Employee Engagement: Key to Success for Contemporary Organisations

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Abstract

Every employee in an organization is expected to believe in its mission, purpose and values and demonstrate the requisite commitment through his actions as an employee and his attitude towards the employer and customers. This exactly is the situation which is called Employee Engagement. When an employee has full belief in the organization, has a desire to work to make things better and understands the business context, he is termed to be an Engaged Employee. And this is the need of the hour. The Contemporary Organisations need to have optimum Employee Engagement in order to survive, succeed and grow in today's changing unpredictable scenario. Employee engagement is a state where employees are maximizing their heart, mind and body, a state where they are fully contributing to the organization. An engaged employee is the one who works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. He puts forth an extra effort, as well as is a very loyal towards his organization stays there for long and shows a strong level of commitment. Employee Engagement is a powerful source of competitive advantage. Employers with engaged employees tend to experience low employee turnover and more impressive business outcomes. Employee engagement has become a critical business issue for contemporary organizations if they want to make it to the next competitive landscape. It is central to an organization's productivity and sustainability. An attempt has been made in this paper to understand the concept, importance and facilitators of employee engagement that can help organizations to make the most from the employees and shall also help them in deciding and prioritizing on the initiatives.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Concept, Importance, Facilitators

INTRODUCTION

"The best companies now know, without a doubt, where productivity—real and limitless productivity—comes from. It comes from challenged, empowered, excited, rewarded teams of people. It comes from engaging every single mind in the organization, making everyone part of the action, and allowing everyone to have a voice—a role—in the success of the enterprise. Doing so raises productivity not incrementally, but by multiples."

Jack Welch

We generally define and characterize ourselves by our jobs. When we try to get acquainted to someone, the first question we often ask is, "So what do you do?" And when we do not feel valued in the workplace, it affects the core of our existence. We want respect, recognition, and rewards in lieu of services provided by us to the organization. We also want to work in the best organisation, handling the most suitable profile and enjoying great autonomy.

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If we are getting all such things in an organization, it is quite likely that we demonstrate full commitment through our actions and their attitude towards the employer. Then only, can we work for the attainment of mission, purpose and values of our organization. And this, in turn makes us fully satisfied with the job. But there is still something beyond Job satisfaction. It is Employee Engagement, which has become the most important word in any organization.

Let us just look at these questions and try to choose what exactly out of them Employee Engagement is:
- Some management technique to make employees to do whatever is told to them, instantly, or
- When two employees plan to get married, or even,
- Some meeting of an employee with a client or
- All of the above (they all sound equally good)

Coming on a serious note, Employee Engagement is a psychological state 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. Engagement fosters and drives discretionary behavior, eliciting employees' highest productivity, their best ideas and their genuine commitment to the success of the organization.

Employee Engagement is the degree to which an employee is emotionally bonded to his/her organization and is passionate about the work that really matters. It is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his organization and its values. The present study has been done to understand the concept of Employee Engagement and the steps for facilitating Employee Engagement.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
1.   SEMANTICS
According to Kahn (1990), Employee Engagement is "the harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". The cognitive aspect of employee engagement concerns employees' beliefs about the organization, its leaders and working conditions. The emotional aspect concerns how employees feel about each of those three factors and whether they have positive or negative attitudes toward the organization and its leaders. The physical aspect of employee engagement concerns the physical energies exerted by individuals to accomplish their roles. Mc Cashland (1999) defines EE as an emotional outcome to the

employee resulting from the critical components of the workplace. Miles (2001) opine that EE means to intensively involve all employees in high-engagement cascades that create understanding, dialogue, feedback and accountability. He also insists that it means to empower people to creatively align their subunits. According to Daniel (2004), EE is a positive, two-way relationship between employee and his organization where both parties are aware of their own and the other's needs, and support each other to fulfill these needs and go the extra mile, and both reap mutual benefits. Similarly, Lanphear (2004), explains EE as the bond employees have with their organization. And when they really care about the business, they are more likely to go the extra mile.

According to Professor Katie Truss[1] "Engagement is about creating opportunities for employees to connect with their colleagues, managers and wider organisation. It is also about creating an environment where employees are motivated to want to connect with their work and really care about doing a good job…It is a concept that places flexibility, change and continuous improvement at the heart of what it means to be an employee and an employer in a twenty-first century workplace.

