

Research Question

Engagement (awareness/tools) training – does it work?

What is employee engagement?

Employee engagement is defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption”.¹ Engaged employees are more likely to be enthusiastic and invest energy into their jobs which leads to higher levels of performance.¹ There are many pieces that combine to factor into overall employee engagement, such as:

Social Engagement: The extent that an employee communicates with team members and other coworkers about work-related improvements and changes.^{2,6}

Intellectual Engagement: The extent of involvement and use of intellect to improve work-related skills. It is similar to cognitive engagement which refers to being acutely aware of one’s mission and role in the work environment.⁶

Emotional Engagement: The extent to which one is emotionally connected with the work and organizational culture.²

In order to improve employee engagement, management needs to consider focus areas along these three dimensions which influence overall satisfaction of an employee--factors like work environment, culture, promotion, respect, and behavior towards employees. Two of the most important of these factors for increasing engagement are *employee voice* and *recognition*.

Enabling Employee Voice

It is important for management to include employees’ voice and opinions in the decision making process, which helps motivate employees to work towards the goal of the organization.^{2,3} Voice-enabling organizational practices include: having employees serve on board of directors, employing ombudsmen, supporting employee voice through focus groups, using participative management styles, training managers in how to listen to employee input, and rewarding employees who share information that prevents an accident.^{2,3,4} These organizational practices encourage employees to become more cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged in corporate decisions.³ Line managers are central to employee voice; involvement and training for line managers should be given priority.⁴

Case study: Southwest Airlines focuses on empowering employees by training local management and crew to make key operating decisions.⁸

Cultivating a Recognition Culture

Employees value recognition more than monetary awards and managers should actively cultivate ways to enhance recognition.⁵ Some of these methods include: saying thank you more often, taking everyone to an inspirational movie on Friday afternoon and then sending them home early, having a monthly breakfast meeting, remembering special days (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.) by writing a card to the employee, creating a team yearbook with pictures and stories of accomplishments during the year, sending notes of praise, and developing a year-end award for those who go above

and beyond on a consistent basis.⁵ Managers should supply the right tools, give individual attention, provide training and coaching, listen to employees, be social, serve others and recognize proudly and loudly to improve employee engagement.⁵

Case Study: JetBlue uses a values-focused peer recognition system that increased employee satisfaction 88% upon implementation.⁸

Other Dimensions of Engagement in Practice

Enabling employee voice and cultivating a culture of recognition are important for employee engagement. Some of the other dimensions of engagement in practice in large organizations are:

Shared goals: Every Google employee creates public OKRs (objectives and key results) to share goals and create engagement between employees with codependent goals.⁸

Employee-organization fit: Zappos holds pre-application meetings for interested candidates to find candidates with the best fit.⁸

Team-based engagement: Amazon focuses on small teams, smaller than “more than two pizzas in the room for lunch”, to increase intra-team engagement and speed up decision-making.⁸

Leadership buy-in: 3M fits engagement into their leadership competencies and yearly performance goals through “Develops, Teaches, and Engages Others”, along with informing managers of their engagement scores from their yearly survey.¹⁰

Results of Increased Engagement

Increased employee engagement manifests itself through positive impacts to people within an organization and the organization’s financial performance. Some examples include:

- A 65-firm study showed firms with higher levels of employee engagement also had higher levels of return on assets, profitability, and shareholder value.¹⁰
- Companies that build a culture of employee recognition have 31% lower voluntary turnover than companies with less employee recognition.⁸
- Organizations that emphasize learning are 52% more productive and 17% more profitable than peer organizations.⁸
- Employees that have high levels of engagement are 20% more productive than employees with low levels of engagement.⁹
- Gallup research and analysis indicates that high employee engagement has a positive effect on customer ratings, safety, quality, minimizing shrinkage, and absenteeism.⁹

Conclusion

If organizations wish to improve, they must improve employee engagement. Increasing awareness of engagement’s positive effects and creating engagement within the workplace will build a powerful and productive organizational culture. It is clear that increased employee engagement leads to increased organizational and individual (employee-level) performance and well-being. Adaptation and implementation of best practices along with the development of new practices will improve engagement within an organization.

