

St. John Fisher University

Fisher Digital Publications

Education Masters

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

2009

Employee Engagement: A Brief Explanation

Louise J. Rombaut

St. John Fisher University

Follow this and additional works at: https://fisherpub.sjf.edu/education_ETD_masters



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rombaut, Louise J., "Employee Engagement: A Brief Explanation" (2009). *Education Masters*. Paper 97.

Please note that the Recommended Citation provides general citation information and may not be appropriate for your discipline. To receive help in creating a citation based on your discipline, please visit <http://libguides.sjfc.edu/citations>.

This document is posted at https://fisherpub.sjf.edu/education_ETD_masters/97 and is brought to you for free and open access by Fisher Digital Publications at . For more information, please contact fisherpub@sjf.edu.

Employee Engagement: A Brief Explanation

Abstract

Due to the fact that globalization is here to stay, organizations need to face and make the changes necessary as to how they treat their employees to be competitive on the world-wide market. Failure to address this simple fact will result in the loss of valuable employees. Every effort must be made to attract and retain individuals who are passionate about their work. This paper explores the steps necessary to hire and engage dedicated professionals in a global market.

Document Type

Thesis

Degree Name

MS in Human Resource Development

Department

Education

First Supervisor

Seth R. Silver

Second Supervisor

Timothy Franz

Third Supervisor

Christopher Comparetta

Subject Categories

Education

**Employee Engagement:
A Brief Explanation**

Louise J. Rombaut

A Literature Review
Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
Of Human Resources Development
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Science
At St. John Fisher College
2009

Master Signature Page

We approve the paper of Louise J. Rombaut.

Dr. Seth R. Silver
Advisor
Assistant Professor of Human Resources Development
St. John Fisher College

Dr. Timothy Franz
Associate Professor of Psychology
St. John Fisher College

Christopher Comparetta, M.S.
Adjunct Faculty, Human Resources Development
St. John Fisher College

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the individuals who supported the completion of this project. To my advisor, Seth Silver, for his patience, professionalism and clarity of instruction. The guidance given, beginning with seeing this endeavor as a vision, and then formulating it into a concrete document of great thought, was superb.

To my cohort members, who have encouraged and inspired me to become a better learner, thinker and leader. I have learned many things from each of you, and value the time we have spent together working as students.

To the GHRD faculty, who have motivated me to “keep on keeping on”, especially when the going was tough. I truly appreciate all the dedication of my professors as educators, to my endeavor.

To my friends and family, who stood by my side. You showed me understanding and loyalty and consistently reiterated the confidence you had in me to accomplish such a task.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	p. 7
Overview of the problem	p. 7
Problem Statement	p. 8
Research Questions	p. 8
Chapter 2	p.9
Overview of Employee Engagement	p. 9
Psychological Availability	p. 12
Intrinsic Motivation	p. 12
Flow	p. 17
Self-efficacy	p. 18
Organizational Citizenship Behavior	p. 19
The Importance of Creativity	p. 21
Empowerment	p. 22
Leadership	p. 24
Emotional Intelligence and Listening	p. 26
Self - Leadership	p.28
Contemporary Definitions/Understanding of Engagement	p.30

Chapter 3	p. 34
Culture of Personal Responsibility	p. 35
Coaching for High Performance	p. 35
Pay for Performance	p. 36
Ethics	p. 36
Communication	p. 37
Relationship/Trust with Immediate Manager	p. 37
Ethical Behavior	p. 40
Coaching	p. 42
Pay for Performance	p. 43
Themes of Current Research	p. 45
Limitations of Engagement Literature	p. 48
Opportunities for Future Research	p. 49
Suggestions for Future Study on Engagement	p. 49
Implications for Human Resources Development Practice	p. 50
Conclusion	p. 53
References	p. 54

ABSTRACT

Due to the fact that globalization is here to stay, organizations need to face and make the changes necessary as to how they treat their employees to be competitive on the world-wide market. Failure to address this simple fact will result in the loss of valuable employees. Every effort must be made to attract and retain individuals who are passionate about their work. This paper explores the steps necessary to hire and engage dedicated professionals in a global market.

Overview of the Problem

Employee retention expert Leigh Branham (2001) writes in her book “The Seven Hidden Reasons Why Employees Leave” that the main reason for employee turnover is “poor management.” Elaborating on this point, she describes some of the mistakes of poor management:

- * The job or workplace is not as expected.
- * Employers focus more on dealing with employee weaknesses than on developing their strengths.
- * Too little coaching and not enough feedback.
- * Too few growth and advancement opportunities.
- * Feeling devalued and unrecognized.

Bandura (2000), goes on to note the attraction and retention of talent is one of the toughest human resource challenges facing companies in the 21st century.

Globalization has changed the way everyone is doing business today. In order to compete, organizations must “engage” their workforce. Employee engagement has become more important than ever. “Globalization has opened up entirely new business markets, increased competition, and widened sources of labor. These global developments are adding to the importance of finding and keeping skilled, productive workers. Companies that address their local workforce challenges will be better positioned to win on the global playing field” (Gebauer, 2006, p. 29).

Problem Statement

Senior management in many companies has not grasped the importance of updated, progressive 21st century management practices to engage employees, enabling them to be fully committed and productive. Hence, there is a need for a literature review that summarizes the research on employee engagement, how it is defined and the best practices being used.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this literature review is to explore how employee engagement may be fostered by certain modern management practices. It outlines what practical steps might be taken to accomplish this endeavor. It points out what employees are searching for in a workplace environment and what an organization must do to remain globally competitive.

Research Questions

- 1) What is the concept of workplace engagement?
- 2) What does the research tell us about workplace engagement?
- 3) How can managers in today's organizations apply this concept to become more effective?

Overview of Employee Engagement

The purpose of this chapter is to address directly the three research questions. Question 1, “what is the concept of workplace engagement?” will be approached first by reviewing antecedent and contributing concepts to workplace engagement. Next, the concept itself will be defined and reviewed.

Question 2, “what does the research tell us about workplace engagement?” will be approached by reviewing briefly research of the last ten years that specifically involved workplace engagement with the aim of summarizing what is currently known about the impact of workplace engagement on organizations. Finally, Question 3, “how can managers in today’s organizations apply this concept to become more effective?” will be approached by providing practical tools and ideas for managers and HRD practitioners to use with the aim of increasing employees’ levels of engagement.

Question 1: *What is the concept of workplace engagement?* Many factors make up employee engagement. However, it is well known that engaged employees show up every day and use their talents, strengths and skills to the best of their ability. They exhibit consistent levels of high performance and are emotionally committed to what they do (Pfeffer, 2003, p. 125). One contemporary, if somewhat lengthy, definition of employee engagement that seems to capture the spirit of the concept is: “Fully engaged employees are more committed; they are less likely to leave because they like what they are doing; they like where they are and they like the people they work with;

they tell others about the organization and are more likely to refer good candidates; they

have a sense of pride and ownership in the organization; they are more productive and contribute more to the organization's success" (Accord Management Systems, 2004).

