Employee Engagement- the Driving Force Behind Every Vibrant Organization

Ritty Francis, Reena R

Abstract- Employee engagement is a yardstickto measure the degree of association between an employee and his organization. Engaged employees, give more importance to achievement of organizational goals without giving much weightage to remuneration and incentives. Percentages of fully engaged employees in most of the companies are very less. Companies have to rethink that by providing all facilities, it is not necessary for an employee to be fully engaged. Since employee engagement is the internal motivation of an employee, so companies should have equal concern for the entire employee regarding their job and future. Nowadays most of the companies are adopting innovative methods to reduce the attrition level. Our paper is a modest attempt to reveal the importance of employee engagement in corporate world. The engagement levels of various countries have also been included so as to provide insights about engaged employees and disengaged employees and how far disengaged employees indirectly affect the success of an organization.

Keywords: Employee engagement, disengaged employees, internal motivation, commitment, performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a workplace approach designed to ensure that employees are fully committed to the business goals and values. When employees are involved in the organizational activitiesit motivates them to contribute to organizational success and at the same time it enhances their sense of belongingness towards organization. Employee engagement can make the organization vibrant. The employees will feel committed to the organization or motivated to perform well only if their employer values them.It is becoming increasingly important for organizations that want to remain competitive and deliver a great customer experience. However organizations do not talk about employee engagement, instead they focus on the practices that foster engagement among their employees. Ultimately, engagement is a one-way journey towards overall business performance. Employees with lower engagement are more likely to leave their jobs than those who are highly engaged. So management have to pay attention on disengaged employees and explore the factors leading to disengagement and engagement and nurture the seed of engagement in the minds of disengaged employees. Employee engagement is the real driving force behind every successful corporate. Employee engagement does not mean employee happiness. Employees might be happy at work, but that doesn't necessarily mean they are working hard, productively on behalf of the organization. Employee engagement doesn't mean employee satisfaction. A satisfied employee might work without any complaint.

Dr. Ritty Francis, Assistant Professors, Department of Commerce, Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore (Karnataka). India.

Ms. Reena R, Assistant Professors, Department of Commerce, Kristu Jayanti College, Bangalore (Karnataka). India.

But that same "satisfied" employee might not works overtime when needed, without being asked and may leave the organization due to any dissatisfaction in salary. Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals. Emotionally committed engaged employees don't have any monetary expectation, but work for success of an organization and use their discretionary effort for better business outcomes.

II. OBJECTIVES

- To gain clear cut insight about the conceptual background and importance of employee engagement of various countries.
- To explore the factors leading to employee engagement and to give suggestions to improve employee engagement culture in organizations.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

William H. Kahn (1990) completed some of the earliest work on engagement and defined engagement as, "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances." According to Towers Perrin (2003), building engagement is a process that never ends and it rests on the foundation of a meaningful and emotionally enriching work experience. Furthermore, it is not about making people happy, or even paying them more money. As important as pay and benefits are in attracting and retaining people, it was found they play a less important role in engaging people in their work. The elements found to be fundamental for engagement were strong leadership, accountability, autonomy, a sense of control over one's environment and opportunities for development; there are no substitutes for these fundamentals.

Cooper (1997) argues that research shows that if emotions are properly managed rather than shut out at work, they can drive trust, loyalty and commitment and great productivity gains by individuals, teams and organisations. Similarly, Heimer (1999) argues that innovation, increased profitability, good decision-making and effective performance are brought about by managed emotions (Holbeche and Springett 2003). Other studies have found clear links between work lives in individual health (Crabtree, 2005). As noted by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), engaged employees are likely to have a greater attachment to their organisation and a lower tendency to quit. The findings from Truss et al (2006) confirm this. They found that, overall, engaged employees are less likely to leave their employer. However, the longer employees stay with an organisation the less engaged they appear to become (Ferguson 2007). The findings of the 2006 CIPD survey on engagement confirm this also (Truss et al 2006). Such

findings emphasize the importance of continually advancing the understanding of engagement in the workplace. Research by Robinson (2006) suggests there is considerable evidence that many employees are greatly under-utilised in the workplace through the lack of involvement in work-based decisions.

According to Deci and Ryan (1987) management which fosters a supportive work environment typically displays concern for employees' needs and feelings, provides positive feedback and encourage them to voice their concerns, develops new skills and solve work-related problems. Employees who are self-determined experience a "sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions" (ibid: 580). As a result, these individuals are likely to feel safer to engage themselves more fully, try out novel ways of doing things and discuss mistakes (Edmondson 1999). Where management is supportive of an employee's self-determination, the trust between the two parties is enhanced (Deci and Ryan 1987). Given that managers have a tremendous influence on employee engagement, levels can vary widely from workgroup to workgroup within one company (Ott 2007). Gallup's research has shown that leaders and managers play a key role in lifting engagement levels.

