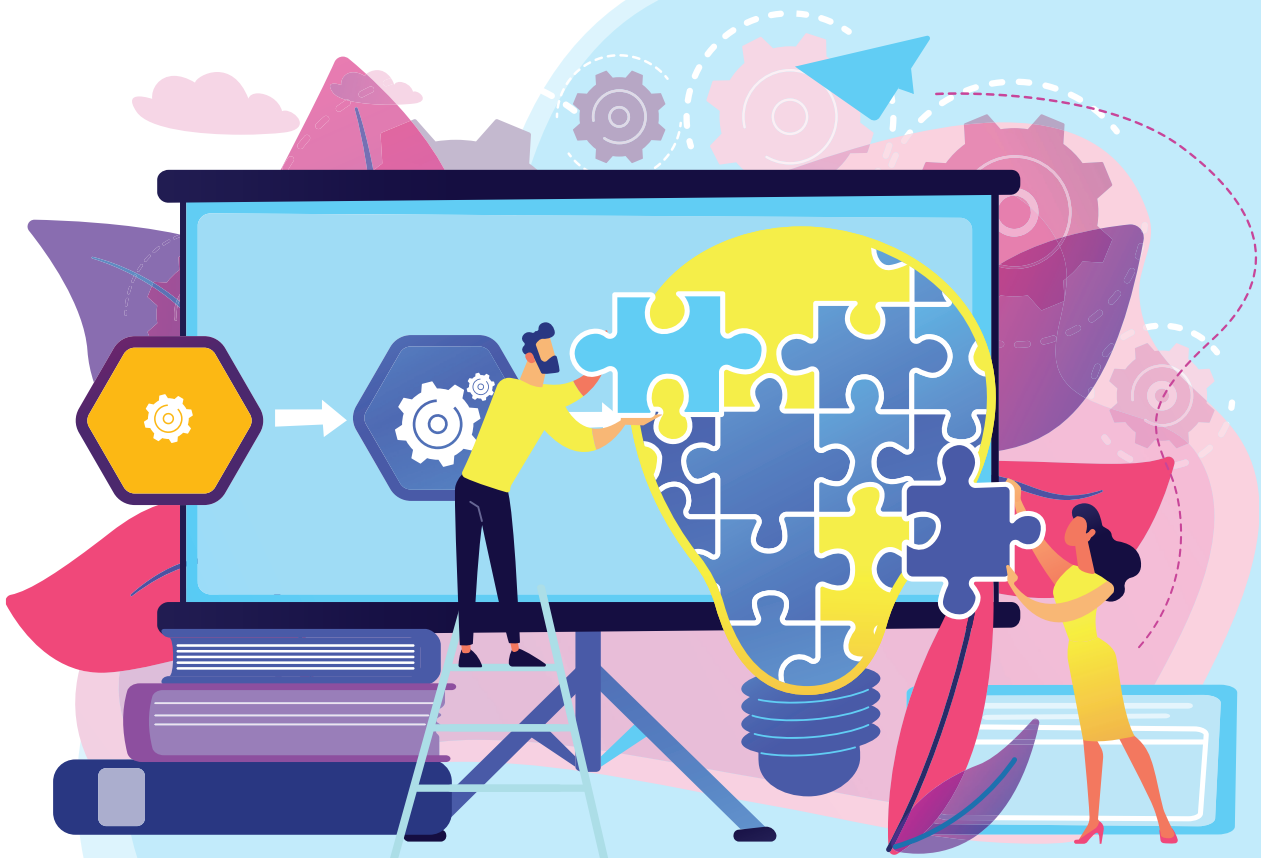


# DECODING AND DRIVING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

A step-by-step guide to employee engagement and what it takes to devise an effective strategy to ensure a happier and productive workforce



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# EDITOR'S DESK

## The 'magic of engaged people'!

In a game of soccer, when a midfielder cleverly manoeuvres the ball and passes it on to the forward to score a goal, it depicts his immense faith in his teammate. This 'faith' is built only when the team is engaged. History is replete with instances where a team dependent on that one 'superstar' has lost the game, while a weaker team has achieved victory based on the team members' engagement, collaboration and synchronous communication.

A winning team—on or off the field— will cultivate a culture of resilience, guts and courage led by a highly engaged workforce tied together by an attitude that 'everyone is more or less equal'.

There are many ways to build an engaged team – a transparent culture and a more participative and empowering team. However, the most important one is to have one purpose – a common mission –and be the winner.