Thus Employee Engagement can be understood as the degree to which an employee is emotionally bonded to his/her organisation and is passionate about the work that really matters. It also explains the extent to which people enjoy and believe in what they do and feel valued for doing it.

2.   REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hewitt (2005) describes engagement as the measure of an employee's emotional and intellectual commitment to their organization and its success – in other words, a hearts and minds philosophy. Gubman (2004) in his study, suggests that the key goal of engagement should be determined by the organization and its strategic goals for the year. What drives that particular organization to succeed will be determined by the strongest levers of the company's leadership, brand, culture, rewards framework, communication and infrastructure. Effrom, Gandorsey and Goldsmith (2003) further elaborate that what engages employees is the feeling that they are making a difference in the work that they care about; that they are working with people who shares their mission and values; and that their company respects them as adults. In a nutshell, it is submitted that employee engagement involves an emotional and psychological connection with an organization and its people which can be translated into positive or negative behaviour at work. The organization and its environment play a leading role in shaping employees' attitudes and the state of engagement.

3.   THE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Hewitt (2005) views engagement as an outcome of employees' organizational experiences that are characterized by behaviors that are grouped in to three categories: say, stay and strive. Three elements are measured in engagement. Employees are engaged when they:

- **SAY:** Speak positively about the organization to co-workers, potential employees and customers,
- **STAY**: Have an intense desire to be a member of the organization, and
- **STRIVE**: Exert extra effort and are dedicated to doing the very best job possible to contribute to the organization's business success.
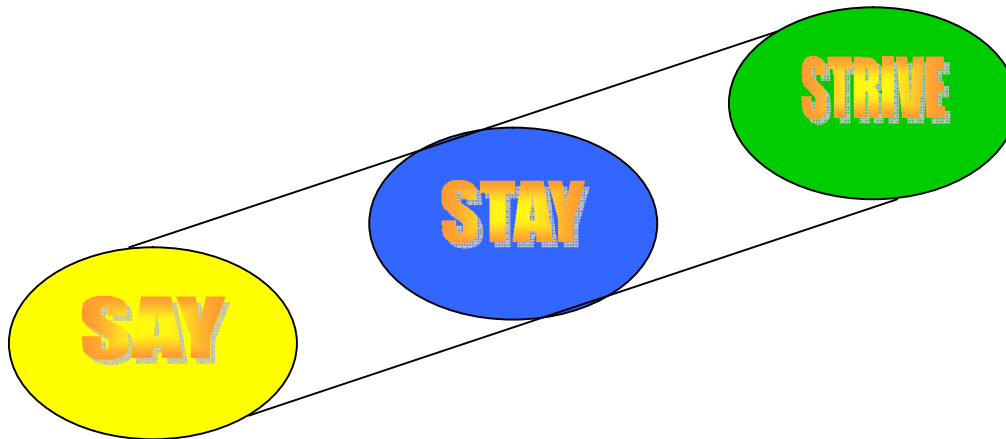
Fig 1: The Engagement Model

3.   CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

According to the Gallup, A Consulting organization, there are there are different types of people:-

1. **Engaged**--"Engaged" employees are builders and want to know the desired expectations for their role so they can meet and exceed them.
2. **Not Engaged**---Not-engaged employees tend to concentrate on tasks rather than the goals and outcomes they are expected to accomplish.
3. **Actively Disengaged**--These are the "cave dwellers." They're not just unhappy at work; they're busy acting out their unhappiness.

4. RELATIONSHIP AMONGST EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION, MOTIVATION, COMMITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

All the concepts, though related to each other, differ in meanings. Brown (1996), views engagement as a progressive combination of satisfaction, motivation, and commitment and resulting from employees movement towards engagement (see figure 2).

