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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is based on trust, integrity, two-way commitment and communication between an organisation and its members. It is an approach that increases the chances of business success, contributing to organisational and individual performance, productivity and well-being. It can be measured. It varies from poor to great. It can be nurtured and dramatically; it can lose and thrown away. Real change occurs at the local workgroup level, but it happens only when company leaders set the tone from the top. Companies realize the most benefit from engagement initiatives when leaders weave employee engagement into performance expectations for managers and enable them to execute on those expectations. Managers and employees must feel empowered to make a significant difference in their immediate identify barriers to engagement and opportunities to effect positive change. Employees are familiar with the company's processes, systems, products, and customers. They are also experts on themselves and their teams. So it makes sense that they will have the best ideas to maximize these elements and deliver improved performance, business innovation, and better workplace experiences.

KEYWORDS

employee engagement, great managers, best managers.

INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organisation to give of their best each day, committed to their organisation's goals and values, motivated to contribute to organisational success, with an enhanced sense of their own well-being. David Macleod says Employee engagement as "This is about how we create the conditions in which employees offer more of their capability and potential". Employee engagement is based on trust, integrity, two way commitment and communication between an organisation and its members. It is an approach that increases the chances of business success, contributing to organisational and individual performance, productivity and well-being. It can be measured. It varies from poor to great. It can be nurtured and dramatically increased; it can lose and thrown away.

Employee Engagement in the point of view of Employees:

- Employee engagement is getting up in the morning thinking, "Great, I'm going to work. I know what I'm going to do today. I've got some great ideas about how to do it really well. I'm looking forward to seeing the team and helping them work well today".
- Employee engagement is about understanding one's role in an organisation, and being sighted and energised on where it fits in the organisation's purpose and objectives.
- Employee engagement is about having a clear understanding of how an organisation is fulfilling its purpose and objectives, how it is changing to fulfil those better, and being given a voice in its journey to offer ideas and express views that are taken account of as decisions are made.
- Employee engagement is about being included fully as a member of the team, focussed on clear goals, trusted and empowered, receiving regular and constructive feedback, supported in developing new skills, thanked and recognised for achievement.
- Engaged organisations have strong and authentic values, with clear evidence of trust and fairness based on mutual respect, where two-way promises and commitments – between employers and employees – are understood and fulfilled.

Employee Engagement in the point of view of Employers:

- Employee engagement is about positive attitudes and behaviours leading to improved business outcomes, in a way that they trigger and reinforce one another.
- Employee engagement is about our employees feeling pride and loyalty working for our organisation, being a great advocate of the organisation to our clients, users and customers, going the extra mile to finish a piece of work.
- Employee engagement is about drawing on our employees' knowledge and ideas to improve our products and services, and be innovative about how we work.
- Employee engagement is about drawing out a deeper commitment from our employees so fewer leave, sick absence reduces, accident rates decline, conflicts and grievances go down, productivity increases.
- Employee engagement is about organisation actions that are consistent with the organisation's values. It is about kept promises, or an explanation why they cannot be kept.

