



## Employee Engagement for Achieving Passionate Work Culture

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### Abstract

*In modern prevailing business scenario, a firm or organization has to co-create values with customers continuously and introduce changes desired by the customers and apply modifications thereof. The organizations are passing through fiercely competitive battlefield competitive and an economic turbulence where-in employee engagement is a critical factor. Fully engaged employees deliver higher performance which may be dire essential for business survival. Even in the longer-term employees may not only help companies during turbulent times but also when business conditions improve. Organizations must ensure that employees are stronger and better placed to take advantage of future opportunities.*

*Employee engagement addresses the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his organization and its values. It is a measureable degree of an employee's positive or negative emotional attachment to their job, colleagues and organization which profoundly influences their willingness to learn and perform at work. Employee engagement has a direct impact on the employee's productivity. It has been observed that the most productive employees are those who are not only committed and loyal but also whose outputs are healthy end values but also gratifying both for themselves as well as for the organization they work for. Obviously, these are the employees who can be called 'engaged'. Engaged employees are the key to a company's ability to grow, prosper and have a positive impact in establishing brand name.*

*Every employee within the organization wants to feel respected and trusted, to feel they have some influence over decisions that affect them, to feel successful and competent. Some employees have more person-specific needs and expectations: some employees want security, while others want the chance to take risks and be entrepreneurial. Few employees like a very expressive, flexible environment, while others like a workplace that is more structured with fairly tight reporting structures and decision rights. Thus it is seen that, Employees engagement correlates with performance and innovation leading to organizational excellence.*

*Aspects such as Power of Full Engagement, Enablers of Engagement, Factors leading to Employee Engagement, along with two case studies have been discussed in this paper.*

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### Introduction

Most organizations start competitively and later turn out into mediocrity, losing the collective outstanding performance momentum after initial higher achievements. Recent decades have witnessed dramatic shifts in the role of Human Resource (HR) Architecture. Even though 85

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percent of a corporation's value is based on intangible assets, this asset is least understood, least prone to measurement, and hence, least susceptible to the management. The ever changing technological aspects, strategic HR and performance are the most dominant factors for measuring the productivity of any organization.

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Every employee within the organization wants to feel respected and trusted, to feel they have some influence over decisions that affect them, to feel successful and competent. Some employees have more person-specific needs and expectations: some employees want security, while others want the chance to take risks and be entrepreneurial. Few employees like a very expressive, flexible environment, while others like a workplace that is more structured with fairly tight reporting structures and decision rights. Thus it is seen that, Employees engagement correlates with performance and innovation leading to organizational excellence.

Due to space crunch only two case studies (Standard Chartered & Global Financial Services) have been discussed in brief and authors have tried to focus on the criticality of the companies looking to get greater engagement from their workforce. It is hoped that the paper will evince keen interest and the erudite readers will find the content of the paper for furtherance of research in such topic.

#### **Employee Engagement Concept**

Engagement is about establishing mutual respect in the workplace for what people can do and be, given the right context, which serves us all, as individual employees, as companies and organizations. Business and organizations function best when they make their employees' commitment, potential, creativity and capability central to their operation. Employee engagement strategies enable people to be the best they can at work, recognizing that this can only happen if they feel respected, involved, heard, well led and valued by those they work for and with. Engaged employees have a sense of personal attachment to their work and organization; they are motivated and able to give of their best to help it succeed – and from that flows a series of tangible benefits for organization and individual alike.

#### **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.

### Employee Engagement Correlates with Performance and Innovation

Managing staff performance is an effective mechanism for developing both staff and organizational growth. By clarifying an organization's objectives, translating these into clear individual goals, and reviewing these goals regularly, performance management provides a well-structured and effective management tool. To manage performance effectively, individuals should know on what basis their performance will be measured. Measures should be transparent and applied fairly across the organization. Ideally there should be a mix of individual and team measures, and measures relevant to both the inputs and the outputs of performance.

