

A Study of Employee Engagement Strategies in a Multinational organisation

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An attempt is made in the article to study the level of employee engagement among managerial employees (who are called associates in the organisation) of a Multinational Company. The study is based on primary data collected from 99 employees. The sample is selected on random basis out of the total 154 associates of the company. A number of parameters were taken to assess the level of employee engagement. The study reveals that the level of employee engagement and positive discretionary effort is high.

Concept

It is believed that Employee Engagement takes place when people are interested or even excited about their jobs. They are willing to perform the work at their best using all the abilities and go 'extra mile' to get the work done. Bevan et al (1997) defined an engaged employee as some one, 'who is aware of business context, and works closely with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation'. Originally, interest in the notion of engagement was generated by The Hay Group which referred it as 'engaged performance'. The same was defined by Murlis and Watson (2001) as follows 'a result that is achieved by stimulating employees' enthusiasm for their work and directing it towards organisation success. This result can only be achieved when... elicits specific positive behaviour aligned with the organisation goals'.

Towers Perrin (2007), another management consultants firm defined employee engagement in similar terms. It is 'the extent to which employees put discretionary effort into their work, beyond the minimum to get the job done, in the form of extra time, brain power or energy. The significance of the concept lies in the fact that it is crucial significance to the employment

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relationship. It implies what people do and how they behave in their roles and work for furtherance of the objectives of both the organization and themselves. Engagement is closely associated with the degree of job involvement and flow (Brown: 1996). Job involvement refers to the degree to which the job situation is central to the person and his or her identity (Lawler and Hall: 1970).

There is some confusion in the usage of the terms employee engagement and organizational commitment. Both the terms are important which influence work performance and attraction and retention of the employees. In spite of overlapping in the terms, they are also different from each other. While engagement is job oriented, commitment is organization oriented (loyalty and be with the company for long). People can be engaged with their work even when they are not committed to the organization as long as they find opportunities to use and develop their skills. Similarly, people who are committed to the organization need not necessarily be highly engaged in their job.

Review of Literature

Jyotsna Bhatnagar(2007) conducted a study on Talent management strategy of employee engagement in Indian ITES employees. She took a sample of 272 BPO/ITES employees using Gallup work place attitude. Another study was conducted at India Yamaha Motor private limited by Nishuadc (2009). The findings of the study are giving right job to the employees, friendly work environment and culture, thorough training and development sessions resulted in the increased level of employee engagement. Agrawal and Sadhana (2010) studied the aspect of emotional labour and employee engagement in call centers. The finding of the study is job related factors are more important than organization related factors for high attrition rates in the call centers. To combat attrition, managers should focus on increasing job engagement through career planning and design of work system. Mamta Mohapatra and Baldev R.Sharma (2010) undertook a study in an Indian Public Sector Undertaking on employee engagement and its predictors. The study is based on primary data collected from 84 managerial employees. The study has revealed that the level of employee engagement in the organisation is quite modest. Three factors namely, pay; job content and objectivity are found to be the predictors of employee engagement.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in a Multinational company engaged in the manufacture of wide range of plastic products. It is based on primary data

collected from a sample of 99 employees selected on random basis out of the total 154 associates of the organisation. The study has the following objectives:

- To determine the degree of engagement in employees
- To study the attitude of the employees towards employment practices.
- To study the employee engagement strategies adopted in the organisation.

Data analysis was carried out by using the following statistical techniques.

Frequency statistics were used to find errors and missing variables. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the data and find mean values. T-test and One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to find significant difference among the groups. Pearson's product moment correlation was used to find the relationship.

Profile of the sample Unit

The sample unit is a Multinational company which comes under the category of plastic industry. By its state-of-art manufacturing facilities produces over hundred different caps and bottles in different shapes, sizes and colors. It produces for large and reputed multinationals and meets their quality standards. It also manufactures complete range of products including home care, personal care products by signing contracts with large companies. The multinational (sample unit) has 132 plants in more than 37 countries. As for India, it has six plants in different locations including two plants in Hyderabad (of which one plant is covered in the study). Its vision is to emerge as a company to achieve global market and technology leadership. Its strategy includes value addition through long-term partnership with customers and seeks to accomplish by innovative and competitive packaging solutions.

The organization places importance on employee engagement as it is a prerequisite for the success of the organization. It has nurtured an enabling and work climate to create conditions that induce high performance. The organization has a clear vision and set of core values as part of its organization climate. All the organization members share the values and are influenced by the organizational climate. It believes in two aspects namely, relational aspect and emotional aspect. Rational aspect refers to employees perception of their role, the wider organizational context in which they work and alignment of their role with business objectives. Whereas the emotional aspect implies people's perception about the organisation. It includes a sense of personal accomplishment, meaningfulness of the job and the relations the employees have with their peers and superiors.

The organization regards human resources as an important asset and believes in the development of their abilities, a good reward and appraisal system and autonomy to the employees in their work with a view to enhance the performance outcomes. All the policies and procedures evolved by the company are communicated through its effective communication network. The company also trusts its employees and treats them fairly by providing equal opportunities.