10 C's OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

1. **Connect:** Employee engagement is often a direct reflection of how employees feel about their immediate supervisor and senior management. Employees can easily tell if their organizations and their leaders are sincere when they say 'our employees are our greatest asset.'
2. **Career:** Organizations should provide meaningful work with opportunities for either career advancement or, at the very least, career enhancement. Employees need to acquire the knowledge and tools to do their work successfully and to see that they have a future within the organization. If they don't, they will feel stressed and frustrated and this will ultimately lead to a lack of engagement.
3. **Clarity:** All organizations need to have a clear vision of their goals, objectives, values and principles, including why these are important and how they will be attained. Just stating them, though, is not enough -- they must be effectively communicated to the entire workforce. Employees who do not know what their organization stands for cannot work together to achieve common goals.
4. **Convey:** Positive and constructive feedback on a regular basis is essential in the pursuit of greatness. Good leaders know that they need to improve the skills of their people to help the organization perform at its best.
5. **Congratulate:** Our 4Cs surveys often show that employees get immediate feedback when they make mistakes or perform below expectations while giving praise and recognition is much less common. Exceptional leaders give recognition frequently, in a genuine spirit and at the time it is deserved.
6. **Contribute:** Most employees want to work hard, to make a difference and to see that their input matters. Good leaders clearly demonstrate and acknowledge how others are contributing to the organization's success, whether at a corporate or at an individual level.
7. **Control:** Leaders can and should create opportunities for employees to exercise control over the flow and pace of their jobs. Employees who have a say in setting goals and decision-making processes feel less stress and enjoy working in a healthy culture where everyone is accountable for their actions and willing to take ownership of problems and solutions.
8. **Collaborate:** Teamwork is most powerful when there is a strong sense of trust among team members -- these teams will achieve a greater sense of cooperation that allows them to out-perform teams that lack good inter-personal relationships.

9. **Credibility:** Organizations that strive to demonstrate high ethical standards and maintain their reputations give their employees reasons to be proud of their jobs, their performance and their organization. Conversely, leaders who behave unethically, such as "playing favourites," erode trust and risk embarrassing employees to the extent they may be ashamed of their affiliation with their organization.
10. **Confidence:** Good leaders help create confidence in an organization and its future by openly sharing information with employees, listening and responding to their suggestions and concerns, giving them strong direction and establishing the priorities of the organization. In turn, employees are clear on where to focus their efforts and energy.

MANAGING EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR AND PERFORMANCE WITH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

For many retail managers, the most baffling part of their job is the people part. The same leaders who can easily manage their inventory, manage their facilities, manage their books, and manage their profit margin are often the same ones who find themselves at a loss when it comes to managing the behaviour and performance of their employees. "Why can't they just do what I tell them to do?" is the management cry heard around the retail world.

Let's remove the mystery about employee engagement once and for all. If your employees aren't performing with excellence in every way, every day, with no exceptions, there are only two reasons why:

- 1) They can't.
- 2) They don't want to.

There's no mystery really, no psychological complexities, and no complicated management theories. There are just two simple root causes. Either your employees lack something essential which prevents them from performing with excellence, or they don't achieve excellence because they simply don't want to. Managers need to think of these two root causes as separate disorders which require accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment. Just as band-aids won't fix a broken bone, a how-to training class won't fix a broken spirit. Successful retail leadership requires more doctoring and less managing in order to keep the people part of the operation healthy.

i. Employees Don't Because They Can't

No matter how much you request, demand, cajole or beg your employees for a certain level of performance, sometimes they don't give it to you because they can't. If you've been a manager for more than a week, you know there are some employees who put no creativity into their work except when it comes to excuse-making. These are the masters of "can't." It is a huge mistake, though, to assume that every "can't" you hear is nothing more than a justification for laziness. There are some (usually many) legitimate barriers in every operation that make it difficult or impossible for employees to complete their tasks, make their deadlines, and generally meet your expectations.

ii. Identify Barriers to Excellence

You can separate legitimate barriers from unfounded whining by asking your employees one simple question: "What makes it difficult or impossible for you to do your job with excellence every day, in every way, with no exceptions?" The legitimate barriers that your employees identify will fall into four categories:

- Physical Barriers
- Time Barriers
- Wherewithal Barriers
- Know-how Barriers

Identifying these barriers is an extremely easy task. Your employees think about them, get frustrated with them, and talk about them behind your back quite frequently! If given the opportunity to communicate without fear of recrimination, your employees will help you compile an extensive barriers list with ease.

iii. Eliminate Barriers to Excellence

Eliminating "can't" excuses from your operation is then simply a matter of eliminating the legitimate barriers. This is usually a much easier undertaking than most managers would expect. Why? Because your employees have already formulated solutions in their heads which usually sound something like, "If I was running this place I would..." Ask your employees for their ideas, and empower them to implement the solutions. Give them a second chance if the solution fails, and praise them in public when they succeed.

iv. Some Employees Just Don't Want To

The best thing about supporting excellence by eliminating barriers is that it leaves nothing for the slackers to hide behind. When you remove the "can'ts," all that's left in your operation are employees who excel and employees who obviously need to be replaced.