Performance management needs structures to support it. These should provide a framework to help people operate, and to help them to help others to operate. But it should not be a rigid system; there needs to be a reasonable degree of flexibility to allow people freedom to operate. Performance management is a process, not an event. It operates as a continuous cycle. Corporate strategic goals provide the starting point for business and departmental goals, followed by agreement on performance and development, leading to the drawing up of plans between individuals and managers, with continuous monitoring and feedback supported by formal reviews. *Employee engagement is thus important as it drives challenge and innovation in achieving organizational excellence.*

#### Enablers of Engagement

**Leadership.** Provides a strong strategic narrative which has widespread ownership and commitment from managers and employees at all levels.

**Engaging Managers.** Are at the heart of this organizational culture— they facilitate and empower rather than control or restrict their staff; they treat their staff with appreciation and respect and show commitment to developing, increasing and rewarding the capabilities of those they manage

**Voice.** An effective and empowered employee voice. A strong sense of listening and of responsiveness permeates the organization, enabled by effective communication. Feeling listened to was the most important factor in determining how much respondents valued their organization. Being heard reinforces a sense of belonging within an organization and a belief that ones actions can have an impact.

**Integrity.** Behaviour throughout the organization is consistent with stated values, leading to trust and a sense of integrity.

#### Power of Full Engagement

Working with full commitment and full concentration has been Indian ethos from very beginning. A recent book on 'Power of Full Engagement' has been written by Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz (2003) on the topic which covers the same thought. Rather, 'India is a way ahead in manifestations of emotional quotient (EQ) and working on intuitive and spiritual levels and even stronger in its manifestations of energy source and its management. High positive energy is the fuel for higher performance. Emotional Quality Management (EQM) harnesses a synergetic work culture into an amazingly powerful 'Organizational Excellence' work culture.' Once the 'power of full engagement' and 'EQ Manifestations' are combined with EQM (Emotional Quality Management) and 'Evolvability', it gets further upshot with experience-centric HR performance drivers into achieving dominant competitive advantages leading a firm to 'organizational excellence' (Prahalad *et al*).

Pathak (2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2008) has amply brought out 'Power of full engagement' in many thought provoking technical papers. Pathak (2006a), in his research thesis work discussed about

various pros and cons of flexibility in HR manifestations of the employees and how to leverage their capabilities as well as potential to higher plethora. Pathak (2001) even in one of ITM, Mussoorie (UK), publication has discussed numerous salient aspects of HR and management challenges for new millennium.

### Talent and Diversity

Companies are increasingly moving away from the *old mindsets thinking about the new kinds of talent that will be needed to ensure the survival and sustainability of companies as well as the economy, environment and society of which we are a part of.*

Workplaces today are becoming increasingly competitive, global and heterogeneous. There is an equally strong relationship between engagement and the drive in most organizations to ensure their workforce reflecting the diversity existing within the organization. *Ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment is an essential strand of an engagement strategy* to maximize the opportunities and effectiveness of existing employees, to employee engagement. Organizations must ensure that they create and promote an inclusive and open workplace environment to support employee engagement in diverse environments.

Talent retention, rather 'Continuity management' is the crux of and holistic approach of employee engagement. Pathak (2006a) suitably has brought out 'Continuity management' and talent search as well as its retention in the organization in one of its technical research work. It will be observed, herein that the talent retention, rather making the employees talent plus personality is the buzz-word and decidedly a 'force-multiplier' of passionate organizations and its work-culture as eventual depository. Pathak *et al.* (2010) have amply discussed about leveraging leadership drivers for unleashing employee's potential to maximum.

### Essential Trait for Engagement: Trust

As in any relationship, trust is among the essential traits that keep commitment and engagement strong. The employee – employer relationship is no different. Relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal and mutual commitments as long as the parties abide by certain "rules" of the exchange (Saks 2006). Trust is highly valued and can only be built up over time, but can be lost quickly. (Refer Figure 1).

