

Qualification: CIPD Diploma in Applied Human Resources

Module Name: Understanding Employee Engagement
(5KEEG)

Word Count: 2,926 (excluding Title page, and Bibliography)

Student Name: Lucy Moriarty

Student Number: 2014451

CIPD Membership Number: 5749316X

By signing below, I confirm that the work/evidence presented is my own, unaided work. I understand the regulations pertaining to candidate malpractice and the action that may be taken as a result.

Signed: Lucy Moriarty

Date: 24.02.2022

Introduction

In today's competitive business environment, employee engagement has emerged as a key driver of organisational success. Engagement can influence employees' perspectives, absences, and turnover rates, different studies have shown connections with productivity, progressively pointing to a strong connection between individual, group, and organisational performance.

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a method use within organisations to encourage motivation, commitment and well-being. This approach enables employees to be committed to organisational values and objectives and increases the chance of success. According to (Johns and Ellis, 2016) there are several known definitions that could be used to define employee engagement. The earliest definition is that of (Kahn, 1990, as cited in Taylor and Woodhams 2016) who identified that engagement is defined by the way that people communicate their feelings through 3 different concepts:

- **Physical** – High levels of output
- **Emotional** – Robust participation with work which can spark enthusiasm and inspiration
- **Cognitive** – Deep attachment to work and happily committed.

In 2008, the UK Government commissioned a review into employee engagement and its benefits on Organisations and employees. This resulted in a report being produced in 2009 by David Macleod and Nita Clarke called Engaging for Success, which is most commonly known as The Macleod Report. The report identified that performance and profitability were raised in the majority of organisations where employee engagement was encouraged. It was also found that well-being was increased along with trust and mutual respect between employees and their employers. As established by the (The Macleod report, 2009) there were over 50 definitions of engagement found and according to (CIPD, 2021) it was discovered through many educational reviews that have taken place that employee engagement is a state of mind. Previously, HR Professionals had taken the lead managing the employee engagement processes; however, this has slowly become a shared responsibility for managers to support and develop their teams to become more engaged.

Employees who are engaged and have a connection with their organisations are more likely to exceed expectations, remain loyal and provide motivation to other employees to do the same. Employee engagement can be related to other organisational concepts such as job satisfaction and organisational commitments. Job satisfaction relates to the perception and attitudes that employees have towards their work and is obtained through extrinsic means such as pay and rewards. As stated by (Armstrong, 2009) job satisfaction is closely related to that of engagement and positive attitudes towards a role can create engaged employees. Employee engagement occurs through employees being able to contribute towards the organisational goals and objectives. By permitting decisions to be made throughout the wider organisation and not by a top-down approach, it will provide employees with the autonomy over their areas of work and will ensure commitment and high levels of engagement. It is imperative that organisations measure the levels of employee satisfaction in order to retain and improve motivation and morale. Employee engagement can also be related to organisational commitment, an employee's emotional attachment to an organisation is defined as organisational commitment. Employees who are highly committed to their organisation and the work that it produces are more inclined to remain loyal to the organisation. Employees who are extremely committed to their organisation perform more effectively, demonstrate the organisational values and go above and beyond. According to research

carried out by (CIPD, 2021) employee commitment involves a cognitive bond with an organisation as it relates to attitudes and behaviours.

Highly engaged workforces have become a top priority for many organisations, ensuring that employers and employees treat each other in a positive manner can have a beneficial impact for the organisation as a whole. Organisations have now identified that there is a clear connection between engagement and organisational performance. High levels of engagement can boost organisational effectiveness and stakeholder value which is evidenced through promoting talent retention, loyalty and organisational performance. According to studies carried out by (Robertson-Smith and Markwick, 2009) identified that both managers and HR professionals have a main role in enabling engagement. HR must ensure that there are clear and accessible policies and procedures in which managers are dedicated and effectively trained in implementing to their employees. Organisations must also endeavour to build cultures in which employees are not reluctant to provide feedback to managers and senior leaders and enable all levels of communication that are honest and transparent.

HR

Employee engagement can be determined by many different methods. As stated by (SHRM, n.d.) they can be methods such as organisational culture, workplace communication, and management styles. HR professionals along with managers play an important role in encouraging and driving employee engagement. Engagement begins with the recruitment process; HR professionals are usually the first point of contact for new employees. Providing a positive experience through the onboarding process ensures that employees are engaged from the outset. It is the responsibility of HR professionals to ensure that candidates are effectively onboarded and provided with an understanding of the organisational values and objectives. HR professionals are responsible for supporting managers and leaders to be engaged with their roles, ensuring that they have the correct induction and training. HR policies and practises that are clear and accessible, as well as evident commitment from management at all levels.

