

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is a key business driver for organizational success. High levels of engagement in domestic and global firms promote retention of talent, foster customer loyalty and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value. A complex concept, engagement is influenced by many factors—from workplace culture, organizational communication and managerial styles to trust and respect, leadership and company reputation. Thus, to foster a culture of engagement, HR leads the way to design, measure and evaluate proactive workplace policies and practices that help attract and retain talent with skills and competencies necessary for growth and sustainability.

This paper explores the importance of measuring engagement, as well as actionable strategies for maximizing workforce engagement and, subsequently, driving higher performance across the organization. By focusing more on employee engagement, organizations are more likely to maintain a strong, motivated workforce that is willing to expend extra effort, drive business goals, and deliver a return on HR's talent management investment.

Key words: *Employee engagement, customer loyalty, proactive workplace, talent management,*

I. INTRODUCTION

The term employee engagement means level of emotional connection of an individual towards his organization, job, or workplace. It is an emotional commitment towards his organization and its goals.

A key component of any organization is its employees. Engaged employees are valuable asset to an organization. Using the organization's intellectual capital has become an important source of competitive advantage. In the present era of talent war the employees are considered as the most valuable asset. An organization can acquire most of assets similar to its competitor but cannot copy the skill and talent of the human resources of the competitor. Now, the situation is very alarming as many organizations target the pool of talented and experienced employees across the world. In this scenario the concept of employee engagement is very important.

Employee engagement is powerfully linked to a range of business success factors such as:

- Employee performance/efficiency
- Productivity
- Safety
- Attendance and retention
- Customer service and satisfaction
- Customer loyalty and retention

- Profitability

II. OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this paper are:-

- It Provides suggestions to human resource and talent management professionals on how to gauge employee engagement in their organizations.
- It offers employee engagement trends and strategies to improve employee engagement that HR and talent management professionals can take.

III. MEASURING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

One reliable instrument to measure employee engagement is Gallup's G12 feedback system. Gallup has identified the factors that determine whether people are actively engaged, disengaged, or actively disengaged. Their research (which consistently shows a correlation between high survey scores and superior job performance) yielded a series of 12 questions known as Gallup's Q12.

The 12 questions are (rated on a scale from 1 to 5):

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment that I need in order to do my work right?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission or purpose of my company make me feel that my job is important?
9. Are my coworkers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the past six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This past year, have I had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

III. STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

In order to have engaged employees in any organization, managers need to look at the following ten points. We can call these points "tablets" because it is believed that they will cure employee disengagement diseases. These "Tablets" or strategies are:

- 1 **Start it on day one:** Most organizations do have clear new talent acquisition strategies. However, they lack employee retention strategies. Effective recruitment and orientation programs are the first building blocks to be laid on the first day of the new employee. Managers should be careful in pooling out the potential talent of the new employee through effective recruitment. The newly hired employee should be given both general

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orientation which is related to the company mission, vision, values, policies and procedures and job-specific orientation such as his/her job duties, and responsibilities, goals and current priorities of the department to which the employee belongs in order to enable him/her to develop realistic job expectations and reduce role conflict that might arise in the future. After the hiring decision is made, the manager has to ensure role-talent fit when placing an employee in a certain position

2. **Start it from the top:** Employee engagement requires leadership commitment through establishing clear mission, vision and values. Unless the people at the top believe in it, own it, pass it down to managers and employees, and enhance their leadership, employee engagement will never be more than just a “corporate fad” or “another HR thing”. Employee engagement does not need lip-service rather dedicated heart and action-oriented service from top management.

3. **Enhance employee engagement through two-way communication:** Managers should promote two-way communication. Employees are not sets of pots to which pour out ideas without giving them a chance to have a say on issues that matter to their job and life. Clear and consistent communication of what is expected of them paves the way for engaged workforce. Involve employee and always show respect to their input. Share power with employees through participative decision making so that they would feel sense of belongingness.

4. **Give satisfactory opportunities for development and advancement:** Encourage independent thinking through giving them more job autonomy so that employees will have a chance to make their own freedom of choosing their own best way of doing their job so long as they are producing the expected result.

5. **Ensure that employees have every thing they need to do their jobs:** Managers are expected to make sure that employees have all the resources such as physical or material, financial and information resources in order to effectively do their job.

6. **Give employees appropriate training:** Help employees update themselves increasing their knowledge and skills through giving appropriate trainings. Generally it is understood that when employees get to know more about their job, their confidence increases there by being able to work without much supervision from their immediate managers which in turn builds their self-efficacy and commitment.

7. **Have strong feedback system:** Companies should develop a performance management system which holds managers and employees accountable for the level of engagement they have shown. Conducting regular survey of employee engagement level helps make out factors that make employees engaged. Managers should be behind such survey results and develop action-oriented plans that are specific, measurable, and accountable and time- bound.

