



# Employee Engagement

Maximizing Organizational Performance



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# The Role of Engagement

Significant shifts in the global economy have accelerated the need for organizations to find innovative ways to address new technological, demographic and marketplace realities.

These shifts have also forced companies to reevaluate costs associated with talent, necessitating a need to do more with less. While new strategies are executed in response to these changes, high workforce performance and organizational success must be maintained. Key to ensuring this is the introduction of processes that will measure and improve employee engagement.

*When business needs to do more with less, engaged employees may be the difference between surviving and thriving.*

Research has consistently shown that employee engagement is powerfully linked to a range of business success factors such as:

- Employee performance/efficiency<sup>3,4</sup>
- Productivity<sup>5</sup>
- Safety<sup>6,7</sup>
- Attendance and retention<sup>3,8</sup>
- Customer service and satisfaction<sup>9</sup>
- Customer loyalty and retention<sup>10</sup>
- Profitability<sup>11,12</sup>

Economic disruptions come and go. The way businesses react to economic cycles often predicts how well they succeed or if they will survive. During turbulent times and uncertain forecasts, many organizations have been less focused on how to manage their talent and engage their employees, instead focusing on how to reduce costs by cutting salaries, bonuses, rewards and development costs. Some shortsighted leaders may even think that employee engagement no longer matters because their employees have fewer options and will stay because of their need for job security. However, smart leaders realize that while they may need to find short-term solutions to cut costs, they must also identify longer-term talent management strategies to remain viable. A downward cycle may require leaders to look for immediate solutions to cut costs by reducing their workforce, but they may lose sight of the fact that engaged employees will be the difference between surviving and thriving. In an upturn, when there

is the opportunity to grow and prosper, engaged employees are ready to seize the opportunity and put forth the effort to achieve it. During recovery periods, engagement becomes even more crucial, as organizations ask fewer people to do more, creating increased risk that top-performing employees may leave as conditions improve.

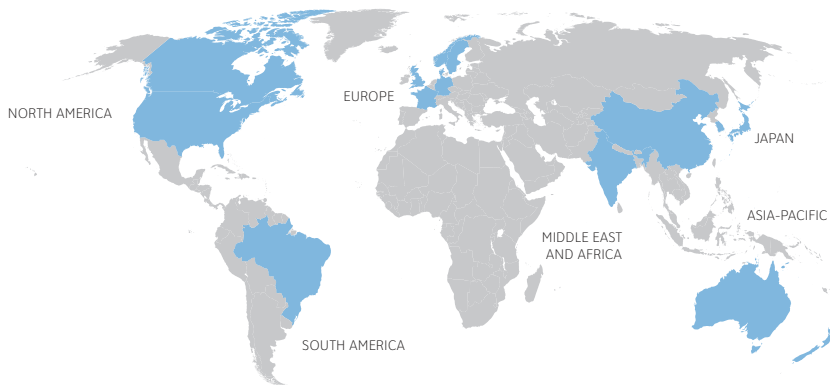
Right Management conducted global research to gain a clearer understanding of the factors most closely associated with driving employee engagement. Our study of more than 28,800 employees in 15 countries revealed that an organization's culture, strategy execution, leadership ability, structure and processes are all inter-related with engagement levels<sup>1</sup>. Failure to create an organization that can not only create and sustain alignment to business strategy, but also promote high levels of employee engagement, will result in failure to execute and, at best, average business results. There is no magic formula for achieving employee engagement and sustainable business results. The factors for engagement are unique to your organization and will include elements that work together, mutually reinforcing each other. There are, however, some fundamental engagement factors that work together to deliver: a great customer experience and profitability. These factors, articulated in Right Management's Organizational Effectiveness Framework, are a "fit for purpose" structure, people systems and processes that drive the right behaviors, and capable leadership, all existing within a positive organizational culture<sup>1</sup>.

*It is powerful information for business leaders to know what proportion of their workforce is engaged to both the organization and their jobs, versus what proportion is engaged to just the organization or just their jobs.*

# About This Study

To arrive at a clearer understanding of engagement drivers impacting critical business metrics, such as performance, employee satisfaction and retention, Right Management conducted a major study of engagement among 28,810 employees representing a broad range of industry sectors from 15 countries in the Americas, Europe, and Asia-Pacific.

Our survey asked participants to self-report on attitudes, performance and conditions directly related to the effectiveness of their organization. It identified 11 key determinants of organizational effectiveness and under each determinant or “topic” presented a number of statements or “items” associated with that topic. There were 99 items in total. For each item, participants were invited to choose among six responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree.” Eight items were specifically directed toward measuring the level of their engagement. The other 91 items addressed the 10 remaining topics, which ranged from leadership and strategy to culture and communication. Responses were then analyzed to test for correlations between engagement and each general topic, as well as each specific item. Most respondents (91 percent) were from private corporations employing 50 or more people, with revenues ranging from under \$1 million to over \$1 billion. The study used a stratified sample of employees that matched the workforce population in each country on several factors, including industry, size of organization, gender and age.



This data was collected from November, 2008 to January, 2009.

## COUNTRIES

United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, UK, France, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, China, India, Japan, South Korea

## INDUSTRIES

Agriculture, forestry and fishing; Mining and quarrying; Manufacturing; Electricity, gas and water supply; Construction; Wholesales and retail trade; Restaurants and hotels; Transportation, storage and communication; Finance, insurance, real estates and business services; Government, social and personal services.

# Gaining Employee-Organizational Alignment

The challenge for businesses is to create an environment where employees understand and commit to the company's direction, strategy and goals. This requires a holistic, coordinated effort to ensure that a number of key elements or building blocks are in place<sup>1</sup> to promote alignment.