Leadership

Line managers, with the assistance of organisational initiatives, play a crucial role in promoting job engagement in organisations with high levels of engagement. Management is the main driving force in not only engaging employees but in attaining organisational performance. Employees who have positive relationships with their managers are also more likely to be content at work and motivated to develop themselves and the company as a whole. There are different types of leadership styles which can impact employees and how they carry out their jobs. Managers who create and sustain a high-level company culture within their teams are known as transformational leaders, they serve as an example of how to encourage development, they create a strong organisational culture by inspiring employees to contribute towards the organisation's success. Within (The MacLeod Report, 2009) four enablers of employee engagement is identified and one of those is "engaging managers", they are described as leaders who offer clarity and gratitude of employee's actions and ensure that their employees feel valued and supported to carry out their roles. They also point to the necessity for organisations to foster cultures that value, encourage, and respect their employees, as well as listen to and understand their needs.

Culture

According to (Solow et al, 2015) culture and engagement is a very important matter that the majority of organisations face, 87% of organisations identify that culture is one of their top priorities

and 50% acknowledge that it is essential. Organisations that promote a culture of productivity, strong employee engagement, job and organisational characteristics, and great leadership outperform their peers and are more likely to attract top talent than their competitors.

Alignment and HR Strategy and Practices

Alignment is imperative in ensuring that organisations achieve higher productivity and are high performing. By aligning job roles with organisational goals and objectives, it achieves a higher level of employee engagement due to creating an understanding of what is expected and what their role is contributing towards. This in turn creates lower staff turnover, due to engaged employees being less likely to leave the organisation. Employees who are not aligned with the values and objectives of the wider organisation will only see short-term outcomes that will unlikely be continuous. According to research carried out by (Robertson-Smith and Markwick, 2009) there is a need to align individual and team conduct with organisational goals and success, in order for employees to know what they are working towards and for them to acknowledge that their contributions are meaningful and significant. Employee engagement is a crucial element of HR processes, when aligned with organisational aims and objectives it can have a positive influence on performance and organisational advantages. To ensure that employees are continually informed of organisational objectives and to ensure that they are aligned, there must be continuous and effective two-way communication between managers and their employees. Also, by creating SMART goals and measuring them against employee engagement regularly is an effective way of measuring progress and ensuring that goals are aligned with the organisation's objectives.

Employee engagement is an extremely important part of HR and its strategy and practices. There are many desired effects of engagement, which includes, higher levels of performance, calibre of output and employee well-being and retention. According to (Gifford and Young, 2021) employee engagement strategies should be holistic and employee motivation, well-being, and support for employees to understand their contribution to the organisation's goals, objectives, and culture should all be considered. Employee engagement has moved away from being solely the duty of the HR department in recent years and the onus of planning and implementing employee engagement practices now also requires the involvement from leaders and managers. HR is responsible for a number of areas that have a direct impact on employee engagement, as a result, it is crucial in ensuring that the fundamental reasons are addressed because of its people-focused approach and mediation function. HR is at the heart of all high-performing companies' and their employee engagement activities. Due to HR overseeing the performance appraisal process, it can have an impact on how it is implemented. HR can guarantee that it is used as a vehicle for encouraging employee engagement rather than being exclusively focused on analysing and monitoring performance. As identified by (Armstrong, 2009) Learning and development, career path progression, performance management, incentive management, work-life balance policies, and job design are all part of HR policies and practises that contribute to increased commitment. HR professionals implements employee engagement by maintaining the company culture, this is done by recruiting employees that are a good cultural fit with organisation and by regularly communicating the organisations values and what they stand for. Employee engagement is implemented by HR professionals through upholding the business culture. This is done by recruiting employees who are a good cultural fit for the organisation and by communicating the organisation's values and what they stand for on a regular basis.

