Employee Motivation and Engagement

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Drivers of Motivation and Engagement

Employee motivation and employee engagement go hand-in-hand, but each is commonly mistaken for the other (Galloway, 2016). This occurs so frequently that when an employee lacks one, managers may incorrectly attempt to treat the other. Take, for example, an employee who gets a lot done for the company but is never really involved with other team members. A manager may try to redirect or rehabilitate the employee by providing financial incentives and bonuses, or conversely, may threaten the employee's job to induce a fear-based motivation, but this manager would be providing a treatment method proscribed for poor motivation when in fact this employee is motivated, but just lacks engagement since they're acting more like a lone wolf than a team player (Trammell, 2019). Undoubtedly, it is important to know what drives motivation and to know what drives engagement, but first we must clarify differences between the two. A motivated employee is noticeably high-energy and excited. In general, motivation is that noticeable energy and excitement (Galloway, 2016). In turn, engagement is the focus of the employee's efforts (Galloway, 2016). Thus, in the example above, the employee was producing some real work and achieving results for the company, yet because he lacked true engagement, he did not work well with others in the organization.

Employee motivation can be driven in a number of ways, to wit; through achievement, authority, camaraderie, independence, esteem, safety/security, or fairness (Entrepreneur Handbook, 2014). Fowler (2017) divides sources of employee motivation into two broad categories and classifies them as either optimal or suboptimal. The suboptimal methods, which Fowler relates to junk-food, are generally methods of external motivation and only provide short-bursts of employee motivation, such as tangible rewards (gifts, promotions, and prizes) or intangible rewards (promises of power, status, or enhanced image) (Fowler, 2017). Another example of suboptimal motivation includes imposed motivation, such as instilling fear in employees and pressuring them into performing (Fowler, 2017). In contrast to these suboptimal methods, Fowler (2017) gave presentation on optimal methods of motivation which she relates to healthy foods. Examples of optimal motivation include aligning corporate goals with employees' significant values, connecting corporate goals to noble purposes, encouraging employees that they are contributing to something greater than themselves, and inherent motivation where the employee is inspired to truly believe in the work that they are doing or takes personal interest in it.

Imagine an employee who desired to put forth effort but didn't have an idea how or what things he could do to successfully achieve that target; for this reason it is important to understand what drives employee empowerment. Employee engagement can be driven in a number of ways, to wit; through rewards, employee wellness, empowerment, improved workplace culture, career growth, brand alignment, and social relations (Question Pro, 2021). Perhaps the greatest example of driving engagement can be achieved through the cultivation of good social relationships at work. The more that employees establish relationships with each other the more inclined they will be to work together, the less resistant to asking for help from one another, and the more cooperatively they will work together which will maximize the synergistic effect of their labor. Another great example of engagement is seen when employees begin to align themselves with the company and brand (Question Pro, 2021). When this starts to happen, managers begin to see employees not objecting to putting in a few extra hours of overtime or to going above and beyond the call of duty.

Supporting or Inhibiting Motivation and Engagement

The organization that I have selected to evaluate is my previous employer, New Hope Ministries. New Hope Ministries is a non-profit organization, church, and a ministry which serves the community in Naples, Florida. During my tenure there, I experienced many ways in which the organization supported motivation and engagement. In the article *Making Work Less Stressful and More Engaging for Your Employees*, Harvard Business Review notes particular methods for creating a work environment that decreases stress (Peart, 2019). New Hope Ministries specifically employed these methods when managers provided clear expectations, reasonable deadlines, and calm workspaces (Peart, 2019). A great example was seen in how the pastor would lead the employees in a morning prayer every day to start the day off on a good note. This, and other examples, helped to drive employee engagement by enhancing workplace culture (Question Pro, 2021). New Hope Ministries would drive employee motivation in a lot of ways too; specifically, in some of the "health food" ways that Fowler (2017) presented as optimal motivators. The organization sought an aligned motivational outlook by aligning organizational goals with spiritual values of the staff which brought about an internal satisfaction; satisfaction in the work that we, as employees, were doing (Pellikaan, 2021). New Hope managers would commonly employ DISC testing and other skill- or personality-based testing to ensure that employees' talents were being properly used in their employment. Consequently, employees, myself included, loved what we did for the organization and always strived to master the skills necessary to complete our work, and in doing so we were enthusiastic in the application of our disparate talents and constantly learning new things to be more successful in our positions. This came from New Hope striking the perfect balance of engagement and motivation (Richardson, 2017). Evidence of employee engagement in particular was seen in our emotional commitment to the organization and its goals (Kruse, 2012).

Actions to Enhance Engagement and Motivation

According to Gallup's study, 51% of employees are disengaged (Question Pro, 2021). According to Towers Perrin research, companies with engaged workers have 6% higher net profit margins, and according to Kenexa research, companies with engaged employees have five times higher shareholder returns (Kruse, 2012). Management plays an important role in employee engagement and motivation (Ryba, 2021). Managers can effectively support or inhibit each and having reviewed this presentation on employee engagement and motivation may leave some managers noting their need for change but lacking clear steps to take next. First, managers ought to define company culture through the creation and implementation of a clear mission statement, vision, values, and expectations for employee behavior (O'Boyle, 2020). Second, they can prevent burnout and overwork by encouraging employees to take time for themselves and provide clear boundaries that support a healthy work-life balance (Ryba, 2021). Third, managers can give employees challenging tasks that rely on their strengths while supporting their professional growth (Ryba, 2021). Implementing these steps will be taking a giant stride forward in increasing employee engagement and motivation.

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