Aligning and engaging people to a clearly articulated strategy requires<sup>1</sup>:

- A “fit for purpose” organizational structure where people understand what is expected of them and what they are accountable for
- People systems and processes that drive the right behaviors
- Capable leadership
- A positive work environment (culture)

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, these elements drive the level of employee engagement in an organization which, in turn, influences the customer experience and, ultimately, the overall performance of an organization in terms of productivity and profitability.

*The challenge for businesses is to create organizations where employees are aligned and engaged to a clearly articulated strategy.*

**Figure 1.** Right Management's Organizational Effectiveness Framework



Integration of these elements will produce powerful and mutually reinforcing results: an engaged workforce and a true performance culture. No single initiative can create organizational effectiveness; excellence is required across the full range of organizational elements if competitive strength is to be built<sup>1</sup>.

So what do we mean by an engaged workforce or employee engagement?

Employee engagement is, arguably, the most critical metric for organizations in the twenty-first century. Most, if not all, of the other key measures that reflect and drive organizational performance (customer satisfaction, innovation, profitability, productivity, loyalty and quality) are products of engaged, committed employees.

With decades of experience and robust global benchmarking research, Right Management defines engagement using four definitive factors:

1. Commitment to the job and organization

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2. Pride in the job and in the organization

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3. Willingness to advocate the benefits and advantages of the job and organization

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4. Satisfaction with the job and organization

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In short, engagement can be described as the degree of employee-organization alignment. Organizations must work to understand the dynamics of employee engagement in their companies, how those dynamics compare to informative benchmarks for improving engagement, then identify the specific and actionable levers that will improve engagement levels.

Engagement can be complex to measure. Achieving a high level of satisfied employees may be easier to realize, but it's much harder to engage them so they are actively working to produce great results for the organization. An accurate measure of engagement -- one that identifies both the drivers of engagement for your organization and a solution to address behaviors and practices that are hindering engagement -- is an essential business tool.

KEY FINDINGS

# Engagement Drives Performance

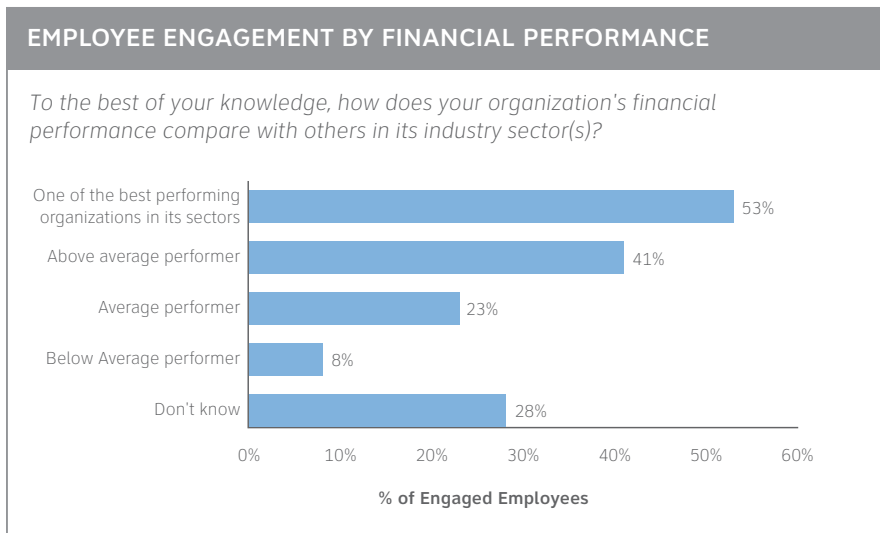
Research confirms that engagement leads to higher financial performance, higher customer satisfaction and higher employee retention. Findings from our global study revealed:

**THERE IS A STRONG RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LEVEL OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE.**

Employees who indicated that their organizations were one of the best performers reported double the level of engagement compared to employees who reported average organizational performance. Fifty-three percent of those who saw their organizations as top performers were highly engaged while only 8 percent of those who reported their organizations as under-performing were engaged. It is important that the organization find ways to clearly communicate successes that demonstrate how the organization is performing, and especially to find ways to socialize stories of superior performance. Clear, well-planned, high-impact messages can help employees not only see the connection between their work and these successes, but also understand how they support overall organizational performance, which ties directly to engagement levels.

*Employee engagement is powerfully linked to a range of business success factors.*

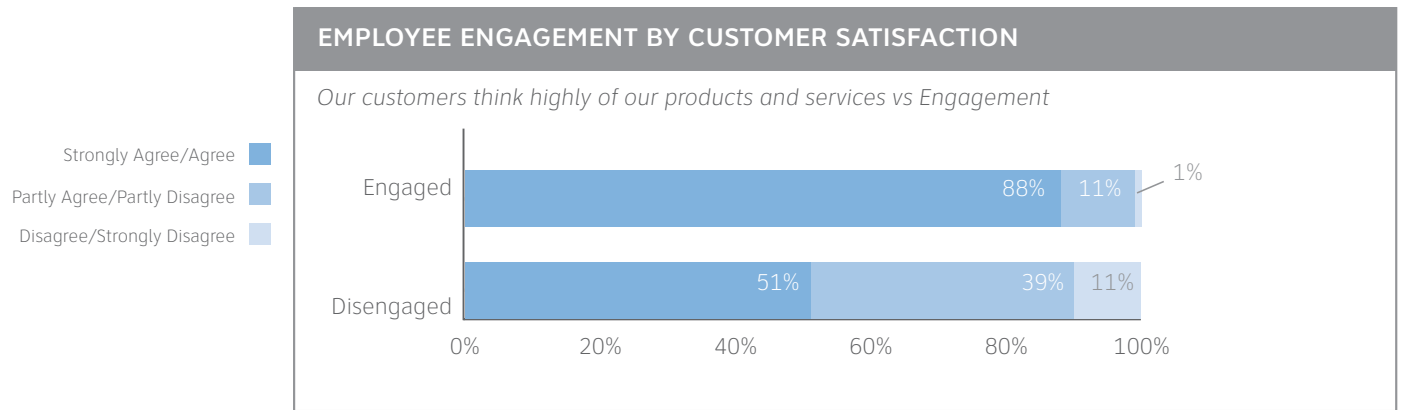
**Figure 2.** Employee Engagement by Financial Performance