8. **Incentives have a part to play:** Managers should work out both financial and non-financial benefits for employees who show more engagement in their jobs. Several management theories have indicated that when employees get more pay, recognition and praise, they tend to exert more effort into their job. There should be a clear link between performance and incentives given to the employees.

9. **Build a distinctive corporate culture:** Companies should promote a strong work culture in which the goals and values of managers are aligned across all work sections. Companies that build a culture of mutual respect by keeping success stories alive will not only keep their existing employees engaged but also they baptize the new incoming employees with this contagious spirit of work culture.

10. **Focus on top-performing employees:** A study conducted by Watson Wyatt Worldwide in 2004/05 on HR practices of 50 large USA firms shows that high-performing organizations are focusing on engaging their top-

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performing employees. According to the finding of the same research, what high-performing firms are doing is what top-performing employees are asking for and this reduces the turnover of high-performing employees and as a result leads to top business performance.

Most researches on the area focus on identifying the drivers or factors leading to engagement; however, failing to indicate clearly articulated strategies to get employees engaged in their work. The suggested strategies will definitely have financial implications on organizations.

Hold Fun in High Regard

One of the most unfortunate aspects of modern office culture is that many people don't associate the word "fun" with work. The fact is that there are a number of ways to incorporate fun into the workday, and the benefits that doing so can have on employee engagement levels within organization are countless. Fun and Happiness are contagious. So lighten up workplace with few simple things that involve little cost and often no cost which is often found in the well-known and renowned companies

1 Earn your seat

It can simply be boring sitting in one particular workstation for many years. People wish to get that workstation close to the window or to get away from the one near the restroom. Try to change seating arrangements but let them first compete and earn it. People, who want to change their seats and those that don't want to, can compete equally to get their favorite seat or possibly not lose their favorite one. Employer can also use this idea whenever there is team restructuring or re-organization and when everyone has to move to be close to their new team.

2 Salad Feste

Let there be a timed (5 minutes) salad competition with two or three people in a team. They come up with the ingredients and condiments and when everything is set up on a table that is when the time starts to run. Let them cut the vegetables, add flavors, spices and condiments, plate it and be ready for presentation in front of judges and audience. Make the audience taste the preparations and vote for the best one. Let the audience palette decide which is the award winning salad. It could also chilly cook-offs (either prepared in home and brought to office or maybe cooked in the office itself)

3 Bizarre Bazaar

It is a very fun way to showcase the talents and skills of employees. As a theme for the event, employees or their family members could put up a booth to sell their artistic creations, or any other items which shows their own identity. The event can be conduct in a big conference hall.

4 Mock Award

These are random and surprise awards that can make an employee feel special. Give away candy and take a picture and blast it through email. E.g. Best Smile, Best dressed person, best curly hair/lengthy hair, the Muscle man etc

5 Birthday Bash

Let all birthday of a month blow the candles together and lighten up the workplace. This can be done in many ways. It can be arrange with surprise party and a surprise funny gift on their desk and decorate their workstation with balloons and lanterns. Or if a big team or number of birthday babies in a month let others in the team bring in sweets and cakes, share it with everyone and add some games if want to make it more fun.

.6. Art Appreciation

There might be a painter, sculptor or one who enjoy doing craft work with things like wires, matchsticks, polythene etc. Let them be given a chance to exhibit their talent and share it among others. Employees of University of Michigan Health System were given an opportunity to exhibit their exceptional talent and creativity.

IV. CONCLUSION

As the economy continues to improve, organizations with active employee engagement programs in place will prosper. The time is now for HR and talent management professionals to do more about helping everyone achieve their maximum level of potential and satisfaction. Assessing and improving employee engagement to re-energize and re-engage workers can be the first step in this retention process to ensure the best and brightest continue to attain both personal and professional success with the organization.

Here in this article ten points or strategies called ‘the ten tablets’ were suggested to keep employees engaged. For managers, work of employee engagement starts at day one through effective recruitment and orientation program, the work of employee engagement begins from the top as it is unthinkable to have engaged people in the organizations where there are no engaged leadership.

The literatures indicate that employee engagement is closely linked with organizational performance outcomes. Companies with engaged employees have higher employee retention as a result of reduced turnover and reduced intention to leave the company, productivity, profitability, growth and customer satisfaction. On the other hand, companies with disengaged employees suffer from waste of effort and bleed talent, earn less commitment from the employees, face increased absenteeism and have less customer orientation, less productivity, and reduced Operating margins and net profit margins. Without a workplace environment for employee engagement, turnover will increase and efficiency will decline, leading to low customer loyalty and decreased stakeholder value.

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