Replacing employees is not a pleasant task, but don't procrastinate. High-performing employees have no tolerance for just-get-by co-workers and neither should you. Cutting slackers loose is a necessary part of managing excellence. It raises the bar of performance for everyone, and it's a surprisingly tangible way to reward those who have been picking up the slack for the slackers.

v. Supporting Success is Managing Excellence

The people part of a retail operation is not as puzzling as it sometimes seems. When you set your employees up for success by listening to their challenges and eliminating their barriers, the work you receive from them in return will take away most of the mystery of human resources management.

FIVE STRATEGIES ORGANIZATIONS CAN USE TO HELP BUILD THEIR CONSTITUENCY OF ENGAGED EMPLOYEES

1. USE THE RIGHT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

When a company asks its employees for their opinions, those employees expect action to follow. But businesses often make the mistake of using employee surveys to collect data that are irrelevant or impossible to act on. Any survey data must be specific, relevant, and actionable for any team at any organizational level. Data should also be proven to influence key performance metrics.

2. FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT AT THE LOCAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS

Real change occurs at the local workgroup level, but it happens only when company leaders set the tone from the top. Companies realize the most benefit from engagement initiatives when leaders weave employee engagement into performance expectations for managers and enable them to execute on those expectations. Managers and employees must feel empowered to make a significant difference in their immediate identify barriers to engagement and opportunities to effect positive change. Employees are familiar with the company's processes, systems, products, and customers. They are also experts on themselves and their teams. So it makes sense that they will have the best ideas to maximize these elements and deliver improved performance, business innovation, and better workplace experiences.

3. SELECT THE RIGHT MANAGERS

The best managers understand that their success and that of the organization relies on employees' achievements. But not everyone can be a great manager. Great managers care about their people's success. They seek to understand each person's strengths and provide employees with every opportunity to use their strengths in their role. Great managers empower their employees, recognize and value their contributions, and actively seek their ideas and opinions. It takes talent to be a great manager, and selecting people who have this talent is important. Whether hiring from outside or promoting from within, businesses that scientifically select managers for the unique talents it takes to effectively manage people greatly increase the odds of engaging their employees. Companies should treat the manager role as unique, with distinct functional demands that require a specific talent set.

4. COACH MANAGERS AND HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR EMPLOYEES' ENGAGEMENT

Gallup's research has found that managers are primarily responsible for their employees' engagement levels. Companies should coach managers to take an active role in building engagement plans with their employees, hold managers accountable, track their progress, and ensure that they continuously focus on emotionally engaging their employees. The most successful managers view as the elements for great managing, not just questions for measuring. By doing so, they gain a powerful framework to guide the creation of a strong, engaged workplace.

5. DEFINE ENGAGEMENT GOALS IN REALISTIC, EVERYDAY TERMS

To bring engagement to life, leaders must make engagement goals meaningful to employees' day-to-day experiences. Describing what success looks like using powerful descriptions and emotive language helps give meaning to goals and builds commitment within a team. Make sure that managers discuss employee engagement at weekly meetings, in action-planning sessions, and in one-on-one meetings with employees to weave engagement into daily interactions and activities and to make it part of the workplace's DNA.

CONCLUSION

Emotional connection an employee feels toward his or her employment organization, which tends to influence his or her behaviours and level of effort in work related activities. The more engagement an employee has with his or her company, the more effort they put forth. Employee engagement also involves the nature of the job itself - if the employee feels mentally stimulated; the trust and communication between employees and management ability of an employee to see how their own work contributes to the overall company performance; the opportunity of growth within the organization; and the level of pride an employee has about working or being associated with the company.

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