Engaged employees drive innovation and move the organization forward. Actively disengaged employees just are not happy at work and often, they are busy demonstrating their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish (Gebauer, 2006, p.29).

"In addressing psychological engagement and organizational behaviors, the two major dimensions are emotional and cognitive engagement" (Pfeffer, 2003, p. 123). To be emotionally engaged is to form meaningful connections to others and to experience empathy and concern for others' feelings.

In contrast, being cognitively engaged refers to those who are aware of their mission and role in their work environment. "Employees may be engaged on one dimension and not the other. The more engaged an employee is on each dimension, the higher his or her overall personal engagement" (Pfeffer, 2003, p.126).

"Personally engaging behaviors simultaneously convey and bring alive the self and the obligatory role. People become physically involved in tasks, whether alone or with others, cognitively vigilant, and empathically connected to others in the service of the work they are doing, in the ways they think and feel, in the ways they express their creativity, their beliefs and values, and their personal connection to others." (Miner, 2005).

Other factors affect employee engagement such as interpersonal, group and inter-group relations. These factors either enhance or undermine people's motivation and

sense of meaning at work (Bion, 1968).

Employee engagement may be boosted by managers who connect employees to the organization. One of the most critical aspects of management is to assist staff in finding solutions to job challenges. It involves forming processes. Finally, it encompasses a set of tools and skills needed by management to function correctly. “High engagement occurs when employees are empowered to create understanding, dialogue, feedback, and accountability” (Miles, 2001, p. 316).

While the concept of “employee engagement” is relatively new to business literature, many of the ideas, characteristics and attributes related to “engagement” date back to earlier contributing constructs.

Hence, for purposes of this literature review, ten antecedent concepts are briefly presented. Each is considered to be an idea related to, or contributing to, the modern understanding of “workplace engagement.” These ten constructs are:

1. Psychological availability
2. Intrinsic Motivation
3. Flow
4. Self-efficacy
5. Organizational Citizenship Behavior
6. Creativity
7. Empowerment
8. Leadership
9. Emotional intelligence
10. Self leadership

1. Psychological Availability

One critical antecedent concept to workplace engagement is “psychological availability” (Kahn, 1990). Four types of distractions influence psychological availability: depletion of physical energy, depletion of emotional energy, individual insecurity, and outside lives.

Three core concepts of psychological conditions are at work in the organizational milieu: meaningfulness, safety and availability. A psychologist, (Freud, 1922), and a group theorist (Bion, 1968) have explored the idea that people are inherently ambivalent about being members of their groups and systems. They seek to protect themselves from both isolation and engulfment by alternately pulling away from and moving toward their memberships. These pulls and pushes are people’s calibrations of self in-role, enabling them to cope with both internal ambivalences and external conditions. The terms to describe these calibrations of self in-role are personal engagement and disengagement. These terms refer to behaviors by which people bring in or leave out their personal selves during work role performances. Hence, psychological availability may be viewed as an early contributing concept to workplace engagement.

2. Intrinsic Motivation (1975)

Another primary antecedent concept to workplace engagement is motivation. Motivation examines the basic psychological inquiry which all behaviorists wonder:

Why do people do what they do?

Central to this inquiry are three questions:

What are individuals in the organization currently doing and why?

What does management wish for them to be doing differently and why? How is

management going to get them from their current behaviors to the desired behaviors?

Engaged employees are the small percentage of individuals who are highly committed and motivated in their work.

Rotter (1975) views internal and external locus of control as a form of motivation. Internal locus of control refers to the belief that individuals can control aspects of their lives and have the power of choice in all matters that affect them. By contrast, external locus of control refers to a belief system in which individuals view factors outside of themselves as responsible for the conditions of their lives and things that happen to them. Productively engaged employees are well aware that the choices they make and their own behavior largely determines their own career success. Having an internal locus of control would seem to be related to workplace engagement. “The concept of internal vs. external control of reinforcement developed out of social learning theory. There are four classes of variables in social learning theory: behaviors, expectancies, reinforcements, and psychological solutions”. (Rotter, 1975, p. 56-57).

Herzberg (1968) developed a model of workplace motivation comprised of hygiene factors and satisfiers. In brief, hygiene factors refer to those external factors that are related to the work environment. Some examples would include the physical office space, equipment, even money and the quality of peer relations. By contrast, satisfiers are internal motivators such as learning, career growth, responsibility, and recognition.

While hygiene factors largely account for why people might be dissatisfied in the workplace, it is the satisfiers which actually enable motivation and satisfaction. It would

seem that satisfiers then, more than hygiene factors, would be a contributing factor to employee engagement.

Smerek and Peterson (2007, p. 223) delineate the specific concepts and values that contribute to intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. “The intrinsic motivators which contribute to job satisfaction are:

1. Recognition: Examples of this would be an announcement at the annual meeting, a company wide e-mail, a framed certificate, a gift card, or a day off with pay.
2. Work itself: The individual delights in and has a passion for what they do.
3. Opportunity for advancement: There is a ladder available for the individual to climb. One’s position is not a dead end.
4. Professional growth opportunities: Trainings are provided within and outside of the company to allow the individual a growth experience.
5. Responsibility: Knowing one has a commitment to meet and meeting it gives the individual self-esteem.
6. Good feelings about the organization itself: This includes pride in the organization and identification with its purpose.
7. Clarity of mission: This is a clear understanding of organizational goals and how one’s efforts contribute to them.

The extrinsic motivators which contribute to job satisfaction are:

1. Effective senior management: Those in charge are able to lead the

organization to greater performance.

2. Effective supervisor: Managers who are effective at accomplishing goals and working with people.
3. Good relationships with co-workers: This includes good communications and working relations with colleagues.
4. Satisfaction with salary
5. Satisfaction with benefits
6. Presence of core values: This refers to key organizational principles which communicated to all employees.

More recently, an interesting system which gives some insight into human motivation, was devised by organizational development author Ken Hultman (2002). It is known as Motivational System Mapping.

Motivational System Mapping (2002) uses the five variables which are most often found in motivational literature and examines their synergistic interrelationships as follows:

- a. Needs: These are urges or desires originating within us. These needs may be physical, personal, social or spiritual.
- b. Thinking: This involves using one's mind, taking in information and interpreting it. The key factors in the thinking process are facts and beliefs.

Facts are objective realities which may be proven with empirical evidence.

Beliefs involve subjective assumption, conclusion or prediction.

- c. Feelings: Our emotions.
- d. Deciding: This entails using one's will, making up one's mind, choosing. Choices are based on values, which are beliefs about what is important in life. Values serve as a criteria for making decisions and setting priorities (Hultman, 2005).
- e. Doing: Actions or behaviors based on needs, facts, beliefs, feelings, and values.

