.

Thus the role of reward schemes in boosting employee engagement is:
- to remove barriers to satisfaction in the organisation;
- to provide a framework for rewarding everyone in the organisation for their performance;
- to give those who are motivated by financial gain an opportunity to achieve this.

Typical approaches include:
- Compensation and benefit programmes
- Stock ownership and profit sharing
- Recognition programmes
- Idea collection schemes linked to rewards for idea generation
- Long service and good performance awards

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career Development- Opportunities for Personal Development:

Organizations with high levels of engagement provide employees with opportunities to develop their abilities, learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and realise their potential. When companies plan for the career paths of their employees and invest in them in this way their people invest in them.
Career Development – Effective Management of Talent:

Career development influences engagement for employees and retaining the most talented employees and providing opportunities for personal development.

Empowerment

Employees want to be involved in decisions that affect their work. The leaders of high engagement workplaces create a trustful and challenging environment, in which employees are encouraged to dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy and to input and innovate to move the organization forward.

Other factors

Equal Opportunities and Fair Treatment:

The employee engagement levels would be high if their bosses (superiors) provide equal opportunities for growth and advancement to all the employees.

Performance appraisal:

Fair evaluation of an employee’s performance is an important criterion for determining the level of employee engagement. The company which follows an appropriate performance appraisal technique (which is transparent and not biased) will have high levels of employee engagement.

Health and Safety:

Research indicates that the engagement levels are low if the employee does not feel secure while working. Therefore every organization should adopt appropriate methods and systems for the health and safety of their employees.

Job Satisfaction:

Only a satisfied employee can become an engaged employee. Therefore it is very essential for an organization to see to it that the job given to the employee matches his career goals which will make him enjoy his work and he would ultimately be satisfied with his job.

Family Friendliness:

A person’s family life influences his work life. When an employee realizes that the organization is considering his family’s benefits also, he will have an emotional attachment with the organization which leads to engagement.

Co-operation:

If the entire organization works together by helping each other i.e. all the employees as well as the supervisors co-ordinate well than the employees will be engaged.

CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

The main reason behind the popularity of employee engagement is that it has positive consequences for organizations. There is a general belief that there is a connection between employee engagement as an individual level construct and business results (Harter et al. 2002). Therefore there is reason to expect employee engagement to be related to individuals’ attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. Although neither Kahn (1990) nor May et al. (2004) included outcomes in their studies, Kahn (1992) proposed that engagement leads to both individual outcomes (i.e. quality of people’s work and their own experiences of doing that work).

Organizational-level outcomes (i.e. the growth and productivity of organizations). Further, the Maslach et al. (2001) model considers engagement as a mediating variable for the relationship
between the six work conditions and work various outcomes and like burnout, should be related to outcomes such as increased withdrawal, lower performance, job satisfaction, and commitment (Maslach et al. 2001). Job satisfaction is a pleasurable or positive emotional state that arises when people appraise their job or job experiences (Locke 1976). Implicit in Locke’s definition is the importance of both affect, or feeling, and cognition, or thinking. There are a number of reasons to expect engagement to be related to work outcomes. The experience of engagement has been described as a fulfilling, positive work-related experience and state of mind (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Sonnentag 2003) and has been found to be related to good health and positive work affect (Sonnentag 2003). These positive experiences and emotions are likely to result in positive work outcomes. As noted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), engaged employees likely have a greater attachment to their organization and a lower tendency to leave their organization.

Lodahl and Kejner (1965) defined job involvement as "the degree to which a person is identified psychologically with his work or the importance of work in his total self-image". Thus, job involvement results from a cognitive judgment about the need satisfying abilities of the job. Jobs in this view are tied to one’s self-image. Where there is a high degree of identification with work, the internalization of value judgments about the goodness or importance of the work serves as a psychological surrogate for the goodness or the importance of the individual performing the work. Kahn (1990) suggested that employees demonstrating high job involvement might be more sensitive to changes in the work environment, especially those that create uncertainty and ambiguity. Operationalization of job involvement included job identification, participation, and the connection of job value with self worth (Blau 1985; Rabinowitz & Hall 1977). Engagement is very closely associated with the existing constructs of job involvement (Brown 1996) and ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi 1990). Kanungo (1982) maintained that job involvement is ‘a cognitive or belief state of psychological identification’.

According to SET (Social Exchange Theory), when both parties abide by the exchange rules, the result will be a more trusting and loyal relationship and mutual commitments (Croppanzo and Mitchell 2005). Hence, individuals who are more engaged are likely to be in more trusting and high-quality relationships with their employer and will, therefore, be more likely to report more positive attitudes and intentions toward the organization. For example, engagement has been found to be positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to intention to quit, and is believed to also be related to job performance and extra-role behavior (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004; Sonnentag 2003). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) found that engagement was negatively related to turnover intention and mediated the relationship between job resources and turnover intention.

**HOW TO MEASURE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?**

Gallup research consistently confirms that engaged work places compared with least engaged are much more likely to have lower employee turnover, higher than average customer loyalty, above average productivity and earnings. These are all good things that prove that engaging and involving employees make good business sense and building shareholder value. Negative workplace relationships may be a big part of why so many employees are not engaged with their jobs.

**Step I: Listen**

The employer must listen to his employees and remember that this is a continuous process. The information employee’s supply will provide direction. This is the only way to identify their specific concerns. When leaders listen, employees respond by becoming more engaged. This results in increased productivity and employee retention. Engaged employees are much more likely to be satisfied in their positions, remain with the company, be promoted, and strive for higher levels of performance.
Step II: Measure current level of employee engagement

Employee engagement needs to be measured at regular intervals in order to track its contribution to the success of the organisation. But measuring the engagement (feedback through surveys) without planning how to handle the result can lead employees to disengage. It is therefore not enough to feel the pulse—the action plan is just as essential.

Knowing the Degree in which Employees Are Engaged?

Employee engagement satisfaction surveys determine the current level of employee engagement. A well-administered satisfaction survey will let us know at what level of engagement the employees are operating. Customizable employee surveys will provide with a starting point towards the efforts to optimize employee engagement. The key to successful employee satisfaction surveys is to pay close attention to the feedback from the staff. It is important that employee engagement is not viewed as a one time action. Employee engagement should be a continuous process of measuring, analyzing, defining and implementing. The employee survey is a diagnostic tool of choice in the battle for the hearts of employees. Gallup, Mercer, Hewitt and Watson Wyatt (consulting companies) are the two important companies in the field.

Step III: - Identify the problem areas

Identify the problem areas to see which are the exact areas, which lead to disengaged employees

Step IV: Taking action to improve employee engagement by acting upon the problem areas.

Nothing is more discouraging to employees than to be asked for their feedback and see no movement toward resolution of their issues. Even the smallest actions taken to address concerns will let the staff know how their input is valued. Feeling valued will boost morale, motivate and encourage future input. Taking action starts with listening to employee feedback and a definitive action plan will need to be put in place finally.

CONCLUSION

To increase employee engagement there are two key components to employee engagement. The first is leadership, not management. He needs to create a culture and vision that inspires the team. The second is our work environment that is need to rethink traditional methods of confining employees inside a box and instead take off the constraints and allow our talent to utilize and maximize their strengths. As the engage employees create an environment that allows them to contribute more to the organizational goals as result it will retain talent and the second is business results will improve. Also the issue of compensation is of importance as it will attract employees and is an important part of the strategy.

REFERENCES