For instance, the Southwest Airlines, which stands high on employee engagement, has given a sense of purpose – 'not just do the job but make a difference'— to its employees. This connects the organisation emotionally with its employees and creates a true sense of engagement.

The CEO and co-founder of Supercell, Ilkka Paananen, credits the success of his gaming company to its fantastic culture of operating like a soccer team – the developers are superstars and not their leaders.

Exceptional talent is not enough to give the desired result. It's also the company's prerogative to establish a high level of engagement and reinforce a culture that leads to an 'engaged' team.

We, at HRKatha, take pride in presenting some of the best practices in employee engagement and the contours of having engaged people at work in this e-book.

We thank our partner – Vantage Circle – for its support in this endeavour.

Happy reading!

**PRAJJAL SAHA**  
Founder & Editor, HRKatha



## EXPERT'S DESK

**T**here's no doubt about the need of employee engagement. However, in our experience interacting with hundreds of companies over the last eight years, what we realised was that companies struggle with ways to engage their employees in a meaningful and measurable manner, particularly in this rapidly-changing environment.

Employee engagement is an all-encompassing term, and organisations generally wonder how to break the various initiatives into actionable components. 'Where do we start? What tools can help enable and sustain these initiatives? What are the new ways to engage? – are some of the common questions being asked on a regular basis.

So, we decided to create an e-book in partnership with HRKatha to help codify our knowledge and experience. It is a compilation of our learnings, our domain expertise through years of experience combined with some secondary research to come up with content that is comprehensive and actionable.

Hopefully, you will find answers to some of your employee-engagement questions. Employee engagement is a journey and no matter where you are today, it can always be improved. This is a start and we hope to keep this document dynamic in nature by updating it with more material once we get your feedback.

Let's start engaging.

**PARTHA NEOG**  
CEO, Vantage Circle



# FOREWORD

**W**hat defines the strength of the relationship between an organisation and its employees? The answer is, engagement. This one word can illustrate various aspects of the relationship. An engaged employee is positive, productive, and collaborative. One who is passionate and lives the brand of the organisation. Someone who will strive to achieve more. All of this improves the longevity, and greater productivity, which leads to business growth.

At the centre of employee engagement is experience. This is what actually matters. It's about how the organisation treats its employees, the culture of the organisation and how peers and leaders behave. The richer the experience, the more engaged an employee is.

So, is it about happiness? Not exactly. An employee may just be happy because he gets to leave for home early, or he has found good friends at work. All engaged employees are happy, but not all happy employees are engaged.

How does this happen? The answer here is the emotional connect that the employee has with the organisation. It defines how engaged the employee is. That emotional connect will only happen when there is a healthy relationship between the organisation and the employee. An engaged employee will own the brand – he or she will go that extra mile because the success of organisations is personal to them. They want their businesses to succeed because they associate themselves with their company's mission, purpose, and values at a personal level.

Now this emotional connect is dependent on various factors, such as trust in leadership, reputation, good managers, quality and frequency of communication, health and well-being.

This e-book by HRKatha outlines the meaning, purpose and importance of employee engagement along with some interesting stories of how some successful companies have leveraged robust employee engagement as their staircase to success. This e-book will serve as a ready reckoner for those looking to improve their business growth. The answer is in having engaged employees. And HRKatha tells us how....

My best wishes...

**SV NATHAN**

*Partner & Chief Talent Officer, Deloitte India*

# WHAT IS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

Employee engagement can be tricky. While many equate engagement to happiness, that's not fully correct, as engagement is not just employee happiness.

Simply put, it is an instinctive feeling of responsibility towards the organisation you work for. While this feeling depends on the employees' personality and sense of purpose, companies can create an environment, where employees feel like taking up responsibilities. But for that, employees need to feel as one with the organisation. They need to be emotionally attached.

**“The concept of employee engagement is sometimes confused with happiness, but it's really about an employee's psychological investment in their organisation and motivation to produce extraordinary results.”**

**~ Ken Oehler**  
Aon's Global Culture & Engagement Practice Leader

Source: Aon News Release

It can be equated to the extent of commitment by the employees. An employee's engagement depends on how personally involved she/he is with the business, and how much the organisation's success matters to her/him. Engaged employees understand how their contribution matters in the bigger picture.



# EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Teams with high employee engagement rates are

**21%** More productive and have

**28%** Less internal theft

than those with low engagement.