Motivational System Mapping (2002) allows already engaged individuals to grow even more. By asking questions that foster self-discovery, assist individuals to identify, organize and use information relevant to their issues and concerns, it helps establish clarity about their vision.

Key issues which need to be addressed must be taken into consideration and the organization must have plans and goals to implement the collected data” (Wiley, 2008, p. 8).

Wiley (2008) proposes a seven step action planning model intended to help organizations become more effective:

1. Understand the results. Review the results to understand the overall picture, including strengths and opportunities.
2. Establish priorities. Select two to three key areas of focus for follow up. Addressing too many issues dilutes planning and results.
3. Communicate results and priorities. Prepare and communicate an overview of the results to employees.

4. Clarify priorities. Find out not just what employees think, but why they feel the way they do. Use face to face meetings to understand employee motivations and points of view. This will provide insight as to how the organization should respond.
5. Generate recommendations. Brainstorm ideas to address priorities and generate recommended action items.
6. Develop and implement action plans. These come from recommendations which are converted into formal action plans. They must include specific objectives and clear accountability.
7. Monitor progress. Hold periodic interviews to ensure objectives are achieved (p. 9).

In sum, intrinsic motivation is necessary for employee engagement because if one is not motivated internally and passionate about what one does, not much is likely to be accomplished. Intrinsic motivation drives the desire to perform well. Both ingredients, passion and desire, are a cornerstone of employee engagement.

3. *Flow (1975)*

Originally developed to describe peak athletic performance, flow is defined as “the mental state of operation in which the person is fully immersed in what he or she is doing by a feeling of energized focus, full involvement, and success in the process of the activity” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).

Certain phenomena accompany the experience of flow and need not occur all at the same time for flow to take place. They are as follows:

1. Clear goals (expectations and rules are discernible and goals are attainable). They definitely align with one's skill set and abilities.
2. Concentrating and focusing. A high degree of concentration on a limited field of attention. A person engaged in the activity will have the opportunity to focus and to delve deeply into it.
3. A loss of the feeling of self-consciousness, the merging of action and awareness.
4. A distorted sense of time, one's subjective experience of time is altered.
5. Direct and immediate feedback (successes and failures in the course of activity are apparent, so that behavior may be adjusted as needed).
6. Balance between ability level and challenge (the activity is neither too easy nor too difficult).
7. A sense of personal control over the situation or activity.
8. The activity is intrinsically rewarding, so there is an effortlessness of action.

Flow can be viewed as an outgrowth, or perhaps a by-product of, engagement. Employees who are highly engaged have a sense of joy and complete focus in what they are doing that would seem to have similarities to the concept of flow.

4. Self-efficacy (1977)

Self-efficacy is defined as “an individual's beliefs about his or her abilities to mobilize cognitive resources and to take specific courses of action in order to successfully

execute a task within a given context” (Bandura, 1977, p. 212). Many interesting discoveries involving this concept have been explored. It has been suggested from a management development perspective, unlike personality traits which are largely fixed, that self-efficacy is state-like and dynamic. It can change over time with new information, experience and learning.

Considerable research by Bandura (1977) and others have demonstrated that self-efficacy can be increased in four major ways:

1. Enactive mastery: This entails successful direct experiences in a training context or on the job.
2. Vicarious learning: Modeling in a training context or on-the-job, through mentoring/shadowing programs.
3. Simple verbal persuasion and social support for lower level jobs and strategy development for higher level jobs.
4. The ability of the manager to build an engaged, work/team group. This creates psychological arousal for the manager, who then becomes enthusiastic about his or her staff.

“Self-efficacy is an important trait to develop in an organization’s employees as it influences the employee in what challenges to undertake, how much effort to expend in the endeavor, and how long to persevere in the face of difficulties” (Bandura, 1977, p. 214).

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) can be seen as related to employee engagement because engaged employees necessarily must be confident in their skills and capacity to perform their role effectively. Indeed, how could an engaged employee not have high job related

self-efficacy?

5. *Organizational Citizenship Behavior (1980)*

“Helping behavior has been defined as “voluntarily helping others with, or preventing the occurrence of work-related problems” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bacharach, 2000, p. 549).

Research is extensive on this topic. There is a four dimensional model of organizational citizenship behavior which lists the following personality characteristics of those most likely to engage in this type of behavior. “Interpersonal helping involves helping co-workers in their jobs when such help is needed. Individual initiative consists of communicating information to others in the workplace to improve individual and group performance.

“Seven other types of behaviors have been examined which contribute to organizational citizenship behavior. These are helping behaviors, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, organizational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue, and self-development” (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine & Bacharach, 2000, p. 520).

Sportsmanship involves not complaining over small matters. Organizational loyalty is also known as organizational commitment, and is addressed later in this document. Organizational compliance means being cooperative with management’s changes in plans.

Civic virtue reaches out to society as a whole, doing pro-bono work for the common good. Self-development means taking personal responsibility for one’s professional and personal growth.

“Organizational citizenship behaviors have been shown to increase both the quantity and quality of work group performance, efficiency, customer satisfaction, profitability, and revenue per full-time employee. It has been known to decrease customer complaints and employee turnover” (Whiting, Podsakoff & Pierce, 2008, p. 125).

Organizational citizenship would seem to be highly related to employee engagement, either as a by-product or as a parallel phenomenon. By its very definition of doing work ‘on and beyond’, employees with high levels of organizational citizenship would naturally be committed to their organization, their colleagues and the work itself.

6. The Importance of Creativity

Creativity is defined as “the individual’s capacity to meld existing ideas together into new combinations” (Amabile, 1998, p. 79). In today’s global economy, creativity and innovation in the workplace are more important than ever. Creativity soars when upper management allows individuals the freedom to choose their own goals, and not decide for them which goals to achieve. This factor alone can enable organizations to thrive. In addition to an idea being creative, it must also meet the criteria of being appropriate. Creative thinking often abounds in intrinsically motivated individuals. It refers to how individuals approach problems and solutions.

Amabile (1998) views how managerial practices may affect creativity. These practices fall into six different categories: challenge, freedom, resources, work group features, supervisor encouragement, and organizational support. Unfortunately, organizations routinely kill creativity, and hence employee engagement, by imposing fake

or impossibly tight deadlines. The former create distrust, and the latter burnout. Another way supervisors undermine creativity is by continuously changing goals and interfering with processes. In addition, lack of sufficient recognition and rewards for creativity, hard work and results can spawn negative feelings, and resentment. Energy and passion for the job is seldom coupled with resentment. Passive-aggressive behavior in the form of subtle sabotage may result. It definitely fails to lead to the goal of employee engagement.

Creativity would also seem to be highly related to employee engagement, as engaged employees tend to feel a high degree of freedom within their role, and an expanded view of their boundaries in how they carry out their work. In other words, engagement suggests a sense of freedom within the role to be creative and take appropriate risks.

