

Employee Engagement: How Important It Can Be To Your Business

Ensuring your employees are committed and motivated to work for you is vitally important to ensuring business growth and sustainability.

What is Employee Engagement?

Employee Engagement is a state where employees are emotionally committed to their job and the values of the organisation in which they work. Due to their commitment to the job, engaged employees demonstrate high motivation, high performance, and a willingness to speak positively about the organisation to those around them.

Advantages of Engaged Employees

Research by the Gallup Organisation shows that engaged employees are more productive, more profitable, more customer-focused, safer, and less likely to leave their employer. In fact, The Conference Board has found that, engaged employees perform 20% better than non-engaged employees, and are 87% less likely to leave an organisation.

This is partly because engaged employees work with a positive, hard-working attitude. A positive attitude is shown to be linked to higher performance. As the attitude permeates the company, overall productivity increases.

Not only this, as engaged employees espouse the virtues of the company, the employers' brand is improved by word of mouth. This leads to more people applying for positions, better people applying for positions, and lower turnover. By creating a more engaged workforce you can increase and improve your recruitment pool and ensure high retention of employees.

What Affects Employee Engagement?

To engage employees, employers must focus on getting employees emotionally involved in their work and in the performance of the company. To do this, barriers must be overcome and managed. Kevin Panozza, the CEO of Salesforce Australia has identified 8 'Enemies to Engagement' that, when managed, can assist in employee engagement.

1. Uniformity

Uniformity accentuates the whole and diminishes the individual. A major aspect of employee engagement is appreciation for the individual. It is therefore important that employers adopt an attitude of celebrating the individual. Remember, a culture is a collection of individual attitudes.

2. Rule-Driven Behaviour

Rules have always had a negative connotation. They, by nature, create limiting behaviours that restrict performance and abilities leading to disengagement of employees. Instead, rules should become guidelines supplemented with training and encouragement of intuitive behaviour. This will ensure individuals are growing and desired performance levels are being met.

3. Grey

Too much use of 'grey' items, 'grey' attitudes or 'grey' people depress mood and inhibit innovation. Engaged employees are colourful and positive and so, any extensive use of 'grey' within an organisation impedes this. Therefore, when looking at design, recruitment, and communication, an element of colour should be injected to ensure maximum engagement.

4. Isolation

People by nature are gregarious. They like being around people, talking to people and being talked to. Therefore, high levels of communication and a focus on group interaction improves employee engagement. Not only this, high levels of communication and group work helps align goals within the organisation and encourages knowledge sharing. The more interaction that goes in a business, the more involved the employees, and the more productive they are.

5. Being Taken for Granted

This can be overcome in a simple manner. Recognise and reward staff continuously. Not only does this ensure appreciation of the individual, it seeks to encourage desired performance levels that spread organisation wide to directly impact productivity levels.

6. The Deep End

Not understanding what you have to do, how you have to do it or where you stand is a scary feeling. The feeling of being thrown in the deep end can only come from a few sources:

- Lack of training, induction or mentoring
- Expectations have not been met
- Low communication

This can be overcome by implementing programs such as mentoring or development and supplementing it with continuous communication strategy.

7. Lack of Career Opportunity

One of the most important elements of employment is the ability to progress and develop within an organisation. Where this is ignored, or career opportunities are not clearly communicated, employees can become disengaged within their role.

By implementing strong development plans, training modules and career progressions opportunities, you are ensuring employee development within the organisation and increasing their commitment and performance as a result.

8. Boredom & Tedium

The clearest message to come out of this is that it's important to keep things interesting and fun at work. Implementing things like competitions, special days and group activities break up the working day, and improve morale across the organisation.

Engage Employees with Total Rewards

To ensure maximum engagement, employers should consider developing a Total Rewards strategy.

Total Rewards is all of the tools available to an employer that may be used to attract, motivate and retain employees. They are everything an employee perceives to be of value resulting from the employment relationship. Total Rewards consists of 5 elements. These include Compensation, Work/life Balance, Benefits, Performance and Development.

By addressing each of these 5 elements and creating a strategy for each, employers can help beat the 8 enemies of engagement resulting in more engaged and more productive employees. An example of how a Total Rewards strategy can work is given below:

1. Compensation

Recognise the Individual: Switching a fixed base salary strategy to creating a mix of base and variable pay ensures individuals are celebrated in a financial way that recognises their individual performance and contribution.

2. Work/Life Balance

Create Guidelines instead of Rules: By taking a flexible approach to hours of work and leave, employees are more productive and demonstrate higher levels of loyalty to their employers than where they are restricted to working hours.

3. Benefits

Be Colourful: By implementing benefits such as discounted holidays or paying for a staff party breaks up the monotony of day to day work and motivates staff leading to a colourful workplace.

4. Performance & Reward

Don't Take People for Granted: By rewarding and recognising people on a continuous basis, employers can not only help motivate high performance, they ensure that the employee feels appreciated and needed within an organisation.

5. Development

Keep Employees out of the Deep End & Give Career Opportunities: A strong development program that includes induction, mentoring and training opportunities ensure individual growth with the organisation. Programs such as this also serve to increase communication within the organisation ensuring employees are more comfortable within their roles and are prepared to stay with the organisation.

Summary

Engaged Employees are emotionally involved with the progress of a business, including its productivity. Because of this level of engagement, employees are by nature more productive as they strive to help achieve organisational goals. Thus, by developing engagement in employees, employers can improve the productivity of their bottom line.

Not only this, engaged employees assist in recruitment processes, are retained longer, and assist in spreading the employers brand. The combination of these things helps reduce costs and improve profits leading to ongoing success of an organisation.

Source: Total Rewards Solution (15th Aug 2007)