High levels of employee engagement are beneficial for not only the individual but for the wider organisation, ensuring that employees are committed and aligned with the organisational objectives and values, ensures productivity and high-performance working. Employee competency, commitment, motivation, and engagement will result from well-executed procedures and policies such as recruitment, training, and development, communication, and feedback. According to (CIPD, 2021) employees that are engaged are healthier, happier and more satisfied and inspired. Employees who are content are more likely to stay with the organisation and employee retention is imperative in successfully achieving business outcomes. Organisations where the engagement levels are higher are more likely to see lower cases of absenteeism, higher retention, improved work/life balances of their employees and better quality of output. Internal stakeholders benefit from their workforce being engaged due to greater performance, which in turn generates profitability. Customers of the organisation also benefit from an engaged workforce by receiving a quality product or service, which guarantees loyalty and commitment.

Employee engagement can be measured through qualitative and quantitative measures and should be collated and evaluated on a yearly basis. However, there is no single tool in identifying employee engagement as it is a combination of attitudes and emotions. A combination of different materials is required in distinguishing the strengths and weaknesses of the organisation. According to (Gifford and Young, 2021) measurements can support strategic decisions and any needed developments. Measuring data provides an insight into where the “hot spots” are within an organisation and the required processes that need to be put in place. To interpret data that has been collated can form part of the organisations Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), this is the most effective way to evidence what has been achieved. As stated by (Armstrong, 2009) KPI's rely on qualitative assessments of organisational capability and is used to assess its success and how it is meeting the organisational objectives. Measuring employee engagement is beneficial in identifying strengths and problem areas, it allows for trusting relationships to be built between managers and employees as requesting feedback proves that they are listened to, and their opinions are taken into account. The data collated should be provided to the whole organisation so that all employees have an understanding of what is happening within the organisation, which provides opportunities for all to buy-in to the culture.

Employee Engagement and Pulse Surveys

Engagement can be measured through employee surveys; however, engagement data should not be collated exclusively through these means. An engagement survey should provide insight into employee's thoughts and attitudes towards their work and the organisation. Employee pulse surveys are an efficient way to gain fast, consistent, and actionable data when it comes to monitoring employee engagement. Short, targeted surveys centred on a specific question are known as pulse surveys.

Exit Interviews

As stated by (Macaffee, 2006) An exit interview should not only uncover the reasons why valuable employees are leaving, but also serve as the foundation for a strategy to prevent them from leaving in the first place. Exit interviews allows insight into how the organisation is perceived by employees from an honest and frank review, which would not be provided by current employees. The data collated from exit interviews allows for the organisation to understand where its weaknesses are and to put a strategy in place to prevent any further resignations and to reduce staff turnover.

Regular Supervisions

Employee engagement can be measured through regular face to face supervisions between managers and their employees. Not only does this provide a safe environment for employees to discuss any issues but also allows for managers to discuss career progression and training needs with the individual and in turn build a trusting and mutually respected relationship. According to (Harvard Business Review, 2016) employees who do not have regular supervisions with their managers are four more times as likely to be disengaged.

According to (Miller and Adkins, 2016) female employees have a lead on their male colleagues in being engaged with their roles and organisations, they also identify that 41% of female managers are better at engaging their workforce than 35% of male managers. Flexibility in work hours is well-known as a motivator for engagement and so will attract working mothers who may have to consider childcare in their daily lives. Due to this, it will increase job performance and will ensure commitment and high levels of engagement. (Gallup, 2021) identified that as little as 20% of employees are engaged globally. Employee engagement is influenced by a variety of factors that vary not only by country but also by sector and company. This could be the result of the recent pandemic which saw the majority of workforces being made to work from home. Previously, organisations and managers had not been equipped to deal with remote working measures and so had to find new ways in which to manage and engage with their teams from home. A report carried out by (Sarkisian et al, 2011) found that older employees had higher levels of engagement. It was identified in organisations within the United States that employees aged 30-39 were less engaged than those who were 40-49 and 50+.

Working environments have changed as a result of the current pandemic; COVID-19 has affected employees' lives and the way businesses operate. Teams were not prepared for remote working and managers had to find new ways in which to check-in with their employees whilst still being able to motivate, encourage and introduce new goals and workplace methods. Employers also had to manage a range of challenges such as sickness, higher turnover, furlough and in extreme cases redundancy. It was identified that employees found it difficult to switch off when working from home and the lack of support for employee health and well-being was one of the primary issues found as a result of the pandemic. According to a report conducted by (CIPD, 2021) unhealthy working practices were identified in organisations, in which they displayed both presenteeism – employees working when unwell and leaveism – employees working outside of their contracted hours and also whilst on annual leave. Moving forward, many organisations have boosted their efforts in the future to enhance employee well-being and mitigate hazards during the pandemic. A recent poll carried out by (Gartner, 2021) identified that 48% of employees will likely continue to work remotely after the pandemic eases compared to 30% prior to the pandemic. The new hybrid and flexible working models could prove to be challenging and have an impact on the future of employee engagement. According to (Keane and Heiser, 2021) at the Harvard Business Review, Hybrid working could be a problem for businesses, and without a well-thought-out strategy in place, it could jeopardise company culture, collaboration, and creativity. However, a well-executed hybrid workplace, on the other hand, can act as a magnet, drawing people together and allowing us to work more effectively than ever before.