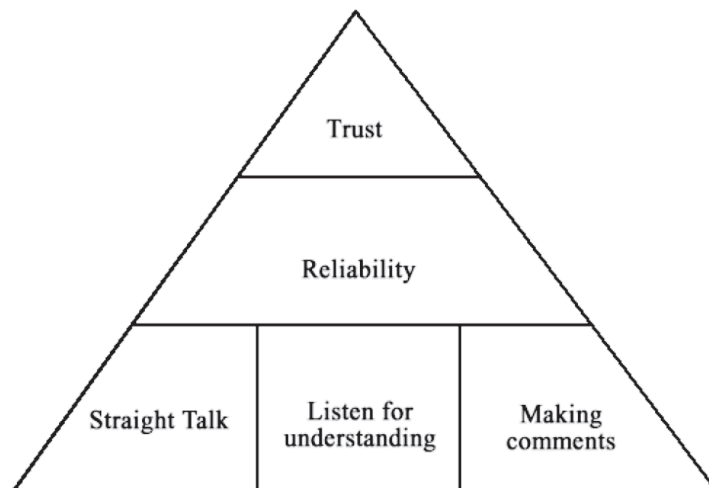


Figure 1: The Trust Triangle was Developed by Dr. John Carter at the Gestalt Institute

The trust triangle was developed by Dr. John Carter at the Gestalt Institute and can be used by organizations as a guide to building trust. The first component of the triangle is straight talk. Ideally, leadership and management are “sharing all the information available in an honest and forthright manner” (Axelrod, 2000). Moving to the right along the base of the triangle, the next component is listening for understanding. By focusing closely on listening, more information is exchanged between the employer and employee and there is an increase in the level of trust in the sender by the receiver. Making commitments is the third element in the foundation of the triangle, as most importantly, “trust is built when commitments are kept” (Axelrod, 2000). If commitments cannot be fulfilled by the organization, going back to the first component of the triangle foundation (straight talk) to provide an explanation is necessary. Only after achieving the foundation can the organization move onto the next level of the triangle. Reliability is established by the organization through leadership and management over time following the foundation principles, eventually building up to the top level of trust.

Faith, trust and belief are rather synonymous term. Having completed faith and belief in any organizations working’s system enhances healthy work-culture. Also authors believe that the personnel spend their full youth or chunk of their creative time in the particular organization, they must work with pleasure and under healthy working environment. This positive attitude will decidedly help the personnel in the organization build up their positive as well as creative personality.

It is obvious that trust lies in the hands of the organizations’ leadership and management. In order to build trust within the organization it is necessary to ensure that these individuals are not only personally involved in the organization, but that they also submit themselves to the same vulnerabilities and risks as their employees. For example, an organization that requires 360-degree feedback for performance management should ensure that all leaders and manager go through the same process. These individuals should set the example for employee behavior. With a strong bond of trust, employees are not only more likely to be engaged, but have faith and perceive that the organization is a fair place to work.

### **Connecting Spirituality with Purpose**

Intelligence Quotient (IQ) controls upto adolescent whereas Emotional Quotient (EQ) encompasses human being upto the last breath of life. Passionate Work Culture achieves its crescendo once life time purpose is connected to spirituality. Pathak (2006a; 2002) has discussed even OSHA model for connecting the highest order of work-culture to oneness, with self realization, leveraging person’s total main thrust purpose to highest level. This may further harness all his energies to maximum concentration, and personnel may be able to fight with stress as a ‘coping capacity measure’. Pathak (2002) has dealt the topic in some detail in the nomograph, of ‘Management By Human Values’. Even Chakraborty (1995), IIMC, Calcutta (now Kolkatta), has written many books on the subject. Management by Human Values, Conference at IIMC, Jan 6-12, 2002, has also brought many salient parameters on the topic.

### **Barriers to Engagement during Change**

Increasing employee engagement is a difficult process. Saks (2006) states, “managers should understand that employee engagement is a long-term and on-going process that requires continued interactions over time in order to generate obligations and a state of reciprocal interdependence.” Saks (2006) also stresses the point that, “engagement is a broad organizational and cultural strategy that involves all levels of the organization.”