7. Empowerment (1990)

“Empowerment is defined as entrusting the shift of decision-making responsibility downward within an organization” (Miscikowski & Stein, 2006, p.43).

The following constructs define psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1999):

1. **Meaning:** The fit between the requirements of one’s role and one’s beliefs, values and behaviors.
2. **Self-Determination:** Control over the initiation and continuation of work behavior and processes.
3. **Impact:** The degree to which a person can influence strategic, administrative or operating outcomes in his or her organization.
4. **Competence:** Confidence in carrying out one’s tasks. (p. 515).

Several factors contribute to an empowerment environment including:

1. Transfer of managerial power and authority to the rank and file
2. Facilitation of operator autonomy and control of their work areas
3. Creation of a climate of psychological safety
4. Access to key information
5. Other tools and methods designed to support the decision-making process

(Miscikowski & Stein, 2006, p.43)

Inspiring subordinates, driving innovation and using influence to convince their superiors that change is necessary to empower their employees are hallmarks of a supervisor who knows how to promote empowerment.

“Empowered individuals do not see their work situation as “given” but rather something able to be shaped by their actions” (Spreitzer, 1999, p. 520).

“Employees these days have to know more than ever to be competent in their jobs because business processes, systems, and product details change so quickly. The information employees need to do their jobs changes so rapidly that training can actually become counter-productive, if the material goes out of date quickly” (Terry, 2007, p. 369).

Empowerment would seem to be directly associated with employee engagement because it fosters in employees a true sense of importance and sends the message that their contribution makes a difference to the organization. The opposite of empowerment is oppression and control, which most human beings detest.

8. *Leadership (1991)*

A leader must do five things to create a highly engaged workforce. (Endersheim-Haas, 2007, p. 100) They are:

1. **Align efforts with strategy:** This refers to ensuring key actions support organizational goals.
2. **Empower:** This refers to allowing employees autonomy in decision making and having control over most aspects of their positions.
3. **Promote and encourage teamwork and collaboration:** This refers to team building, managing conflict, and ensuring employees can work as a cohesive unit.
4. **Assist people to grow and develop:** This refers to coaching and helping staff in their professional development.
5. **Provide support and recognition where appropriate.** This refers to routine verbal praise and encouragement as a means to ensure morale and high performance.

It has been argued that the most important factor for employee engagement is senior management's interest in the employee's well-being. (Endersheim-Haas, p. 101) The second most important factor is that the chief executive officer recognizes the necessity of clear cut communications with their employees.

Regular updates of objectives and plans are disseminated regularly via various internal communication channels such as e-mail, staff newsletters and the like.

Savvy companies also realize the importance of informal platform opportunities for engagement such as those occurring during lunch, at social functions, or after work get-togethers. These foster trust-based relationships.

“Research (Hackman & Oldham, 1980) has demonstrated that job involvement has been related to job characteristics such as task autonomy, task significance, task identity, skill variety, and feedback. Supervisory behaviors such as leader consideration, participative decision-making and the amount of communication predispose individuals to become more or less involved in their jobs” (Chughtai, 2008, p. 170-171).

Morrison & Burke (2007) define employee commitment as having three parts: psychological attachment, emotional bonding and long-term focus, which are not universally present in organizations. There are five general conditions for action that employers can take to support the creation of commitment and meaning. These are: “fit and belonging”, “status and identity”, “trust and reciprocity”, “emotional reward and economic interdependence (p. 100-101).

These authors go on to say that “management must realize the impetus for continued productivity and high morale must come from a sense of meaning and purpose in the work itself. Leaders must examine their sources of intrinsic motivation, provide a culture that encourages this level of exploration for all employees, and develop methods that assess and sustain this approach” (p.112).

To truly lead in a competitive global environment, those in charge must have vision. “Vision is defined as an ideal and unique image of the future” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 15).

Kouzes and Posner define five key roles for effective leaders:

1. Challenging the Process. This refers to leaders’ ability to confront and change the status quo and to take appropriate risks.
2. Inspiring a Shared Vision. This refers to envisioning the future, and enlisting others help design a common purpose.
3. Enabling Others to Act. This refers to promoting cooperative goals, mutual trust, and empowering others.
4. Modeling the Way. This refers to having integrity, ‘walking the talk’ and building commitment to action.
5. Encouraging the Heart. This refers to appropriate use of reward, recognition, high expectations and celebrating success (Kouzes & Posner, 1995).

Leadership would seem to be a key enabler of employee engagement because without effective leadership, a supportive and engaging work environment is not possible, and employees will simply not stay. Life is increasingly complex today and the stress of working under “bad” management only drives individuals to the front door. The most difficult part of business management is that one is judged by the results you get through others, not the work that one performs oneself.

9. *Emotional Intelligence*

Emotional intelligence is “a type of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one’s own and others emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use the information to guide one’s thinking and actions” (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002).

Emotional intelligence includes these four competencies (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002):

- a. Self-awareness. This involves being cognizant of one’s own needs, values, emotions, and their impact on one’s decisions and behavior.
- b. Self-management. This consists of keeping emotional reactions in check and being able to behave appropriately when experiencing emotions which could result in destructive behavior.
- c. Social awareness. This involves being in tune with other’s feelings and needs. It is known as empathy. Are you aware of your staff members’ beliefs, values and needs?
- d. Relationship management. This is all about the ability to build relationships on mutual trust and respect. According to Goleman, (2002) the core concepts of emotional intelligence are as follows:
 1. Self-awareness - This is the ability to recognize and understand your moods, emotions, and drives, as well as their effect on others. It is exemplified by possessing self-confidence, realistic self-assessment, and a self-deprecating sense of humor.
 2. Self-regulation - This is the ability to control or redirect disruptive impulses and moods; the propensity to think before acting. It is demonstrated by

trustworthiness and integrity, comfort with ambiguity, and an openness to change.

3. Motivation - A passion to work for reasons that go beyond money or status, a propensity to pursue goals with energy and persistence. It is illustrated by a strong drive to achieve, optimism even in the face of failure and organizational commitment.
4. Empathy - The ability to understand the emotional makeup of other people, skill in treating people according to their emotional reactions. It is embodied in the business world as possessing an expertise in building and retaining talent, cross-cultural sensitivity, and in service to clients and customers.
5. Social skill - Proficiency in managing relationships and building networks, the basic ability to find common ground and build rapport. It is represented as effectiveness in leading change, persuasiveness, and expertise in building and leading teams.

Emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) would seem to be a contributing factor to employee engagement because of its importance to teamwork, collaboration and healthy work relationships. Engaged employees appear to work well with others; typically are strong team players; and have the ability to manage multiple work associations effectively (Ayers, 2006).

