

Linkage between Employee Engagement and Organizational Performance in the Post COVID-19 pandemic situation

Dr. R. Subramaniya Bharathy

Associate Professor in Management Department of Management Studies, Periyar University, Salem – 636011

Date of Submission: 02-08-2020

Date of Acceptance: 20-08-2020

ABSTRACT: It is obvious fact that, Covid-19 has adversely affected almost all sectors of business across the globe. Every business entity exists to make profit by effectively and efficiently achieving their organizational goals. For that purpose, they assemble all resources like Men, Money, Machine, Material, Method, and Technology and so on. Among these resources, Human resources play a crucial role in determining the ultimate success of the organization. When the employees of the organization deliver their best performance, the organization benefits to a greater extent. If they are motivated, energetic, enthusiastic at their work, the organizational performance will be significantly higher. Only engaged employees could able to create such environment in an organization. There is a direct link between the organizational performance and the employee engagement. If the employees are highly engaged, then the organizational performance also will be high. Hence, it is the duty and responsibility of the HR managers to build an environment in the workplace that encourages high degree of employee engagement among the employees. Particularly during this Post Covid-19 Lockdown period, the roles of HR managers are very crucial and complex. It is their duty to retain the best talent and at the same time meeting the interests of the organization. This chapter will be highlighting the concept of employee engagement, influencing factors, process, benefits, and limitations of employee engagement. Further, the chapter will emphasize on the linkage between employee engagement and organizational performance and highlights on various strategies that can be adopted by HR professionals in fostering the employee engagement level in their organizations.

Key Words: Employee Engagement, Organizational performance, Engagement Strategies

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the year 2020, the outbreak of COVID-19 has changed the lives of many. Not only the Individuals and society but the business communities too are affected to a greater extent. The Post COVID-19 era certainly throws lot of challenges to the business community. Even though the COVID crisis has been categorized as a biological one it poses considerable threats to the business. In business, the most valuable resource is the human resources. The human resources strength of an organization determines its success in the industry. In particular, the employee engagement acts as a critical factor of business success in today's highly competitive world. Employee engagement is a property of the relationship between an organization and its employees. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and so takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests. The COVID-19 pandemic has great impact on the ability of the organizations to keep up the morale and enthusiasm of the employees. When the employees are uncertain about the future, when they see job losses and retrenchments happening to their fellow colleagues they feel stress and anxiety about their career. Such mindsets will certainly affect the employee's engagement in the organizations. This gives lot of pressure to the HR managers to retain the employee's engagement for the better business results. The HR managers of the business organizations must develop effective and sustainable employee engagement strategies at the workplace so as to make the company to benefit to a greater extent. The managers should understand the factors that affect and contribute to the successful drafting and implementing of employee engagement strategies in their organizations.

The Concept of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is an organizational approach aiming at providing perfect conditions for all employees of an organization to deliver their best every day to the organization, committed to their organization's objectives and values, inspired to contribute to organizational achievements, with an enhanced sense of their own success. Some of the definitions of Employee Engagement is given below;

Employee engagement is a property of the relationship between an organization and its employees. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and so takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests. (Wikipedia) Kevin Kruse from Forbes.com says the definition of employee engagement is; Employee engagement is the emotional commitment the employee has to the organization and its goals. (Forbes.com)

Business Dictionary defines Employee Engagement as "Emotional connection an employee feels toward his or her employment organization, which tends to influence his or her behaviors and level of effort in work-related activities."

"A business management concept that describes the level of enthusiasm and dedication a worker feels toward his/her job. Engaged employees care about their work and about the performance of the company, and feel that their efforts make a difference." Is the definition given by Investopedia.

HR Zone forum defines the concept of engaged employees as "Employee engagement is the emotional attachment employees feel towards their place of work, job role, position within the company, colleagues and culture and the affect this attachment has on wellbeing and productivity." Thus, the Employee engagement is built on basic four elements such as

- Trust
- Loyalty
- Commitment
- Motivation

All these elements play an important role in determining the success of an organization. The level of these elements among the employees determines the level of engagement among the employees.

