



Employee Engagement or Involvement?

Insights

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At some point we shifted the discussion from employee *“involvement”* to employee *“engagement.”*

One dictionary defines *“involvement”* as:

the act of taking part in an activity, event, or situation

The same dictionary defines *“engagement”* as:

the feeling of being involved in a particular activity

Although, I better like the definitions provided for *“engage:”*

to attract and keep someone’s interest or attention or if a part of a machine engages, or if you engage it, it fits into another part so that they work together.

The latter engineering definition seems to more clearly express our meaning when we talk about our need to *“engage”* our employees. We want employees to do more than *“take part,”* we want a more tangible effort where the employees *“fit with one another and work together.”* The word *“engage”* seems to suggest a more active and committed role. certainly this definition applies to our endless quest to get employees *“engaged in the safety process.”* While serving on a safety committee is one example of *“involving”* an employee, this act alone seems less significant than the engagement achieved by assigning several employees to develop a new Job Safety Analysis (JSA) or strategy to lessen soft tissue or *“ergonomic”* injuries. At some point, we earnestly hope that the effort will become self-perpetuating and that the employee will seek involvement in *“their company.”* Or to put it in the colloquial terms we labor lawyers use, *“feel as if they have some skin in the game.”*

If we discuss engagement, we have to consider management *“leadership.”* I wrestle with whether it is more difficult to obtain this self-driven employee engagement or genuine management leadership, but I do not wrestle with which comes first. Genuine management leadership is necessary to perpetuate a culture of employee engagement.

I want to share two interesting articles on *“engagement”* from this week's [TLNT](#). First an article by author Kevin Kruse on whether *“Employees Should Be Responsible For Their Own Engagement.”*

Then read the provocative and even better Article by Carol Anderson, *“I’m Getting Tired of All of the Talk About Employee Engagement,”* which sets out the following premise:

I have come to the conclusion that “engagement” has become one of those buzzwords that has lost its meaning because it is so overused. And I fear that focusing on “engagement” has caused us to lose sight of what is really important – skilled leaders who can move teams forward.

See what you think about these two articles. More importantly, develop a concrete and specific strategy, with mile markers to get employees more than merely *“involved”*....

Howard

Should Employees Be Accountable For Their Own Engagement?

By Kevin Kruse

Whose job is it to increase engagement?

Whenever I ask that question in a group, answers typically include:

- “The HR department needs to champion engagement.”
- “Engagement needs C-level support.”
- “You have to focus on the front-line managers, make them accountable.”

All good answers.

How people can proactively increase engagement

And yet, what has been missing for decades in the fight to increase employee engagement, are the individual employees themselves. According to IDG Research, 43 percent of engagement comes from intrinsic motivation. This means that despite the best efforts of corporate leadership and front-line managers, all that they do is only half the equation for success.

I’m Getting Really Tired of All the Talk About Employee Engagement

by Carol Anderson

Recently I came across a sponsored article in Fast Company, titled Happiness Secrets from the Staff of Delivering Happiness at Work. Apparently Zappos’ leadership team has launched a new consulting business on how to achieve Zappos’ fun culture — using fun culture as a measure of engagement.

Who knew? One picture in the article shows three employees with rubber noses. That’d go over well with customers interested in effective growth of their investment portfolio ...

Several blog sites that I frequent post myriad articles on employee engagement – from how important it is, to how much additional revenue is generated by engaged employees, to why it is different than satisfaction. And then, there was the “happiness” article.

Has the word “engagement” lost all meaning?

Inc. magazine carried a post, The Dark Side of Employee Engagement, in which the authors cite Leadership IQ’s recent study showing that those who were most “engaged” might not be the best performers. They caution the reader to clearly understand the definition of engagement, when embarking on a study to determine engagement levels.

I have come to the conclusion that “engagement” has become one of those buzzwords that has lost its meaning because it is so overused. And I fear that focusing on “engagement” has caused us to lose sight of what is really important – skilled leaders who can move teams forward.

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Howard A. Mavity

Partner

404.240.4204

Email