Conclusion

In conclusion, employee engagement is imperative in reaching organisational goals and objectives. High levels of engagement can impact positively on organisational performance and levels of absenteeism, retention and innovation. HR professionals and managers are the primary drivers of employee engagement, as they collaborate in the execution of engagement procedures. HR should not be solely responsible for employee engagement; managers work directly with employees and are therefore able to be aware of their employees' daily tasks and take some responsibility for ensuring that they are motivated. Effective communication, particularly face-to-face communication about the organisation's visions, strategies, and progress, is critical in building engagement.

References

2022. *Employee Engagement: Definitions, Measures and Outcomes*. [online] London: CIPD, p.10. Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/employee-engagement-discussion-report_tcm18-89598.pdf> [Accessed 5 February 2022].

Armstrong, M., 2009. *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice*. 11th ed. London: Kogan Page, p.239.

Armstrong, M., 2009. *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice*. 11th ed. London: Kogan Page, p.241.

Armstrong, M., 2009. *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice*. 11th ed. London: Kogan Page, p.285.

Armstrong, M., 2009. *Armstrong's handbook of human resource management practice*. 11th ed. London: Kogan Page, p.287.

Fuller, R. and Shikaloff, N., 2016. *What Great Managers Do Daily*. [online] Harvard Business Review. Available at: <<https://hbr.org/2016/12/what-great-managers-do-daily>> [Accessed 22 February 2022].

Gifford, J. and Young, J., 2021. *Employee Engagement & Motivation / Factsheets / CIPD*. [online] CIPD. Available at: <<https://www.cipd.co.uk/knowledge/fundamentals/relations/engagement/factsheet>> [Accessed 14 February 2022].

Gifford, J. and Young, J., 2021. *Employee Engagement: Definitions, Measures and Outcomes*. [online] Cipd.co.uk. Available at: <https://www.cipd.co.uk/Images/employee-engagement-discussion-report_tcm18-89598.pdf> [Accessed 19 February 2022].

Keane, J. and Heiser, T., 2021. *4 Strategies for Building a Hybrid Workplace that Works*. [online] Harvard Business Review. Available at: <<https://hbr.org/2021/07/4-strategies-for-building-a-hybrid-workplace-that-works>> [Accessed 24 February 2022].

Macafee, M., 2006. *HR Magazine - Employee engagement: Exit interviews - Time to say goodbye*. [online] HR Magazine. Available at: <<https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/content/other/employee-engagement-exit-interviews-time-to-say-goodbye>> [Accessed 19 February 2022].

MacLeod, D. and Clarke, N., 2009. *Engaging for Success*. The MacLeod Report. [online] Surrey, p.9. Available at: <<https://engageforsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/engaging-for-success.pdf>> [Accessed 12 February 2022].

Robertson-Smith, G. and Markwick, C., 2009. *Employee Engagement A Review of Current Thinking*. [online] Employment-studies.co.uk. Available at: <<https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/469.pdf>> [Accessed 16 February 2022].

SHRM. n.d. *Developing and Sustaining Employee Engagement*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/tools-and-samples/toolkits/pages/sustainingemployeeengagement.aspx>> [Accessed 16 February 2022].

Solow, M., Chheng, S. and Parker, K., 2015. *Culture and engagement*. [online] Deloitte Insights. Available at: <<https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/human-capital-trends/2015/employee-engagement-culture-human-capital-trends-2015.html>> [Accessed 16 February 2022].

Taylor, S. and Woodhams, C., 2016. *Human resource management*. 2nd ed. London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, p.81.

The Sloan Centre on Aging & Work, 2011. *Effects of Country & Age on Work Engagement, Job Satisfaction & Organisational Commitment Among Employees in the United States*. Findings from the Generations of Talen Study. [online] p.3. Available at: <https://www.bc.edu/content/dam/files/research_sites/agingandwork/pdf/publications/GOT_USEmployee.pdf> [Accessed 23 February 2022].