



Engaged Employees Stay With You

Our clients are consistently focused on finding ways to increase the engagement that employees experience within their jobs for many reasons. The research and career experience suggests that it is a better idea to have employees who view their jobs as engaging, compelling and important.

Engaged employees do better work, make better work-related decisions, encourage a team approach, are constantly seeking better ways to reach company (and personal) goals and encourage others to do the same. Any manager would happily work toward a culture at work that generates those kinds of outcomes, not just from their superstar performers, but among the entire workforce.

Let's look at two typical views that employees might possess when they come to work. In the first scenario, an employee has been hired and trained to do a specific job. We'll image that the employee is bright and motivated. Despite being motivated, this employee does not view the job as belonging to him/her, as it was "given" to him/her by management, with a clear definition of the expected outcomes and goals. The employee comes to work mostly on time, tries to get along with others to avoid conflict, does his/her job as the requirements dictate and leaves on time at the end of his/her shift. The employee's primary motivation is to stay out of trouble, meet requirements and collect a paycheck on payday. This, historically, has been the description of a "good" employee.

This employee remained employed as long as the paycheck felt equitable and they were not "abused" by their fellow employees or their manager. Should a better offer appear, the employee would consider it without a great deal of remorse over leaving the current employer. After all, it's all about the money first and the work environment second (or worse).

Now let's consider a different scenario. Imagine an employee whose initial experience is different right from the start. In addition to the standard HR interview, the candidate is interviewed by potential team members who want to assess the candidate's compatibility with the team. After his initial HR interview, he has ten additional telephone interviews, only two of which are conducted by managers. He is hired and, subsequently, he receives several congratulatory messages from teammates he had not yet met.

When a culture exists at work that puts employees and their development in the first tier of important outcomes, the whole tenor of "going to work" changes. More and more, we are seeing companies whose hierarchical structure is flattening, where teams make the majority of their own decisions, and where every employee knows his/her role in relation to the bottom line. Engaged employees set personal development goals and are given ample opportunity to achieve them. At the same time, every employee within an engaged culture understands the company goals and is fully committed to their personal contribution toward hitting them.

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Companies that have realized the value of working toward full engagement of their workforce have achieved remarkable success. Amazon, Apple, Whole Foods, Johnsonville Foods and dozens of others are reaping the benefits of encouraging their employees to literally own their jobs.

Among the statistics that demonstrate these powerfully positive outcomes is remarkable retention. Simply stated, engaged employees stay with their employers far longer than non-engaged employees. When employees realize that their role on their team is vital and important, they are far more likely to return to work every day without a lot of thought as to what else might be available.

Typically, there are two primary pathways to employee turnover. One is employee dissatisfaction with the environment, management, pay scale and benefits, or working conditions. Not uncommonly, this employee is often not a star performer. The other pathway is a bit more worrisome. When an employee realizes that she/he has marketable value and “can do better” elsewhere, then pursuing those outcomes is a clear and easy pathway. Of course, this tactic causes a brain and talent drain from the original employer and moves the best and brightest elsewhere, often to the competition.

So, instead of looking at the idea of encouraging employee engagement as a trendy, progressive management option, the hard, fast business logic of engagement takes the front position. The simple fact is that engaged employees do better work and stay with the company that allows them to do it.

