A Study on Employee Engagement Models for Sustainability of Organisation

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Abstract: Out of several resources available to the organizations, management of human resource, in general, and keeping the employees engaged in the work place, in particular, has become the most sensitive aspect that plays a crucial role in the success or failure of the business today. Dealing with employee engagement is nothing but handling successfully the complex feelings, emotions and psychological state of minds of the employees. While engaged employees have a positive attitude and self-commitment to deliver better outcomes for the success of the organization; an imbalance in the ‘effort-reward’ or ‘work-life’ would essentially generate higher stress among the employees that may result burnout and further staff-turnover in the organization. In this study, attempts have been made to discuss the meaning and significance of the employee engagement in the organization. Further, various models related to employee engagement have been discussed and the factors that keep the employees motivated and engaged have been highlighted. The study suggests that the management should be cautious enough to take care of the employees in the way that they should feel valued and involved in the work. The emotional and psychological availability and a cordial relationship of the employees with their co-workers and supervisors should be the essence of employee engagement.

Key Words: Employee engagement, Employee engagement models, Drivers of employee engagement, Rewards and recognitions, Community and social support, Fairness and justice, Sustainable workload, Supportive work community, Effort-reward imbalance, Work-life-work imbalance, stress, Job burnout.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employees are the key component of every organization as they are critical to its viability and the competitiveness. Engaged employees are considered as most valuable asset for every organization (Kumar and Sia, 2012; Khan, 2013). High level of employee engagement in domestic and global firms promotes retention of talent, fosters customer loyalty, and improves organizational performance and stakeholder’s value (Harter et al., 2002; Bates, 2004; Richman, 2006; Lockwood, 2007; Molinaro and Weiss, 2008; Markos and Sridevi, 2010). Engaged employees deliver better outcome with a positive attitude towards the organization and its values, which is important for its growth and development (Robinson et al., 2004; Saks, 2006). Thus communicating to the employees, making them feel valued and inculcating a strong corporate culture have been considered vital for the management of every organization (Kontakos, 2007; Holwerda, 2007; Sengupta and Ramadoss, 2010; Panda, 2011; Xu and Thomas, 2011; Shuck and Herd, 2012).

II. UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement was conceptualized during the Nineteen Century and became more prominent in the present era of turbo-globalism and hyper-competition, keeping in mind the productivity and prosperity of both the employees and the organizations, as a whole. In the World of research, several postulates were formulated in relation to employee engagement and definitions were derived from various perspectives. Kahn (1990) viewed ‘engagement’ to be the simultaneous employment and expression of a person’s preferred self in task behaviours that promote connections to work and others, personal presence (physical, cognitive, and emotional), and active, full role performance. Further, Rothbard (2001) explained it as the ‘psychological’ presence including attention, or cognitive availability of the employee spending time in thinking about a role and his intensity of focus on the role. It refers to a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by a personal involvement with enthusiasm, vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Harter et al., 2002). Essentially, it is a two-way relationship between the employer and the employees, where the employees are positively, emotionally and intellectually committed to their organization and its success, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis (Tower-Perrin, 2003; Hewitt Associates, 2004; Robinson et al., 2004). On this context, Vaibhu (2004) expressed ‘employee engagement’ as a measurable degree of an employee’s positive or negative emotional attachment to his job, colleagues and organization which profoundly influences his willingness to learn and perform at work. Further, Mercer (2007) expressed it as a state of mind in which employees feel a vested interest in the company’s
success and are both willing and motivated to perform to levels that exceed the stated job requirements. It is the result of how employees feel about the work experience – the organization, its leaders, the work and the work environment. They must feel positive emotions toward their work to be personally meaningful, consider their work-load to be manageable, and have hope about the future of their work (Nelson and Simmons, 2003).

III. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT MODELS

While elaborating the concept of employee engagement, researchers like Khan (1990), Maslach et al. (2001), Robinson et al. (2004), Saks (2006) and Aon Hewitt (2011) formulated different models that categorically discussed about the various dimensions of employee engagement. Those essentially highlighted about the engaged employees, the environment and facilities that keep them motivated and dedicated to work for a mutual benefit while establishing a work-life balance in the day-to-day schedule. On this context, a detail investigation about these models have been made here and the outcomes are hereunder-

1. Kahn’s Model

Kahn’s model (1990) of employee engagement is considered to be the oldest model of employee engagement. His model emphasizes that there are three psychological conditions that are associated with personal engagement and disengagement of work: meaningfulness, availability and safety (Refer: Figure-1.1). For the purpose of his study, Kahn interviewed summer camp counselors and organizational members of an architectural firm about their moments of engagement and disengagement at work. He found that, workers were more engaged at work situations that offered them more psychological meaningfulness and psychological safety, and when they were psychologically available.

![Kahn’s Model on Employee Engagement](image)

**Figure - 1.1**

Kahn’s Model on Employee Engagement

- **Meaningfulness** *(Need to feel valued about their work by themselves as well as by others)*
  - Create Goals.
  - Ensure adequate level of challenges.
  - Allow creativity.
  - Give autonomy.