1. **Employee satisfaction:** It is the most passive measures. Satisfaction is what gets/ makes employees to just show up for work. It is the base level of employee contentment whether or not they can do their job, how happy they are with their pay, how well they like their working environment they have no real desire to go the extra mile.
2. **Motivation:** The "buzz" employees feel about their work and a desire to excel in it. A motivated worker will want to go the extra mile in the performance of their work.
3. **Commitment:** Whereas motivation works at an individual level, commitment   is about feeling part of the wider company. Committed workers become positive ambassadors for their companies.
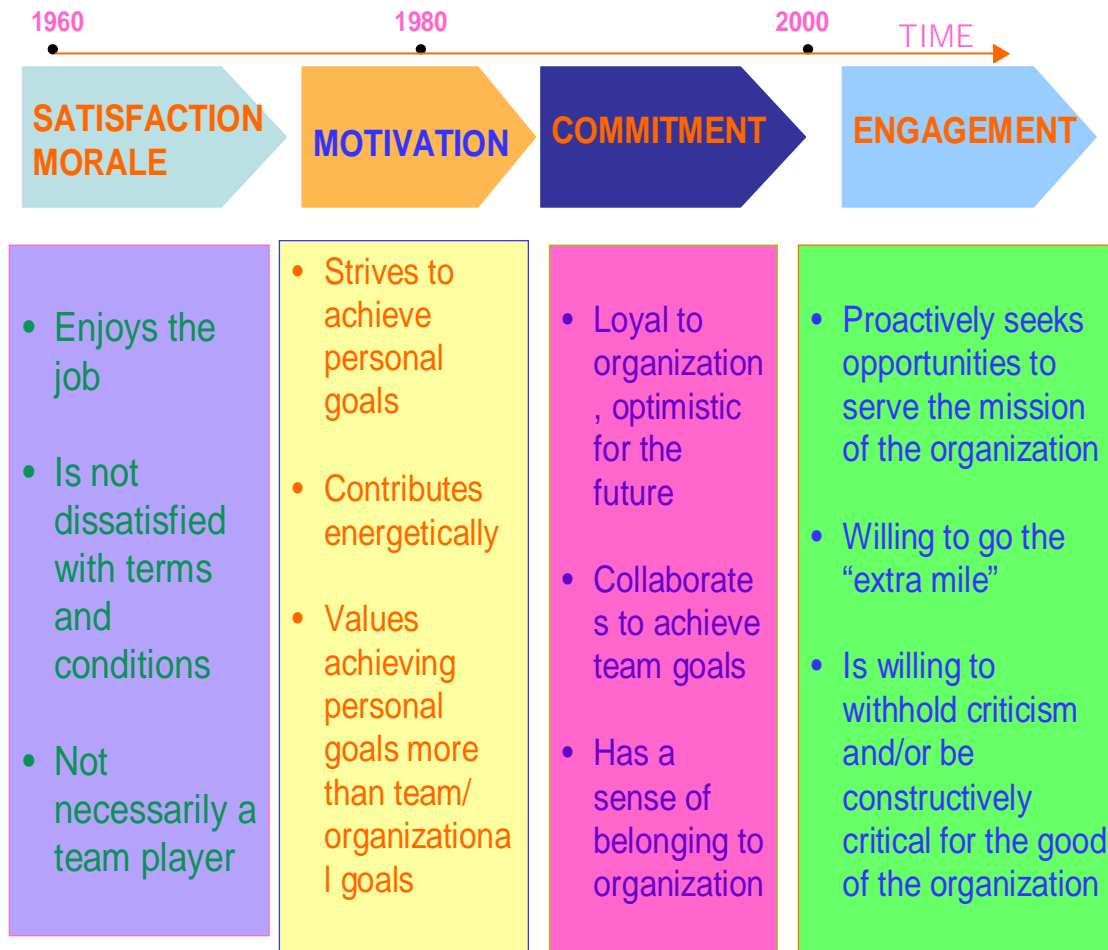
Fig 2: The Relationship of Employee Engagement Satisfaction, Motivation and Commitment

4. Engagement: Engagement is said to be present when an employee displays positive discretionary behaviors and efforts towards completion of the job. This can be understood as below:

1. Discretion in behavior and efforts
2. Positive Discretion in behavior and efforts:
3. Intensity of Positive Discretion in behavior and efforts:

Engagement is a combination of all the preceding factors. An engaged worker is satisfied, motivated, committed and is an advocate for the company and what it produces.

