



## Is Employee Engagement that Important?

“To win in a market place you must first win in the workplace” Doug Conant former Campbell’s soup CEO once said. Study after study turns up numbers in the range of 70 to 80% of the workforce that’s either not fully engaged or ac- tively disengaged at work, costing companies billions in annual turnover. The impact isn’t just on the individual; the organization loses out in multiple ways. The most obvious is the lost productivity and discretionary effort of those who are doing just what they have to do to get by but actively disengaged employees can also have a negative influence on other employees and push customers away. Turnover, quality, safety, profitability, the list of costs goes on and on. However, just as marketing and product teams have moved beyond customer satisfaction to look at total customer experience, successful companies are refocusing their efforts on improving the entire employee ex- perience. What do 93% of the top 100 Fortune 500 listed companies KNOW that the other 7% don’t? Here are their top 5 secrets...

01.

Know Yourself-Know Your Employee

Today’s business environment requires learning dynamics that promote high employee en- gagement and Whole Brain Thinking™ skills that drive results. Leaders Know their employees “ their preferences, skills, expectations and job needs, they know how to encourage their best thinking, they embrace employee diversity, and they recognize and align employee strengths, talents and needs with the organization’s objectives. There’s no one-size-fits-all management approach to engaging and inspiring employees, but Whole Brain® Thinking gives leaders practical tools to diagnose and adjust their approaches as necessary. It makes it easy for them to keep the lines of communication open so employee engagement becomes a daily focus, not a stop-gap, crisis management issue.

If you want an innovative organization, you need to hire, work with, and promote people who make you uncomfortable. You need to understand your own preferences so that you can complement your weaknesses and exploit your strengths. In a cognitively diverse environment, a message sent is not necessarily a message received. Some people respond well to facts, figures, and statistics. Others prefer anecdotes. Still others digest graphic presentations most easily. Information must be delivered in the preferred “language” of the recipient.

02.

Don’t Just Engage... Enable!

Employee engagement is only half the story. It’s no good feeling great about your job if you can’t get things done. That’s why it’s important for employees to be “enabled” too. Because if enthusiastic people are held back by bureaucracy, systems or conflicting demands, not only will they underperform — they may stop trying, or even leave.

Hay Group Insight has found enabling of employees embraces two key components. The first is an optimised role which requires employees to be effectively matched to their jobs, so that their skills and abilities are effectively utilised. The second is a supportive environment, which provides people with the resources they need (for example, time, information, tools and equip- ment) and removes barriers from getting the job done (such as red tape, or tasks that don’t add value). By considering both employee engagement and employee enablement, research by Hay Group Insight suggests that there are four distinct groups of employees within a typical organisation. (figure 1)

### CLUSTERING OF EMPLOYEES BY ENGAGEMENT AND ENABLEMENT

		EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT	
		LOW	HIGH
EMPLOYEE ENABLEMENT	HIGH	DETACHED	EFFECTIVE
	LOW	INEFFECTIVE	FRUSTRATED

03.

Inspire and Be Inspired!

Truly engaged workplaces are rare. Gallup research shows that worldwide, just 13% of employ- ees are engaged in their jobs -- they are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. The remaining 87% of employees are either not engaged or indiffer- ent – or even worse, actively disengaged and potentially hostile to their organizations.

Southwest Airlines is a company who encourages employees to stay inspired to do things dif- ferently, from allowing existing employees from various departments to design their own uni- form and giving them autonomy over aspects of their work life they’d never normally get a say in, to becoming a glowing example of customer service due to their collective of happy, com- mitted employees.

04.

Improve The Employee Experience

Understanding and improving the employee experience is critical for companies operating in a highly competitive global economy, giving employees the space to boost their creativity to make them feel that they are more than just the work they do for the company, will help com- panies succeed in attracting and retaining skilled employees. Employee engagement doesn’t not mean employee happiness nor does it mean employee satisfaction, many companies have satisfaction surveys but the bar is set too low, and often are gone without follow-up. Em- ployee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals.

Dreamworks Animation host company parties after big projects are completed; a practice that employees really appreciate is that at such parties and events, they are encouraged to share their personal work and projects with their co-workers. This opens up an appreciation of non-work related projects, it keeps people feeling both in control and passionate about their work.

05.

Reward Them For Better Or For Worse

Managers should understand what it is that their employees truly value and focus on improv- ing these, even if (and especially when) financial rewards are being squeezed. Employers may be less concerned about employees leaving them during a downturn. However, when good times return, disengaged employees are more likely to jump ship at the first opportunity, just when recovery for the firm becomes possible. Conversely, when employers adopt a long-term view of engaging their employees during a downturn, they will be rewarded with increased loy- alty and motivation when the next wave of growth arrives. When employees are en- gaged-when they care, they use discretionary effort. In Drive, Dan Pink goes on to illustrate why the traditional carrots-and-sticks paradigm of extrinsic reward and punishment doesn’t work, pointing instead to his trifecta of intrinsic motivators: Autonomy, Mastery, and Purpose.

## Final Thoughts

Implementing great employee engagement practices is a sure-fire way to improve company culture and have a team full of happy, productive and passionate people! Every business leader worldwide has a responsibility to raise the bar and truly embrace strategies for engagement. This significant step is not only key to improving busi- ness outcomes, but is also vital to achieving sustainable growth for companies, communities and countries and for getting the global economy back on track toward a more prosperous future.

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