Strong communication, collaboration, information flow, trust, and effective problem solving all seem to be common key functions of both engagement and change. If employee engagement

is a primary antecedent to successfully implementing an organizational change initiative then deficiencies in these key functions form a potential barrier to employee engagement as well as the change initiative. One example has been cited below.

**Example:** Motorola went about the challenge of linking its change acceleration strategy and its Digital Six Sigma Management System to produce a high-performance system for executing business strategy effectively and efficiently. Motorola focused on translating commitment into momentum and divided the process into “digestible” parts to support a quick transition. Training was supplied to all stakeholders on topics such as overcoming resistance, business acumen (for HR practitioners), and relationship management. Motorola also designed a “change acceleration Web portal” to support communication and act as a central depository for all information relevant to the initiative. Stakeholders were frequently informed of the importance of their role in the change initiative and feedback was constantly solicited. Motorola listed three primary contributors to its success: creating its own “change language,” having a high level champion, and linking training to key initiatives.

### **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. Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment from ones works. In such conditions, individuals are thought to be estranged from their selves .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
- Makes the employees effective brand ambassadors for the company

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’. One in five employees strongly agree with this statement. Those work units scoring higher on this perception have substantially higher performance. (Refer Figure 2 below).

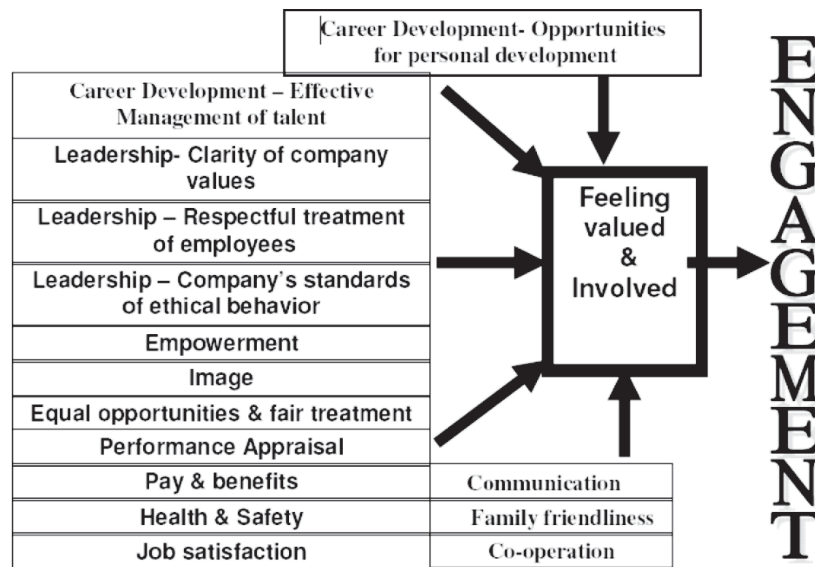


Figure 2: Factors Leading to Employee Engagement

### 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 Leading to Employee Engagement

- **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 than 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 supervisors co-ordinate well than the employees will be engaged.

Two case studies have been suitably discussed below focusing on two aspects of Employee Engagement i.e. leading towards success and development for innovation.

### Case Study 1: Engaging for Success: Standard Chartered Corporation

A strong focus on the importance of the relationship between manager and individual is at the heart of Standard Chartered's approach to employee engagement. At Standard Chartered, people management is placed on at par with task and financial management, and managers' performance is assessed accordingly. Great effort is put into developing effective managers and the organization has developed four manager principles ('know me'; 'focus me'; 'care about me' and 'inspire me') designed to encourage managers to put themselves in the position of their direct reports so that they can make the most of their employees' strengths, interests and career aspirations.

The Bank's 9,000 managers are supported through the Great Managers Programme (GMP) which includes a mix of training and online tools and communications which equip them to bring the Standard Chartered story to life for their team members, and ensure they regularly hold effective and productive conversations with their people which address the four principles. The Bank's unwritten motto is 'treat no behaviour with indifference', and managers are encouraged to treat every interaction with their staff as an opportunity to have a performance conversation – giving praise and recognizing a job well done, giving constructive feedback on areas requiring more work, or discussing what help and support might be needed to carry out the job. As a result, staff are better focused, motivated and engaged, which is reflected in business outcomes – lower levels of staff turnover, and improved financial performance.