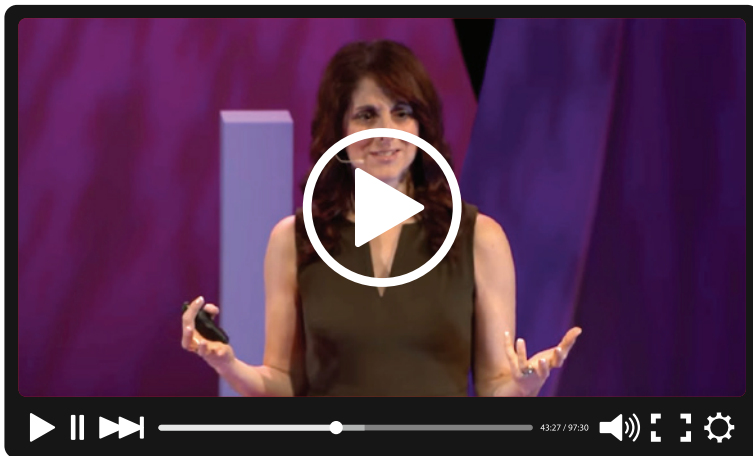
Source: Gallup



Employees who are engaged are

**27%** More likely to report EXCELLENT performance

Source: Gallup



Companies with engaged employees outperform those without by

**202%**

Source: Business 2 Community

“  
When people are financially invested, they want a return.  
When people are emotionally invested, they want to contribute.”

~ Simon Sinek

Source: Twitter

Organizations with low employee engagement scores saw

**18%** Lower productivity

**16%** Lower profitability,

**37%** Lower job growth,

**65%** Lower share price over time.

Source: Queens School of Business and by the Gallup

# WHY IT IS IMPORTANT?

Employee engagement levels reached its all-time high in 2017. Experts say the reason for this could be the improving economics in Asian and African regions.

Yet, not many organisations understand the importance of having an engaged workplace. Engaged employees help your business achieve its goals.

Engaged employees are more productive. They are motivated and success driven. According to a research carried out by the University of Cambridge, engaged employees are 43 per cent more productive than others.

With engaged employees, the

“**Companies with employees with above average engagement levels will see better employee productivity, lower turnover rates and higher customer satisfaction scores—all factors that can significantly contribute to improved financial performance.**”

~ **Ken Oehler**  
Aon’s Global Culture & Engagement Practice Leader

Source: Aon News Release

profitability of the company also increases. It affects the company’s bottom line. Wyatt Watson says companies with highly engaged employees generate 26 per cent higher revenue per employee.

When the employees are engaged, they make the company's goal their own and stay committed to it thus [improving the rate of retention](#) in an organisation.

It also reduces the rate of absenteeism. Engaged employees are ‘less likely to fall sick.’ A research by Gallup shows that engaged employees take 2.7 sick days per year, while disengaged employees take 6.2 sick days.

Again, in the words of Ken Oehler, “companies with employees with above average engagement levels will see better employee productivity, lower turnover rates and higher customer satisfaction scores—all factors that can significantly contribute to improved financial performance.”

# MYTHS ABOUT EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



## Myth #1: Sincere employees are engaged employees

Regularity at work is not the parameter to determine the capacity of an employee to engage. Sincere employees can be just as disengaged as any other employee.

The very premise of an engaged workforce is for one to go beyond what is expected. An engaged employee is motivated to learn better, effective and efficient ways to contribute to the organisation.

## Myth #2: Employee engagement requires a huge budget

Employee engagement is perceived as a very expensive endeavour, but it isn't. The prime drivers of employee engagement, such as employee recognition, appreciation and effective communication are all about company practices/culture.





Although a lot of things can be done in the engagement space, many of the engagement tools are available free of cost. All you need to do is get started!

**Myth #3:**  
**Employee engagement is solely HR's responsibility**

On the contrary, it is a collective responsibility. From the top level to the very bottom, establishing employee engagement requires the participation of all the people involved in the equation.

While the HR function may take it upon itself to make engagement initiatives a priority, it is the collective effort that will bear fruit. HR can encourage teams to suggest ideas to improve engagement within the organisation and implement the best ones.

**Myth #4:**  
**Happy employees are engaged employees**

While engaged employees are happy employees, the same cannot be said about happy employees. It's a myth that happy employees are engaged employees. Moreover, happiness need not correlate with the effectiveness and efficiency of your employees.

Build a happy workplace, by all means. It is vital. Then again, don't rest your hopes of an efficient and engaged workforce on a happy one alone.



