



Why can't organizations engage their employees?

Written by Georgina Villeneuve

“Employee engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organization to give of their best each day, committed to their organization’s goals and values, motivated to contribute to organizational success, with an enhanced sense of their own well-being”. So why are organizations around the world doing a poor job developing employees who are “emotionally invested in and focused on creating value for their organization every day”?

This is puzzling, because employee engagement may be the single most effective competitive strategy available to any organization.

The positives of energized workers have been well documented. According to a Gallup Poll, those who are engaged are:

- More than twice as likely to remain on the job as those characterized as disengaged, and more likely to refer friends and family members for employment. These factors lead to lower costs of recruitment, hiring, training, and lost productivity.
- Up to 2.5 times more productive than the disengaged.
- Less likely to be absent, work more safely on the job, produce fewer quality defects, and are less likely to steal.
- Fostering higher levels of engagement that lead to higher loyalty, greater growth, and more profit.

If these are the potential gains, what is employee engagement and how do employers benefit?

What's employee engagement for you and me as 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".

Employee engagement is about understanding one's responsibilities in an organization, and being focused and energized on where they fit in the organization's purpose and objectives.

Employee engagement is about having a clear understanding of how an organization is fulfilling its goals and mission, 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 achievements.

Engaged organizations who have strong and genuine 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.

What's employee engagement for you and me as employers?

Employee engagement is about positive attitudes and behaviours leading to improved business outcomes, in ways that they trigger and reinforce one another.

Employee engagement is about our employees feeling pride and loyalty working for our organization, being a great advocate of the organization 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 being innovative about how we work.

Employee engagement is about drawing out a deeper commitment from our employees so fewer leave, sick absence is reduced, accident rates decline, conflicts and grievances go down and productivity increases.

Employee engagement is about organizational actions that are consistent with the organization's values. It is about kept promises, or an explanation why they cannot be kept.

What employee engagement is not!

Employee engagement cannot be achieved by a mechanistic organization meaning, an organization with a hierarchical, bureaucratic, organizational-structure characterized by (1) centralization of authority, (2) formalization of procedures and practices, and (3) specialization of functions. Mechanistic organizations

are comparatively simpler and easy to organize, but find it difficult to cope with rapid change and employees see through such attempts very quickly and can become cynical and disillusioned.

Source: Harvard Business Review