

## Optimizing Employee Engagement

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**Abstract:** In the current trend of globalization and rise of Multinational Companies, the organisations face a difficult task with employee turnover, floating employee, recruitment and training due to which the production, total quality management, enterprise resource planning would be hampered. Engagement is important as it helps the managers solve issues like lack in commitment & motivation, employee turnover, customer satisfaction, loyalty, safety and productivity. This paper focuses on enhancing the employee engagement thereby helping the collective growth of the organization.

**Key words:** Employee engagement, Employee turnover, Total Quality Management.

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### I. Introduction

Employee Engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his 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. It is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally while executing the respective duties.

According to Tim Rutledge, "Truly engaged employees are attracted to and inspired by their work ("I want to do this"), committed ("I am dedicated to the success of what I am doing") and fascinated ("I love what I am doing")" (Rutledge, *Getting Engaged* 21).

When engagement is talked about, it refers to a multidimensional concept that involves a two-way interaction between the employee and the organization. However, raising engagement levels, and maintaining them, takes time, effort, commitment and investment.

An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works closely with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization" (qtd. by Bevan 42).

#### Stating the problem

According to **Gallup MBA**, one of the oldest leading Consulting organization (in conducting engagement survey) has identified three different types of people:

**Engaged--**"Engaged" employees are builders. They want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and surpass them. They are 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 have to be told what to do just so they can do it. 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 are "Consistently against Virtually Everything". They are not just unhappy at work, they are busy acting out their unhappiness. They sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity. Every day, actively disengaged worker 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.

#### Research Gap

There have been lot of researches done on Employee engagement with regards to employee commitment and empowerment, but most of the researches have failed to highlight the factors which affecting the employee

engagement. In this paper the 'key drivers' of the employee engagement are given more importance since that has a major impact on employee involvement and growth of the organization.

## **II. Research Methodology**

Employee Engagement plays an important role in work, motivation and commitment. People can do more to an organization than just perform a specified task. Since the human resource is considered to be the most important and most valuable resource of an organization, it becomes essential that organization strive to better understand and utilize them. Enlightened managements have realized to increase the employee's potential by engaging them in qualitative tasks. The study on 'Employee Engagement' is proposed to gain an insight in to the factors which enable the organization to achieve its goals. The findings could serve as guidance to management for possible action as deemed necessary.

In order to instill employee engagement, the manager has to focus on few important aspects. The employees should share the common goals of the organization. There must be consistent focus in fulfilling the goals. In order to help fulfill the goals, the management must provide necessary exposure and constant encouragement for continued learning. Sometimes it is observed that the goals remain unfulfilled because of a disconnect between the Superior and subordinate as a result of which effective output is not possible. There is a need to bridge the gap between the Superior and the Subordinate employees by continuous interaction. This can be done by an effective Induction Programme where the employees are familiarized with the mission and vision of the organization along with the value system and work culture. This instills a sense of belonging in the new recruits. They are able to unleash their creative energies. The employees feel content and continue to contribute to their best if a conducive environment is created where there is transparency and all the decisions pertaining to them are taken with proper justification. They must also be updated with the happenings in the organization, its new business ventures and acquisitions, and career growth prospects so that they experience a sense of belonging and pride. It is crucial to win the trust of the employees in order to derive quality output which calls for timely feedback, genuine appreciation, fulfilling the promises made and prompt grievance redressal. Sometimes in order to get productive work done it is always better to team rivals. This strategy works for the good of the organization where, the rivals when pitted together bury their differences and work towards their common goal. Different strategies can be applied for different categories of employees to keep them totally engaged.

### **Reinforcing the Engaged**

The first category of employees is already motivated. The reason could be passion for the chosen field in addition to sincerity, hard work etc. They are a boon to the organization as they are already proactive and keen to contribute to their optimum capabilities. To sustain this motivation, a few measures should be taken. As this category of employees put in their cent percent efforts it is natural that they expect and deserve appreciation and timely feedback from their superiors. Incentives and perks can help in sustaining the motivation levels high. It is also very important to allot appropriate tasks to satisfy their creative energies so that there is a sense of fulfillment in them. The totally engaged group expect the management to be fair and just in merit rating, performance appraisal, promotions and rewards and very rightfully so. Self assessment methods should be encouraged so that the employees keep track of their progress and update themselves from time to time.