**Lesson learnt:** Engaging managers offer clarity, appreciation, positive feedback and coaching. Managers have a very important role in ensuring that work is designed efficiently and effectively.

### Case Study 2: Employee Engagement and Development for Innovation and Business Value Additional

#### Context

Global Financial services firm established their Captive centre in Pune in 2006/2007. Most of their processes are back office IT and ITES operations employing technical staff.

From the beginning the organization has established impressive track record on the performance criteria set, which resulted in quick ramp up and process transition. Now world wide the organization is following the strategy of not increasing the employee strength but invest in technological advancement. Across the organization lower end processes after being established are shifted into automatic online transactions and higher end processes are managed manually.

In Indian Captive context this has translated into stagnation in numbers and size which means no visible vertical growth for staff resulting in low energy and high staff turnover. The only means of the growth now is through moving up the value chain by building capabilities for higher end processes resulting in higher revenues.

In the competitive Indian ITES market absence of visible growth opportunity inside the organization has created huge risk of turnover of trained manpower which was base for good performance on the existing processes. While the leaders are struggling to keep the employees engaged on existing processes, the business requirement is that of innovation and creativity and value add in skills for all the employees.

#### Interventions

The key success factor for the organization is their ability to drive employee engagement and development creating a culture of creativity and innovation. The designed interventions has feature of:

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- a. Giving organizational HEART a voice and space. Exploring the expressions, passionately driving the diversity of opinions and responses and building the environment of trust and respect.
- b. Minimum overall precious leadership time spend on the interventions.
- c. Understanding the ground level feel, senses and experiences. Moments of truth, gathering insights from experiences so far.
- d. Designing the future: outcomes, expected behaviours, conflict resolution. Higher energy levels and motivation on the ground to build high engagement and innovation.
- e. Deep dive in self discovery and then building leadership capabilities. Comprehensive learning methods based on Theory U comprising awareness, reflection and experimentation.
- f. Aligning the individual and organizational aspirations, values, needs and goals. This will unfold value for all Customers, stakeholders, employees, business and society.
- g. Deliver the results: Get all the energy aligned towards engagement and innovation by working at levels of self, team and organization.

#### **Critical Evaluation**

The success indications are:

1. Increased confidence and Morale in the leadership team that they can achieve the stretch goals set to them.
2. Improved employee engagement dipstick feedback
3. Improved energy on the floor
4. Number of new innovative ideas submitted to the innovation core team

#### **Conclusion**

Engaged employees are the key to a company's ability to grow and prosper and have a positive impact on the customer experience particularly in today's economy, where attraction and retention of experienced, skilled, and creative employees can lead to organizational excellence.

There have been a number of research studies across a wide range of industries and countries to identify the benefits of employee engagement in the organizations. Researchers through their research studies have reached to the conclusion that highly engaged employees in the organizations increase passion for and commitment to organization's goals, create a high energy working environment, bring higher employees retention, higher levels of creativity and innovations, greater sense of team, greater alignment with organization's values and sustained long term success.

It's time to truly think about engagement strategically, and recognize that it is the new business imperative that will drive competitive advantage. Certainly, we have to harness employee's engagement to reach its crescendo – fuller height – with 'Power of full engagement', achieving them a talent plus personality as well as unleashing their brain- power with full blast of motivational leadership, coping with the changing and discrete needs of the present day society. Decidedly such vibrant and positive activities will prove as 'force – multiplier' for truly personnel engagement for fully exploiting / harnessing the human – capital- converting the organization into passionate organization.

In the present paper, case studies of Standard Chartered and Global Financial services have been suitably presented. It is firmly believed that this paper will certainly evince keen interest for further future work by erudite readers/scholars.

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