**ENGAGED EMPLOYEES REPORTED MUCH HIGHER LEVELS OF PERCEIVED CUSTOMER SATISFACTION.**

Clearly, engaged employees understand the value of ensuring a positive customer experience and are more likely to demonstrate their commitment by delivering high quality products and services. Customer, and employee-driven experiences that highlight great customer satisfaction and loyalty need to be effectively shared throughout the company. Like the connection to organizational performance, the connection to positive customer experiences is vital to healthy engagement levels.

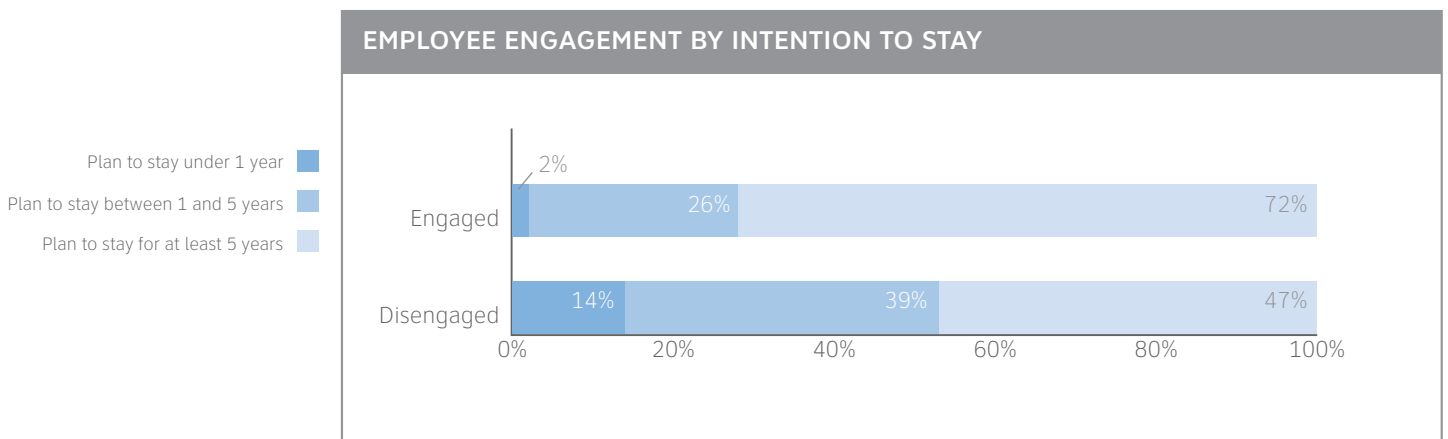
**Figure 3.** *The Relationship between Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction*



**ENGAGED EMPLOYEES ARE 7 TIMES LESS LIKELY TO LEAVE IN THE NEXT YEAR AND 1.5**

**TIMES MORE LIKELY TO STAY FOR AT LEAST 5 YEARS.** Organizations need to protect their investments in their workforce by retaining employees and their intellectual capital to ensure business continuity and the ability to meet key business objectives. Does your organization know who is engaged and who isn't? This can be the best starting point for addressing unwanted attrition that could lead to competitive weakness should your top performers leave.

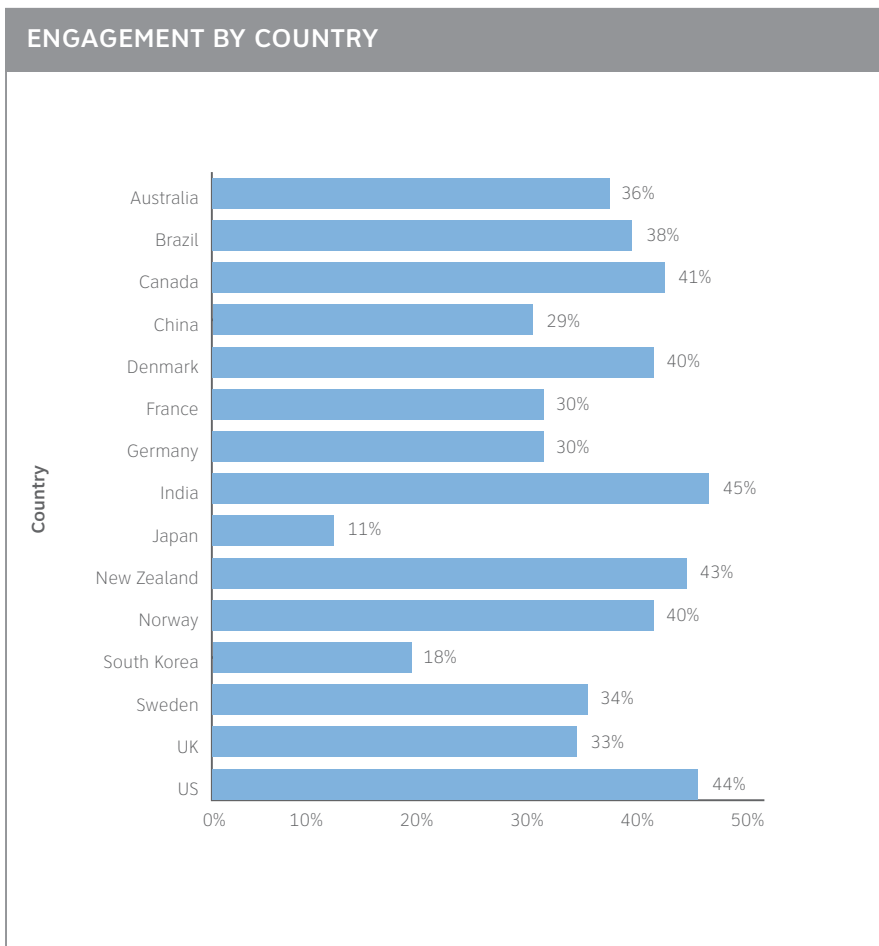
**Figure 4.** *The Relationship Between Employee Engagement and Intention to Stay*



