Employee Engagement For Organizational Success

Dr. Gajanethi Swathi Kumari

ABSTRACT

Managing and developing human resources in the global setting is increasingly recognized as a central challenge, particularly to multinational enterprises. As the concept of employee engagement has garnered attention in both practitioners and academic communities. Thus, organizations pay more attention to employee engagement which 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 purpose of this article is to explore the historical development and also to identify specific roles and responsibilities of the workforce in building a more engaged organization. It also focuses on how employee engagement is an antecedent of job involvement and measurement of employee engagement. Finally it is concluded with the implications and suggestions.

Keywords: *employee engagement, engaged organization, historical development, human resources, multinational enterprises*

INTRODUCTION

Employee Engagement is the extent to which employee commitment, both emotional and intellectual, exists relative to accomplishing the work, mission, and vision of the organization. Engagement can be seen as a heightened level of ownership where each employee wants to do whatever they can for the benefit of their internal and external customers, and for the success of the organization as a whole. Engaged employees care about the future of the company and are willing to invest discretionary effort. Engaged employees feel a strong [1]emotional bond to the organization that employs them (Robinson),which results in higher retention levels and productivity levels and lower absenteeism. When reliably measured, positive employee engagement can be causally related or correlated to specific positive business outcomes by workgroup and job type. Scarlett Surveys refers to these statistical relationships as engageonomics.

MEANING

Employee engagement, also called **worker engagement**, is a business management concept. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about their work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests. According to Scarlett Surveys, "Employee Engagement is a measurable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization which

---

Ashoka School of Business

profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work". Thus engagement is distinctively different from employee satisfaction, motivation and organizational culture.

Linkage research received significant attention in the business community because of correlations between employee engagement and desirable business outcomes such as retention of talent, customer service, individual performance, team performance, business unit productivity, and even enterprise-level financial performance

CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

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. The second related construct to engagement in organizational behavior is the notion of flow advanced by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990). Csikzentmihalyi (1975) defines flow as the 'holistic sensation' that, people feel when they act with total involvement. Flow is the state in which there is little distinction between the self and environment. When individuals are in Flow State little conscious control is necessary for their actions.

Employee engagement is the thus 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 Engagement is most closely associated with the existing construction of job involvement (Brown 1996) and flow (Csiksztmihalyi, 1990).

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) maintained 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.

Furthermore engagement entails the active use of emotions. Finally 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. When Kahn talked about employee Engagement he has given important to all three aspects physically, cognitively and emotionally. Whereas in job satisfaction importance has been given to cognitive side. HR practitioners believe that the engagement challenge has a lot to do with how employee feels about the about work experience and how he or she is treated in the organization. It has a lot to do with emotions which are fundamentally related to drive bottom line success in a company. There will always be people who never give their best efforts no matter how hard HR and line managers try to engage them. "But for the most part employees want to commit to companies because doing so satisfies a powerful and a basic need in connect with and contribute to something significant".

Aspects of Employee Engagement
Three basic aspects of employee engagement according to the global studies 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.

Importance of Engagement
Engagement is important for managers to cultivate given that disengagement or alienation is central to the problem of workers' lack of commitment and motivation (Aktouf). Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment from ones works. In such conditions, individuals are thought to be estranged from their selves. Other Research using a different resource of engagement (involvement and enthusiasm) has linked it to such variables as employee turnover, customer satisfaction – loyalty, safety and to a lesser degree, productivity and profitability criteria. An organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results. Some of the advantages of Engaged employees are:

□□Engaged employees will stay with the company, be an advocate of the company and its products and services, and contribute to bottom line business success.

□□They will normally perform better and are more motivated.

□□There is a significant link between employee engagement and profitability.

□□They form an emotional connection with the company. This impacts their attitude towards the company's clients, and thereby improves customer satisfaction and service levels

□□It builds passion, commitment and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals

□□Creates a sense of loyalty in a competitive environment

□□Provides a high-energy working environment

□□Makes the employees effective brand ambassadors for the company

A highly engaged employee will consistently deliver beyond expectations. In the workplace research on employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002) have repeatedly asked employees 'whether they have the opportunity to do what they do best everyday'. While one in five employees strongly agree with this statement. Those work units scoring higher on this perception have substantially higher performance. Thus employee engagement is critical to any organization that seeks to retain valued employees. The Watson Wyatt consulting companies has been proved that there is an intrinsic link between employee engagement, customer loyalty, and profitability. As organizations globalize and become more dependent on technology in a virtual working environment, there is a greater need to connect and engage with employees to provide them with an organizational 'identity.'

