

Get Engaged!

What is employee engagement anyway?

Engage. Engaged. Engaging. Engagement. These are common enough words. So, let us *engage* in the task of considering some of the ways we use them in everyday language:

“Mr. Sulu, *engage* Tractor Beam.” “Tractor beam *engaged*, Captain.”

“Provocative. *Engaging*. A must-see this summer. Two thumbs up!”

“Sorry, I can’t attend your *engagement* party—I have a previous *engagement*.”

“Our country’s first great military *engagement* of the Second World War...”

Think about this: when we talk about **employee engagement**, we find nuances of all of these meanings. **Employee engagement** implies something is put in gear, is switched on or, perhaps, even fully involved. It includes the ideas of allure, allegiance and action. Its polar opposite is indifference. One thing is clear: **engagement** is definitely not boring!

It has only been in the last forty years that researchers have begun to study the relationship between the attitudes, well-being, and job satisfaction of employees and the business bottom line. The term **employee engagement** emerged in the 1990’s with the goal of identifying those key areas for managers to “maximize the return on human capital,” or, in other words, to motivate employees and improve profitability.

Business leaders should care about employee engagement because, when correctly measured, engagement profiles provide management with a statistical method to maximize return on human capital. Scarlett, 2008

Formatted: Left, Space Before: 0 pt, After: 0 pt

ONE THING IS
CLEAR:
ENGAGEMENT
IS
DEFINITELY
NOT BORING!

GET ENGAGED!

Engagement Defined

Engagement...

- ☑ is defined as a combination of dedication, motivation, and sense of belonging;
- ☑ is described as “one step up” from commitment;
- ☑ like the double entendre of this book’s title, has its very foundation in relationship;
- ☑ takes two parties working together—it calls for a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD: the professional body for those involved in the management and development of people in the United Kingdom) explains further:

So what is employee engagement? It can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organization and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues (organizational citizenship). It goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation. Engagement is something the employee has to offer: it cannot be ‘required’ as part of the employment contract.
CIPD, 2008

Characteristics of Engaged Employees

Engaged Employees:

- ☑ are enthusiastic and energetic—they go the extra mile;
- ☑ care about what they do and have a sense of purpose in their work;
- ☑ have positive attitudes towards the organization and its values;
- ☑ feel valued for their contributions.

In highly engaged organizations, leaders are more visible and have a high level of personal engagement. They act as role models by demonstrating organizational values and they build relationships at all levels. As a result, employees feel informed, valued, and respected and come to share their leaders' passion and commitment to success.

Anyone can dabble, but once you've made that commitment, your blood has that particular thing in it, and it's very hard for people to stop you. Bill Cosby

Why Get Engaged?

Building a business case for engagement

After a recent business trip I stopped at a well-known restaurant. A sign greeted me in the dining room, 'Please wait to be seated.' Moments later, the host showed me to my table. The server soon appeared with a menu. As he was giving it to me, I asked, "What do you recommend today?"

Without missing a beat, he said, "Going to another restaurant."

As I picked my jaw off the table, the only profound thing I could think to say was, "Oh." He continued without any prompting, "Yeah, this is my last day here and I can't wait to get out of here. The manager's a real jerk."

Now, in addition to being hungry, I was also curious. I was curious for two reasons. I was wondering if I should choose a different restaurant, as he suggested. But, more importantly, I wanted to know what the server would say about the manager, who just happened to be a friend of mine.

So I asked, "Why are you quitting?" He went on to describe all his boss's *unreasonable* demands: coming to work on time, not texting his girlfriend while working, being polite to the customers...

You're probably wondering what I did... Yes, I stayed and ordered a steak dinner. Then, I relayed the information to the manager.

This is a classic example of the actual and hidden costs of a disengaged employee.

THIS IS A
CLASSIC
EXAMPLE OF
THE ACTUAL
AND HIDDEN
COSTS OF A
DISENGAGED
EMPLOYEE.

GET ENGAGED!

Benefits of Engagement

Numerous studies have well established the significant relationship between employee engagement and productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction.

Competitive Advantage



“Organizations whose employees are highly engaged build a competitive advantage over the competition.” BlessingWhite, 2008

Increased Productivity & Profitability

“Organizations with high engagement are 78 percent more productive and 40 percent more profitable than those organizations with low levels of engagement.” Hewitt Quarterly, 2008



Highly Motivated Employees



“Engaged employees are not just committed. They are not just passionate or proud. They have a line-of-sight on their own future and on the organization’s mission and goals. They are “enthused” and “in gear” using their talents and discretionary effort to make a difference in their employer’s quest for sustainable business success.” BlessingWhite, 2008

Our studies show that positively engaged employees have higher than average individual productivity and innovation events plus they remain with the company longer than disengaged employees. In addition, the discretionary efforts of the fully engaged are of higher quality and of a more positive intensity than other less-engaged employees: their economic contributions to the business consistently exceed their employment costs. From a quality of work life perspective, positively engaged employees are energetic and enthusiastic which makes them more productive in group efforts and makes them a pleasure to work with. Our research also shows that fully engaged employees solve problems. Scarlett, 2008

GET ENGAGED!

Cost of Disengagement

Of course the flip side of this is that employee *dis*engagement is extremely costly. It seeps into the work atmosphere, infects the workforce, and affects every part of the organization. The results include increased absenteeism, negativity, and internal conflict. When this happens, the workplace is not a happy place to be.

Customer Impact

The attitude and actions of employees can make or break customer relationships. The actual cost of a lost customer is not just one transaction but the “lifetime value” of that customer.

Operational Inefficiencies

Delivering poor quality services, missing deadlines, or sending the wrong product are all issues which can be readily linked to a disengaged employee. The impact of lost or diminished business can often be substantial, even to the point of threatening the survival of the company.

Organizational Impact

How many people can one disengaged employee affect? Imagine just 5-10 customers, colleagues, or acquaintances hearing repeatedly that XYZ Company is a bad place to work. Not only can this negative buzz hamper immediate productivity, it can also damage the reputation of the company’s brand in the marketplace and affect the company’s ability to attract quality employees in the future.

Turnover costs

The financial cost of employee turnover has actual and hidden costs: the time required to recruit and train new employees and the potential loss of new business opportunities or current customers during the vacancy period.

In addition, it is costly for it a company to identify the disengaged employee, understand the reasons for the disengagement, and implement the actions required to improve the situation.

Call The Safety Officer!

(Lockwood, 2007)

Disengagement is a safety hazard! A recent study reports that non-engaged employees were five times more likely than engaged employees to have a safety incident and seven times more likely to have a lost-time safety incident.

