Developing an Engaging Climate

WHIRLING CHIEF

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Introduction

With the evolution of Human Resources practices in the workplace (about twenty, twenty-five years ago), we began to consider the relationships between what our employees do and tangible business results in the markets in which we were operating.[1] More recently, we moved on to studying employee satisfaction, showing an understanding of a certain balance needed to be achieved. Soon, we realized that being 'satisfied' is not always the same as being 'engaged' as an employee. After all, the research has proven to us that engaged employees are more likely to be productive and innovative. It is a fact that performance against revenue expectations is 23% greater for companies with high engagement capital compared to those with low engagement capital.[3]

Employee Satisfaction vs. Employee Engagement

Employee Satisfaction is a measure of an employee's content with general work conditions.

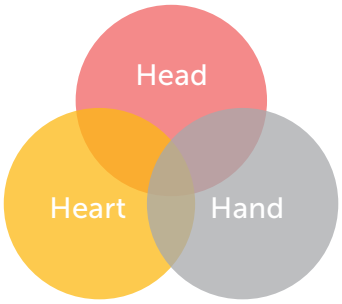
Employee Engagement is a measure of an employee's emotional commitment to an organization.

How to Think about Organizational Climate

Human beings are the greatest asset companies ever had, and ever will. Organizational research unanimously agrees all employees, in private or public sectors, require the same thing when it comes to developing organizational commitment: Being informed, being involved, and being on-board.

For Practitioners

If you are a people manager and/or a human resources professional looking to create enhanced organizational climate and worker engagement, you need to appeal to three (3) dimensions of an employee: The head, the heart, and the hand.



The Head: All of us want to understand our organization's strategy and the business objectives we are tasked to achieve.

- Make sure you have in place a reliable and sustainable strategy planning and execution process, along with a strong strategic narrative.

- Make sure your strategic narrative includes where you are coming from and where you are headed to as an organization.

- Make sure your strategic narrative is visible to people, allows for questions, and is empowering and inspiring.

The Heart: The number one reason why people leave organizations is the relationship they have with their immediate managers.[2]

- Make sure you have engaging managers who gain energy by focusing on people, giving support and coaching vs. doing the work.

- Make sure you have a system where feedback can flow both ways; employee voice is an important asset and is part of solution building.

- Make sure organizational values are clearly defined, communicated and are reflected in the day-to-day decision making. Particularly for leaders, behaviors have a huge impact; making sure they 'walk the talk' is key.

The Hand: Having a great manager that touches your heart is only half the equation; the other half is understanding how one can contribute. Showing employees how their part plays a piece in the bigger puzzle, and assigning clear tasks to strengths, are two essentials.

- Make sure you communicate roles and responsibilities clearly.

- Make sure to delegate tasks to strengths, and coach and reward along the way.

- Make sure to be present during turbulence, change, and ambiguity for direction setting.

Measurement

If you are unsure of how to measure employee engagement, that's because it is not a valid construct! There are, however, certain ways you can consider measuring your organizational climate. Below are key categories you can consider in designing your questionnaire or survey.

PRIDE (I'd recommend this organization to a valuable friend)
STRATEGY (I believe in the mission of this organization)
MANAGEMENT (I feel supported by the leadership of this organization)
WORK (My talents are well utilized and my work is valued)
DEVELOPMENT (I can clearly see a development path for my career)

For more information on employee engagement and/or development of employee surveys, please contact us here.

[1] Corporate Leadership Council, HR Engagement Research Survey, 2011.
[2] Leigh Branham, the 7 Hidden Reasons Employees Leave: How to Recognize the Subtle Signs and Act Before It's Too Late, 2005.
[3] Gallup, Employee Engagement Survey, 2010. commitment to an organization.

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