Factors Leading to Employee Engagement-
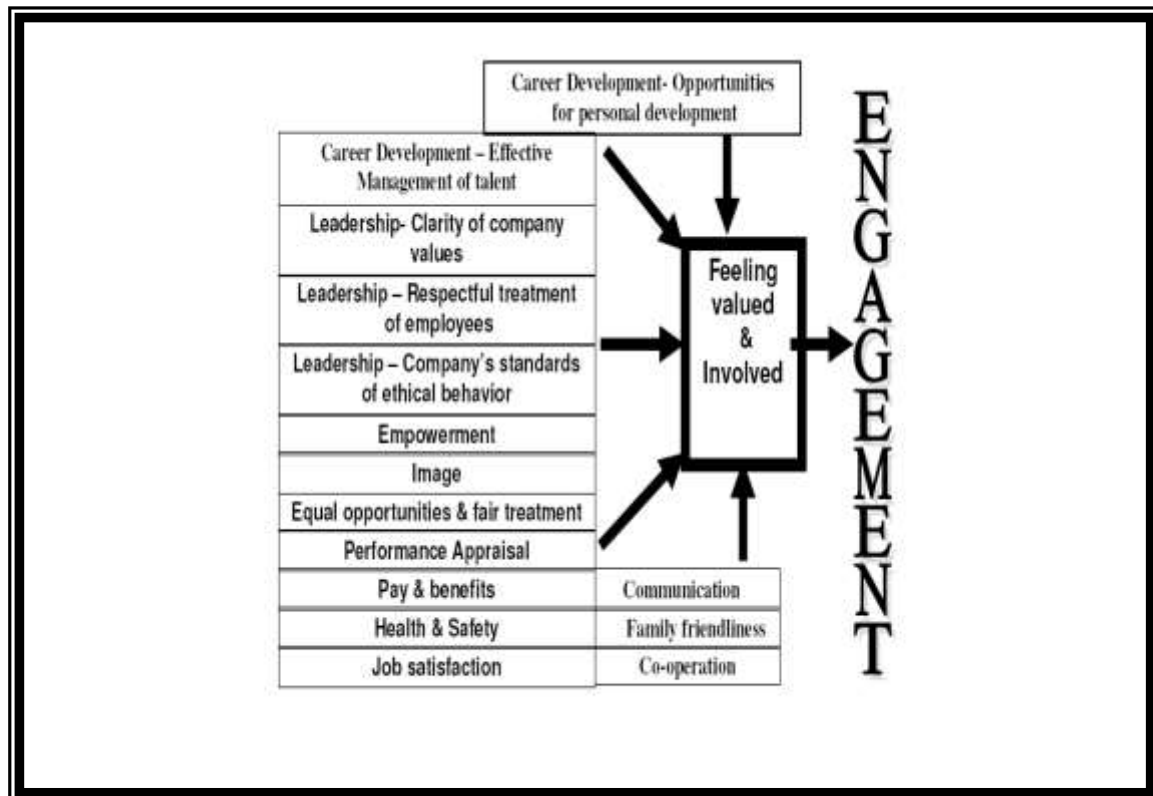
Career Development- Opportunities for Personal Development
Organizations with high levels of engagement provide employees with opportunities to develop their abilities, learn new skills, acquire new knowledge and realize their potential. When companies plan for the career paths of their employees and invest in them in this way their people invest in them.

Career Development – Effective Management of Talent
Career development influences engagement for employees and retaining the most talented employees and providing opportunities for personal development.

Leadership- Clarity of Company Values
Employees need to feel that the core values for which their companies stand are unambiguous and clear.

Leadership – Respectful Treatment of Employees
Successful organizations show respect for each employee's qualities and contribution – regardless of their job level.

Leadership – Company's Standards of Ethical Behaviour
A company's ethical stand ards also lead to engagement of an individual

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.

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.

Other factors

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

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
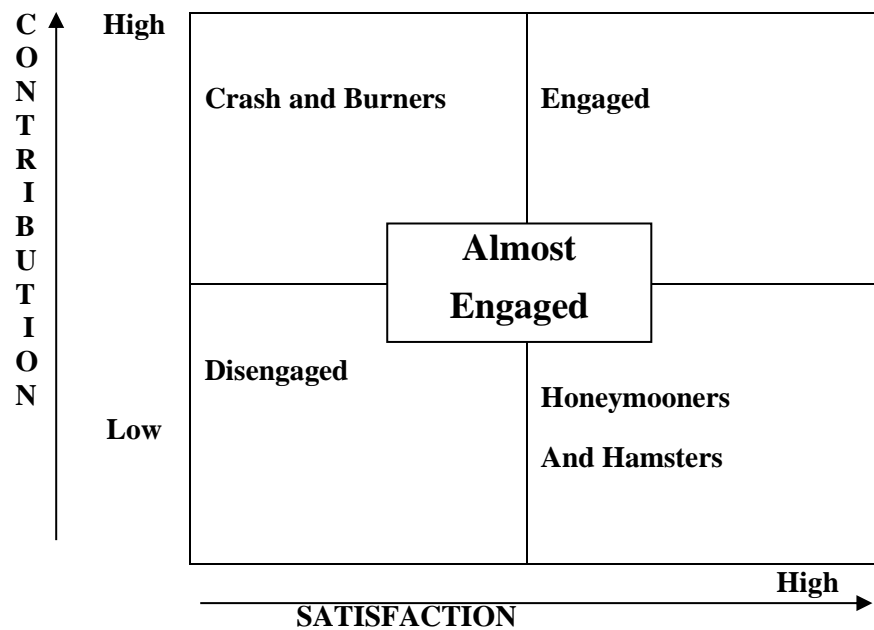
Family Friendliness
A person's family life influences his wok life. When an employee realizes that the organization is considering his family's benefits also, he will have an emotional attachment with the organization which leads to engagement