**ONLY ONE IN THREE EMPLOYEES IS ENGAGED IN THEIR JOB AND THE ORGANIZATION THAT THEY WORK FOR.** Engagement drives key business metrics. Organizations that seek to improve engagement measures can realize significant improvements in organizational performance. However, there are significant country differences in engagement levels, from 45 percent in India to only 11 percent in Japan. Again, knowing who is engaged and who isn't can be the vital information necessary to boost organizational performance in competitively meaningful ways.

*There are significant country and industry differences in engagement levels.*

**Figure 5.** Engagement by Country

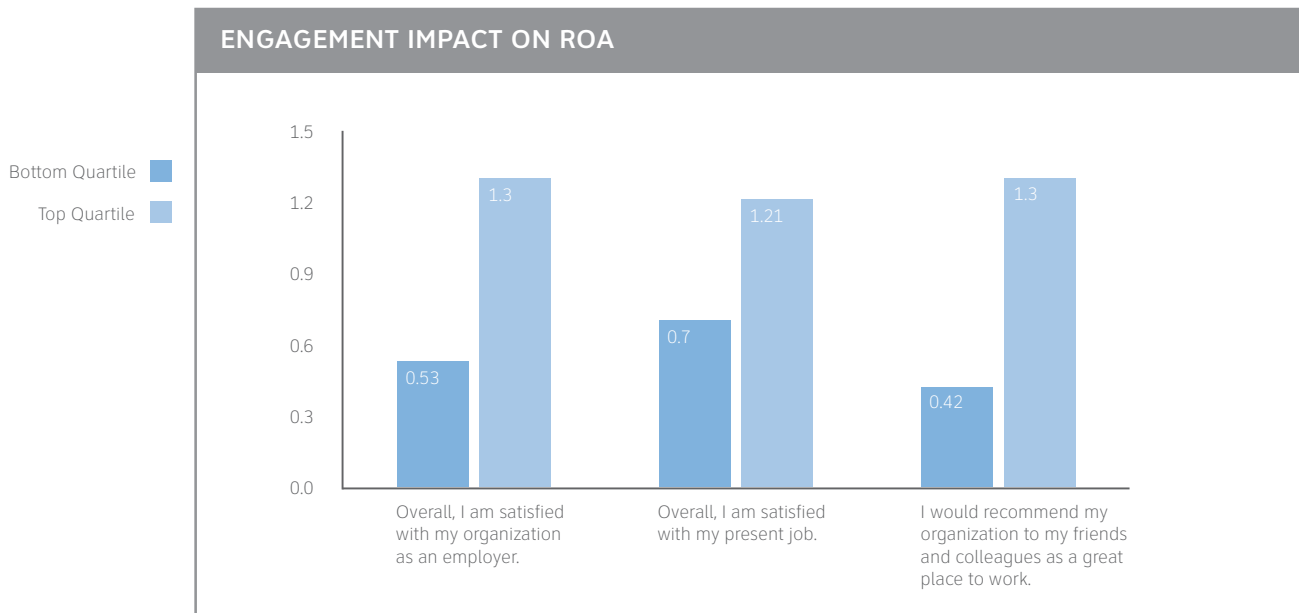


# The Organizational Performance Difference

In a study commissioned by Right Management, the University of Wisconsin conducted research that, taken together with Right Management’s 2008-2009 global benchmarking study, revealed significant relationships between engagement and key organizational metrics. This study used the Right Management engagement methodology and research data, studying 3,200 employees from 343 companies, and examined factors such as the relationship between engagement and key organizational indices.