5.   ASPECTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT:
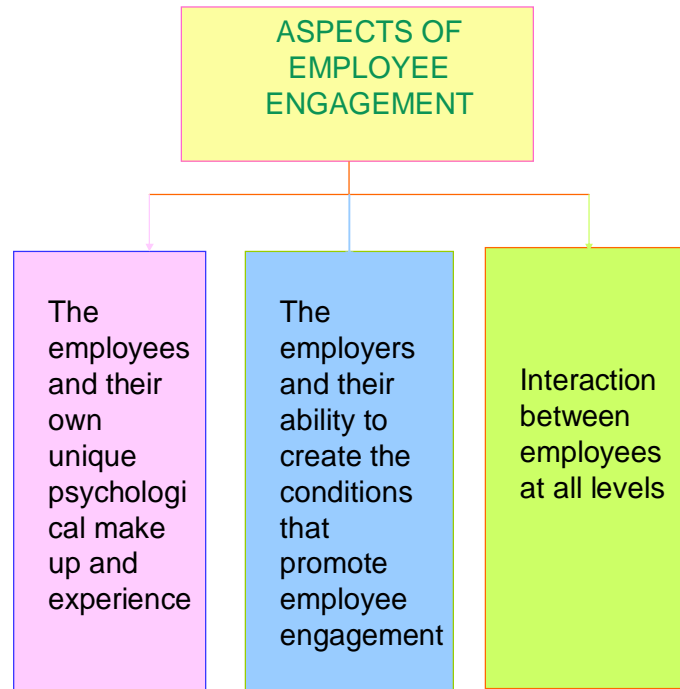Three basic aspects of employee engagement are:-

Fig 2: The Three Aspects of Employee Engagement

Thus, it is largely the organization's responsibility to create an environment and culture conducive to this partnership.

6.   FEATURES/ CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT
Higher levels of engagement can be attained while keeping certain beliefs in mind. The following can make the understanding of the Employee Engagement concept more clear:

1.Employee Engagement ensures efficiency and effectiveness in successful completion of any task:
An engaged workforce can be recognized as an   unparallel competitive advantage. In its absence, execution of corporate   initiatives may become intricate.

2. Engagement is a Long-Term initiative:
EE is actually not so easy in execution. It cannot, therefore be achieved, but only improved.   Building high levels of employee engagement may take years of steady progress. And of course, it requires proper care too, otherwise, these gains achieved, may droop soon.

3. Engagement is from the top to bottom process:
Engagement is a business imperative and must pervade in all the parts. HR is a key player in driving higher levels of engagement. Support from the top is required and the senior managers themselves also be highly engaged themselves. It would be a difficult situation to imagine wherein there are highly engaged employees without highly engaged managers.

4. One of the best ways to have highly engaged employees is to hire them:
Those employees who show higher levels of engagement than others, regardless of the jobs they choose or assignments they receive, should be chosen and hired for the jobs.

5. Engagement is all about fit:
If the jobs and the culture of the organization match both the abilities and skills, and the motivation and values of the employees, they are then more likely to be engaged.   Along with considering ability and   skill match, the motivation and value match should be kept in mind at the time of hiring and promotions.

6. Employee's immediate leader highly impacts the state of engagement:
We all must have heard the phrase: "Most people do not leave their jobs; they leave their bosses." A leader who coaches for success, sets clear goals, empowers others, provides open and honest feedback, and makes the winners feel valued definitely makes a highly engaged team.

7. Effective Engagement measures should be simple and cost effective:
Big amount money is not required to be put into measuring and re measuring engagement. Instead, more energy and budget should be utilised for actually improving engagement levels and moving the needle in the right direction.

8. Engagement means reaching the heart:
Highly engaged employees make an extra effort for the reason that inside they care. And, they care because they feel someone is caring for them. A good manager, who   wants engaged employees insists on knowing the individuals as people, not just   employees. He yearns to know about their aspirations, interests, and families. This   sends   a   powerful message to employees that the organization understands and appreciates that they have a life outside work.

7.   FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

There   are   certain   factors   that   influence   Employee   Engagement.   These   can   be understood as:

1. Employee perceptions of job importance.
2. Employee clarity of job expectations.
3. Career advancement/improvement opportunities
4. Regular feedback and dialogue with superiors
5. Quality of working relationships with peers, superiors, and subordinates
6. Perceptions of the ethos and values of the organization

8.   COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Melcrum (2005) defines employee engagement as composing of 3 areas:

1. **Think" (Cognitive Commitment)**: describes an employee's intellectual connection with the company, including their support of and belief in the company's objectives.
2. **Feel" (Affective Commitment)**: describes a strong emotional connection to the company. They feel loyal, devoted, have a sense of belonging and are proud to work for the company.
3. **Act" (Behavioural Commitment)**: employees act in ways that support the success of the organization. Willingness to stay with the company despite other opportunities and frequently go above and beyond normal expectations to help the company succeed.

9. IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

It is now being extensively acknowledged by both practitioners and academicians that employee engagement is not merely a vogue. High levels of employee engagement considerably and positively impact at both organisational and individual levels. The Towers Watson 2007–2008 Global Workforce study demonstrates the links between employee engagement and performance. Observing 50 global organisations over a one-year period, this study found that organisations with high employee engagement benefited from a 19% increase in operating income, whereas organisations with low levels of engagement saw a 32% drop. It also found that organisations with highly engaged workforces experienced a 28% growth in earnings per share, compared with an 11% decline in earnings per share in organisations with low levels of engagement.

In other studies, high levels of employee engagement have been shown to impact positively on: organisational commitment (Saks 2006); customer satisfaction, loyalty, profitability, productivity and safety (Harter et al 2002). In addition, low levels of employee engagement have been linked to increased turnover intention (Saks 2006, Harter et al 2002, Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). According to Towers Perrin (2003), research shows that companies with higher levels of employee engagement outperform their competitors in terms of profitability. They proceed to state that Managers must first understand what engages their employees and what factors drives engagement in their companies. Disengaged employees, on the other hand, disconnect themselves from work roles and withdraw cognitively and emotionally. Disengaged employees display incomplete role performances and task behaviours become effortless, automatic or robotic (Hochschild, 1983). According to Hewitt (2005), enhancing employee engagement creates a .win-win. situation. Employees are happier and more productive and this ultimately leads to a positive impact on business results.

Engagement is important for managers to nurture commitment and motivation. Research using a different resource of engagement (involvement and enthusiasm) has also linked it to variables as employee turnover, customer satisfaction – loyalty, safety and to a lesser degree, productivity and profitability criteria. Some of the advantages of Engaged employees can be studied as:

1. Increases the Goodwill of the Company:
   Engaged employees will stay with the company, be an advocate of the company and its products and services, and contribute to bottom line business success. Employee Engagement also acts as a catalyst towards the retention of staff. Greenberg (2004) says that employee engagement is critical to any organization that seeks not only to retain valued employees, but also increase its levels of performance.
2. It increases the Motivation amongst the employees.
3. Profitability is significantly linked to employee engagement in the positive manner.
4. A positive attitude is built by Employee Engagement. They form an emotional connection with the company. This impacts their attitude towards the company's clients, and thereby improves customer satisfaction and service levels.
5. Passion, commitment and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals is built by Employee Engagement.
6. Increases employees' trust in the organization.
7. A sense of loyalty is created in a competitive environment.
8. Provides a high-energy working environment.
9. Boosts business growth.