10. Self-leadership (1992)

Self leadership (Manz, 1992b) involves the influence people exert over themselves to achieve self-motivation and self-direction needed to behave in desirable ways. Three distinct but complementary categories of self-leadership influence subsequent outcomes:

behavior focused strategies, natural reward strategies, and constructive thought pattern strategies.” (Manz, 1992b).

Behavior focused strategies are tied to precise behaviors. These behaviors focus on self-observation, self-assessment, self discipline, self-correcting feedback, and self-reward. Natural reward strategies pertain to positive perceptions and experiences with tasks to be accomplished. These naturally include a commitment to, a belief in, and enjoyment of the work for its own value. Individuals may use these natural reward strategies by modifying perceptions or behaviors associated with task performance.

This in turn increases perceived competence, self-control and the accomplishment of task responsibilities.

Constructive thought pattern strategies focus on establishing and altering thought patterns in desirable ways. Four particular strategies may be used to change thinking patterns:

- a) Self analysis and improvement of belief systems
- b) Mental imagery of positive performance
- c) Positive self-talk to facilitate performance
- d) Using positive scripts in place of ineffective ones

(Prussia, Anderson, Manz, 1998, p. 529)

Self-leadership would seem to be associated with employee engagement because it bolsters self-esteem, efficacy, and supports the personal autonomy needed for engagement to occur. When an individual has strategies to lead him/herself, and is supported by upper management to do so, self-leadership, personal empowerment, and workplace engagement become far more likely (Manz & Sims, 1989).

Contemporary Definitions/Understanding of Engagement

The conventional definition of employee engagement is simply termed “above and beyond” behavior.

Towers and Perrin (2005) define it as: “The measure of people’s willingness and ability to give discretionary effort at work”.

Sibson Consulting’s “ROW Study” (2006): “Knowing what to do at work and wanting to do the work”. This involves “understanding the organization’s vision/goals; knowing how employees contribute to this; clear understanding of expectations”. It also allows for gaining satisfaction from work and job content; inspired by the organization to perform the work”.

The Conference Board of NY Research Review (2006): “A heightened emotional connection that an employee feels for his/her organization, that influences him/her to exert greater discretionary effort to his/her work”.

The Towers and Perrin Global Workforce Study (Crowley & Tatchell, 2007) debunks several myths surrounding the global workforce. The first myth it destroys is the notion that some individuals are self-motivated and others are not. “The study clearly shows that people’s engagement with their work is directly what they see and experience within their company. So, you could place an individual who has always been highly engaged into their career into a new, but dysfunctional work environment. Very often he or she is likely to end up deeply frustrated and without potential contribution. Conversely, a previously disengaged employee may become fully engaged under different

circumstances” (Crowley & Tatchell, 2007, p. 6).

Question Two: *What does the research tell us about employee engagement?*

Who is engaged? Towers & Perrin Global Workforce Study (2005) of 86,000 people in sixteen countries found that worldwide 14% of workers are engaged. The world-wide rate of employees reporting that they are neither engaged nor disengaged is 62% and in the United States it is 63%. The rate of actively disengaged workers is 24% worldwide and in the United States the figure is 16%.

What is the impact of employee engagement? Towers & Perrin (2005), discovered the following associations between perceptions of engagement and other key employee beliefs:

- * 84% of highly engaged employees believe they can positively affect the quality of their organization’s service/product (versus 31% of the disengaged).
- * 72% of highly engaged employees believe they can positively affect customer service.
- * 68% of highly engaged employees believe they can positively impact costs in their job or unit (versus 19% of disengaged).
- * 60% of highly engaged employees plan to stay with their current employer (versus 25% of disengaged).

Clearly, these percentages suggest that engaged employees believe they have more control over their work, can influence key organizational outcomes, and have a higher level of commitment to their employer.

The top ten drivers of engagement according to the Towers & Perrins Study (2005) are:

1. Opportunities to learn and develop new skills.

2. Improvement of my skills and capabilities over the last year.
3. Reputation of organization as a good employer.
4. Input into decision-making.
5. Focus on customer satisfaction.
6. Pay determination fair and consistent.
7. Collaboration with co-workers.
8. Appropriate amount of decision-making authority.
9. Senior management acting to ensure the company's long-term success.
10. Senior management's interest in employees' well-being.

The above list of enablers suggests that engagement is not only a function of the employee's attitude, but is also highly dependent on management to create the right conditions and opportunities for the employee. In effect, it is a partnership between an energized and committed employee with a supportive, trusting and fair organization.

The top global obstacles to engagement (Towers & Perrin, 2005) are:

1. Failing to adequately differentiate performance and provide rewards that are perceived as fair, consistent, and genuinely commensurate with the level of contribution that employees provide.
2. Failing to give first line managers the training they need to serve as coaches and mentors for their employees and help those employees develop skills and advance in their careers.
3. Failing to build appropriate connections between senior management and the workforce.

The common link in the above three obstacles would seem to be a lack of communication and attention to the required collaboration between the employee and management. In other words, a poor relationship between employees and management may be the cause of low levels of engagement.

How is engagement measured? The Gallup Organization developed the following items to measure workplace engagement. These questions have been used extensively in research by Gallup (e.g. Buckingham & Coffman, 1999) and by many well known organizations, such as Best Buy, American Red Cross and Toshiba, to measure employee levels of engagement:

1. I know what is expected of me.
2. I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right.
3. At work, I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day.
4. In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work.
5. My supervisor or someone at work seems to care about me as a person.
6. There is someone at work who encourages my development.
7. At work, my opinions seem to count.
8. The mission/purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.
9. My fellow employees are committed to doing quality work.
10. I have a best friend at work.
11. In the past six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
12. In the past year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.

Towers & Perrin (2005), in their research, developed a similar set of items to measure engagement:

1. I really care about the future of my organization.
2. I am proud to tell others I work for my organization.
3. My job provides me with a sense of personal accountability.
4. I would recommend my organization to a friend as a good place to work.
5. My organization inspires me to do my best work.
6. I understand how my unit/department contributes to the success of my organization.
7. I understand how my role in my organization is related to my organization's overall goals, objectives and direction.
8. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond what is normally expected to help my organization succeed.
9. I am personally motivated to help my organization be successful.

Chapter 3

One summary of the research presented in this literature review (Wiley, 2003) might be that the one simple rule management needs to follow is to treat others the way they would like to be treated. By providing a physically safe, clean and pleasant work environment, and by further exhibiting an interested and caring attitude about their employees, this alone could motivate them to want to come to work every day. It is also necessary on the part of management to create a work environment that is psychologically safe. This means disrespect, bullying, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate negative behaviors are not tolerated and forbidden.

This review has touched on numerous concepts (e.g. intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, emotional intelligence) and strategies (e.g. empowerment, self-leadership) which support the understanding of employee engagement. This review has also provided a brief summary of some of the recent research (e.g. Towers & Perrin, 2005) on the subject, shedding light on the benefits, enablers and obstacles to workplace engagement.

