

Dear Workforce: What Is a Reasonable Level for Employee Engagement?

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Q Dear Workforce:

While recognizing that it will vary between industries and indeed countries, how should our organization determine a reasonably satisfactory level for employee engagement? In particular, how do we get serious about driving engagement higher, and measuring its impact on our employees' morale/satisfaction, as well as our business?

—*Out of Touch, HR manager, services, Botswana*

A Dear Out of Touch:

Employee engagement drives improved organizational performance. So how do you create and sustain engagement in your workforce? Our recommendations for creating an engaged workforce include:

Measure engagement levels

The only way to gain accurate information about employee engagement in your business is to measure it. Organizations need to not only understand their current level of employee engagement, but also have confidence that the measures used to evaluate engagement are reliable and valid. The most accurate way to achieve this is through a quantitative survey supported by qualitative interviews and focus groups. Surveys need to be tailored to your organization, your strategy, your values and your language.

Determine the drivers of engagement

Every organization is characterized by unique dynamics, structure and culture. The answer to what drives employee engagement will be different for each organization. Every organization should undertake research that incorporates robust design and analysis to determine its drivers or levers of engagement.

Link the results to business outcomes

Research has consistently shown that employee engagement is a

lead indicator of lagging business metrics, such as customer loyalty, productivity and profitability. Unfortunately, many business leaders continue to think of engagement as a “nice to have” and fail to bring these key numbers to the table when regularly monitoring business performance, developing business strategy or preparing budgets. Business leaders need to better understand the impact of engagement on their success. Executives need to act and behave in ways that reinforce its importance. A compelling way to achieve this is to model the exact financial impact that engagement has on productivity, customer service, retention, absenteeism and financial results. This is achieved by creating and analyzing a unified database containing productivity data, customer data, HR data and financial data for similar groups—e.g., stores, teams, locations. This creates a business case that is hard to ignore.

Continue to track engagement levels

Measuring engagement is not a one-time event. Organizations are continually evolving and changing; therefore, you need to take a “pulse” to measure engagement and track the success of strategies you have put in place to increase engagement and business performance.

SOURCE: Deborah Schroeder-Saulnier, Right Management, Philadelphia, February 2, 2010

LEARN MORE: Engagement is a priority for many HR leaders, although some observers warn that fixating on ever-higher engagement survey scores may backfire. Also, it is important to understand what engagement means to your organization, and avoid using it to compare with competitors.

The information contained in this article is intended to provide useful information on the topic covered, but should not be construed as legal advice or a legal opinion. Also remember that state laws may differ from the federal law.

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