- **Availability** *(Emotionally and psychologically available to perform the work)*
  - create a feeling of security.
  - Develop confidence about his own capability.
  - Develop self-consciousness.
  - Ensure fit with the social system.

- **Safety** *(Cordial relationship of the employee with his co-worker and supervisor)*
  - Develop support by co-workers and supervisor.
  - Create predictable norms and management style.

SOURCE: (Khan, 1990; Graber, 2014)

2. Maslach, Schaufelli and Leiter Model

Another model of engagement comes from the research work of Maslach, Schaufelli and Leiter on “Job Burnout” in the year 2001. According to them, six areas of work-life lead to burnout and engagement: (I) work load (II) control (III) rewards and recognitions (IV) community and social support (V) perceived fairness, and (VI) values. In their model, they argued that job engagement is associated with various characteristics like (i) sustainable workload (ii) feeling of choice and control (iii) appropriate recognition and reward (iv) a supportive work community (v) fairness and justice, and (vi) meaningful and valued work (Refer: Figure-1.2). It came to light that like burnout, engagement is expected to mediate the link between the six work-life factors and various works out-comes. Further, they argued that job characteristics, especially feedback and autonomy, have been constantly related to burnout.
3. **Robinson, Perryman and Hayday Model**

The model developed by Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004) (hereafter Robinson et al., 2004) described engagement as a two-way relationship between the employer and employees (Hewitt Associates, 2004). Their model was described in the research work entitled “The drivers of employee engagement”, where they suggested that employee engagement is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organization and its values. The model further identified that an engaged employee is one who is aware of business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job to add value to the organization. The model emphasizes, the commitment of employees is possible when the organization continues to focus on developing and nurturing the employees (Refer: Figure-1.3)

**Fig: 1.3**

Robinson, Perryman and Hayday Model on Employee Engagement

4. **Saks Model**

A conceptual model was developed by Saks in the year 2006 in the context of his research work on “Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement” that focused on three basic aspects of employee engagement: (i) the employees and their psychological makeup and experience (ii) the ability of the employer to create a conducive environment that promotes employee engagement, and (iii) interaction between employees at all levels. The researcher developed an evaluation process and showed the interconnection between three parameters: antecedents, employee engagement and consequences (Refer: Figure-1.4). Factors like job satisfaction, training and development, reward and recognition, and assertive relationship with peers and supervisors have been taken...
as antecedents that impact directly the state of engagement of employees that can be attributed to the factors like commitment, ownership, satisfaction, participation etc. The ‘consequences’ are the end result of the evaluation process that can be evaluated with customer satisfaction and enhanced performance measures.

**Fig. 1.4**

Saks Model on Employee Engagement

5. **Aon Hewitt Model**

The Aon Hewitt model (2011) examines both the individual state of engagement as well as the organizational antecedents. It states ‘engagement’ as the state of emotional and intellectual involvement that motivates employees to do their best work. The model has a global validation supported by over 15 years of research in the area of organizational psychology.

According to this model, engagement is an individual, psychological and behavioral state and the behavior of the engaged employees demonstrates positive outcomes in the business like customer satisfaction, increased sales, and other positive extra role behaviours (Refer: Figure-1.5).

**Figure-1.5**

Aon Hewitt’s Engagement Behaviour Model

Further, according to this model, there are typically six engagement drivers and twenty two organizational antecedents attached to these drivers that lead to individual’s engagement in an organization (Refer: Figure-1.6). The engagement drivers are identified as (i) quality of life (ii) work (iii) people (iv) opportunities (v) total rewards, and (vi) company practices. However, apart from the people factor rests are resulting through the people factor itself. Hence the people factor is the most crucial element driving the rest of the factors. Further, the model says that the engagement drivers are interrelated, and they do not operate in isolation.
IV. CONCLUSION

‘Engagement’ basically describes the conditions under which people work (Macey and Schneider, 2008). It reflects the positive emotional and intellectual connection of an employee with his work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It is normative, affective and continuance commitment of an employee. If employees are engaged they are inspired to go above and beyond the call of duty to meet organizational requirements. Further, they reinforce and support the organization’s culture and values.

From the examination of various models, several propositions have also come to light that categorically stated about the significance of engagement as a corporate practice and the different parameters that would keep the employees engaged, motivated and inspired, reduce turnover and improve well-being of the employees (Wright and Cropanzano, 2000; Taris et al., 2004; Griffith, 2004; Michie and West, 2004; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Robinson et al., 2004; Hakanen et al., 2008). However, measuring engagement has remained highly crucial for the fact that it deals with the complex feelings, emotions and psychological state of mind of the employees (Macey and Schneider, 2008). At the same time, the imbalance related to the ‘effort-reward’ or ‘work-life’ would generate stress that may result burnout, and further staff-turnover in the organization. However, it is important to remember that engagement and burnout are two different and opposite concepts. With the dynamic environment and the era of hyper-competition, keeping the employees engaged and organizations sustainable is perhaps the biggest challenge of this Millennium.

REFERENCES


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