The third question in this study, “how can managers in today’s organizations apply this concept to be more effective?” will now be addressed.

Based on the research reviewed, there appear to be six important strategies that managers can employ in order to foster the development of employee engagement. Each in turn will be reviewed:

1. Culture of personal responsibility

It is both necessary and important for management to stress to the employee that they, and they alone, are responsible for their career path. To grow in one’s career, it is necessary to keep abreast of all new developments in their

field. This would necessitate reading periodicals and relevant academic journals to broaden the individual's awareness of fresh ideas being introduced or already used in their specific profession. At least three intense trainings, covering exact areas, should be a goal in each individual's career plan and they should follow through by attending them every year without fail.

2. Coaching for high performance

The organization itself should provide ongoing training for all employees in all areas. These need to be offered on a consistent basis, while giving the employees a choice. A manager should have a monthly meeting with each employee, rewarding strengths and good performance, while gently giving recommendations to the employee to overcome their weak points. This ensures maintaining a more positive morale, rather than lambasting an employee during a yearly review. By setting goals and providing incentives to achieve them, management will see the results in employee productivity.

If customer service is necessary for the success of the organization, focusing upon it by training the employee in all facets of this great asset, will be a prime driver of employee engagement. Allowing input into decision-making gives the employee a sense that their presence, thoughts and ideas are just as important and contributory to the growth of the organization as is that of middle and senior management's.

3. Pay for performance

By setting fair and equitable pay scales in alignment with competitive organization's compensation, it will be easier to not only attract 'cream of the crop' employees, but it also assists in retaining employees. The retention of employees is paramount to a success of a company. Furthermore, incentives and bonuses are another way to give an individual a purpose for their daily efforts.

4. Ethics

This falls on the shoulders of senior management that they truly use integrity in all areas of the business. Caring about the employees' well-being will be demonstrated by the authenticity of their actions and not just be manipulative statements of what the employee wants to hear. Being sincerely concerned about the long-term success of the corporation, and not just how one may profit from it, is necessary to foster a sense of job security for the rank and file. By doing the above things, this will create a reputation of being a good employer and a great company for which to work.

5. Communication

Regular and clear communications via semi-annual or quarterly meetings, weekly e-mails, and a company newsletter allow information to flow freely. By allowing individuals to work in partnerships, and by building team spirit, this cultivates an environment of good communication.

6. Relationship/Trust with Immediate Manager

When a manager goes out of his or her way to treat each employee as an individual, and takes time to understand and know them as people, this will create a relationship with the employee. This encourages commitment.

Knowledge Workers' Need for Engagement

One hundred years ago, management thought that workers were uneducated peasants from the farm and brought to the factory world and it was believed that they were intrinsically lazy and like children. Therefore, these leaders needed appropriate controls to manage their behavior. Today's knowledge worker is well educated and relatively sophisticated, and expect to be "engaged" in the work they do. Organizations who fail to realize this and refuse to make necessary adjustments in management style and behavior are doomed to fail, as workers will not stay. They will move to other organizations who have more to offer.

Peter F. Drucker gives his take on the attitude of workers in professional organizations today. He states, "People are much more than employees. They embody the knowledge, the capabilities and the relationships that your company takes to the market. People are the most important investment a company makes" (Edersheim-Haas, 2007, p. 208). He goes onto say, "Enabling people to live up to their potential, achieve their maximum effectiveness, and to contribute to an organization's performance is what makes the difference between success and failure. In an organization of self-managing knowledge workers, command and control is obsolete. Trust and support is key." In

effect, Drucker is stating that engagement is a requirement for today's knowledge worker. (Edersheim-Haas, 2007, p. 208)

In addition to recognizing and developing talent, other areas need to be developed as well. One of the most important and major goals of all management today is that of fostering and mentoring individuals to be self-directed. This may be accomplished by examining the Personal Responsibility Model, outlined by Keith Ayers in his book, *Engagement is Not Enough*, (2006). Simply put, there are two types of working individuals: other-directed and self-directed.

Other-directed individuals believe they have no control over their own lives and instead controlled by those in authority. They see their locus of control as external. Their basic core belief is "I have to." Their thinking mode is to either comply and resent, or resist and rebel. Their attitude is "I am not responsible." Their behavior is that of a victim, wallowing in self-pity and whining. Or, they get revenge. The ways they accomplish this by slowing down on their work output, sabotaging projects and calling in sick when they are not. The most common form is holding back in giving their best performance. This is called disengagement.

Self-directed individuals believe their locus of control as internal. Their basic core belief is "I choose to" and they know they always have a choice in life. Their thought process is to agree or disagree. Their feeling mode is to then 'accept the consequences.' Their attitude is "I am responsible." Their behavior paradigm is "I am accountable."

Obviously, it takes time, patience and coaching on the part of the manager to gently sway all of his team members into believing they have the power to create their own reality.

“Natural reward strategies include seeking work tasks which are pleasant and enjoyable. Individuals can facilitate natural reward strategies by modifying perceptions on behavior associated with task performance, thereby increasing perceived competence, self-control or task responsibilities.” (Prussia, Anderson, Manz, 1998, p. 524).

Authoritarian behavior on the part of management has been shown over and over not to work. “If you seek to control self-directed people and make them comply, they will either give up or become other-directed, or they will leave. When they give up, they will either comply with your demands and lose their spirit, or they will rebel.” (Ayers, 2006, p.42).

Ethical behavior (1986)

“Ethics are fundamentally concerned with the impact of an individual’s actions on others.” (Zhu, May & Avolio, 2004, p. 16-17).

More attention has been given to this issue since the scandals involving Enron and WorldCom were brought to light in 2001. Universities and colleges responded by providing a plethora of ethics courses in their business curriculums. Lack of congruence on the part of corporate leaders is easily perceived by employees. This only leads to distrust and lack of engagement. Integrity is a must on the part of leadership.

“Corporate ethical codes are defined as written documents which attempt to state the major philosophical principles and articulate the values embraced by the organization. The content in ethical codes was primarily designed to defend organizations against illegal behavior and was found lacking in visionary perspectives and in providing ethical guidance” (Stevens, 1996, p.75).

It is important that specific discussions with all employees, involving the organizational code of ethics be made a priority within organizations. Due to the information overload so prevalent today, they cannot simply be made available via the dissemination of electronic e-mail or a paper to be filed in a binder. “Ethical leadership and the open discussion of ethics in the organization contributed to increased ethical behavior. Strong leaders who share their values with others positively affect the organization and its code” (Trevino, Weaver, Gibson, & Toeffler, 1999, p 142).

“The ethical leader is one who does not seek to fulfill his/her own self-interest (psychological egoism) at the expense of others, but who looks after the group’s interest at a minimum. Ideally, such a leader bases his/her behavior on moral principles that respect the rights of associates and treats them fairly. Ethical leaders involve their employees in decision-making within their firms to enhance the procedural justice and autonomy over their work lives - the employee’s experience (Zhu, May & Avolio, 2004, p. 16-17).