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Appendix

Figure A:

High Performance vs. High Potentials

High Performance	Regularly exceeds expectations	Sets standard of excellence in role
	Lacks skills for success at higher level	Model leadership candidate
Low Performance	Little-to-no aptitude	Above-average aptitude
	Weak, unsatisfactory performance	Inconsistent performance
Low Potential		High Potential

Source: *High Potentials vs. High Performers: A Manager's Guide to Identify, Assess and Develop*, by Kyle Lagunas: <http://new-talent-times.softwareadvice.com/high-potentials-vs-high-performers-a-managers-guide-to-identify-assess-and-develop-1081012/>

Figure B:

Figure 1. The simply irresistible organization®
 What we have learned: Five elements drive engagement

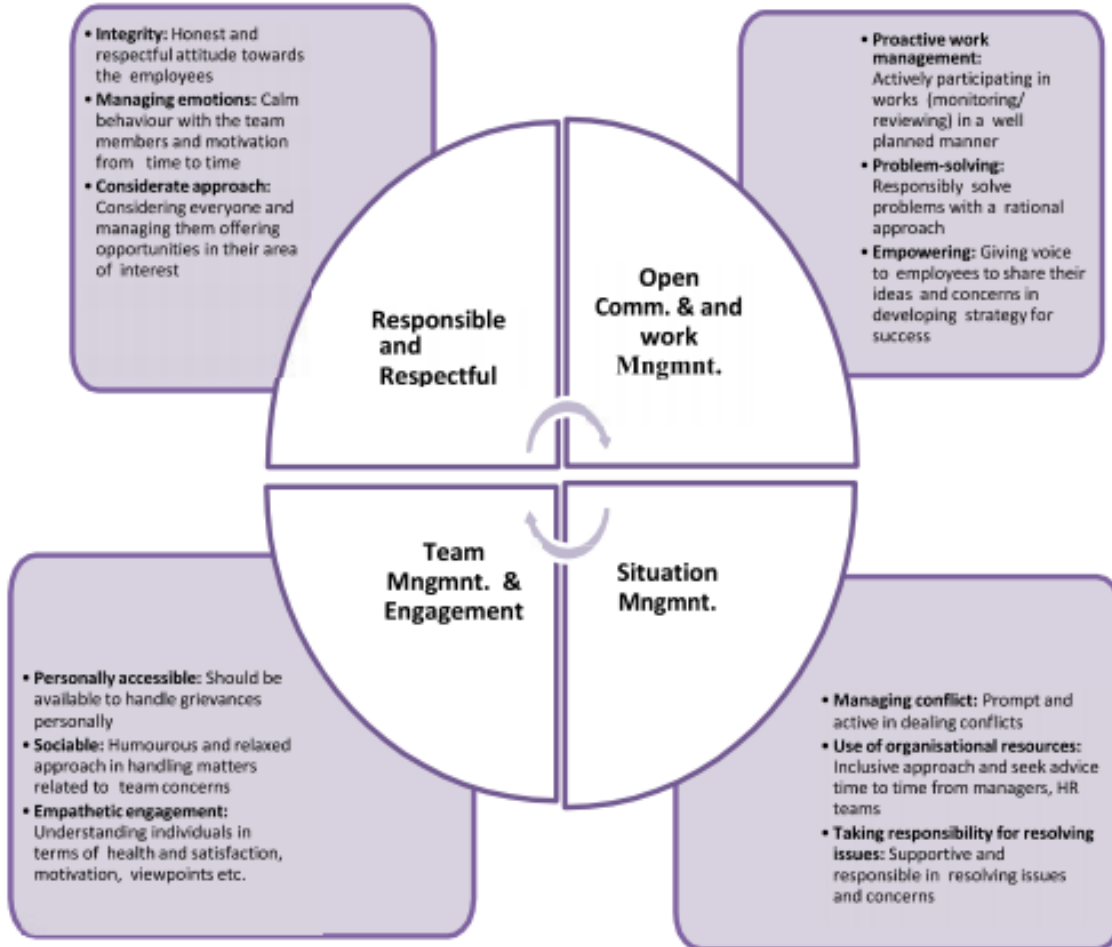


Graphic: Deloitte University Press | DUPress.com

From *Becoming irresistible: a new model for employee engagement*; by Josh Bersin, Deloitte

Figure C:

Fig. 3. Management competencies to enhance employee engagement



Source: CIPD, Managing for sustainable employee engagement, developing a behavioral