II. BENEFITS OF AN ENGAGED WORKFORCE

There are numerous benefits to an organization if it has an engaged workforce at its

disposal. Some of the benefits are highlighted hereunder.

- Improved Work Performance
- Improved relationship with co-workers
- Increased work productivity
- Innovativeness
- Minimizing the cost
- Positivity at workplace
- Better personal life
- Better satisfaction to the stakeholders

Improved Work Performance

The performance of an engaged employee will be always at top. He will be highly enthusiastic in carrying out his responsibilities and even if additional responsibilities are given to him, he will be happier and will execute the responsibilities with more zeal. He will not evade the work. He always completes the work in time. Hence the work performance of an engaged employees will always be high when compared to other disengaged employees.

Improved relationship with co-workers

An engaged employee is always a good team player. He moves well along with the other members of the team. He shares the responsibility genuinely and cares about the other team members also. He brings high morale among the team. Every members of the team will be encouraged and motivated to give their best to the organization because of the presence of the engaged employees in the team. Better cooperation and participation is very much possible when the organization has an engaged workforce.

Increased work productivity

Engaged workforce always strive hard to achieve the deadlines and organizational goals more efficiently and effectively. They have the high confidence and attitude that their performance has more significance to the organization success. Such attitude of the engaged employees makes their productivity level at peak. Thus, engaged employees boost up the team productivity and contributes significantly to the achievement of the organizational goals.

Innovativeness

Engaged employees always innovate in their work. The commitment they have towards the organizations make them to innovate new things related to their work which will significantly increase the productivity and profitability of the concern.

Minimizing the cost

With their dedication and commitment in providing better service to the organization the engaged employees significantly reduces the cost. The costs such as manufacturing costs, operational costs, administrative expenses, marketing expenses, customer related costs all can be significantly reduced due to the presence of the engaged employees.

Positivity at workplace

The engaged employees spread positivity in the workplace. Their commitment, motivation, loyalty and trust make them to work with high involvement and zeal. Such attitude and performance makes the workplace a vibrant and positively infused one. The engaged work force create an atmosphere where everybody actively involved in accomplishing the organizational goals effectively and efficiently.

Better personal life

The engaged employee will always be active and be positive. He will not be lethargic in his job performance. He always performs well in the organization. This gives him an immense satisfaction about the work and working organization. Such work life satisfaction brings satisfaction in his personal and family life too. Thus, an engaged employee always lead a better personal life.

Better satisfaction to the stakeholders

Every employee of an organization is always the ambassador of the organization to all its stake holders like, shareholders, vendors, suppliers, customers and so. An engaged employee with his zeal and performance in the work will bring lot of satisfaction to the stakeholders. Wherein, a disengaged employee will be spreading bad message about the organization to all the stakeholders directly or indirectly.

Factors Influencing Employee Engagement Strategies.

The following factors should be considered by the personnel managers before drafting the employee engagement strategies for their organizations.

- Nature of work
- Workplace environment
- Communication at the workplace
- Organizational policies and procedures
- Leadership styles
- Rewards and appreciations

- Opportunities for learning and training
- These factors are discussed in nutshell as under,

Nature of work

The employee will assess his job role and see the link between his job role and the organizational goals. If he could able to find the link between his role and the organizational goal that gives him an immense satisfaction and will become as an engaged employee.

Workplace environment

If an employee feels that he is in a conducive and supportive working environment his motivation level will be higher and he will be an engaged employee of the organization.

Communication at the workplace

The level of communication in the organization determines the level of engagement by the employee. If transparent and good communication system prevails in the organization the level of employee engagement also increases.

Organizational Policies and Procedures

The policies and rules of the organizations have direct impact on the attitude and motivation level of the employees. If they are supportive and encouraging to the employees they will be more committed and sincere and will an engaged employee of the organization.

