



Employee Engagement

DEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

- The individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work
- A result that is achieved by stimulating employees' enthusiasm for their work and directing it toward organizational success
- The extent to which people value, enjoy and believe in what they do
- The capability and willingness to help the company succeed, i.e., discretionary performance
- A heightened emotional and intellectual connection that employees have for their job, organization, manager or co-workers that in turn influences them to apply additional discretionary effort to their work

ENGAGEMENT BASICS

The plurality of these engagement definitions makes it obvious that the measurement of engagement is neither uniform nor clear. In fact, many HR consultants and practitioners have re-packaged existing employee surveys and called them engagement surveys. This serves the purpose of addressing management interest in engagement while also addressing certain practical goals—for example, retaining historical items in existing employee surveys for trend analyses. Nonetheless, the resulting measures are more likely indicators of job satisfaction than indicators of engagement. For example, the most common measure of employee engagement we have seen being used in companies contains three or four traditional employee survey items:

- How satisfied are you with working for this organization?
- Do you plan on working for this organization a year from now?
- How proud are you that you work for this organization?
- Would you recommend to a friend that he or she come to work for this organization?

The sum of the responses to these four items is called an index of engagement, although even a casual inspection of the items would suggest it is better thought of as an index of overall satisfaction.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION AND ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement essentially has two major components. First, there are the feelings of engagement or the heightened state of energy and enthusiasm associated with work and the organization. Second, there are engagement behaviors demonstrated in the service of accomplishing organizational goals--behaviors such as persistence at tasks, being proactive and taking on responsibilities when the need arises.

The three strongest drivers of feelings of engagement are

- (a) feeling that there is full utilization of one's skills and abilities
- (b) seeing a link between one's work and the objectives of the company and
- (c) being encouraged to innovate

The drivers of engagement behaviors are

- (a) quality of relationships with coworkers
- (b) feeling trusted and respected and
- (c) supervisor credibility.

Employee engagement feelings and behaviors are clearly different from job satisfaction--they address different kinds of issues and they have different drivers. What is particularly important about these differences is that the drivers of satisfaction (job security, benefits) are largely out of the direct control of first-line supervisors, so there is little that can be done at the local level to change satisfaction. On the other hand, the drivers of engagement are clearly more controllable locally: assignment to jobs that utilize skills and abilities, encouragement to innovate, being treated with trust and respect and working for a credible supervisor.

BENEFITS OF BETTER ENGAGEMENT

Employee Engagement score is a very accurate and leading Indicator of Business Success.

Many progressive companies now use employee engagement surveys for this reason, but mostly they use it because they believe that employee engagement is a leading indicator of better customer service, and therefore a precursor of bottom-line measures such as revenue-increases, profitability, and total shareholder return.

The core idea of engagement is a vital indicator of business success; that is, employees who enjoy their work and care about the company will be easier to retain, sell more products, work harder and even contribute more innovations to drive success.

Engaged employees are confident about their personal futures with the company, like their managers and co-workers, and feel like they make a difference. They also are generally proud of the leadership, vision and ethics of the corporation.

Increases in employee engagement directly affect customer engagement, which leads to increased revenue and profits.

MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is measured by the ability and willingness of individuals to exert extra effort for the benefit of the company, their tendency to speak highly of the organization and their intent to stay.

FACTORS THAT ASSIST HIGHER ENGAGEMENT LEVELS

- Setting a clear, compelling direction that empowers each employee. While the future during economic crisis might look grim to some employers triggering panic or inactivity, employees at better engaged companies will work hand-in-hand with their supervisors to create a positive future for the company.
- Open and honest communication. While some employers hide bad news from their employees, better engaged companies keep their employees informed and updated, even if the news isn't always good.
- Continued focus on career growth and development. While some employers cut jobs or scale back on promotions, better engaged companies help their associates to see opportunity in the midst of the crisis for their own growth and development.
- Recognizing and rewarding high performance. While some employers institute hiring freezes and cut back on perks, better engaged companies continue to find ways to reward those who are taking care of customers and keep them coming back.
- Employee benefits that demonstrate a strong commitment to employee well-being. While some employers scale back employee benefits, better engaged companies commit to helping maintain the health and vitality of those who work for them.

CONDUCTING ENGAGEMENT SURVEYS

Conducting periodic employee engagement surveys can provide useful insight into the thoughts, perceptions, and goals of a company's staff apart from their direct engagement levels. The surveys can be designed to assess employees' feelings and behaviors with regard to their jobs, managers, and overall level of engagement. By collecting this data on a regular basis, small and large companies alike can keep tabs on the attitudes of their employees. This data will help business owners develop a number of critical HR strategies. Companies be able to retain their best people, deliver the proper training, and provide a challenging and satisfying work environment.

A typical engagement initiative involves asking a defined set of questions of all employees. The responses are then used as the foundation for discussion and action to improve the workplace environment and as a baseline for future measurement. The survey is repeated six months or a year later, and regularly thereafter, with scorecards issued to show progress--or lack thereof.

Done right, these are complex and ongoing efforts that require the help of consultants and / or dedicated staff oversight to execute.

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