

AN ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Introduction

Employee engagement is usually defined as an internal state of an organisation's health climate, or not, and covers physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. It also covers attitude and behaviour and in particular work commitment, effort and performance. Some of the general themes of employee engagement include discretionary behaviour, going the extra mile, feeling valued and passion for work.

www It can be measured

If it can be measured, it can be managed.

If it can be managed, it can be acted upon.

Scope

This strategy proposes an agreed definition of employee engagement, a method for measuring the strength of it in any organisation, and an action plan for implementing change.

www The right message

This is all about communication and voice.

Social media and technology help in pushing and pulling communication and voice.

The importance of engagement

There are huge benefits of employee engagement, so get engaged.

There are three prime elements to the measurement of engagement:

- **Vigour** - energy, resilience and effort.
- **Dedication** - enthusiasm, inspiration and pride.
- **Absorption** - concentration and being focused in work.

Awareness of the business context, the culture of the organisation and the current working climate are important to the meaning and the measure of engagement. The business context must be considered, as well as an understanding of the line of sight between each role and the purpose and objectives of the organisation.

A broader view of employee engagement includes *being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections*. This approach identifies three further dimensions:

- **Intellectual engagement** – thinking hard about the job and how to work better.

- **Affective engagement** – feeling positively about doing a good day's work.
- **Social engagement** – actively taking opportunities to discuss work-related improvements with work colleagues.

It is useful to think about what aspects of their work employees are engaged with. Employee engagement can be directed towards the role of the job itself, relationships with colleagues, the organisation as a whole and, not to be ignored, the people external to the organisation.



Everyone wants to be happier, healthier and more satisfied.

Did you hear the one about happy cows?

The benefits of employee engagement

Undoubtedly, there is a clear relationship between how people are managed, job satisfaction, their attitudes and behaviour, and business performance. You do the maths!

Employers want engaged employees, who are happier, healthier and more fulfilled in their work. Employees want their employers to do all they can to help them to be happier, healthier and more fulfilled in their work. This basic understanding holds true across all levels of an organisation and each job role. The importance of inter-connectedness at work brings together work effort, organisational commitment, job satisfaction, shared purpose, energy and flow. Positive relationships return profit, revenue growth, customer satisfaction, productivity, innovation, staff retention, efficiency, and health and safety performance.

So, happy cows produce happy milk. Another potential benefit covers organisational brand and reputation. Engaged people will be stronger advocates or adverts of their organisation and help to protect their organisation from reputational risk, poor customer service or product quality.



Beware of the dark side.

May the force be with you.

The dangers of a disengaged workforce

"I hate the thought of having to get out of bed each morning and getting ready for work".

Having a disengaged workforce brings huge risks, such as productivity loss, recruitment and retention of the best talent, implementing change, effective collaboration, innovation, human capital, knowledge management, absenteeism and ill-health, particularly stress-related.

There is a dark side to employee engagement. In particular, the drive and desire to do more for the organisation (emotional engagement) or the drive and desire to earn more and progress (transactional engagement). Driving a workforce to be more productive, without adequate support, makes burnout more likely. A sound people strategy brings together working conditions, levels of pressure, work-life balance, wellbeing, support mechanisms, continuing personnel development and reward management.



It's not rocket science; you do the maths.

Better me + Better you = Better us.

Building an engaged workforce

Integrated strategies provide the best organisational foundation to build on.

The fundamentals of any employee engagement strategy should include:

- **Leadership** – offering a strong strategic voice about the organisation, where it's come from, where it is and where it's going.
- **Line management** – who motivate, empower, support their people and lead by example.
- **Employee voice** – throughout the organisation, to challenge and reinforce equally, and to be actively involved in decision making.
- **Integrity** – organisational values embedded into the culture: what we say is what we do.

Integrity is a vital core value which relates to the sense of fairness and trust in an organisation and the assumption that employers will deliver on their commitments, thus fulfilling employees' expectations.

Drivers and enablers – assume nothing – not all employees are lazy, demotivated and disengaged, and not all employers inspire and lead their people in an engaging way. The majority of employees are highly motivated and only demotivated by organisational barriers such as a lack of support, under-resourced or poor senior and line management.

Making the connections



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The drive for an engaged workforce begins, continues and ends with good personnel management, together with learning and development practices. A sound and successful employee engagement strategy needs the full support of senior leaders, line managers and trade unions. It should be holistic and aligned with organisational values, vision and

mission or principles, intent and purpose (PIP) with job roles, communications, management systems and the team ethos (PIP²).

Employee engagement has to be organisation-wide and include all employees, bottom to top and vice-versa. The hard questions must be asked: what makes people tick or tock here? What moans and groans do people have? What are the delights and the duties of work here? What are the challenges and opportunities to engage people? All this, and more, must be considered with an organisation's culture, the history of its development and the structures and leadership shaping it today.

Engage for success

Simple and sure steps to successful employee engagement.

DMAIC:

Define Measure Analyse Improve Control

The first step to success in employee engagement is to assess and measure employee attitudes. A bespoke employee attitude survey, supported by focus groups and other forums provide insight.

The questions should be relevant and precise with the findings clear and specific enough to be actionable. The purpose of such surveys is to ascertain the specific factors relevant to employee engagement and disengagement. Some of the areas for analysis will be specific to a particular organisation, whereas the majority will be applicable to all organisations.

Social media provides a good platform for employees to interact with each other, with an opportunity for a degree of anonymity, read and comment on colleagues' opinions before senior management considers them.

A simple checklist

Are employers clear enough about what employees are engaging with and how this aligns with the organisational strategy?

Do employers expect too much effort from their workforce and is there a real danger of burnout?

Is employee voice disregarded as inappropriate or useless?

Do you need to revisit the fundamental relationships in your workplace?

How can new technology be utilised to enable employee engagement?

Outcomes

- Communications to keep people informed and reinforce principles, intent and purpose.
- Employee voice.
- Role modelling commitment to the organisation and the core values.
- Fair treatment of employees and adequate support for employee wellbeing.