Leadership styles

The level of engagement of an employee depends a lot on the style of leadership that exists in the organization. The bosses are the big source of motivation as well as big reason for frustration for the employees. If employees are happy with their leaders then his engagement level will be high, otherwise they will be disengaged when the leaders are not supportive. A good leader can inspire the employees to a greater extent.

Rewards and appreciations

Every employee in an organization basically works for the salary to meet out his basic needs and fulfill the family commitments. If the compensation and reward structure of the organization is well framed, that will be a big boost to the employees. Adequate rewards and appreciations for the performance of the employees will keep them engaged and committed to the organization.

Opportunities for learning and training

In this post covid-19 situation re-skilling and up-skilling are becoming must for the employees. To cope up with the industry demand and changes happening the opportunities for learning is a big boon to the employees. When such opportunities for training and learning are provided that enhances the motivation level of the employees and lead to the commitment and engagement.

III. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

In the post Covid-19 pandemic situation the employee engagement will play a major role in determining the success of an organization. Since an engaged team of employees bring better results to the organization the HR managers should look into various strategies that keep the employees committed and loyal towards the organization. Many researchers have contributed to the field of employee engagement. According to Igloo's 2019 State of the Digital Workspace report, 70 percent of dispersed team members feel "left out" of the workplace. And with remote work penetrating companies of all sizes in all industries, curbing that sense of isolation should be a top priority. There appears to be a significant correlation between the employee engagement and the performance of the organization And, It becomes a bigger challenge for the HR managers to keep employees engaged when they are geographically dispersed and lack typical day-to-day, face-to-face contact with their colleagues and managers in this post pandemic situation (Hearn, 2019).The Entrepreneur article, written by Raad Ahmed, discusses three strategies to keep remote employees engaged. Raad touches on goal setting, accountability and creative workarounds for issues such as time zones, which can cause communication breakdown if not managed appropriately (Ahmed, 2019).

By considering all the factors and significance of employee engagement during this pandemic situation, the HR managers can very well focus on the following strategies to enhance the employee engagement for the success of the organization.

- Ensuring transparency
- Ensuring effective communication system
- Sticking on to the core values of the business
- Creating opportunities for employee engagement
- Enabling and encouraging team work
- Building trust and confidence among the employees

Ensuring transparency

By being transparent in the activities of the organization to the employees, the employees will be highly motivated and the employee engagement level can be increased. This is important, because every individual in the organization wants to be updated with the happenings in the organization. If they feel that the things are happening without their knowledge and understanding then the trust may not be built in their minds about the organization. This will adversely affect their commitment and loyalty towards the organization. Therefore, the HR managers should be realistic and be open to the employees particularly in the adverse situation like Covid-19 Pandemic situation. The decisions taken at all the levels should be transparent and communicated to the employees. Such openness will increase the employee engagement significantly.

Ensuring effective communication system

If the employee engagement has to be increased, then the problems and issues that exist in the organization should be addressed properly and timely. For this purpose, it is essential for the organization to establish an effective communication system to facilitate the employees to share their problems, issues and views. Even the employees can share their ideas and suggestions for certain issues of the organization. The HR managers should identify the different effective mode of communication so that every employee in the organization should feel comfortable in sharing their view points. The HR managers should also draft appropriate rewarding policies for the best suggestions and ideas given by the employees. So, when the employees felt that their voices are heard by the top management, their attitude and affinity goes up and their level of engagement will also shoot up significantly.

Sticking on to the core values of the business

The relationship between the employees and the company become very stronger when he has high regards on the core values and ethical practices of the organization. Particularly, in the adverse situation like this it is an acid test for the company. The employees will observe the reactions and actions of the company in this pandemic situation. If the company loses its values and engage in activities which are against the core values and beliefs what it preached so far, then the organization loses its credibility not only among the customers but also among the employees.