“Organizations should develop strong cultures where employees embrace the code, are supported and rewarded for following the code, and observe managers and executives in the organization behaving consistently with the code. Embedding the code in an organization means defining and prioritizing responsibilities with strategies and policies in the organization such that the code is not a separate entity.” Ethical codes require thoughtful absorption and discussion in order to become culturally embedded. Organizations should discuss the code and the meaning behind the words. It is important not to view culture as a separate entity from communication: they are intertwined and woven as one in the organizational fabric” (Stevens, 2008, p. 605-606).

“Good ethics cannot be ordered by management. Culture and cooperation - not

legalistic compliance - create conditions where ethical codes are effective (Stevens, 2008, p. 603).

“Great leaders like great companies create meaning - not just money. Employees work harder and more effectively for leaders who inspire them to rise above self-expectations” (Kouzes & Posner, 2003, p. 59).

Ethics are related to employee engagement as the wise employee would only wish to work for an organization that conducts itself in a morally correct fashion. Most intelligent employees would not stay to feel the intense ramifications of unlawful and corrupt behavior on the part of their management.

Coaching

“Coaching is defined as leaders using approaches that balance their focus between interpersonal skills and driving for results” (Trinka, 2005, p. 154).

Research shows that it is also important that frequent conversations take place between the manager and the employee. In this way, criticisms surrounding poor performance may be addressed in a timely manner, and corrections made throughout the year. This is a much more effective approach than delivering all the performance weaknesses at once, which most likely will make employees recoil.

“Good managers focus on the future. This allows input by the employee. Managers should ask questions such as, “What goals would you care to accomplish in the next few months? What is your most efficient route to these goals? How may I assist you in doing so? In this way, it becomes a win-win for both. Hopefully, more productive, more energetic and more satisfying” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 222-223).

Communication is also essential for employee engagement. Management must take time to explain to staff what is to be accomplished and the reason for meeting the goals. Goals should always include numeric objectives and timelines. It is optimal if they are “SMART”: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant to the role and have a timeline. It is also necessary for management to ask employees for solutions to goal impediments. However, this can easily backfire.

If suggestions are not implemented, employees may feel as if no one is listening to them and they will lose their motivation. Also, if all the necessary and relevant data are not incorporated into the final resolution, that too, will cause the individual to lose interest.

“Measuring the impact of employee communication is performed by highly effective organizations far more often than low performing ones. These highly effective organizations also take into serious consideration retention of critical talent, workforce productivity, employee engagement, and business performance and how these factors all relate to communication (Terry, 2007, p. 370).

Coaching is linked to employee engagement because it makes the individual feel as if management really cares about them and their well-being. This fact is crucial in retaining good employees. Coaching acts as a driver of good intentions on the part of upper management and in turn, fosters a spirit of willingness and dedication to the organization on the part of the employee.

Pay for Performance (1999)

Pay for performance is defined as “an organization possessing a compensation system which is augmented by training, professional development and ultimately, promotions to better positions” (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p. 222). It appears the most successful companies have pay for performance policies in place. Companies must compete globally today to obtain and retain the best employees available. Employees have a goal setting process in place, which is initially discussed with management. Individual engagement reviews are then conducted, and finally a year-end assessment is performed.

In order to glean good work from their people, great managers keep their routine simple. Basically, this is to understand each employee. Therefore, managers will know what to say and how to say it by taking into account the person’s personality and temperament.

How to motivate unmotivated people involves delineating certain steps for both the employee and the employer. First of all, it is imperative that management explain the organizational/departmental goals and the reason for them. Very often, because business managers discuss these goals with their superiors, they assume that all of their employees are aware of them as well. Usually, this is not the case, because how would they know

what needs to be accomplished and the reason for doing so is not communicated to them?

It is also crucial that management be specific about what is needed to be accomplished involving a work process or project. Bearing the need to change course after a significant amount of work has been put forth is demoralizing. “Begin with the end in mind” is the axiom to be heeded before any major undertaking.

Intelligent managers with people skills, and without great hubris, understand their staff members as individuals. They always know what is important to their charges, and they understand the reason why each and every one of them shows up to work every day. By demonstrating an ongoing interest and genuine concern for their staff member, this fuels a higher morale.

Finally, negative individuals who are resistant to new ideas and fail to participate as team players must be moved off of the team. This type of individual holds everyone back. All team members must promote and support the group’s efforts.

Pay for performance is linked to employee engagement in the fact that if an individual knows what is expected of them by goals being outlined for them, it often follows that the worker has a sense of purpose and knowledge of why they come to work everyday. It fuels the morale of each individual to know they have important goals and objectives for which to strive in their day to day work lives.

Themes of Current Research

One theme that emerged from the research is that a clear connection was identified between effective leadership of an organization and engaged employees. When the leader of a company wishes to create a highly effective workforce, the most important thing that can be done is to provide appropriate ethical leadership.

A second theme that emerged from this research is that in light of the fact that there are many different work styles, similarities in work styles has been noted. The point being made is that one thing all engaged employees have in common is a passion for what they do.

A third theme that emerged from this research is that providing proper coaching, training, and competitive wages with prerequisites, can organization will help an organization to retain its most talented employees.

It is apparent that by observing a “work style” pattern inherent in each employee, a strong team environment may emerge if the manager has enough savvy and self-confidence to allow each employee to play to his or her strengths. Further, self-confident employees are a boon to a work unit as well to the entire organization as they possess the self-efficacy necessary to perform the tasks of the job. They require less “hand-holding” and find ways to perform the job all on their own. They often emerge as “natural” leaders and are often a role model for the less than confident employee. Another venue to explore, which has proven itself to be viable, is to hire and retain mature workers.

This ensures that the work gets accomplished. It is well known that the mature worker is knowledgeable, dependable and reliable. Experience is often the best teacher. They possess a more realistic view of the overall organization, as well as the job itself. Self-confidence often abounds in mature workers as their rich plethora of actual work experience empowers them. They have experienced all types of management and learned how to “manage” the boss. They have also encountered all types of colleagues and often, intuitively know how to handle interpersonal situations which baffle the inexperienced worker. They understand organizational culture. They also usually score high in the area

of intrinsic motivation.

Employee engagement may be boosted by connecting employees to the organization. One of the most critical aspects of employee management is to assist staff in finding solutions to job challenges. It involves forming processes. Finally, it encompasses a set of tools and skills needed by management to function correctly.

Measurement is an important tool which is often placed on the ‘back burner.’ Measurement consists of management’s stand in living up to their responsibility of providing fair and accurate feedback regarding their staff’s quality of work and job performance. While most companies use feedback mechanisms, few take the time to connect these measurements to overall performance.

