

## **Employee Engagement : Issues and Concerns**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In a highly competitive market for both customers and talented staff, employee engagement is the current issue. Many companies realize that maximum productivity does not come from just a “satisfied” or “happy” employee. The most productive and loyal employee is known as engaged employee.*

*Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization and its values. The article focuses on how employee engagement is an antecedent of job involvement and what should company do to make the employees engaged. The paper not only discusses how to measure the level of employee engagement but also the Ten C's of employee engagement.*

*It is concluded that raising and maintaining employee engagement lies in the hands of an organisation and requires a perfect blend of time, effort , commitment, and investment to craft a successful endeavour.*

**Key Words :** *Employee engagement, Employee engagement measurement, Ten C's*

## **1.Introduction**

In a highly competitive market for both customers and talented staff, employee engagement is the current Holy Grail. Many companies realize that maximum productivity does not come from just a 'satisfied' or 'happy' employee. The most productive and loyal employee is known as engaged employee. Engagement at work was conceptualized by Kahn, (1990) as the 'harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. Engagement is most closely associated with the existing construction of job involvement (Brown 1996) and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.' Thus Employee engagement is a barometer that determines the association of a person with the organization.

Job involvement is defined as 'the degree to which the job situation is central to the person and his or her identity (Lawler & Hall, 1970). Kanungo (1982) expressed that job involvement is a 'Cognitive or belief state of Psychological identification. Job involvement is thought to depend on both need saliency and the potential of a job to satisfy these needs. Thus job involvement results form a cognitive judgment about the needs satisfying abilities of the job. Jobs in this view are tied to one's self image. Engagement differs from job in as it is concerned more with how the individual employees his/her self during the performance of his / her job. Engagement involves the active use of emotions. Engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job involvement in that individuals who experience deep engagement in their roles should come to identify with their jobs.

The OB & HR practitioners strongly feel that the challenge of employee engagement is more connected with how an employee feels about work experience and the treatment they receive in the organization. It has a lot to do with emotions which are fundamentally related to drive bottom line success in a company.

A fully engaged employee

- Is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization
- Gives 100 percent of his commitment
- Feels passionately about organizations goals and
- Is committed to live by the organizations values

The term ‘employee engagement’ represents an alignment of maximum job satisfaction with maximum job contribution. Employee engagement is the means or strategy by which an organization seeks to build a partnership between the organization and its employees.

## **.2.Facets of Employee Engagement:**

According to the studies made globally, the important facets of employee engagement are:

- The employees and their own unique psychological makeup and experience
- The employers and their ability to create the conditions that promote employee engagement
- Interaction between employees at all levels.

Thus it is largely the organization’s responsibility to create an environment and culture conducive to this partnership, and a win-win equation.

## **3. Categories of Employee Engagement:**

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

**3.1.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.

**3.2.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 coworkers.

**3.3. 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 coworkers 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.

#### **4. Factors leading to employee engagement:**

Studies have shown that there are some critical factors which lead to Employee engagement. Some of them identified are:

- Career Development- Opportunities for personal development
- Career Development – Effective Management of talent
- Leadership- Clarity of company values
- Leadership – Respectful treatment of employees
- Leadership – Company's standards of ethical behavior
- Empowerment
- Image
- Equal opportunities & fair treatment
- Performance Appraisal
- Pay & benefits
- Health & Safety
- Job satisfaction
- Communication
- Family friendliness
- Co-operation

##### **4.1. 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 realize their potential. When companies plan for the career paths of their employees and invest in them in this way their people invest in them.

##### **4.2. Career Development – Effective Management of Talent**

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

#### **4.3. Leadership- Clarity of Company Values**

Employees need to feel that the core values for which their companies stand are unambiguous and clear.

#### **4.4. Leadership – Respectful Treatment of Employees**

Successful organizations show respect for each employee's qualities and contribution regardless of their job level.

#### **4.5. Leadership – Company's Standards of Ethical Behavior**

A company's ethical standards also lead to engagement of an individual

#### **4.6. 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.

#### **4.6. Image**

How much employees are prepared to endorse the products and services which their company provides its customers depends largely on their perceptions of the quality of those goods and services. High levels of employee engagement are inextricably linked with high levels of customer engagement.

#### **4.8. 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.

#### **4.9. 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.

#### **4.10. Pay and Benefits**

The company should have a proper pay system so that the employees are motivated to work in the organization. In order to boost his engagement levels the employees should also be provided with certain benefits and compensations.

#### **4.11 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.

#### **4.12. 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.

#### **4.14.Communication**

The company should follow the open door policy. There should be both upward and downward communication with the use of appropriate communication channels in the organization. If the employee is given a say in the decision making and has the right to be heard by his boss than the engagement levels are likely to be high.

#### **4.14. 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.

#### **4.15. 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.

### **5. Measurement of 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 onetime action. Employee engagement should be a continuous process of measuring, analyzing, defining and implementing.

### **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.

## **6. How to engage employees? The Ten C's of Employee Engagement:**

How can leaders engage employees' heads, hearts, and hands? The literature offers several avenues for action; As a summary we can find the Ten C's of employee engagement.

### **6.1. Connect**

6.2. Leaders must show that they value employees. In *First, Break All the Rules*, Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman argue that managers trump companies. Employee-focused initiatives such as profit sharing and implementing work-life balance initiatives are important. However, if employees' relationship with their managers is fractured, then no amount of perks will persuade employees to

perform at top levels. Employee engagement is a direct reflection of how employees feel about their relationship with the boss. Employees look at whether organizations and their leader walk the talk when they proclaim that, “Our employees are our most valuable asset.”