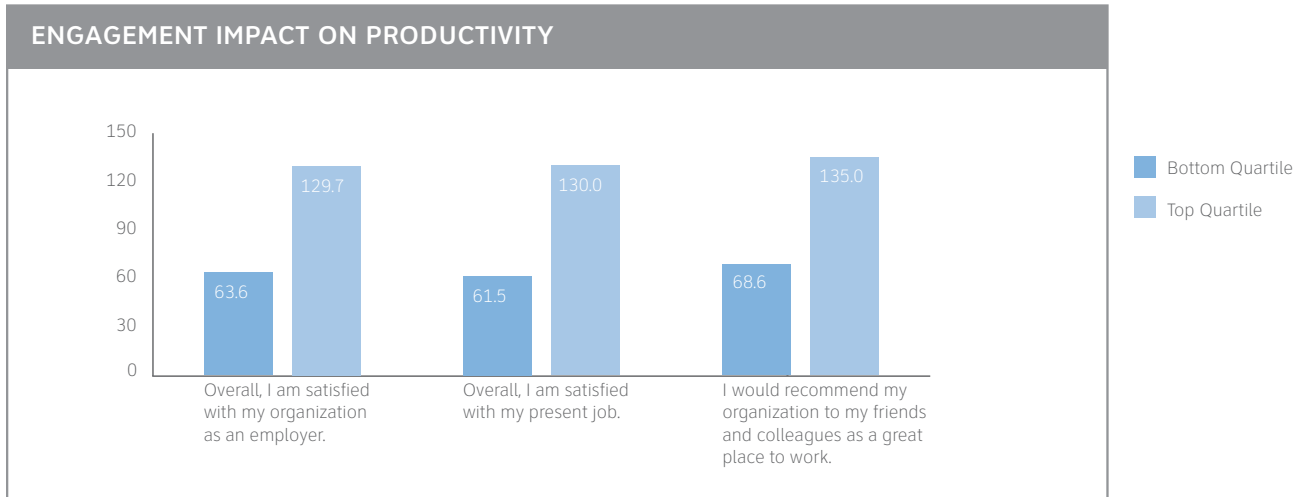
**THERE WAS A CLEAR DIFFERENCE IN ROA (RETURN ON ASSETS) BETWEEN THOSE ORGANIZATIONS IN WHICH EMPLOYEES RESPONDED TO RIGHT MANAGEMENT’S ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS WITH FAVORABLE PERCEPTIONS, AND THOSE WHOSE STAFF WITH UNFAVORABLE PERCEPTIONS.** Especially during uncertain times when cost efficiencies dominate the priority list, employee knowledge of how well an organization’s assets are being managed can have a great impact on engagement. Reciprocally, understanding the relationship between current engagement levels and ROA provides key decision-makers with more organizationally relevant information upon which to base good strategic decisions.

**Figure 7.** Engagement Impact on ROA



**THERE IS A VERY STRONG LINK BETWEEN PRODUCTIVITY AND ENGAGEMENT.** As with the relationship between engagement and ROA, employee knowledge of an organization’s productivity levels also have a direct relationship with engagement. Conversely, understanding the relationship between current engagement levels and productivity provides key decision-makers with information that will help to make sound business decisions.

**Figure 8.** *Engagement Impact on Productivity*



**A CORRELATION EXISTS BETWEEN CUSTOMER SATISFACTION LEVELS AND ENGAGEMENT LEVELS.** While it seems intuitive that higher employee engagement levels lead to higher customer satisfaction levels (and vice versa), Right Management’s evidence supports this with meaningful data.

**Figure 9.** *Engagement Impact on Customer Satisfaction*



# Creating an Engaged Workforce

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

**MEASURE ENGAGEMENT LEVELS.** The only way to gain accurate information about employee engagement in your business is to measure it. Organizations need not only to understand their current level of employee engagement, but also to 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.

A robust discovery process can be implemented without a significant investment in money, time and resources. However, careful survey design is critical. If you don't ask the right questions, you will never uncover the behaviors and practices your organization needs to address in the design of a solution.

Surveys also need to measure performance against each of the key elements of organizational effectiveness, such as Strategy, Structure, Roles, Capability, Leadership, People Systems, Culture & Values, Employee Engagement and Customer Satisfaction.

A survey also provides the benefit of comparing demographics by Business Unit, Job Type and Location, which allows you to target solutions where they are needed. In addition, the survey provides a benchmark to track and monitor progress against future tracking or pulse surveys.

**DETERMINE THE DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT.** Every organization is characterized by its own 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.

Uncovering barriers to engagement and designing the right solutions only comes from robust interpretative analysis, rather than a sole reliance on descriptive data. The lowest performance score is not necessarily the place to start as it may have a limited or negligible overall influence on organizational effectiveness and engagement. Similarly, the drivers of employee engagement that are unique to your organization cannot be determined by looking at frequency counts and percentages alone.

However, aggregate analysis by country and industry does provide some insight into the things that typically impact engagement levels.

## GLOBAL DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Our study found that the global drivers of employee engagement are:

1. I am committed to my organization's core values
2. Our customers think highly of our products and services
3. My opinions count
4. I have a clear understanding of what is expected of me at work
5. I understand how I can contribute to meeting the needs of our customers
6. I have been fairly rewarded
7. Senior leaders value employees
8. Everyone is treated with respect at work, regardless of who they are
9. I can concentrate on my job when I am at my work area
10. My personal work objectives are linked to my work area's business plan
11. I clearly understand my organization's mission
12. Senior leaders have the capability to make my organization successful
13. I am encouraged to take ownership of my work
14. My organization is involved in supporting the community
15. There are career opportunities for me at my organization
16. You can balance work and personal interests at my organization and still progress
17. My organization allows me to maintain a reasonable balance between my family and work life
18. The amount of pressure I experience in my role is reasonable
19. There is sufficient incentive to perform well at my organization
20. My pay is competitive compared to similar jobs in my organization
21. My immediate manager gives me the support I need to do my job well
22. People in my organization have the capability to do their jobs effectively
23. My organization is effective at attracting and retaining talent
24. I have the authority that I need to do my job well
25. My organization actively promotes health and well-being
26. My organization invests in its people's learning and development

Right Management *Global Benchmarking Employee Engagement Study*, December, 2008.

The study also found that the drivers of engagement do vary by country, with only one driver constant across all countries: Commitment to organizational values. This result highlights two things: the importance of creating and building a values-driven organization; and, conducting your own research to determine other unique drivers of engagement for your business.

**LINK THE RESULTS TO BUSINESS OUTCOMES.** Research has consistently shown that Employee Engagement is a lead indicator of lag business metrics, such as customer loyalty,<sup>10</sup> productivity,<sup>5</sup> and profitability.<sup>11,12</sup> So why do 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?