10. Makes the employees effective brand ambassadors for the company.

11. A highly engaged employee will consistently deliver beyond expectations.

In the workplace research on employee engagement, (Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002) have repeatedly asked employees 'whether they have the opportunity to do what they do best everyday'. While one in five employees strongly agree with this statement. Those work units scoring higher on this perception have substantially higher performance. Thus employee engagement is critical to any organization that seeks to retain valued employees. The Watson Wyatt consulting companies has also proved that there is an intrinsic link between employee engagement, customer loyalty, and profitability. As organizations globalize and become more dependent on technology in a virtual working environment, there is a greater need to connect and engage with employees to provide them with an organizational 'identity.'
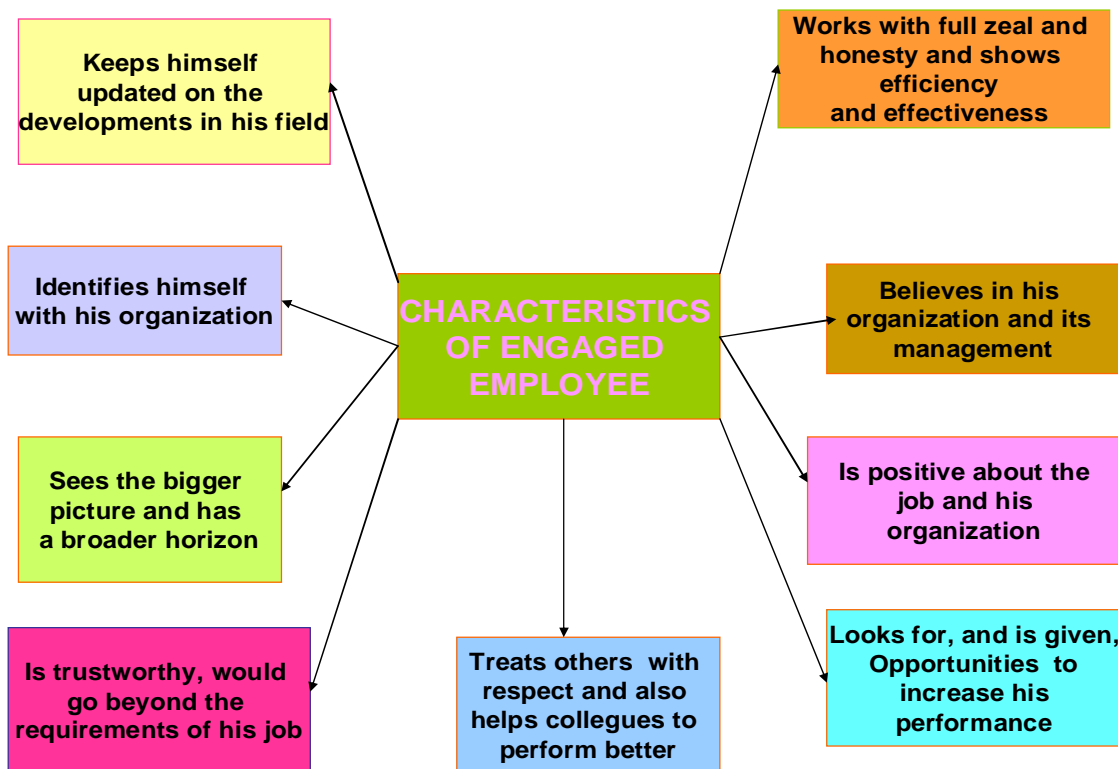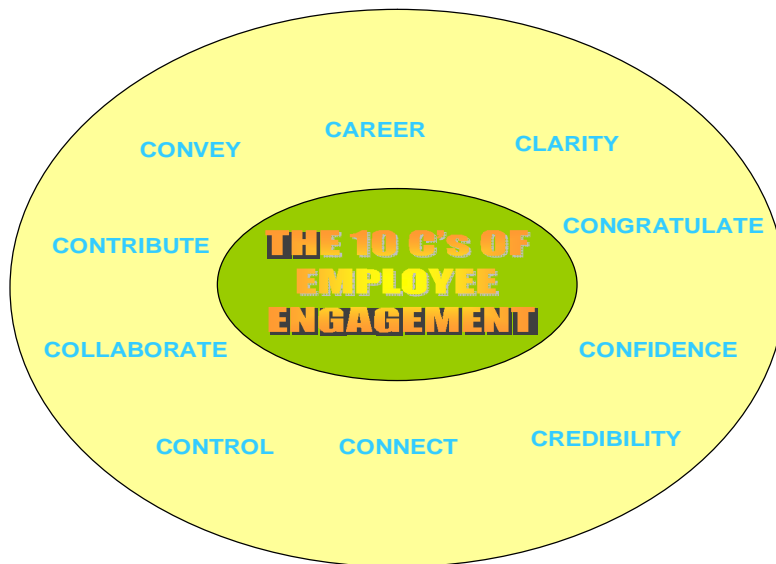
10. CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ENGAGED EMPLOYEE

Fig 3 : CHARACTERISTICS OF AN ENGAGED EMPLOYEE

11. THE 10 C's OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT:

The 10 C's of Employee Engagement explain to how to "Engage" the employees and how to allow them to overcome transient dissatisfaction and still remain valued team members. These can be seen in Fig:

1. Connect: Managers should connect with employees. Managers must show that they VALUE their Employees. They should adopt Friendly and open attitude to all Employees. Employee engagement is a direct reflection of how employees feel about their relationship with the boss. If relationship with their managers, is fractured, then no amount of perks will persuade employees to perform at top levels.

2. Career:
Managers should provide challenging and meaningful work with opportunities for career advancement. There should be job rotation. People should be accountable for progress and Jobs should be enriched in duties and responsibilities. Good leaders challenge employees; but at the same time, they instill the confidence that the challenges can be met.

3. Clarity
It is expected from leaders to clarify their expectations about employees and provide feedback on their functioning in the organization. They must establish processes and procedures that help people master important tasks and facilitate goal achievement. They also must provide honest and constructive feedback. Mentoring of younger (Gen Y) employees is a good example.

4. Convey
Leaders must clearly communicate goals, vision and a pathway!
People want to understand the vision that senior leadership has for the organization, and the goals that leaders or departmental heads have for the division, unit, or team. Success in life and organizations depends critically on how clear individuals are about their goals and what they really want to achieve.