Robinson et al (2004) identified key behaviours, which were found to be associated with employee engagement. The behaviours included belief in the organisation, desire to work to make things better, understanding of the business context and the 'bigger picture', being respectful of and helpful to colleagues, willingness to 'go the extra mile' and keeping up to date with developments in the field.

Clearly employee engagement also depends on the manager or supervisor. Cufaude (2004) argues that when managers employ a philosophy of 'servant-leadership', whereby a manager's primary role is in supporting and serving those around them, the environment becomes 'highly engaged'. Soltis (2004) argues in order to create a highly engaged environment managers must be engaged; "if managers aren't engaged its unlikely employees will respond to any efforts to engage them" An article by Dan Crim and Gerard Seijts in the Ivey Business Journal titled "What engages employees the most or, the 10 C's of employee engagement". Companies need to expand their thinking about what "engagement" means today, giving managers and leaders specific practices they can adopt, and holding line leaders accountable. Leaders in business and HR need to raise employee engagement from an HR program to a core business strategy. Research shows that pay is a "hygiene factor," not an "engagement factor." In other words, in most cases if compensation is not high enough, people will leave—but increasing compensation does not directly increase engagement (with certain exceptions).

It may seem counterproductive to let people take time off during the week, but in fact the opposite is true. Overworked people tend to burn out, produce lower-quality output, provide lower levels of customer service, become depressed, and sometimes just flail around in their exhaustion. Giving people time lets them relax, engage, and perform better.

In addition to such benefits and employee wellness programs, research also shows that open, flexible workplaces have a major impact on engagement. The change we need to make is to redefine engagement beyond an "annual HR measure" to a continuous, holistic part of an entire business strategy.

IV. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Employee disengagement is a critical problem faced by every organization. There has been a confusion regarding the actual meaning of the concept of employee engagement. It is more often misunderstood as employee commitment. Committed employee may be involved in their work but they may quit if they find better career opportunities whereas an "engaged employee" is one who is fully involved and enthusiastic about their work and takes positive action to enhance the organization's reputation. To retain the employees the company should actively engage their employees to produce better results. Engaged employees will stay with the company and contribute to the success of the organization. It is essential for the organizations and their employees to understand the fine line of difference between being committed and engaged so that management can develop the culture of fully engaged and committed employees in the organization which in turn help the organization

V. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Organization productivity is measured not in terms of employee satisfaction but by employee engagement. Employees are said to be engaged when they show a positive attitude towards the organization and express the commitment to stay with the organization. Not all the employees are engaged in the organization. There are those who are not engaged and tend to concentrate on tasks other than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish. Efforts are to be made to raise the level of engagement for those who fall in the non-engaged category. This study helps to know how far employee engagement is vital for every organization.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Firstly, the paper adopts a literature review approach beginning with indicating significant works on Employee Engagement research. Literature review is adopted as it enables to structure research and to build a reliable knowledge base in this field. Secondly the paper adopts a case study approach examining the employee engagement initiatives and practices taken up by the various countries. The benefits of Employee Engagement are given in the paper so that organizations not following this concept are also encouraged to do so. Suggestions and recommendations are given towards the end of the paper in order to help the companies improve their working in this area and to encourage the others to implement this concept in their organizations.

VII. DISCUSSION

Engaged employees are more likely to be productive, fully committed to their organization's goals and values and motivated to contribute to organizational success. William Kahn provided the first formal definition of personal

engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances Engaged employees are rare. Engagement and respect should go hand in hand to develop the culture of employee engagement in organization. Based on level of engagement and commitment within an organization, employees can be categorized into four types**: engaged and committed, engaged, committed** and **neither engaged nor committed**. The four types diverge in the subsequent way:

- **Engaged and committed** employees are both engaged in their work and committed to the organization. Employees love their work and the company they work for.
- **Engaged** employees are engaged in their work, but not committed to the organization.
- **Committed** employees are committed to the organization, but not engaged in their work.

- Employees that are **neither engaged nor committed** are neither engaged in their work, nor committed to the organization.

Beyond salary, psychological and social fulfillment can determine which employees are motivated to stay, perform, and contribute to organization success**.** Companies that focuson employee engagement understand that motivating high performance and aligning talent with business strategy requires getting to the heart of what matters to employees**.** To inculcate the culture of employee engagement, managers should know their employees, offer career opportunities, motivate them for better performance, involve in business matters and recognize their hard earned efforts.

