

Employee Engagement – Why it Matters and What You Can Do

A Tool for Leaders and HR

Organizations that successfully drive employee engagement achieve high performance results. Engaged employees speak positively about the organization to co-workers, friends, family, and others outside the organization (potential future applicants and customers); have a strong interest in being a part of the organization, and contribute extra effort to help ensure the organization's success. Employee engagement is critical to any organization that wants to recruit and retain top performing employees and be a high performance organization.

Employees who are engaged are satisfied with their jobs; demonstrate organizational commitment, and contribute to the organization's success.

High performance organizations have:

- High levels of employee engagement
- High customer satisfaction/loyalty
- High productivity/profitability/mission accomplishment
- High retention rates
- Low accident rates (high employee safety)
- Low absenteeism (30% fewer sick days taken)
- Low "shrinkage" (theft, damaged inventory, etc.)

Leaders and HR drive employee engagement. High performance organizations influence employee engagement by developing a common set of values and a common culture through employee engagement initiatives. Some key factors leading to employee engagement include:

- Effective talent management
- Respect for employees
- Leaders who uphold organization's standards of ethics
- Empowered employees
- Equal opportunities and fair treatment of employees

Employee engagement is a continuous process of learning, improvement, measurement, and action.

What can leaders and HR do?

- **Hire employees with demonstrated commitment to quality** and then set shared goals and metrics for quality.
- **Define clear expectations and results** so employees know what they need to do to succeed.
- **Ensure employees have the right resources** (e.g., materials, equipment, information) to do their work.

- **Communicate how employees' work fits into the overall mission** so they understand why their efforts matter (e.g., their work keeps the food supply safe; influences people to change behaviors; helps people find jobs).
- **Provide employees with the opportunity to do what they do best** by identifying employees' talents and interests and, when possible, putting them into roles that align.
- **Provide meaningful development opportunities** so that employees have opportunities to improve their skills, build their knowledge, and learn new competencies.
- **Give feedback by** regularly meeting with each employee to discuss progress, goals, and answer questions and concerns.
- **Recognize employees when they perform well**, do it frequently, and in a way that acknowledges different preferences for being recognized.
- **Create an environment of respect** by listening and responding to employees' individual needs (e.g., need to have task variety, try new projects, learn new skills) and then connecting those needs to the needs of the organization).
- **Ask for employees' input and consider it in the decision making process** because employees typically have a different perspective than managers and they then become "stakeholders", taking more ownership in the outcome.
- **Create opportunities for coworkers to get to know each other** because it helps improve communication, trust, and collaboration.