

Employee Engagement – 8 Key Points

What is employee engagement?

We should first start with what it isn't. Employee engagement is NOT about your employees being happy. It is NOT about employees being satisfied. Employee engagement is about employees being committed to achieving the goals of an organisation.

Full engagement happens when a company's values, goals and strategies align with values goals and strategy of the individual.

I am not saying that if the company wants to sell 1,000,000 boxes per year that the goal of the individual must be to sell 1,000,000 boxes per year. A **company** wants to employ people that are willing to learn, work hard so they can work their way up to management position to help the business to implement their overall business strategy. The **individual** wants to learn, work hard so they can get promotions, increase salary and work their way to a more senior position. Both the organisation and individual are reaching their goals.

For commitment or engagement to be sustained, there must be alignment between organisational goals and personal goals. **It must be Win-Win.**

Below is a simple way to describe the four type's engagement levels. You will most likely have all four types of people in your organisation.

1. **Satisfied - Contributing** (*happy and productive*) Engaged
2. **Not satisfied - Contributing** (*Productive, but not happy*) Can burn out or leave due to under appreciation
3. **Satisfied - Not contributing** (*Happy but not productive*) Will continue to work with you, but are not focused on helping the company
4. **Not satisfied - Not contributing** (*Not happy and not productive*) Will either leave, or stay and drain your resources

Why do we want engaged employees?

Engaged employees give what is called "discretionary effort" Effort that is above and the level required to fulfil the job description. Engaged employees:

1. Give better service
2. Are more productive
3. Are more willing to learn and improve
4. Make more sales / make less mistakes
5. Are more likely to identify areas of organisational improvement
6. Enjoy their work more
7. Are focused on achieving company goals

Engaged employees are great. Every organisation should have them. Unfortunately you can't just go and buy some engaged employees and put them in your office. Engagement requires a company to address many different personal needs of each individual.

Eight key factors impacting employee engagement.

1. Quality of management / leadership
2. Development and promotion opportunities
3. Total pay and benefits
4. Clearly defined goals / alignment and buy-in to those goals
5. KPI's, measurements of success and feedback
6. Culture and team environment
7. Resources to complete the task (including systems, procedures, policies)
8. Autonomy to make decisions / control over their work

What happens when one factor is missing?

1. Quality of managers and leaders: The quality of the leader is the single biggest factor. A poor leader can have a negative impact on many of the other key factors. The person with the biggest impact on employee engagement is their direct supervisor.
2. Development and promotion opportunities: With poor development, employees may feel that they are not competent to do their job, or feel unsupported. Without further training, and promotion opportunity, they may not see a future with the company and start looking at other options for further progression.
3. Total pay and benefits: If you are not meeting market rates or employee expectations, they may feel undervalued by the company.
4. Clear goals / aligned goals: unclear goals can result in unfocused work and wasted effort. Non-aligned goals mean that the employee's goals are not being achieved through their work, and may direct their time to other projects.
5. Key Performance Indicators / Feedback: If an employee doesn't know how you are going to measure success, then they don't know if they are doing a good job, or can be unsure where to focus their efforts. Good employees may feel like they are underperforming, and poor employees may think they are doing a great job. If there is no feedback or measurable performance indicators, individuals can't measure their success.
6. Team and Culture: A poor manager, or poor teamwork and culture can make good employees feel like they don't fit in. It is human nature to want to be accepted and liked. Create a strong team spirit, and employees will feel less like an employee and more like family.
7. Resources, policies, systems: Without the appropriate resources to complete their job, employees will feel frustrated or confused.
8. Autonomy: Another basic human need is to feel like you are in control. Without some level of autonomy, an employee may feel like they are micro-managed, or that they don't have control over their own performance.

Maintaining Engagement

1. Review your systems and procedures against the 8 key factors outlined
2. Ensure organizational goals are set and regularly communicated
3. Develop your supervisors, leaders to understand what motivates their team, and manage expectations in the context of your organisation. Leadership is key.
4. Managers conduct regular reviews with team members to understand any missing factors for each individual, and to understand their goals, as individuals often change their goals over time.
5. People are complicated. Even though you will never be able to fully engage every person in your organization, it is vital that you are consistently working toward providing an environment that encourages maximum engagement and focusing on Win-Win for employees and the organisation.

Who is responsible for Employee Engagement?

To achieve high levels of employee engagement you require commitment from all levels of management. Senior management, human resource departments, and frontline managers are all responsible for driving the engagement of staff.

This article was written by Adrian Low, Managing Partner at HRINC.

“A job isn’t just a job, it consumes more than a third of your day – make sure you enjoy what you do and challenge yourself to be creative and do things differently!” Contact hrinc@hrinc.asia for more information