*It's important to conduct your own research to determine the unique drivers of engagement for your organization.*

There is evidence that organizations are including engagement targets (along with retention and absenteeism) in their business plan as the “people” measure in a balanced scorecard approach. Some organizations are also including engagement scores in managers’ individual performance targets. Sounds good, but often the systems don’t support the behavior. For example, when a manager achieves or exceeds a financial target but fails to deliver on engagement, he or she is often still considered a “high performer” and rewarded. The message is that engagement is “nice to have” but not essential to the organization’s success, so managers continue to deliver short-term financial results regardless of the impact on engagement.

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, retention, absenteeism and financial results. This is achieved through 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 the pulse of the living system to measure engagement and track the success of strategies you have under way to increase engagement and business performance.

Comprehensive surveys should be conducted across the organization annually or biannually, supported by shorter quarterly tracking surveys. During times of extensive change, quick pulse surveys every two months provide critical management information to guide and direct change initiatives.

**BENCHMARK COMPETITOR PRACTICES.** Benchmarking is a useful tool to understand how you measure against competitors. Global, local and internal benchmarking can be conducted to:

- Compare results against those of other global or national organizations
- Compare results against companies from the same industry sector
- Compare results internally, to see which business areas or divisions are experiencing particularly positive or negative levels of engagement
- Decide which issues to take action upon in order to achieve desired standards

There are two types of benchmarking: additive and normative. Additive benchmarking is conducted by research organizations by comparing your results to other organizations that have conducted a survey with them. They simply add the results into their existing client database (hence additive). Each time results of items are added, the database it is recalibrated.

An additive benchmarking database is limited as it can only compare an organization against the sample of organizations in the database. Additive databases can be skewed as they may contain only certain industry groups or be influenced by a few large organizations. In effect, they answer the question: “How good are our results compared to the results of other organizations that my survey provider has surveyed?”

A normative database is based on stratified sampling using ILO statistics and local country statistics. It accurately reflects the characteristics of the workforce population, including industry, size of organization, gender, age and employment status. The normative database answers the question: “How good are our results compared to the results of other organizations in my country or my industry?”

**TARGET YOUR INVESTMENT AND EFFORT WHERE IT WILL HAVE THE MOST IMPACT.** Avoid a scattershot approach by trying to change too many things all at once. Good analyses will uncover two or three critical areas that you need to focus on: the areas that drive engagement and are under-performing.

Get experts to work with you – experts who understand people systems and behaviors. You are embarking on organizational change that requires building the capability of managers to take action; designing processes to support and embed change; and measuring success. Additional information is available in Right Management’s paper “Organizational Effectiveness: Discovering How to Make it Happen,” 2009.

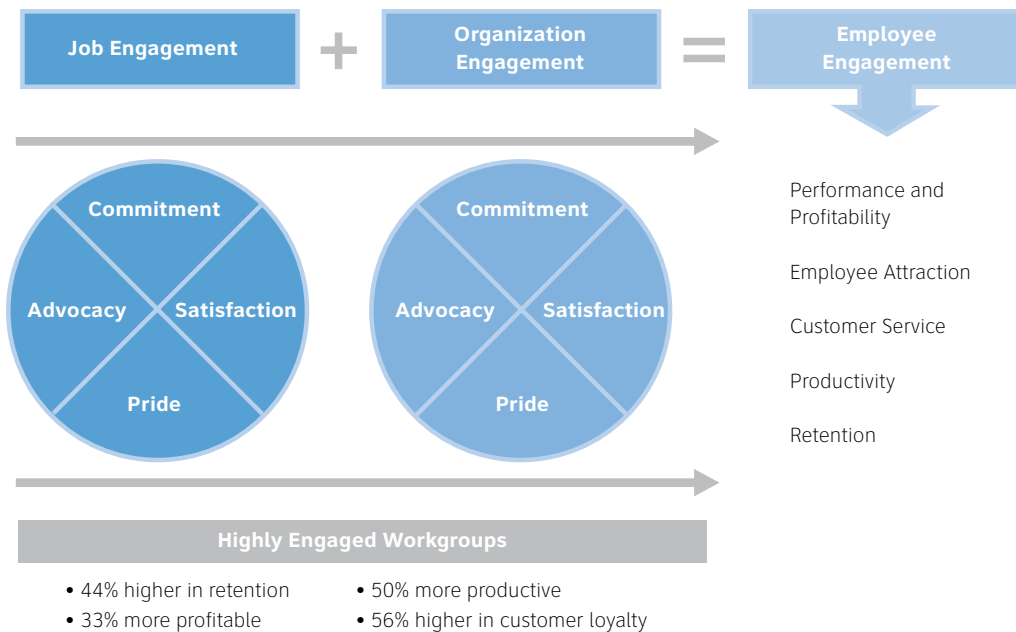
# Our Approach to Engagement

Engagement is a two-way process between employees and an organization. The organization attempts to engage employees who return a level of engagement to the employer. Research, however, has revealed that engagement is more complex than this, and can be directed by employees in one of two ways (or both). The first is the level of engagement employees have with their career or profession, and the other is the engagement employees feel toward their employing organization.<sup>13</sup>

The distinction between these constructs was evident in work conducted by the Institute for Employment Studies.<sup>14</sup> This work showed clearly that many employees, such as health professionals in the UK national health service, had extremely high levels of engagement with their career and professions, but were very disengaged in many instances from their employer (usually a Hospital Trust).

For this reason Right Management's approach uses a two-construct model describing both Job Engagement (the level of engagement people have their job, career or profession) and Organization Engagement (the level of engagement they have to their organization).

