



INCREASING PROFITABILITY THROUGH EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

You've seen it happen many times. An organisation that provides top wages and benefits loses a great employee to a competitor for no apparent reason. Of course, some employee turnover is to be expected, but if your company is truly engaging your employees, there is no good reason for the unexpected loss of quality staff members. Many companies already know that wages and benefits are important to employees, but compensation alone is not enough to keep the highly skilled, motivated and experienced workforce your business needs to excel.

DEFINING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

What is employee engagement exactly? Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organisation and its values.

The primary behaviours of engaged employees are speaking positively about the organisation to co-workers, potential employees and customers, having a strong desire to be a member of the organisation, and exerting extra effort to contribute to the organisation's success. Many smart organisations work to develop and nurture engagement. It is important to note, the employee engagement process does require a two-way relationship between employer and employee.

WHY IS EMPLOYMENT ENGAGEMENT SO IMPORTANT?

An organisation's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results.

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. Engaged employees also normally perform better and are more motivated. There is a significant link between employee engagement and profitability. Employee engagement is critical to any organisation that seeks not only to retain valued employees, but also increase its level of performance.

FACTORS OF ENGAGEMENT

Many organisational factors influence employee engagement and retention such as:

- A culture of respect where outstanding work is valued
- Availability of constructive feedback and mentoring
- Opportunity for advancement and professional development
- Fair and appropriate reward, recognition and incentive systems
- Availability of effective leadership
- Clear job expectations
- Adequate tools to complete work responsibilities
- High levels of motivation

Many other factors exist that might apply to your particular business and the importance of these factors will also vary within your organisation.

ENGAGEMENT ESSENTIALS

How will you know to what degree your employees are engaged? The first step is to determine the current level of employee engagement. The best tool to determine this base line is a comprehensive employee satisfaction survey. A well administered satisfaction survey will let you know at what level of engagement your employees are operating. Customisable employee surveys will provide you with a starting point towards your efforts to optimise employee engagement.

The key to successful employee satisfaction surveys is to pay close attention to the feedback from your staff. 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.

Listening to employee ideas, acting on employee contributions and actively involving employees in decision-making are essential to employee engagement.

TAKING ACTION TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Nothing is more discouraging to employees than to be asked for their feedback and see no improvement towards resolution of their issues. Even the smallest actions taken to address concerns will let your staff know that their input is valued. Feeling valued will boost morale, motivate and encourage future input.

Taking action starts with listening to employee feedback. Then the data needs to be analysed. Next, a definitive action plan will need to be put in place and finally, change will be implemented. It is important that employee engagement is not viewed as a one time action. Employee engagement should be a continuous process of measuring, analysing, defining and implementing.

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE TO EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

Conditions that prevent employee engagement seldom alleviate themselves. They should be assessed and addressed as soon as possible. Left to multiply, negative employee satisfaction issues can result in:

- *Higher employee turnover* – Employees leave, taking their reservoir of knowledge and experience to another workplace
- *Diminished performance* – Competency of the workforce is reduced, at least short term, until new employees are trained
- *Lost training investment* – Time and money invested in training and development programmes for departing workers is wasted
- *Lower morale* – Remaining employees can be overburdened with new duties, in addition to the unresolved issues that already prevent their full engagement

HOW CAN YOU ATTAIN EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

Listen to your employees and remember that this is a continuous process. The information your employees supply will provide direction. Insist upon increased engagement at the managerial level, and create and deploy a customised employee satisfaction survey to assess your current level of employee engagement. Identify problem areas, make a plan and take action towards improvement.