According to **Harvard Business Review survey** found that many companies find it challenging to measure engagement and tie its impact to financial results: few companies are effectively measuring employee engagement against business performance metrics such as customer satisfaction or increased market share.

Global View on Employee Engagement:

Levels of Actively Disengaged, Not Engaged and Engaged Employees
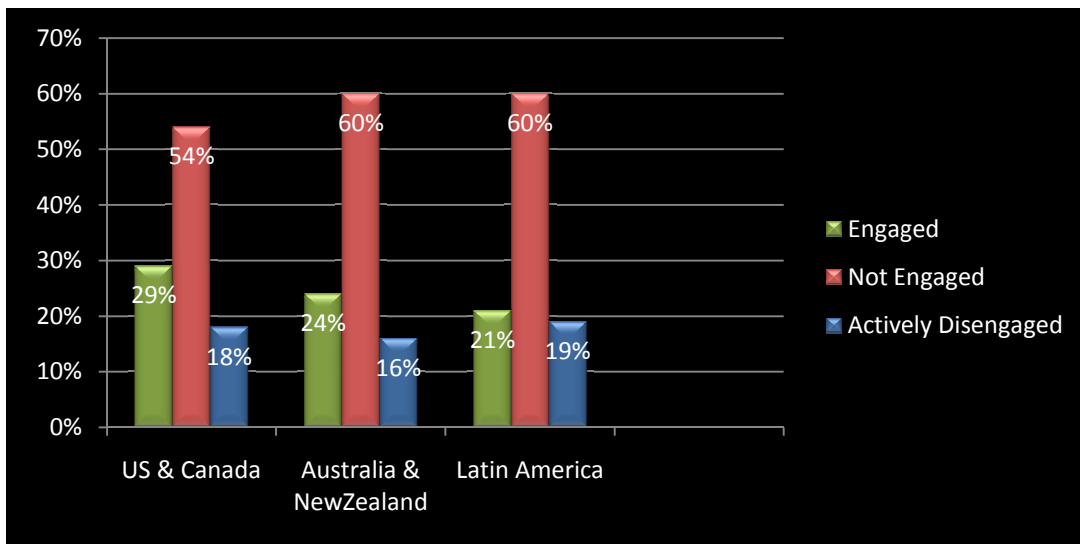
Figure 1(Source: Gallup survey)
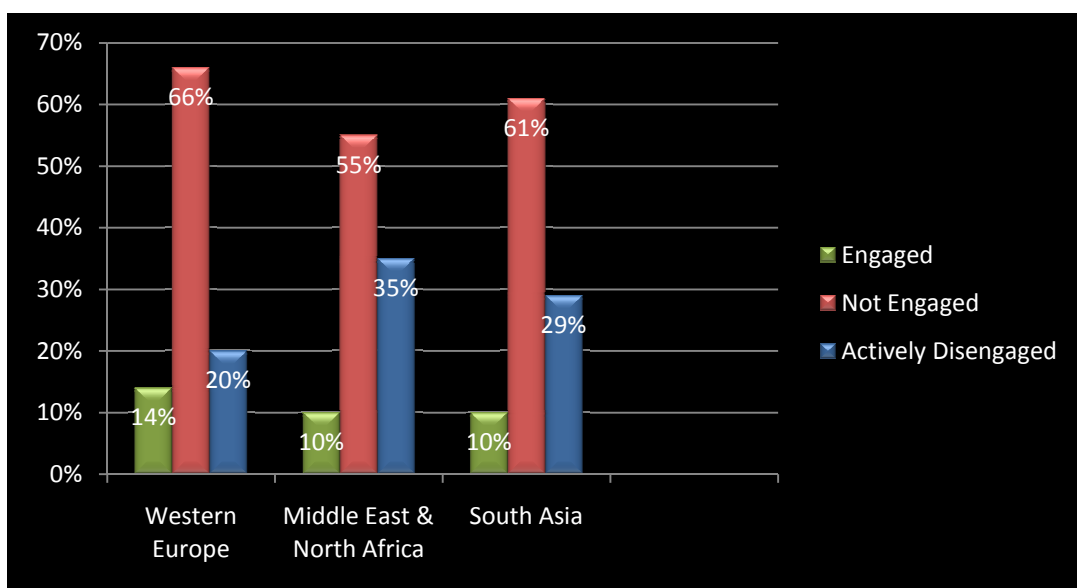
Figure 2(Source: Gallup survey)

Research conducted to measure the level of employee engagement in US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Latin America, Western Europe, Middle East and North Africa and South Asiashows that employee engagement level is highest in U.S and Canada (29%) as compared to others. Level of not engaged employees is high everywhere, Southeast Asia topping the list with 73%, which can have a negative impact on the organizational growth. Disengagement is less except Middle East and North Africa (35%). Studies reveal that some root causes of disengagement can be:-