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.

Levels of Employee Engagement

```
C ↑  High    ┌─────────────────────┬─────────────────────┐
O │           │                     │                     │
N │           │  Crash and Burners  │  Engaged            │
T │           │                     │                     │
R │           │              ┌──────────────────┐         │
I │           │              │    Almost        │         │
B │           │              │    Engaged       │         │
U │           ├──────────────┤                  ├─────────┤
T │           │              └──────────────────┘         │
I │           │  Disengaged         │                     │
O │           │                     │  Honeymooners       │
N │  Low      │                     │  And Hamsters       │
  │           │                     │                     │
  │           └─────────────────────┴─────────────────────┘
  └──────────────────────────────────────────────── High ──→
         SATISFACTION
```

1. Engaged (High contribution and high satisfaction): These employees are the apex where personal and organizational interests align. They contribute fully to the success of the organization and find great satisfaction in their work. They are known for their discretionary short. Organizations need to keep them engaged, because they can transit over time to any of the three adjacent segments, a move that would likely impact workforce morale and the bottom line.

2. Almost engaged (Medium to high contribution and satisfaction): A critical group, these employees are among the high performers and are reasonably satisfied with their job. They may not have consistent "great days at work," but they know what those days lack like. Organizations should invest in them for two reasons: they are highly employable and more likely to be lured away; they have the shortest distance to travel to reach full engagement, promising the biggest payoff.

3. Honeymooners & Hamsters (Medium to high satisfaction but low contribution): **Honeymooners** are new to the organization or their role- and happy to be there. They have yet to find their stride or clearly understand how they can best contribute. It should be a priority to move them out of this temporary holding area to full alignment and productivity.

Hamsters may be working hard, but are in effect spinning their wheels, working on non-essential tasks, contributing little to the success of the organization. Some may even be hiding out, turned up in their cedar shavings, content with their position (retired in place).If organizations don't deal with them; other employees will have to work harder and may grow resentful

4. Crash & Burners (Medium to high contribution but low satisfaction): Disillusioned and potentially exhausted, these employees are top producers who aren't achieving their personal definition of success and satisfaction. They can be bitterly vocal that executive is making bad decisions or that colleagues are not pulling their weight. They may leave, but are more likely to take a breather and work less hard, slipping down the contribution scale to become disengaged. When they do, they often bring down those around them.

5. Disengaged (Low to medium contribution and satisfaction): Most disengaged employees didn't start out as bad apples. They still may not be. They are the most disconnected from organizational priorities, often feel underutilized, and are clearly not

getting what they need from work. They're likely to be skeptical, and can indulge in contagious negativity. If left alone, the disengaged are likely to collect a paycheck while complaining or looking for their next job. If they can't be coached or aligned to higher levels of engagement, their exit benefits everyone, including them.

According to global research findings, the following table illustrates the engagement levels by region wise
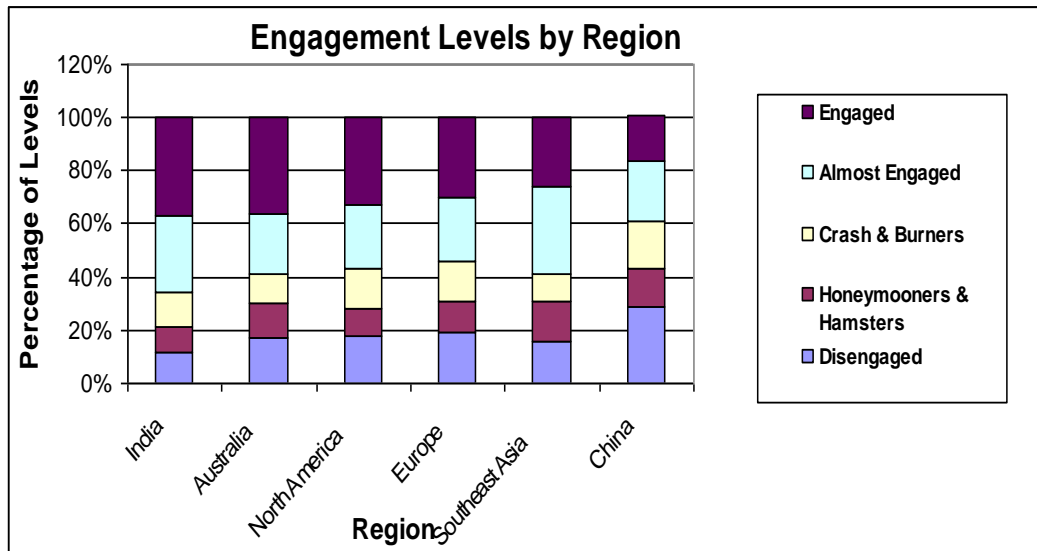
Source: Employee Engagement report 2011