**Myth #5:**  
**Employee engagement is all theory/employee engagement is just another trend**

Despite stunning numbers and statistics to back it up, employee engagement is still considered a vague concept. It is believed that there is only so much that can be done in this space. Employee engagement is often seen as an 'in-thing' or a trend, one that is destined to go off-radar in the coming years.

If there is one thing that can be guaranteed, it is that employee engagement isn't going anywhere any time soon. Employee engagement is real, effective and will see growth in future.

# COMPONENTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT



One thing that must be kept in mind is that communication is a two-way street. To make employee communication efficient, you must be willing to listen to your employees. When there is a constant and honest flow of communication, you too are well aware of what your employees need, where they stand and can fight fire when needed quicker than ever.

More importantly, when you make efforts to keep your employees in the loop of the developments in a company, it instills a sense of belongingness in them.

## 1. EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION:

Effective employee communication is a building block for creating a holistic work environment. A robust [communication strategy](#) within the organisation ensures your company works like a well-oiled machine. It includes the exchange of information, ideas, and feelings within the workforce. It encourages teamwork and collaboration in the organisation.

Effective communication acts as a strong factor in uniting the individuals and driving them towards a common goal, that is the betterment and success of the business.





**Communication can't always follow the top-down model. With the fluidity of information in business today, leaders need to be masterful listeners; they need to be able to receive as well as send. ”**

~ **Joseph Badaracco**  
Professor of Business Ethics,  
Harvard Business School

Source: Harvard Business School, Alumni Stories

The global digital marketing automation company, Hubspot, for instance, is redefining the meaning of transparency in business. HubSpot co-founder and chief technology officer, Dharmesh Shah, practices slew discussions directly with all the employees. He introduced a programme called “Ask Dharmesh Anything” where hub-spotters can directly interact with him.

A culture of communication is rather simple to build and the returns are consistent. Joseph Badaracco, professor of business ethics, Harvard Business School, sums it up best:



## HOW TO DO IT?

- Effective communication begins with **transparency** and **honesty**. Build an open-door culture in the workplace that facilitates effective flow of communication.
- Maintain **regularity** while communicating.
- Keep a healthy balance between **talking to them and listening to them**.
- Use a **global and standard form of communication** in the workplace. Try to keep your messages brief and precise.
- Encourage **peer to peer communication** in the organisation. Organise events and activities that help improve internal communication.

## 2. RECOGNITION

Appreciation is a great virtue and makes the recipient feel appreciated and valued. And recognition is an effective way to do it.

Employee recognition refers to the acknowledgment of an individual's or team's behaviour, hard work and accomplishments, which support the organisation's goals and values.



“**Brains, like hearts, go where they are appreciated.**”

~ **Robert McNamara**,  
Fmr. American Secretary of Defense

Of the many recognition programmes at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, one is inspired by an employee called Fred. Fred came to represent the values which the company stands for —friendliness, resourcefulness, enthusiasm and dependability (FRED). The Spirit of Fred Award has become a coveted one – a plaque-mounted certificate. The Lifetime Fred Award for multiple recipients of the Spirit of Fred Award is a bronze Mickey Mouse statuette.

When you recognise employees for their efforts, they feel motivated to work harder the next time. When employees are recognised for their good work, they [feel appreciated](#). This motivates them to consistently perform their job and even strive for greater heights. When they see their contribution has made an impact on the organisation and you recognise that, they feel good about their work.

When employees feel appreciated, they stay. They become loyal to the organisation.

Lack of recognition has a strong connection with employee retention. A research conducted by [Office Team](#) found 66 per cent employees who would “likely leave their job if they didn't feel appreciated.” And this number jumps up to 76 per cent among millennials.



Sometimes your method of recognition has to be more than a ‘thank you’ or a simple ‘pat on the back.’ Let rewards be simple — something thoughtful that hits the right spot.



**Employee loyalty begins with employer loyalty. Your employees should know that if they do the job they were hired to do with a reasonable amount of competence and efficiency, you will support them. ”**

~Harvey Mackay

Source: Brainyquote.com



## HOW TO DO IT?

- Every organisation is different and so is its culture. Therefore, create a **culture-specific recognition programme** matching your organisation’s culture and values.
- Recognise both **individuals as well as teams**. And do it as much and as frequently as possible. Ultimately, recognition delayed is recognition denied!
- Recognition doesn’t always have to come from the top. More often than not, coworkers know more about each other than the boss. Encourage **peer-to-peer recognition**.
- Tools, such as Vantage Circle’s reward and recognition programme allow peers to instantly recognise colleagues individually.
- Engage in **year-round recognition**. Create monthly or quarterly awards to create a culture of recognition.



