



WORDS ON WISE MANAGEMENT

Why employee engagement must be a priority, not an option

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When it comes to your workplace, do you know how many members of your team are truly engaged? On average, U.S. companies have an engagement level of 32%. Basically, one out of three of your team members is engaged. Studies suggest that disengaged employees cost the U.S. economy between \$400 billion and \$600 billion a year!

Levels of engagement

Let's focus on three levels of employee engagement. At the first level are the above-mentioned 32% of employees who are truly engaged in their work and are passionate supporters of their organization. Those employees feel a real connection to the workplace and a passion for their jobs. This group of employees provides the team with creativity and innovation. They continually work to move the organization in a positive direction.

At the other end of the spectrum are the actively disengaged employees who make up about 20% of the workforce. Actively disengaged employees, or "dangerous detractors," consciously or unconsciously undermine your company's mission. Those employees are toxic and will eventually affect engaged employees.

Lastly, there is a neutral group of employees who do not lean one way or the other when it comes to engagement. This group is the compliant core and makes up about 48% of a typical workforce. These team members just go through the motions of work every day, lacking energy, creativity, and passion.

Engagement factors

So how are you tracking and measuring engagement among your team members? If the adage "You can't manage what you can't measure" holds true, how are you managing a team without knowing the level of engagement?

Engagement depends on several factors, but the end goal is having team members become more intrinsically motivated and engaged at work. Many people think money is the long-term answer to

engagement issues, but that is not the case. One of the most important factors in employee engagement is the relationship with the immediate boss. If the relationship is poor, the team member is likely *not* one of your passionate supporters. So how do you find out which team members are engaged and which are not?

Measure to manage

Start by asking employees the right questions and then, most important, listening to their answers. That can be done via an online or print survey, in an open forum, or through another means of gathering information.

In addition, look at members of your leadership team individually. How are the relationships between frontline leaders and their teams? As with a long-term solution to any problem, we all know it must start at the top. Are the people at the top of your organization providing the support and information needed for frontline leaders to be successful?

How are the relationships between your leaders and their teams? Do your leaders connect with team members? Do they lead in a manner that encourages employees to come to work, be present, and actively participate in the company's success?

Study after study shows increased profits when places of employment have fully engaged teams. Other studies show many other benefits of engagement, including a decrease in attendance issues and a noticeable reduction in accidents. It only stands to reason: Engaged employees equal higher productivity and greater returns in the bottom line.

Look in the mirror

As a leader, are you willing to invest in finding out how engaged your employees are? Are you engaged enough to move the needle, or will you just go through the motions daily and wait for quitting time?



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