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EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT – A TOOL FOR ORGANIZATIONS SUCCESS

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Abstract

Employee engagement 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. It is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the Organization and its values. The paper focuses on how employee engagement is an antecedent of job involvement and what should company do to make the employees engaged. The paper also looks at the literature that identifies strong feelings of employee engagement and the steps which shows how to drive an engaged employee.

Introduction

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). Csikszentmihalyi (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 (Csikszentmihalyi, 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 more 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.

Categories of Employee Engagement: According to the Gallup the Consulting organization there are there are different types of people :-

Engaged--"*Engaged*" employees are builders. They want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and exceed them. They're naturally curious about their company and their place in it. They perform at consistently high levels. They want to use their talents and strengths at work every day. They work with passion and they drive innovation and move their organization forward

Not Engaged---*Not-engaged* employees tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. They want to be told what to do just so they can do it and say they have finished. They focus on accomplishing tasks vs. achieving an outcome. Employees who are *not-engaged* tend to feel their contributions are being overlooked, and their potential is not being tapped. They often feel this way because they don't have productive relationships with their managers or with their coworkers.

Actively Disengaged--The "*actively disengaged*" employees are the "cave dwellers." They're "Consistently against Virtually Everything." They're not just unhappy at work; they're busy acting out their unhappiness. They, sow seeds of negativity at every opportunity. Every day, actively disengaged workers undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish. As workers increasingly rely on each other to generate products and services, the problems and tensions that are fostered by *actively disengaged* workers can cause great damage to an organization's functioning.

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 (Thomas and Velthouse). In such conditions, individuals are thought to be estranged from their selves (Seeman, 1972). 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 (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002).

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
- Increases employees' trust in the organization
- Creates a sense of loyalty in a competitive environment
- Provides a high-energy working environment
- Boosts business growth

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.

Factors Leading to Employee Engagement-

Studies have shown that there are some critical factors which lead to Employee Engagement. Some of them identified are

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 standards 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 then the engagement levels are likely to be high.

Family Friendliness

A person's family life influences his work 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 supervisor's co-ordinate well then the employees will be engaged.

How to measure Employee Engagement?

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. These are all good things that prove that engaging and involving employees make good business sense and building Shareholder value. 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 in their positions, remain with the company, be promoted, and 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 organisation. But measuring the engagement (feedback through surveys) without planning how to handle the result can lead employees to disengage. It is therefore not enough to feel the pulse the action plan is just as essential.

Step III: - Identify the problem areas

Identify the problem areas to see which are the exact areas, which 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.

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.

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