



What Can Mentoring Contribute to Employee Engagement?

By Ann Rolfe

"If someone is going down the wrong road, he doesn't need motivation to speed him up. What he needs is education to turn him around"

Jim Rohn

Employee engagement may be the single most important strategic challenge for organisations. Disengaged employees may be passively or actively dragging your organisation down, holding co-workers back from achieving goals and costing the organisation billions.

What is Employee Engagement?

Employee engagement, according to Hewitt Associates, is:

"The state of emotional and intellectual commitment to an organisation - the degree to which you have captured the hearts and minds of your employees."

Engaged Employees consistently say positive things about the organization, intend to stay with the organization and strive to achieve above and beyond what is expected in their daily role (Kelleher).

Employee engagement is not the same as happiness. Employees can be happy but unproductive. It's not the same as satisfaction. Satisfied employees don't necessarily make extra effort and can be lured away by other employers who offer more.

Why is Employee Engagement Important?

Research shows that companies with engaged workers have 6% higher net profit and 5 times higher shareholder return over 5 years.

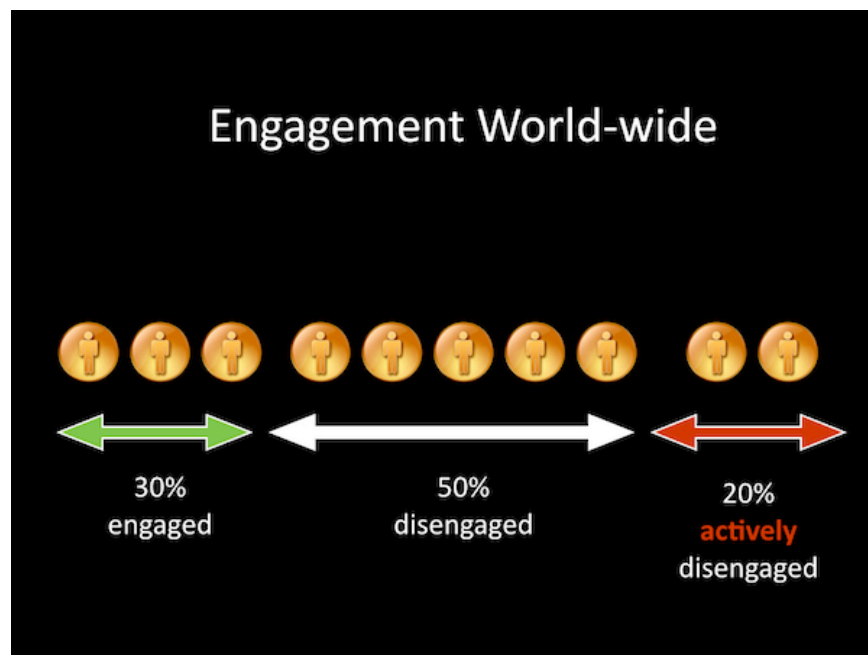
If you are a not-for-profit or government agency, the return on investment in employee engagement will significantly reduce your costs. And, in any type of organization it will result in higher levels of service, quality and productivity.

The most obvious link between employee engagement and improved organisational performance is retention. Disengaged employees are 4 times more likely to leave. Think about how much staff turnover costs. Imagine how much time, money, knowledge and experience is lost when people leave.

The cost of disengagement in the US alone is \$450 Billion (ibid)

Employees may be engaged, disengaged or actively disengaged (working against you).

What percentage of employees are engaged?



World-wide around 30% of employees are engaged , 50% are disengaged and 20% are actively disengaged (working against their employer).

Imagine what that looks like!



The Mentoring Connection

As with any strategic issue, there is no easy answer, no single solution, no quick fix. Mentoring alone is not going to fix employee disengagement but the research literature shows three key areas where mentoring has been shown to make a difference.

BlessingsWhite research reveals that in every region of the world, two factors top the list of drivers for employee engagement: “career development opportunities and training” and “more opportunities to do what I do best”. They go on to say “most employees do not have clarity around their career aspirations or drivers of job satisfaction”

This is exactly what mentoring conversations provide!

The third, and perhaps even more important factor influencing engagement, is managers. Disengaged managers are 3 times more likely to have disengaged staff. Bad managers create active disengagement – workers that undermine the effectiveness of co-workers and the organization, lower quality, service and customer satisfaction. More than a third of U.S. workers would rather see their direct supervisor fired than get a substantial pay rise!

To boost employee engagement organisations must build trust in management. In particular the manager that employees are most influenced by, their direct supervisor. Often overloaded, under pressure and under-developed, these front-line managers must not be neglected. They can be mentored to develop leadership skills so that they demonstrate competence, have integrity and show they care about employees – factors known to increase trust in management and engagement.

Mentoring – Leverage for Employee Engagement

You will need to analyse the strategic needs of your organization to discover where mentoring will make the most difference. However, you can achieve measurable improvements to the attraction, retention and development of talented people through mentoring.

Engaged employees go “above and beyond” what is required of them in their jobs. Employees need mentoring to gain clarity on their career aspirations and to develop their strengths.

Managers who are focused and effective at developing their people have teams that out-perform those that are not by around 25%. Managers need mentoring to develop leadership competence and relationship skills and eventually become mentors themselves.

Employee engagement is a big issue, mentoring is not the complete answer but you can do so much more with mentoring.

References

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