

Javier Bajer

Engagement: are we chasing red herrings?

We all want engaged employees in our organisations and engaged citizens in our cities. But we can't assume that someone is engaged because they want to stay. There is a variety of reasons why humans would choose to stay in one place, often influenced by economical instability and even by traits of personal insecurity. Of course, there are also good reasons why people truly commit and enjoy what they do.

It is important that we distinguish what type of engagement we need for our organisations: Engagement as attachment or engagement as commitment:

- Attachment is where people come to work because they will be getting something from us. Whether it is money, career, perks or a sense of belonging, the psychological contract is about what the organisation is promising to give to the employee in exchange of their time and talent. This type of Engagement is often frail and unsustainable. It creates rather conservative behaviours, sufficient to honour the deal on the table. This is, unfortunately, the most common approach to engagement and has not transformed the world of work yet.
- Commitment is where people focus their hearts, minds and hands on what they bring, on their impact they can create on others (specially on clients) or on the problem that the organisation has promised to solve. Engagement that comes out of commitment is persistent, has ownership, innovates naturally, is relentless and is extremely focussed on adding value.

What if you could measure the “type” of engagement you have in your organisation and then take the right set of actions so you can steer it in a healthy direction, where you drive more commitment than attachment?

In this issue of *SHR*, we'll share a range of tried and tested interventions with the intention of inspiring you.

In *Creating a Winning Culture: Next Step for Leading HR Professionals*, Dave Ulrich and Wayne Brockbank look at the core concepts that define an engaging culture and the steps needed to develop and instill it in the workplace.

In *Organizational Transformation Through Improved Employee Engagement*, Perry Daneshgari and Heather Moore present a case study of a company that achieved a range of bottom line improvements after conducting a company-wide employee engagement and culture change intervention.

In *Moving Employee Talent Key to Competitive Edge*, Brynne Herbert explores the business upsides of improving talent mobility – and especially the positive impact it has on employee engagement and boosting recruiting appeal.

In *How to achieve a win/win for both employees and corporates*, Mitesh Sheth delves into the many dimensions of an engaging corporate culture and offers his perspective on the keys to developing and maintaining one.

In *Our Take: Building Engagement Cultures*, Jay Romans and Jeff Tobaben also expand on the key principles that must be deployed to build an engagement culture – including the central role that senior leadership has to play.

And in *The Measurement of Engagement*, Andrew Mayo defines the concept of engagement and how it differs from other descriptions of positive employee wellbeing, and then discusses how to measure this concept objectively and reliably.

You might want to avoid chasing Red Herrings, looking for quick hits to raise “engagement” levels in your organisation. I know that many things can sound rather inoffensive, but do question how they will create commitment, instead of attachment. Adjust those interventions so that you help people connect with is most important. And they’ll engage others in the process.

Warm regards,

Dr. Javier Bajer

Editor-in-Chief