### **6.2. Career**

Leaders should provide challenging and meaningful work with opportunities for career advancement. Most people want to do new things in their job. For example, do organizations provide job rotation for their top talent? Are people assigned stretch goals? Do leaders hold people accountable for progress? Are jobs enriched in duties and responsibilities? Good leaders challenge employees; but at the same time, they must instill the confidence that the challenges can be met. Not giving people the knowledge and tools to be successful is unethical and de-motivating; it is also likely to lead to stress, frustration, and, ultimately, lack of engagement. In her book *Confidence: How Winning Streaks and Losing Streaks Begin and End*, Rosabeth Moss Kanter explains that confidence is based on three cornerstones: accountability, collaboration, and initiative.

### **6.3. Clarity**

Leaders must communicate a clear vision. People want to understand the vision that senior leadership has for the organization, and the goals that leaders or departmental heads have for the division, unit, or team. Success in life and organizations is, to a great extent, determined by how clear individuals are about their goals and what they really want to achieve. In sum, employees need to understand what the organization’s goals are, why they are important, and how the goals can best be attained.

### **6.4. Convey**

Leaders clarify their expectations about employees and provide feedback on their functioning in the organization. Good leaders establish processes and procedures that help people master important tasks and facilitate goal achievement.

### **6.5. Congratulate**

Business leaders can learn a great deal from Wooden’s approach. Surveys show that, over and over, employees feel that they receive immediate feedback when their performance is poor, or below expectations. These same employees also report that praise and recognition for strong performance is much less common. Exceptional leaders give recognition, and they do so a lot; they coach and convey.

### **6.6. Contribute**

People want to know that their input matters and that they are contributing to the organization’s success in a meaningful way. This might be easy to articulate in settings such as hospitals and educational

institutions. But what about, say, the retail industry? Sears Roebuck & Co. started a turnaround in 1992. Part of the turnaround plan was the development of a set of measures – known as Total Performance Indicators – which gauged how well Sears was doing with its employees, customers, and investors. The implementation of the measurement system led to three startling conclusions. First, an employee’s understanding of the connection between her work – as operationalized by specific job-relevant behaviors – and the strategic objectives of the company had a positive impact on job performance. Second, an employee’s attitude towards the job and the company had the greatest impact on loyalty and customer service than all the other employee factors combined. Third, improvements in employee attitude led to improvements in job-relevant behavior; this, in turn, increased customer satisfaction and an improvement in revenue growth. In sum, good leaders help people see and feel how they are contributing to the organization’s success and future.

### **6.7. Control**

Employees value control over the flow and pace of their jobs and leaders can create opportunities for employees to exercise this control. Do leaders consult with their employees with regard to their needs? For example, is it possible to accommodate the needs of a mother or an employee infected with HIV so that they can attend to childcare concerns or a medical appointment? Are leaders flexible and attuned to the needs of the employees as well as the organization? Do leaders involve employees in decision-making, particularly when employees will be directly affected by the decision? Do employees have a say in setting goals or milestones that are deemed important? Are employees able to voice their ideas, and does leadership show that contributions are valued?

A feeling of “being in on things,” and of being given opportunities to participate in decision making often reduces stress; it also creates trust and a culture where people want to take ownership of problems and their solutions. There are numerous examples of organizations whose implementation of an open-book management style and creating room for employees to contribute to making decisions had a positive effect on engagement and organizational performance. The success of Microsoft, for example, stems in part from Bill Gates’ belief that smart people anywhere in the company should have the power to drive an initiative. Initiatives such as Six Sigma are dependent, in part, on the active participation of employees on the shop floor.

### **6.8. Collaborate:**

Studies show that, when employees work in teams and have the trust and cooperation of their team members, they outperform individuals and teams which lack good relationships. Great leaders are team

builders; they create an environment that fosters trust and collaboration. Surveys indicate that being cared about by colleagues is a strong predictor of employee engagement. Thus, a continuous challenge for leaders is to rally individuals to collaborate on organizational, departmental, and group goals, while excluding individuals pursuing their self-interest.

#### **6.9. Credibility**

Leaders should strive to maintain a company's reputation and demonstrate high ethical standards. People want to be proud of their jobs, their performance, and their organization.

#### **6.10. Confidence**

Good leaders help create confidence in a company by being exemplars of high ethical and performance standards. Practitioners and academics have argued that competitive advantage can be gained by creating an engaged workforce. The data and argument that we present above are a compelling case why leaders need to make employee engagement one of their priorities.

Leaders should actively try to identify the level of engagement in their organization, find the reasons behind the lack of full engagement, strive to eliminate those reasons, and implement behavioral strategies that will facilitate full engagement. These efforts should be ongoing. Employee engagement is hard to achieve and if not sustained by leaders it can wither with relative ease.

#### **Conclusion**

Employee Engagement is the buzz word term for employee communication. It is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. It is rapidly gaining popularity, use and importance in the workplace and impacts organizations in many ways. Employee engagement emphasizes the importance of employee communication on the success of a business. An organization should thus recognize employees, more than any other variable, as powerful contributors to a company's competitive position. Therefore employee engagement should be a continuous process of learning, improvement, measurement and action. It can hence be concluded that raising and maintaining employee engagement lies in the hands of an organization and requires a perfect blend of time, effort, commitment and investment to craft a successful endeavor.

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