### **Instilling Employee engagement**

**The second category that is not engaged** is a reason for concern as a majority of employees fall in this category. This category suffers from lack of interest and initiative in performing the allotted task. The reason for this could be lack of passion for the current field, internal conflicts in the team they work with, alienation by the colleagues, lack of comradeship, wavering interest, etc. The management should take particular care in identifying the reasons for their lack of enthusiasm in contributing to the growth of the organization. It has also been observed that when employees work in close proximity, there are bound to be clashes especially between the superior and subordinate.

It is crucial that the chasm between Superior and subordinate is bridged and all the factors which affect the constructive relations are on a strict check. This is necessary because it hampers the amicable atmosphere required for productive work. As a process of rapport building -excursions, outings, parties can be organized. Such programmes help ease the work pressure, diminish ego clashes, hostility etc which are inevitable in a work setup. In few organizations, Rapport building is encouraged and enhanced by role plays where in the superior and subordinate take turns and play different roles. This would help each other in seeing one another's perspective and problems faced while completing a specific task. It aids in being empathetic towards one another and help in reaching goals smoothly without friction.

The performances of employees play a key role in the quality growth of an organization. So, appraising the performance of the employees is crucial as it helps identify the innate ability & potential of each and every

employee and provide appropriate opportunities to showcase them. The employee feels his potential is recognized and this creates a sense of belonging in the individual. Elton Mayo's Hawthorn's experiment stands as a proof (Aryasri, *Management Sciences* 43). Many times employees fail to contribute not because they don't want to but for the simple reason that they don't enjoy the task that they are allotted. So, in the larger perspective, for quality development it is important to assign each employee with the task they are good at in order to avoid frustration which sets in otherwise. Acknowledging a person's contribution can also act as a fuel for a person to do the tasks assigned to a person with more zeal and efficiency in future. This effectively curbs the disappointment that creeps in if the employee feels his efforts are overlooked or ignored. In case a person fails to complete a specific task or his performance is found to be dissatisfactory the superior has to find out the reasons behind it so that any pitfalls on the part of the employee are mildly corrected. The correction should be such that the employee reflects on it and realizes it. The criticism should not be brash wherein the employee becomes aggressive or rebellious. This in turn is not good for the organization on a longer run.

The working environment should be conducive and positive if the employees have to be motivated to contribute their best. So, it is vital to maintain the positive spirit throughout the organization. As the story of the con artist with white wolf and black wolf goes- where he wins over the people by letting the wolf he chooses with a simple secret he owns – feeding the wolf he wants to win. This holds good even in the context of running an organization -every management has the liberty to choose the culture, style of working etc. The results are the consequence of the choice made. An organization can only prosper if the employees feel secure and happy.

### **Engaging the disengaged**

This category of employees is the actively disengaged group in the organization. They are a constant threat to the organization because they breed negativity and pollute the atmosphere in a workplace. They are pessimistic and de-motivate the performers by their cynical attitude. This cynical attitude could be due to deeply ingrained negative thoughts as a result of unhealthy upbringing. Sometimes it could also be a reason of deep disillusionment as a result of some painful experiences in the past. It is very essential to curb this negativity. Professional counselors can be pulled in to help the actively disengaged group to unwind themselves. With professional help, they can cultivate a positive attitude.

A very effective way to cultivate a positive attitude is to assign the unengaged employees in productive tasks. This enhances the self-esteem of the person and channelizes the negative energy into a positive one. Another way of engaging the disengaged is to involve them in team work. By this, a feeling of comradeship will develop between the disengaged person and the others. Socialising helps a person to see the brighter side of life. In this process, it converts the disengaged person to an optimistic one where he gets an opportunity to see and understand others' perspective.

So, it is mandatory to channelize the disengaged people on the right path for the prosperity of the organization or its fate will be similar to the popular fable in which a tree which could not be uprooted by a mighty storm fell prey to the tiny termites. Even in the current scenario an organization can stand against mighty problems but if the parasites that sap the energy are neglected, it could cost the firm a great deal. The third category i.e. **Actively Disengaged** if not transformed can be a drag to the progress of the organization.

### **III. Conclusion**

Engaged employees can help the organization achieve its mission, execute its strategy and generate important business results. An engaged employee contributes for the quality growth of the organisation. When employees are effectively and positively engaged with their organization, they form an emotional connection with the company and this impact their attitude towards the company's clients and thereby improves customer satisfaction. A successful employee engagement helps to create a harmony at the workplace.

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