**Figure 10.** Right Management's Employee Engagement Model



Each construct is measured using four components: Pride,<sup>15</sup> Commitment,<sup>16</sup> Satisfaction<sup>4</sup> and Advocacy.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, an engaged workforce is achieved when there is a high number of employees whose hearts and minds are aligned to both the job that they do and the organization that they work for. Engaged employees are:

1. Satisfied with their current job and their organization as an employer
2. Committed to making the job and organization successful
3. Proud of their organization and the work they do
4. Willing to positively talk about their job and the organization

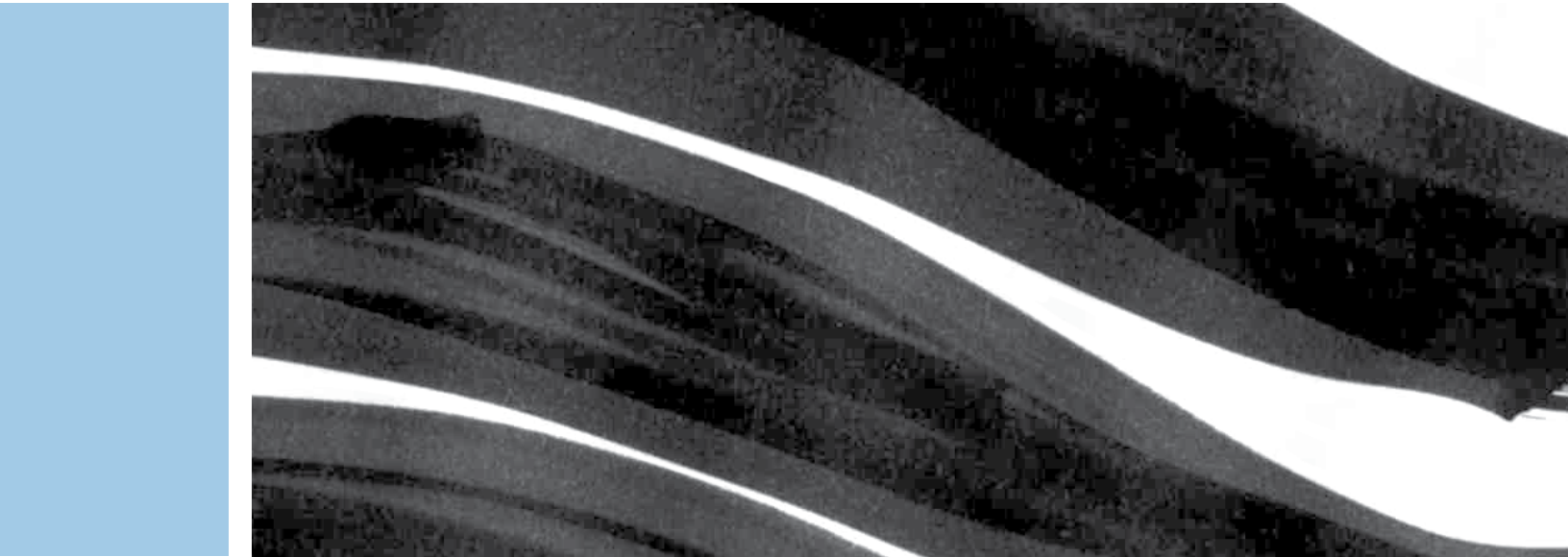
The four components of the model describe the emotional and behavioral aspects of engagement. When people positively evaluate their experience of the job and organization, they are more likely not only to feel satisfied, committed and proud, but also to be advocates for the company and engage in behaviors that enhance both job and organizational performance.

To maintain the integrity of this engagement measure, Right Management does not calculate engagement using a mean or average. A person is only described as “engaged” if he or she responds positively to all engagement questions. This ensures that the analysis provided is able to differentiate between employees who respond to half of the items negatively and half positively and employees who respond moderately to all items, which can mask the true reality. For example, when assessing health, you can’t claim that an individual who answered the majority of questions positively (e.g., diet, exercise, and stress) is healthy if he or she answered one negatively (e.g., smoking).

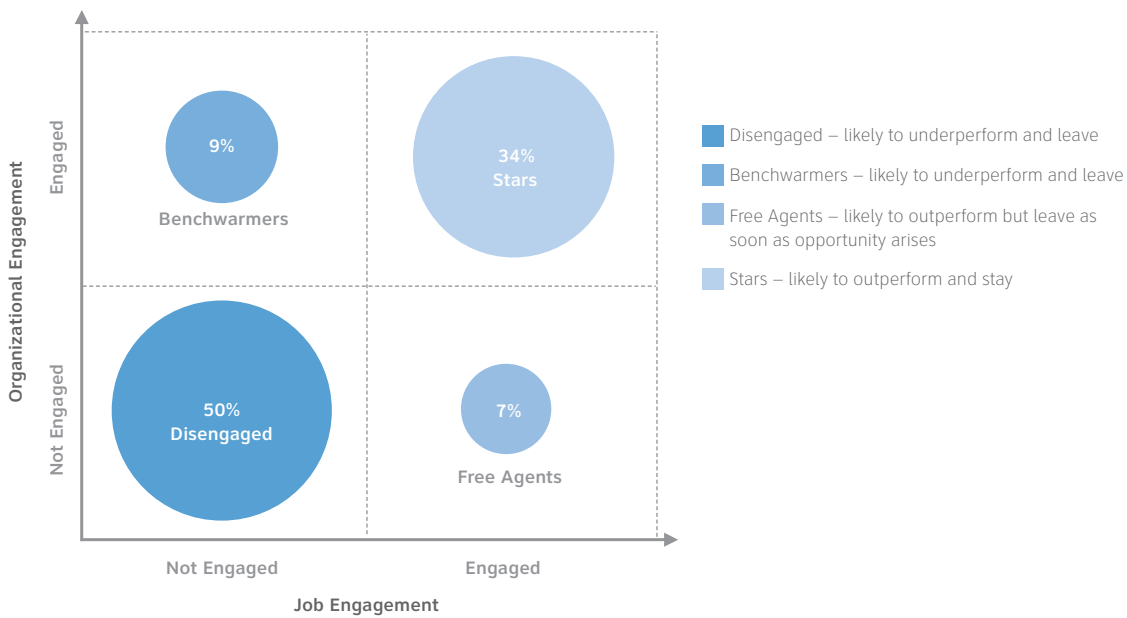
It is powerful information for business leaders to know what proportion of their workforce is engaged to both the organization and their jobs, versus what proportion is engaged to just the organization or just their jobs.