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. 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 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 organization. But measuring the engagement (feedback through surveys) need to be done with proper planning..

Step II1: - Identify the problem areas
Identify the problem areas to see which are the exact areas and 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.

IMPLICATIONS

1. Less than one in three employees worldwide (31%) are engaged, nearly one in five (17%) are actually Disengaged.

2. Engagement levels are almost stable around the world.

3. Engaged employees plan to stay for what they give; the disengaged stay for what they get.

4. Trust in executives can have more than twice the impact on engagement levels than trust in immediate managers does.

5. Executives appear to struggle with key leadership behaviors correlated to engagement and executive behaviors can have a greater potential impact on engagement than manager actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To reap the rewards that a more Engaged Organization promises, the entire workforce needs to be accountable for their piece of the "engagement equation" every day. The present paper clarifies these roles and responsibilities.

Individuals: ownership, clarity and action- individuals need to know what they want- and what the organization needs- then take action to achieve both.

Managers: coaching, relationships and dialogue- Managers must understand each individual's talents, interests, and needs and then match those with the organization's objectives – while at the same time creating personal, trusting relationships. Furthermore, they need to discuss engagement often.

Executives: trust, communication and culture- Executives have to demonstrate consistency in words and actions, communicate a lot (and with a lot of depth), and align all business practices and behaviors throughout the organization to drive results and engagement.

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. We would hence conclude 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.

REFERENCES

- Archie Thomas, CMA, and Ann MacDi anmid – Encouraging Employee Engagement –CMA Management, Jun/Jul 2004.
- Ashok Mukherjee – Engagement for the mind body, and soul – Human Capital, Aug.2005.
- Barbara Palframan Smith – Employee connection – Technology to built culture and community – Communication World – Mar / Apr 2004.
- Beverly Kaye and Sharon Jordan Evans – From Assets to Investors – Training and Development – Apr 2003.

- Charles Woodruffe – Employee Engagement – The Real Secret of Winning a Crucial Edge over your rivals – Manager Motivation – Dec. / Jan. 2006.
- Christoffer Ellehuus,Piers Hudson-Driving Performance and Retention Through Employee Engagement –Corporate leadership Council 2004,Employee Engagement Survey
- Charlotte Garvey – Connecting the organizational pulse into the bottom line – HR Magazine society for Human Resource Management, June 2004.
- Cifton, D.O. & Hartor, J.K. (2003) – Investing in strength – positive organizational scholarship. Foundation of a new discipline (pp 111-121)
- Douglas R. May, Richard L Gilson – The Psychological conditions of meaningfulness safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work – Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology (2004) 7, 11-37.
- Ellen Lanser May – Are people your priority? How to engage your work force – Healthcare Executive, July/Aug. 2004.
- Fox, S, & Spector, P.E.. – Emotions in the work place – the neglected side of organizational life introduction. Human Resource Management Review, 12,
- Gretcher Hoover – Maintaining employee engagement when communicating difficult issues – Communication World, Nov / Dec 2005.
- Heskett, Jame L – Putting the service profit chain to work – Harvard Business Review, Mar / Apr 94 Vol. 72 Issue 2.
- Jerry Krueger and Emily Killham-At work,feeling good matters-Gallup Management Journal,Dec2005
- Michael Treacy – Employee Engagement higher at DDG company – Hewitt Research Brief. 2005
- Remus, Ilies – An experienced sampling measure of job satisfaction and its relationships with affectivity, mood at work, job beliefs and general job satisfaction – European Journal of work and organizational psychology, 2004, 13 (3), 367 – 389.
- Steve Batts – Getting engaged – HR Magazine society for Human Resource Management, Feb. 2004.
- Steve Crabtree – (2004) Getting personnel in the work place – Are negative relationships squelching productivity in your company? – Gallup Management Journal, June
- Employee Engagement Report 2011-Beyond the numbers: A practical approach to Individuals, Managers and Executives.