Employee Engagement Strategies

The organisation where the study is undertaken adopts the following strategies to enhance the levels of engagement.

Work Motivation

The organization pays attention to the job design and work system. When a job is properly designed it takes care of different aspects of the job namely, challenging nature, job interest, responsibility and autonomy. Such a job should also provide scope for using and developing skills and abilities. Availability of required resources to carry out the work are also necessary. It should also provide for opportunities for personal growth and advancement. All these aspects are important and necessary for job satisfaction which in turn leads to intrinsic motivation and increased engagement. The organisation also believes in sound performance management aspects. They take care about role clarity, goal setting, guidance and advice. The salient feature noticed here is the line managers make a good impact through their involvement in the jobs on a day to day basis. Their efforts take the form of educating the employees in a training or leadership development programme on the quality and importance of good work and the general job design. They are also encouraged to know the part they should play and benefits for them arising out of such imaginative practices to enhance employee engagement.

Enabling and Supporting Work Environment

Such an environment has impact on employee engagement. It influences the attitude of the people and the roles they carry out. An enabling environment will create the conditions that induce high performance and positive discretionary condition. This refers to such aspects of work processes, equipment and facilities and the working conditions in which they carryout the work. The organization also pays attention to create supportive environment in that it tries to maintain satisfactory work-life balance. If the employees develop stress as a result of job conditions, stress relief programmes are organized to release stress and recreate interest. One major consideration of the management is to provide

a clean, healthy and safe working conditions where the workers work without any risk of employment injury. It believes in providing good organizational climate which refers to the perceptions held by the organisation members about the characteristics and quality of organisational culture. Work culture is an important aspect which is the creation of intrinsic job motivation and work environment. Such organizational climate is also influenced by the work and HR practices. It believes in proper staffing in the organisation, hours of work and sound reward system. The reward system has also a bearing on job satisfaction and employee performance.

Inspirational Leadership

The employee outcomes depend upon the way the job holders are led and managed. This has an effect on the employee engagement and positive discretionary behavior. Leaders have the important task of designing the job, allocating the work among employees as well as delegating powers and allowing freedom to act. They can provide employees by their supporting role, opportunities to the employees, the experience of achievement and personal growth. It is equally important to recognize the good work done by employees. They are expected to provide coaching and guidance in the performance of the job, monitoring the progress, giving feedback and encourage them in performance outcome. The leaders should also treat the subordinates fairly and have concern for their personal problems. The employees can legitimately expect that the decisions and the policies of the company are clearly communicated to them to appreciate their role in the wider context of the organization. If the group members are matured enough and have the required skills and abilities they must be encouraged to take part in the decision making process in different forums by empowering them.

Opportunities for Personal Development

The organization pays attention to the aspect of employee personal growth and development. In this regard by providing learning experiences through continuous training and development programmes, it touches on an important principle of 'treat people right' which is beneficial to both organization and people (Lawler: 2003). Learning is not only a rewarding experience but also significantly contribute to intrinsic motivation. Satisfaction of growth needs depends on providing opportunity to a person to do the present job effectively as well as encouraging him to become what he is capable of becoming (Alderfer:1972). The organization also shows concern to provide employees with opportunities to develop their abilities, learn new skills, acquire new knowledge, develop positive attitudes and realize their potentials. It believes

that when the company plans for career paths of its employees and investing them in this way, its people also invest in them.

Opportunities to Contribute

Employee engagement is also contingent upon providing opportunities to employees to listen to their opinions. As intelligent, innovative and matured individuals they have a desire to find occasions for self expression. This encourages them to contribute their ideas and views to the senior managers and this may induce in them a feeling of making a contribution. It is found in the organization that the management suggestion system for the employees. It encourages their innovative ideas and constructive suggestions relating to the job, work environment and employment relations. Such practices nurture positive feelings among employees that they are part of the organisation and their voice is listened to. This involvement tends to have a positive impact on the employee engagement and performance outcome.

Results of the study: Analysis and Interpretation

Table-1
Significant Mean Difference between Age and Employee Engagement

Factors	Age	N	Mean	S.D	f-value
Work itself	Less than 25	26	19.85	3.38	16.22**
	25-35	40	21.98	1.78	
	35 and above	33	23.12	1.36	
Leadership	Less than 25	26	17.27	5.18	14.84**
	25-35	40	20.90	3.16	
	35 and above	33	22.55	2.98	
Personal Growth	Less than 25	26	17.35	4.78	9.46**
	25-35	40	20.58	3.48	
	35 and above	33	21.42	3.02	
Work Environment	Less than 25	26	30.12	5.67	5.24*
	25-35	40	32.48	5.12	
	35 and above	33	34.48	4.73	
Opportunities to Contribute	Less than 25	26	15.15	3.57	2.51
	25-35	40	16.33	3.24	
	35 and above	33	16.88	1.93	

*p≤.05 level, **p≤.01 level

Table 1 provides the significant mean difference between age groups and employee engagement. It was found that the age group of above 35 years employees have significantly differed with work itself ($f=16.22$, $p\leq.01$), leadership ($f=14.84$, $p\leq.01$), personal growth ($f= 9.46$, $p\leq.01$), and work environment ($f=5.24$, $p\leq.01$) factors of employee engagement than other age groups. It can be said that employees above 35 years are satisfied with work, have good freedom at work, recognition, friendly atmosphere and balance of work and personal life. It might be due to fact that employees are well experienced, most of them have self esteem, work culture, appreciation of company policies and values.