If employees are engaged only to their job or profession, then they will not be aligned to organizational goals and strategy. If employees are engaged to the organization but not their job, they will be aligned to organizational goals but will find it difficult to do their jobs well and to deliver extra discretionary effort in the work that they do.

Driver analysis can be conducted to determine the key drivers of engagement for each employee segment, providing a solution for how an organization engages employees with their jobs and the company.



**Figure 11.** Segmentation: Organization Engagement and Job Engagement



Data from *Right Management 2009 Global Benchmarking Study*, 28,810 respondents

What value would it be to know how your workforce might look on a grid like this? Decision-makers benefit from knowing how to differentially focus resources on the four segments above to guide talent retention and engagement initiatives.

# Getting it Right

Right Management has worked with thousands of organizations on employee engagement issues and uses an approach that incorporates robust research and skill development methodologies with real business applications. Our solution is proven and equips companies to create organizational effectiveness that not only promotes engagement, but also enables employees to execute on strategy to achieve improved business results.

Our approach is to work with business leaders using robust research methodology to determine current organizational effectiveness and identify key behaviors and practices that will improve engagement and enhance business results. We build capability to design processes to support action, equip leaders with skills to act, and track progress.

Right Management's **Organizational Effectiveness Survey** is aligned to the Organizational Effectiveness Framework illustrated in Figure 1. The survey allows organizations to measure the different elements of organizational effectiveness using up to 100 benchmarkable items grouped under the following topics:

- |  |                         |
|--|-------------------------|
| 1. Strategy                            | 6. Recognition & Reward |
| 2. Structure, Roles & Capability       | 7. Work Processes       |
| 3. Senior Leadership                   | 8. Communication        |
| 4. Immediate Manager                   | 9. Culture & Values     |
| 5. Learning, Development & Performance | 10. Customer Experience |

The survey is fully customizable, allowing organizations to create their own specific items, and also allows for the inclusion of open-ended or free-text questions.

Our experienced consultants are recognized experts in the field of Organizational Effectiveness and Employee Engagement Research. Right Management partners with organizations to create customized solutions that exactly meet their needs. With a worldwide presence, we are able to design and deliver organizational effectiveness solutions on every continent – employing a consistent approach that can be adapted to the local culture. Our approach also ensures organizations can measure effectiveness and engagement accurately, and can then interpret the results into clear actions that work in the unique business context of their company.

# Conclusion

Engaged employees lead to increased productivity, retention, customer loyalty and profitability.

Savvy organizations focus on both the lead and lag indicators of business success, so business leaders need to know about engagement levels in the same way they need to know about other critical management information, such as financial, productivity and customer data.

Robust, business-oriented measurement and analysis is required to identify the key drivers of engagement for your organization. Survey design should be aligned to your organization, your strategy, your values and your people.

Key insights are provided when organizations know whether employees are engaged to both the jobs that they do and the company that they work for. This knowledge enables organizations to predict behavior and its impact on key business metrics.

Measurement without action can do more harm than good. Simply surveying for the current engagement level and then doing nothing with that information often leads to employees feeling that they aren't being heard, which in turn can negatively impact morale and trust levels. Identifying and analyzing engagement levels and the drivers of success is the first step. The real challenge is in equipping your business to act and ensuring that change is embedded in your culture so that your workforce remains focused and aligned to the business strategy. An engaged workforce is the key to sustained competitive advantage and accelerated business performance.

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As a global thought leader for Right Management's Talent Management practice, Michael drives the strategy and execution of the organization's Talent Assessment capabilities worldwide. He supports a network of Regional Champions and Subject Matter Experts and leads the design and implementation of global, scalable solutions delivered to meet critical and emerging business needs. These key capabilities and associated client solutions focus on competency modeling and individual, team and organizational assessment.

Jamie Sims

BA (Hons), MPsych, MBA  
**Managing Principal**

Jamie is a registered psychologist and assessment specialist. She currently heads Right Management's Talent Assessment practice in Australia and New Zealand. Since joining Right Management, Jamie has been involved in a range of national and global assessment and leadership development consulting projects. Jamie also provides individual coaching using an evidence-based approach and cognitive behavioral and solution-focused techniques.



# About Right Management

Right Management ([www.right.com](http://www.right.com)) is the talent and career management expert within Manpower, the global leader in employment services. Right Management helps clients win in the changing world of work by designing and executing workforce solutions that align talent strategy with business strategy. Our expertise spans talent assessment, leadership development, organizational effectiveness, employee engagement and workforce transition. With offices in over 50 countries, Right Management partners with companies of all sizes. More than 80% of Fortune 500 companies are currently working with us to help them grow talent, reduce costs and accelerate performance.

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