Creating opportunities for employee engagement

The important strategy that may help the HR managers to build and retain the employee engagement in the organization is to create opportunities and situations through which the employee's engagement can be increased. Small pep talks by the CEOs and top authorities, frequent interaction programmes, employee feedback surveys, rewards, incentives, appreciations, recognitions are some of the avenues through which the company can retain the motivation level of the employees and to enhance the employee engagement level. The steps and actions taken by the organization are also some opportunities to prove their credentials among the employees. For ex, though the companies are making losses due to Covid-19 lock down, if they still disburse the salary, not laying off the employees and assuring them the job security such actions will foster the image of the company among the employees and that will boost their engagement to the organization significantly.

Enabling and encouraging team work

The HR managers should try to provide a collaborative team work environment to their employees. Because, the team work always brings the creativity and diversity in the execution of the responsibilities. Collaborating with other team members an engaged employee draws inspiration and enthusiasm in working towards the achievement of the organizational goals. The team work helps the individuals to bring out their talent by working together. The team members rely on each other for their best performance. Moreover, the team work promotes the wider sense of ownership which is the essence of the employee engagement.

Building trust and confidence among the employees

The workforces who are actively engaged in their job exhibit more loyalty towards the company. In that sense, the HR managers should try to build the loyalty, trust and confidence among the employees in order to ensure the high level of employee's engagement. The employees who have high trust and confidence in their organization will take the responsibilities on their shoulders. They don't need either supervision or control. In order to build the trust and confidence among the employees the employees should be properly recognized and they should be empowered to a greater extent. They should not be confined to the regular and routine rules and practices. Such

autonomy will foster the employee engagement to a greater extent.

IV. CONCLUSION

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and inspiration of an employee towards the job. They are the people who give more importance for the job responsibilities rather than the monetary benefits they get out of that. They are very passionate about their job and that passion drives them to be engaged with their job. But it is a big challenge for the HR managers particularly at this time of Covid-19 Pandemic situation to retain or build the employee engagement since the impact of Covid on the business sector is huge. Though, as suggested here, the strategies like, Ensuring transparency, Ensuring effective communication system, Sticking on to the core values of the business, Creating opportunities for employee engagement, Enabling and encouraging team work, Building trust and confidence among the employees may help an organization to build and sustain the employee engagement for their organizational success.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Ahmed, R. (2019, May 29). How to Ensure Your Remote Staff Is Engaged. Retrieved July 29, 2020, from www.entrepreneur.com: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/333995>
- [2]. Hearn, S. (2019, November 15). 12 Employee Engagement Articles You Need to Read. Retrieved July 29, 2020, from <https://www.clearreview.com/essential-employee-engagement-articles>
- [3]. Heinz, K. (2019, OCTOBER 8). 8 Employee Engagement Strategies That Actually Work. Retrieved July 29, 2020, from <https://builtin.com/>: <https://builtin.com/employee-engagement-employee-engagement-strategies>
- [4]. BharathySubramaniya R. & Rajapushpam (2017, September). A Study on Worklife Balance of Food and Beverage Service [F/B (S)] Employees at Hotel Industry in Salem City. International Journal of Research in Social Sciences, 427-439
- [5]. Ahmetoglu, G., Harding, X., Akhtar, R., & Chamorro-Premuzic, T. (2015). Predictors of creative achievement: Assessing the impact of entrepreneurial potential, perfectionism, and employee engagement. Creativity Research Journal, 27, 198–205. doi:10.1080/10400419.2015.1030293

-
- [6]. Beck, R., & Harter, J. (2015, April 21). Managers account for 70% of variance in employee engagement. Gallup Business Journal. Retrieved from <http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/182792/managers-account-variance-employeeengagement.aspx>
- [7]. Dale Carnegie & Associates, Inc. (2018). Employee Engagement: It's Time to Go 'All-In'. Retrieved from <https://www.dalecarnegie.com/en/resources/employee-engagement-making-engagement-a-daily-priority-for-leaders/thank-you>
- [8]. Hastings, R. (2009, March 4). The "what" and "why" of employee engagement. Retrieved from <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/employeerelations/pages/whatandwhy.aspx>
- [9]. www.businessdictionary.com
- [10]. www.forbes.com
- [11]. www.wikipedia.org
- [12]. www.investopedia.com
- [13]. www.hrzone.com