Table-2
Significant Mean Difference between Marital and Employee Engagement

Factors	Marital Status	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Work itself	Married	70	22.54	1.71	4.01**
	Unmarried	29	20.00	3.23	
Leadership	Married	70	21.63	3.20	3.75**
	Unmarried	29	17.76	5.16	
Personal Growth	Married	70	21.03	3.20	3.58**
	Unmarried	29	17.55	4.80	
Work Environment	Married	70	33.34	5.01	2.28*
	Unmarried	29	30.55	5.76	
Opportunities to Contribute	Married	70	16.60	2.65	4.01
	Unmarried	29	15.24	3.64	

* $p\leq.05$ level, ** $p\leq.01$ level

Table 2 shows the significant mean difference between marital status and employee engagement. It explains that married group employees have statistically got more significant score on work itself ($t=4.01$, $p\leq.01$), leadership ($t=3.75$, $p\leq.01$), personal growth ($t=3.58$, $p\leq.01$) and work environment ($t=2.28$, $p\leq.05$) dimension of employee engagement when compare with unmarried employees. It illustrates that married employees are fully engaged in work itself, leadership, personal growth and work environment aspects. The reason behind this seems to be married employees have more responsibilities and are loyal to the company than unmarried employees.

Table-3
Significant Mean Difference between Work Experience and Employee Engagement

Factors	Work Experience	N	Mean	SD	t-value
Work itself	Less than 3 years	52	20.65	2.75	-5.53**
	Above 3 years	47	23.06	1.45	
leadership	Less than 3 years	52	18.87	4.55	-4.47**
	Above 3 years	47	22.30	2.99	
Personal Growth	Less than 3 years	52	18.69	4.61	-3.71**
	Above 3 years	47	21.47	2.66	
Work Environment	Less than 3 years	52	30.77	5.52	-3.67**
	Above 3 years	47	34.47	4.50	
Opportunities to Contribute	Less than 3 years	52	15.48	3.58	-2.64*
	Above 3 years	47	17.00	1.99	

*p≤.05 level, **p≤.01 level

Table 3 exhibits the significant mean difference between work experience and employee engagement. It is observed that employees above 3 years of experience significantly have more score on work itself (t=5.53, p≤.01), leadership (t=4.47, p≤.01), personal growth (t=3.71, p≤.01) work environment (t=3.67, p≤.05) and opportunities to contribute (t= 2.64, p≤.05) factors of employee engagement than less than three years experience employees. It can be said that above three years experience employees have good facilities, are committed at quality work, enjoy recognition for the performance, career development, balance between work and personal life and opportunities to learn and grow.

Table 4
Relationship: Demographical variables and Employee Engagement Factors

Demographical variables	Employee Engagement factors				
	Work Itself	Leadership	Personal Growth	Work Environment	Opportunities to Contribute
Age	0.49**	0.47**	0.38**	0.31**	0.22*
Marital Status	-0.46**	-0.42**	-0.39**	-0.24*	-0.21*
Work Experience	0.48**	0.41**	0.34**	0.35**	0.25*

*p≤.05 level, **p≤.01 level

Table 4 indicates the relation of demographical variables and employee engagement factors. It was found that age group has positively and significantly differed with work itself ($r=0.49$, $p\leq.01$), leadership ($r=0.47$, $p\leq.01$) personal growth ($r=0.38$, $p\leq.01$), work environment ($r=0.31$, $p\leq.01$) and opportunities to contribute ($r=0.22$, $p\leq.05$) factors of employee engagement. It can be explained that all age group employees are fully engaged with dimensions of work engagement factor.

However, it was also shown that work experience employees have positive and significant relation with work itself ($r=0.48$, $p\leq.01$), leadership ($r=0.41$, $p\leq.01$) personal growth ($r=0.34$, $p\leq.01$), work environment ($r=0.35$, $p\leq.01$) and opportunities to contribute ($r=0.25$, $p\leq.05$) dimension of employee engagement. It seems that experienced employees have good facilities, are committed at quality work, performance recognition, career development, work - life balance and opportunities to learn and grow.

Conclusion

The study was conducted in a Multi National Company manufacturing a wide range of plastic products with high quality. The researchers set out with the objective of assessing the level of employee engagement among executives in the organization.

A comparison is made in terms of age, marital status, and work experience across different parameters of employee engagement used in the study, such as work itself, leadership, personal growth, work environment and opportunities to contribute. The values obtained in this regard indicate a high level of employee engagement. The company enjoys a positive organizational culture and its values are internalized by the organizational members. In both the aspects namely, relational aspect and emotional aspect, the members expressed a high level of satisfaction. In the former case, the employees exhibited a clear perception of their role, the organizational context, and alignment of their role with business objectives. In the latter, they have expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their personal accomplishment, meaningfulness of job, and the relations with peers and superiors at the place of work.

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