5. Congratulate:

Employees should be frequently given immediate feedback both when their performance is good or bad. Praise and recognition for strong performance is very uncommon. Leaders must recognize Employees for achievement, participation, and utside accomplishments.

6. Contribute

Employees should be communicated that they are important and that they are contributing to the organization's success in a meaningful way. An Employee's understanding of the connection between their work and the strategic objectives of the company has a positive impact on job performance. Good managers/ leaders help people see and feel how they are contributing to the organization's success and future. Leaders need to show Employees that their input matters.

7. Control

Employees value control over the flow and pace of their jobs. Leaders can create opportunities for employees to exercise this control. Managers should consult with their employees with regard to their needs. The employees have the right to voice their ideas. Such a culture should be created where Employees want to take ownership of problems and solutions.

8. Collaborate

When employees work as a team with trust and cooperation, they outperform individuals and teams which lack good relationships. Great leaders are team builders. An environment that fosters trust and collaboration should be encouraged.

9. Credibility:

Leaders are expected to maintain a company's reputation and demonstrate high ethical standards. Such should be the organization, that people feel proud of their jobs, their performance, and their organization. That is possible only in an unethical organization. Employees want to follow a leader who is ethical and honest.

10. Confidence

Leaders are required to create confidence in a company by being role models for high ethical and performance standards. Leaders need to create confidence in the organization – be the best! They should ensure that all organizational operations are done:

- Professionally
- On-time
- Fiscally responsible
- Enjoyably

The leaders should make employee engagement one of their priorities. They should actively try to identify the level of engagement in their organization, find the reasons behind the lack of full engagement, strive to eliminate those reasons, and implement behavioral strategies

that will facilitate full engagement. Of course, it should be kept in mind that these efforts should be ongoing and can give an unmatched competitive advantage.

12.   FACILITATORS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

It is very essential to identify the areas for improvement within organisations. There are a range of factors, known as drivers that are perceived to increase overall engagement. By managing these drivers/ facilitators, an organisation can effectively manage engagement levels of its employees. Drivers to EE imply the factors that assist in improvement within organizations. Drivers such as communication, performance clarity and feedback, organisational culture, rewards and recognition, relationships with managers and peers, career development opportunities and knowledge of the organisation's goals and vision are some of the factors that facilitate employee engagement. Some other facilitators/ drivers can be understood as:

1. **Feeling Valued and Involved:** A feeling of being valued and involved is the strongest driver of employee engagement, This relates to several aspects like:
    - Involvement in Decision- Making,
    - The extent to which the employees feel able to voice their ideas, and managers listen to these views, and value employee's contributions.
    - The opportunities employees have to develop their jobs,
    - The extent to which the organization is concerned for employee's health and well being.
2. **Making employee realize the job importance** - Ryan, Richard and Edward (2000) feel that an employee's attitude towards the job's importance and the company has the greatest impact on loyalty and customer service then all other employee factors combined.
3. **Clarity of job expectations** – If the employees are clear about their expectations from the job, that would lead to creation of positive vibes amongst them and they can thus focus on how he can help the organization succeed.
4. **Unambiguous HR Policies**: If the HR policies, towards which the employees are expected to be committed, are clearly passed on to them, it helps in EE. Specifically, the policies relating to appraisals, equal opportunities and family friendliness.
5. **Effective Leaders and Managers:** The seniors should care about their employees and treat them with impartiality and hence encourage them to perform better. The employees should also be encouraged for participation and training and development opportunities.
6. **Providing Career advancement/improvement opportunities** - Hulme (2006) in a research, found that "Plant supervisors and managers indicated that many plant improvements were being made outside the suggestion system, where employees initiated changes in order to reap the bonuses generated by the subsequent cost savings." If the employees are given frequent trainings, they consider themselves as a part of the organization and realize that the organization takes a long term view of their value.
7. **Continuous feedback and meetings with superiors** - Feedback helps in giving a response to the employees that whether they're going on a desired track, or not. It also motivates an employee if we give a positive feedback in presence of all and a negative one in privacy.
8. **Better working relationships with peers, superiors, and subordinates** - Ryan, Richard and Edward (2000) opine that "...if employees' relationship with their managers is fractured, then no amount of perks will persuade the employees to perform at top levels. Employee engagement is a direct reflection of how employees feel about their relationship with the boss."

