

Engaged Employees - Critical Asset of an Organisation

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Introduction

What makes one organization more successful than the others? Is it their services, strategies or perhaps technologies? In reality, these factors contribute to the superior performance; however, one thing that creates sustainable competitive advantage for the organization is employee engagement. It increases the organizations value and plays a vital role for every organization to attain its uniqueness in this world.

In today's fast-paced competitive world, securing and sustaining loyal employees is the top most priority for all the organizations. So Employee Engagement continues to be a hot button for all the organizations to hold their talented employees. Hence understanding employee engagement is the most valuable and critical factor for every organization, as the engaged employees are capable of taking their organization to a greater heights. Employee engagement is not something that exists only in papers to follow or a contract. It is something like a marriage, in which the relationship between the employer and employee should be fully committed. "When the marriage is solemnized both the parties feel a commonality they can share. The employer and employee also choose each other based on their possibility of sharing such a stake"¹

Employee Engagement

There is no commonly accepted definition for 'employee engagement'. Different authors give different definitions. The simple definition for Employee engagement is: "*It is the degree of emotional commitment that an employee has to their job and organization as a whole.*"²

The concept of employee engagement has been with us a coon's age. More than 30 years ago Gallup and other companies pioneered the concept of "Engagement Survey". The root of these surveys started in late 1900s by the pioneering industrial engineer Fredrick Taylor³, finally it was refined by William Khan and he framed the first formal definition for employee engagement in 1990 thus the term 'engagement' began to be used in academic literature.

Though employee engagement plays a pivotal role for the success of organizations, the concept of engagement was hidden somewhere due to the lack of importance given for human resource. Again, the conception of engagement regenerated only at the beginning of 2000. For all these past decade defining employee engagement was like nailing jelly to the wall because the

definitions for engagement varied in the weight given to the individual than against organization.

Significance of Employee Engagement

Engaged employees are the real asset of an organization. It is all about rational and the emotional connection an employee has to the organization, combined with his or her willingness to extend discretionary effort. Therefore, employee engagement is a necessary tool, which overcomes all growth hurdles and helps the organization to attain its vision and mission sustainably. For instance, the jewellery giant Titan has used employee engagement as the keystone to manage challenges. Titan had to manage aspirations of two sets of utterly diverse kinds of employees: one from the manufacturing pool and the other from its retail pool. Employees at the plant were heartened to form a forum to symbolize the various needs and ambitions, which led to the creation of an internal union.⁴

The importance of 'engaged employees' came to the fore during 26/11 attack in Mumbai Taj Hotel. During this Taj attack 31 people died and 21 were hurt. But the guests were full of gratitude at the service and support given by Taj employees during the incident. They were besieged by the employees' dedication to duty and dedication without regard to personal safety and their emergency handling skills⁵. These two instances bear ample testimony to the crucial role played by 'engaged employees'. "Employee Engagement is the most important factor that can drive organization's success and organization's effectiveness."⁶

Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance

There is always a positive relationship between Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance. Its outcomes are: employee retention, productivity, profitability, customer loyalty and safety. It also indicates that the more engaged employees tend to have enthusiasm, high energy levels and willingness to learn new things, sense of belonging to the organization, involvement in the job, adaptability to change, and openness for innovative ideas and so on⁷. It is also observed that engaged employees report less absenteeism, stay with the organization longer and happier being proactive, and more productive⁸.

Engaged employees consistently demonstrate three general behaviours, which improve the organizational performance:

- a) Sayers - Engaged employees act as advocates for the organization spreading positive information to co-workers, prospective employees and customers.
- b) Stayers - Engaged employees stay longer in the organisation and feel proud to be part it despite opportunities of work elsewhere.
- c) Strivers - Engaged employees are always ready to go an extra mile, work extra time, exert extra effort and take extra initiative to contribute to the success of the organization.

On other hand what will happen if the employees are disengaged? The disengaged employees are the '*Cave dwellers*' of an organization. They are likely to waste their effort and talent on tasks that may not matter much. They do not show full commitment to their work^{9,10} and they often sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity. This disengaged employees will craft inordinate damage to the organizations' interest and functions.

What's the main drive of Employee Engagement?

There are many drives for Employee Engagement like "career opportunities, managing performance, pay, communication, employer employee relation, innovation and so on."¹¹ But the empowerment of employees plays a pivotal role to make employees engaged. Everyone wants to feel that his or her opinion counts.¹² That is where empowerment comes into play.

When the employees are empowered they will feel motivated and become responsible. Empowering the employees does not mean they are completely out of loop. It makes them feel that the organization is always available for them by giving them some degree of ownership over their work; organizations help them to bring forward their good ideas. It will create a healthy relationship between the organizations and employees.

The Current scenario of Employee Engagement in Indi

Kelly Global Workforce Index (KGWI) reveals that across APAC (Asia-Pacific), the most engaged employees are in India and Indonesia. About half the Indian workers in a survey have said that they feel fully committed or engaged with their current employer. But still there is a major challenge for employers to rebuild confidence and trust among employees who have been impacted by economic slowdown and job uncertainty.¹³ Another survey conducted by Dale Carnegie Training, a leader in improving workplace performance, revealed a report on employee engagement in India. It elicit that Indian employees are significantly more engaged than their global counterparts , with 46 per cent employees fully engaged compared to the global average of 34 per cent.

Though Indian employees are more engaged than their global counterparts, still 54 per cent of them remain somewhat dissatisfied in their jobs signalling an urgent need for organization to take proactive steps to reduce the disengagement proposition¹⁴.

Conclusion

Employee Engagement carries a great significance for both the organizations and employees. An organization should recognize its employees more than any other variables, as influential contributors to an organization competitive position. Employee Engagement is not a single process. It is a continuous process of learning, improvement, measurement and action. When an organization gives priority to Employee Engagement it will help the organization to increase its productivity, retention, customer loyalty, innovation

and profitability, which in turn will help the organizations to attain its sustainable competitive advantage.

Endnotes

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