



RETHINKING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

“The engaged stay for what they can give, the disengaged stay for what they can get.”

Prepared by Incentive Services University

Engaged or disengaged? Quit or Stay? As leaders in our organization, we all wonder which terms apply to our employees. How do we keep them “engaged” in their role, actively participating, and contributing to the company’s goals and strategic direction? A study indicated that 29% of employees “ . . . who are fully engaged do more in less time than their colleagues” and yet “ . . . 75% of organizations have no engagement plan or strategy” (Dale Carnegie Training).

The level of our employees’ engagement may be more than just black and white, engaged or disengaged. According to a recent Employee Engagement update, there are actually five levels of employee engagement ranging from those who are fully engaged to those who are fully disengaged by ranking employees based upon their levels of both contribution and satisfaction. (BlessingWhite Research Update).

Five Levels of Employee Engagement

- **The Engaged:** High contribution and high satisfaction. Those employees who have the greatest personal and organizational interests.
- **Almost Engaged:** Medium to high contribution and satisfaction. Among the high performers and “reasonably satisfied with their job”, these employees deserve our investment as they have the “shortest distance” to travel to become fully engaged.
- **Honeymooners & Hamsters:** High satisfaction but low contribution. Honeymooners are new to the organization or role and “happy to be there.” Hamsters are working hard, but are “spinning their wheels” and contributing little to the organization.
- **Crash & Burners:** High contribution but low satisfaction. Top producers who are “disillusioned and potentially exhausted.”
- **The Disengaged:** Low contribution and low satisfaction. Disconnected, skeptical and negative, they often feel underutilized at work.

By focusing our attention on those employees who have the potential to make a contribution to the organization, we can help more individuals to achieve full engagement. This includes not only the Engaged, but those who are Almost Engaged and the Honeymooners & Hamsters.

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Creating Engagement

So how can we reach employees who are just below the apex of contribution and satisfaction? And, perhaps just as importantly, how do we measure their intention to stay and to contribute? Surveys are a great start, but “. . . engagement surveys do no good if they only result in a list of actions that managers are ill-prepared to undertake.” Three key elements are critical to a fully-developed employee engagement strategy:

1. How an employee relates to his or her job and employer
2. How managers work with individual employees to address individual engagement drivers and foster positive team dynamics
3. How executives create an inspiring vision for the future and foster a purposeful culture that makes engagement a core driver of business results.

Engaging employees must be a shared responsibility in every organization – shared by employees, managers and organizational leaders. Managers and leaders need to take the time to identify where each and every employee lies on the axis of satisfaction and contribution. Are their roles and their goals aligned with the direction of the organization? Are they engaged or almost engaged? Can you reinforce and realign the honeymooners and hamsters? Or have they crashed and burned? Almost “. . . 61% of employees who say they are satisfied with the amount of input they have in decisions affecting their work are engaged” (Dale Carnegie Training).

Recognition and Reward

Finally, how are you effectively recognizing the contributions of your employees? Reinforce the need to challenge, stretch and coach employees to their full potential and to “. . . recognize attitude, effort and results” (BlessingWhite). There are so many ways to recognize employees for successful contributions to the organization, including:

- Everyday Behaviors
- Living Company Values
- Cost Saving
- Going Above and Beyond
- Innovation
- Wellness & Community
- Teamwork
- Hitting Goals
- Sales Results
- Personal Wins
- Recruiting
- Safety Achievement

Think beyond the general strategies of yearly bonuses and occasional promotions. Rewards should be “meaningful . . . Benefits and incentives can be customized to appeal to different segments of the workforce” (Dale Carnegie Training). Recognition of employee accomplishments can and should be a significant motivator towards employee engagement.

Summary

Challenge, stretch and recognize your employees to maintain their full engagement - every day. Employee engagement needs to be a shared responsibility and a “top-down” commitment. Building a fully engaged workforce must be part and parcel of your daily culture and built from the top-down - to give your organization that competitive advantage.