9. **Emphasis on ethos and values of the organization** - Watson (2002) feel that inspiration and values very important for EE.
10. **Effective Internal Employee Communications:** Effective internal communication proves to be very constructive in global organization, specially in case of Transnational Organizations and Virtual Teams where employees are far away from the action and know little about what is happening. Two way communication should be sought wherein the employees can put up their ideas as well.
11. **Co-operation amongst all the parties:** These parties are the different departments, management, employees and Trade Unions.
12. **Employee Well Being:** Steps taken by the organization towards the safety and security needs of the employees, working for minimization of accidents, injuries, violence and harassment, and taking appropriate and speedy actions help in EE.
13. **Employee Involvement:**
    Lucas et al (2006) explain that employee voice can be defined as the ability for employees to have an input into decisions that are made in organizations. Truss et al (2006) also feel that one of the main drivers of employee engagement is for employees to have the opportunity to feed their view upwards.
14. **Appropriate Rewards to deserving:** - An incentive to reward good work boosts the staff morale and makes them more loyal towards their organizations. The incentive scheme should be communicating to the employees to obtain sustained efforts from the employee side.

Institute for Employment Studies (IES) did an attitude survey of over 10,000 employees in 14 organizations in the NHS. According to the report, the feeling of being valued and involved leads to engagement. The report explains the following as the drivers to Employee Engagement.
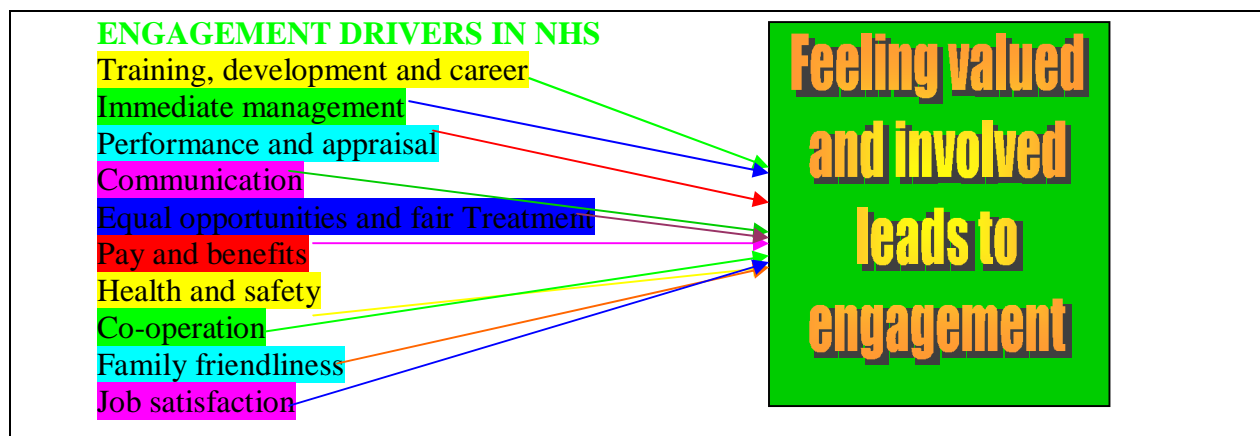

Fig 2: Employee Engagement Drivers,   Source: IES Survey, 2003

CONCLUSION
The organizations should continuously identify the engagement levels and the specific drivers which will significantly enhance the engagement levels. Then only, can they expect the employees to put forth that extra discretionary effort and be loyal with the organization. Hence, the employees shall be engaged and perform better, put in extra efforts to help get the job done, show a strong level of commitment to the organization, and become more motivated and

optimistic about their work goals. The organization, can thus also Employers experience very low or no employee turnover and have more impressive business outcomes.

We may sum up that the premier objective of management should be to bring about optimal financial performance with a fully engaged workforce. Along with the employee's willingness to work hard and identify with the company, a good leadership is also important. All managers and supervisors should become a part of the change process, with the goal being a true cultural modification that heightens employee engagement and improves organizational performance and the bottom line. It should be part of an organization's continuous improvement process; not a one time event.

In the end, the need of enhanced employee engagement in the present contemporary scenario can be understood as that it will pay real dividends for the organization. It will favorably impact achievement of the organization's mission and goals and holds strong promise for helping the organization to retain good employees, build high performance teams, and compete most successfully.

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