

## **OPINION**

### **Impressions**

#### ***The myth of engagement***

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What is employee engagement? Everyone appears to have a definition of his own. Skimming through them only creates more confusion. Bugged by these two words — ‘employee engagement’, almost every company has tried to do something based on its understanding. But the question is, are they hitting the bull's eye? There are still many myths surrounding employee engagement. Exploding these myths is paramount to draw the real benefits of engagement. One of them is that employee engagement is a derivative of job satisfaction.

#### **Partly engaged**

Many believe that employee engagement is an improved version of job satisfaction. But I chose to differ. I think engagement can happen even without job satisfaction. Consider a fresh hire, Mr X, in his new company ‘A’. On his first day in the new organisation, he expected the usual routine introduction, loads of paper forms to be filled, and so on. Instead, after a brief video tour of the organisation, all fresh hires had a ‘coffee with CEO’ of the company, when they had a chance to share new ideas that would improve the company. Later, he was assigned a buddy (a senior employee) to help him out with everything, right from making him with the office to finding a house, gas connection etc. Mr X was already feeling that this was the place he always wanted to be in and he would give his best to the organisation.

Now, would you say that Mr X has job satisfaction when he has not been assigned any work? However, Mr X already appears partly engaged.

Similarly, disengagement can happen even when the employee is satisfied and involved in his job. Consider Mr Y in another organisation ‘B’. He has been working in this organisation for the last five years and his track-record has been very good. Mr Y is relatively satisfied with his job.

#### **Shift in strategy**

Organisation ‘B’ has recently been acquired by an industry major and has, of late, seen a sudden shift in strategy. The company now seems to be focusing more on development projects, rather than on maintenance and support projects. He, like many working on such projects, has been perplexed at the sudden change in the organisation's strategy and has been uncertain about its

future. In the absence of communication from the company, there was a lot of grapevine in the informal circuit.

Mr Y suddenly gets an offer from a competitor through a head-hunter and even though he was very satisfied with his job, he decided to take up the offer as it provided him ample chances to grow and learn.

Here, in this case, Mr Y leaves the organisation despite being satisfied with his job.

Long and short of the story is that there is a fundamental difference in the approach of job satisfaction and employee engagement. While job satisfaction approach calls for simplification of the job, monetary rewards, title inflations and perks to make the employee happy and satisfied, engagement principles involve making the job interesting and challenging, embraces unhindered communication, transparency, facilitating performance through various interventions and providing opportunities to employees to contribute, so that their performance can be enhanced.

In the process, the employee derives happiness and a self-drive.

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