



Janice Orchard, a partner in Thomson Orchard Partnership, is a very experienced consultant with 30 years in PA Consulting Group and working independently. She has been involved in many business strategy development and change management assignments, and also has experience of market research, market planning, employee and customer surveys and customer service training. Her clients are drawn from a wide range of industries.

With virtually full employment and predictions that many workers from the EU will go back to their home countries after Brexit, it is even more important that organisations engage fully with their employees to increase retention, improve working practices and productivity and grow their businesses. Of course, the impact will vary by company depending on their circumstances.

What is employee engagement?

It is about how we create the conditions in which employees offer more of their capability and potential, indeed offer their best every day. Employee engagement is based on trust, integrity, two-way commitment and communication. It increases the chances of business success, contributing to organisational and personal performance, productivity and well-being. It can (and should) be measured. It varies from poor to great.

It's not new – that's for sure. It's been one of the buzz words in business for the last ten years or so. And it's hard work really embedding the concept with everyone in the organisation. (There will always be naysayers!) Is it time to refocus your efforts on how your organisation could benefit from improving how it engages with its employees. It can be nurtured and dramatically increased. It can be lost and thrown away. And those organisations that do fritter it away probably have poor customer service, more rework, more mistakes, wasted talent and diminishing returns.

Drivers of employee engagement

- Leadership that gives a strong strategic direction and narrative about the organization and where it is going, how it will get there, its values and what is expected from its employees
- Line managers who motivate, empower and support their employees. give them scope to grow, coaching and stretching them to succeed and mining their creativity
- Employee voice heard throughout the organisation, reinforcing and challenging views, across and within functions (within reason, of course)
- Organisational integrity: Clear values and behaviours established for everyone. Day-to-day behaviours at all levels need to reflect these values. Any gap between what you say you are and what you are leads to massive mistrust. Promises must be kept or a timely explanation given. "Do what it says on the tin".

How does the engaged employee feel?

It's getting up on Monday morning thinking, "Great, I'm going to work today. I know what I'm going to do this

week. I've got some great ideas about how to improve how I do my own work. I've got some ideas to share with my team as to how we can do things better together. I'm looking forward to contributing to the new product development team meeting later in the week. We've got a group of customers coming in tomorrow, so we can tell them about our plans to improve customer service and on Friday there's a meeting on cutting back on rework and waste. It should be a good week!"

The benefits for the organisation

- improved business outcomes that trigger and reinforce one another
- increased productivity
- your employees being great advocates of the organisation to clients, users and customers, "going the extra mile"
- improving your products, services and business processes
- reduced numbers leaving, sickness absence, workplace accidents, conflict and grievances, negative gossip and bullying
- the actions of everyone are consistent with its values

Barriers to employee engagement

Employers should be careful not to assume that employees are inherently demotivated and the solution is for managers to inspire and lead them in an engaging way. It can be that employees are naturally motivated and only demotivated by factors such as lack of support, poor line management and frustrating HR systems. To know what these barriers and drivers are, managers should listen to employees and give them effective channels of communication.

Call to action

We can help you to assess your current levels of employee engagement and draw up a plan of action to improve the situation, ideally involving members of your staff along the way. If interested, please give us a call.

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