- Lack of training and career development opportunities.
- Salary issues
- Employee-employer resistance
- Lack of Trust and Confidence in Senior Management
- Unaware the organizational goals, objectives and policies
- Disparity between Job and Person and work pressure
- No job security
- When employees are not well communicated
- No recognition for hard work
- Lack of leadership and guidance

Benefits of Employee Engagement:

Employee engagement benefits everyone involved with your business by creating an informed, involved and productive workplace that helps propel your business towards its goals. Engaged employees:

- They have a desire and commitment to give their best to your business
- Generate more revenue for your business
- Demonstrate higher levels of innovation
- Act as advocates for your business
- Have lower rates of sickness or absenteeism
- Are less likely to leave your business
- Behave in ways that support your business values
- Have a positive impact on customer services
- Higher productivity
- Help to increase sales

Findings:

- Even though company provides attractive salary and other benefits, the employees are not fully engaged.
- Percentage of engaged employees are very less in an organization
- Organization doesn't know how to make the employees engaged in their work.
- Management believes that by providing better facilities they can make the employees fully engaged.
- Most of the companies do not find out the exact reason for attrition.
- Some companies layoff 300 to 1000 employees without having any concern for employees.
- Engaged employees are regular in their work

Suggestions:

- Companies should assure job security to employees
- There should be effective downward communication

- Management should involve employees in business planning process
- Management should show the employees the financial status of the company and tell them how their efforts are directly linked.
- Allemployees should be made to understand the company's vision.
- Proper training should be given to middle level managers on employee engagement
- Management should communicate upcoming opportunities to the employees.
- Management should categorize the engaged and disengaged employees and take remedial measures.

VIII. CONCLUSION

It is essential that the superiors in the organization know their subordinates as to what kind of personality they have and not just what they do. Every interaction with an employee has the potential to influence his or her engagement and inspire discretionary effort. The levels of engagement can largely depend on how efficiently the employees are managed by their seniors.

In the present scenario it is observed that even though the companies provide best quality service to its employees, still employees keep leaving their organization. This question needs to be answered. It is high time that the companies start rethinking in this matter. Employees can be made more engaged if the companies give them job security and career enhancement opportunities. Various studies in this context reveal that the top level management is responsible for developing the concept of engagement. If the senior level management has direct concern for employees through its managers, then it is possible to make disengaged employees to fully engaged employees. Above all mindset and passion of an employee towards their job determine the engagement level in the employee. Let's change our thinking and move towards creating a culture of engaged corporate.

REFERENCES

1. Baumruk, R. (2004) 'The missing link: the role of employee engagement in business success', Workspan, Vol 47, pp48-52.
2. Cooper, R. (1997) 'Applying Emotional Intelligence in the workplace', Training and Development, Vol 51 No 12, pp31-38.
3. Crabtree, S. (2005) 'Engagement keeps the doctor away; A happy employee is a healthy employee, according to a GMJ survey', Gallup Management Journal, 13th January. Available at: http://gmj.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=14500&pg=1 [Accessed 4th July]
4. Cufaude, J. (2004) in Lanphear, S. (2004). 'Are Your Employees Highly Engaged?' Credit Union Executive Newsletter, 19, 1-2. Credit Union National Association, US.
5. Frank, F.D., Finnegan, R.P. and Taylor, C.R. (2004) 'The race for talent: retaining and engaging workers in the 21st century', Human Resource Planning, Vol 27, No 3, pp12-25.
6. Freud, S. (1922) in Ferguson, A. (2007) 'Employee engagement: Does it exist, and if so, how does it relate to performance, other constructs and individual differences?' [online] Available at: http://www.lifethatworks.com/Employee-Engagement.prn.pdf [Accessed 20th June 2007]
7. Gubman, E. (2004) 'From engagement to passion for work: The search for the missing person', Human Resources Planning, pp42-46.
8. Kahn, W.A. (1990) 'Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work', Academy of Management Journal, Vol 33, pp692-724.

9. Lloyd, J. (2004) 'Offer empowerment to encourage engagement', Triangle Business Journal, Vol 15, No 1.
10. Richman, A. (2006) 'Everyone wants an engaged workforce how can you create it?' Workspan, Vol 49, pp36-39.
11. Robinson, D., Perryman, S. and Hayday, S. (2004) The Drivers of Employee Engagement. Brighton, Institute for Employment Studies.
12. Seijts, G.H and Crim, D. (2006) 'What engages employees the most or, the ten C's of employee engagement', Ivey Business Journal, March/April, pp1-5.