Engagement building is best integrated into existing processes, such as six month reviews, goal setting and department meetings. Care to keep it simplified was critical to managers and leaders in finding it palatable.

Another facet of employee engagement is the fact that “an employee’s attitude toward the entire organization is a result of their immediate environment. Most specifically, it involves the working relationship the individual experiences with their immediate supervisor and their colleagues” (Tatchell, Crowley, 2007, p.6). Other questions which require pondering are: Does a real team exist or is it merely a work group? Are individuals supportive of one another, or is undermining/sabotage allowed? Can one’s superior truly lead or is he/she a follower? Furthermore, another concept brought forward in this study, which is absolutely crucial to workforce well-being, is that senior management demonstrates a sincere interest in the employee’s well-being.

Finally, the top three things upper management needs to do in order to facilitate cooperation among all members of the organization is simple. It is to communicate openly and honestly, be visible and accessible, and to show interest in new ideas.

“The main drivers of employee engagement are doing exciting and challenging work, having career growth as well as learning and development opportunities, working with great people, receiving fair pay, having supportive management, and being recognized, valued and respected.” (Ketter, 2008, p. 26)

Limitations of the Engagement Literature

This literature review was subject to limitations that will be explained. The first limitation is that because the nature of a literature review is to review existing literature, views reflected by the author may have been slanted due to bias on certain subjects. Opinions of any author bias the writing, and therefore would bias the findings of this literature review.

Another limitation of this study is that not a lot of empirical literature on

globalization of industry is available as it is still a new phenomenon, only about fifteen years old. As this concept does not have a long history, there is still a lot of conjecture about not only what needs to be done, but how it needs to be done. The focus of this paper was on employee engagement, and there are still countries which need to be studied in terms of how engagement is accomplished in their future.

Suggestions for Future Study on Engagement

Although there is an emerging base of literature on the concept of engagement, there is still relatively little empirical study of this construct. Future research could perhaps examine the effects of introducing a time-series design, to determine whether employees in fact become more “engaged” as a result of organizational efforts. Another study could perhaps look at two departments, each managed with different approaches to engagement, but within the same organization. The study would essentially ask if there are differences at the individual or group level, or is engagement really an organizational level phenomenon. Finally, a third study could simply continue the current trend of surveying broadly, but with an intent to see if different industries, or different regions, turn out to be more engaged than others. Certainly, there are many other studies that are possible as well.

Implications for HRD Practice

Given the importance of engagement to HRD practice, the following “Top Ten Ideas to Help HRD Practitioners” may be useful:

1. Assist employees in finding personal meaning their work.

This is done by assigning tasks that bring immediate closure as well as those that may take a little longer from which to achieve satisfaction. By helping each one to focus on the positive.

2. Be fair. Treat the employee as you would like to be treated.

This means understanding their personal difficulties and demonstrating a kindness and understanding when the staff member is facing a personal problem like a spouse suffering with cancer, or a child with a substance abuse issue.

3. Stress the importance of individual value.

Empower the employee and provide them with opportunities for personal growth. Personal growth may be fostered in an individual by encouraging them to try something they never have done before.

4. “Coach” the employee by developing their talents. Inspire confidence

by bringing out the best in them. This matter goes above and beyond as it recognizes the individual talents each employee has. Then, management warmly encourages the employee to further develop these talents so that they may become well-rounded individuals. Some of these talents may be related to their work, whereas others may not be.

Those that are not directly tied to the work one performs gives stress-relief and enjoyment in the form of an outlet. Some examples would be hands-on hobbies such as crocheting, woodworking, oil painting, sketching or sports.

5. Recognize an employee's achievements and contributions.

Reward them for it. This is a factor which should never be overlooked. This information may be disseminated to other employees through an organizational newsletter, positive information posted on a bulletin board, or verbal recognition given during a large, organizational staff meeting. Other ways to reward employees is compensatory time if money is short, or a day off with pay if it is not. Small items such as gift cards for lunch, coffee and sweets and other like items act as a simple "thank you" for their efforts.

6. Provide positive interpersonal support. This will increase retention rates. When management compliments an employee on a regular basis about a job well done, this creates an impetus for the employee to perform even better. This also means that management should demonstrate care and compassion for the employee as a human being, not just a warm body to pump out work for the organization.

7. Create both a "psychologically safe" and "physically safe" environment.

This is accomplished by fostering altruism for each other as part of a team, again, on the part of management. Gossip and sniping are not tolerated and are not used for power plays on the part of management.

Bullying is not accepted either. Confidentiality on the part of management, demonstrated by not having the supervisor gossip to one a subordinate about another or divulging confidential personal matters or problems, is paramount. A physically safe environment involves providing a clean, clutter free work-space for employees. A truly clean building includes dust-free work surfaces, clean floors and carpeting, ceilings and restrooms and a fresh odor within the environment.

8. Provide clear direction and performance accountability; deliver feedback.

By using action steps and strategic planning, this will ensure that the employee has a “road map” to follow. Feedback through individual monthly one-on-one meetings with the manager and employee will allow for proper coaching of the employee. This will demonstrate to the employee on the part of management that the manager does indeed have the employee’s best interest at heart. Through proper guidance, without chastisement, feedback for improvement will be more palatable to the employee. This will give the employee a chance to correct any deficiencies before the yearly performance review is administered.

9. Foster teamwork and team spirit.

Teamwork and team spirit are the responsibilities of management. Research demonstrates over and over again that a high morale fosters productivity. The team spirit may be encouraged by having treats at a meeting or a small gathering for a birthday within the unit, on a regular basis. Teamwork may be encouraged by other members of the team by

supporting an individual when that person is behind in their work, by extending a helping hand or covering for them if they are absent due to their own illness or because of that of a family member.

10. Develop an efficient workplace in terms of budget, resources and time.

Without efficiency, it is impossible to glean the results one wants from the efforts put forth to run a business. Efficiency is achieved by putting basic systems into place for day to day, month to month, and year to year business functions. Money is paramount in a free-enterprise organization.

Resources tie into this basic tenet as money supplies resources. Resources must be conserved wisely by not allowing waste. The old adage, “time is money and money is time” fits in here as well. When employees perceive these areas are being managed well, it reduces cynicism and poor morale. Regular fine-tuning of these areas, such as on a quarterly basis, will ensure a quiet control of the basics of the business, and in turn, cultivate a sense of security within the workforce.

Conclusion

Is it possible to delineate what motivates each and every working person across the globe? I think not. Instead, the individual differences as well as the culture of the organization and society must be taken into account. Motivations and desires of each person may be hidden. Care must be taken to draw out the best that each worker has to offer the organization. When management shows genuine concern and a genuine interest, and is consistent with their words and actions, each organization involved should be able to grow and foster the engagement of those that work for that organization. “The assets go home at night” (Louis B. Mayer, MGM Studios).