### 3. LEADERSHIP

In order to understand, influence and engage people, you need leaders. Good leaders!

Employees who trust their employers are more likely to stay with the organisation. They usually have a higher morale, which translates to higher efficiency and productivity.

But it is probably the HR or the people managers who are the most important when it comes to employee engagement. The HR are the middlemen between senior management and the employees. They are the ones actually working with

the employees, developing strategies, executing the plans.

That’s why, this middle management is referred to as the **“missing link to employee engagement.”** Missing because not many organisations are aware of the need for employee engagement or unsure of the ways to [execute their engagement programme.](#)

A research by Gallup has also found that managers account for 70 per cent of variance in employee-engagement scores.

“Everyone talks about building a relationship with your customer. I think you build one with your employees first.”

~ Angela Ahrendts,  
Senior vice president, Apple

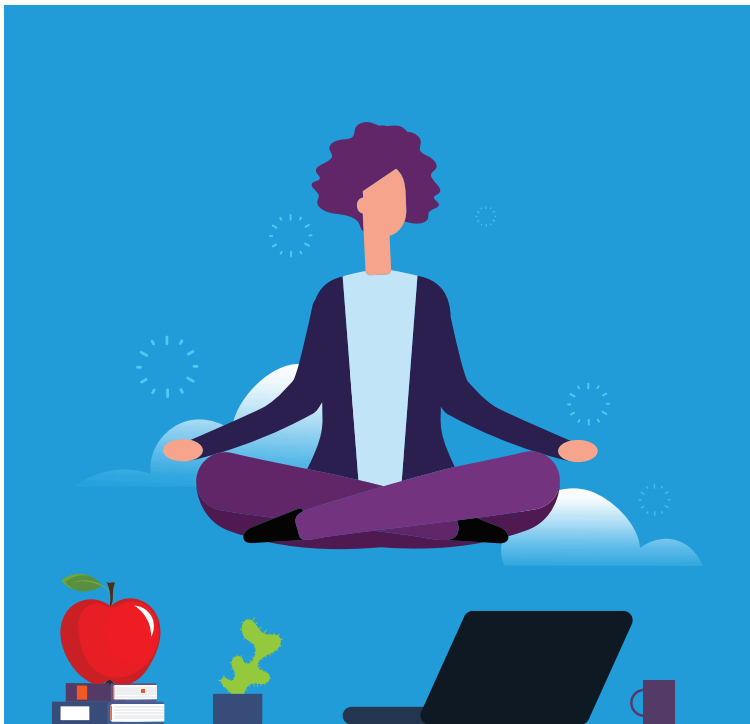
Source: Quotefancy.com





## HOW TO DO IT?

- The first and foremost thing to do is to **communicate well**. Studies have shown a direct link between higher engagement levels and consistent communication.
- A good leader knows how to **prioritise**. The most successful managers always pick and choose their priorities and focus on those rather than trying to accomplish all at hand. In fact, the reason why many small companies fail is usually the lack of focus.
- Responsibility and **accountability** are some qualities leaders must possess. Leaders with great accountability take responsibility for their actions. They try to get to the core of why something didn't work and find a solution for it. Eventually, team members start mirroring these traits, which results in greater overall accountability.
- **Delegate wisely**. When you delegate tasks, it shows that you trust your employees. It also means that you're giving them the autonomy and the space to make their own decisions and get the work done.
- Leaders need to have **team building skills** and the **ability to motivate**. Sustaining motivation is hard. So, leaders need to be able to motivate their employees as much as possible. Gamifying incentives, supporting their ideas, providing work-life balance are some effective ways to motivate them too.



## 4. WORKPLACE WELLNESS

Health and wellbeing is an integral component of employee engagement. Just like one cannot separate the mind from the body, one cannot separate well-being from work life. Your employees

spend a large part of their waking hours at the workplace, and hence their well-being is naturally influenced by the work environment. Promoting wellness in the workplace is not just your financial but moral responsibility.

You can start your journey of building a healthy work environment by creating an employee wellness programme that suits your diverse workforce. An employee-wellness programme is basically the summation of all the health and wellness initiatives taken up by an organisation to promote the well-being of its employees.

The [health of the employees](#) in your organisation is directly linked to the growth of the company. It directly influences productivity and the performance level of individuals.

### ADVANTAGES OF PROMOTING WELLNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

- Corporate health and wellness programmes substantially **reduce healthcare cost**.
- Promoting health in the workplace results in a healthy and balanced lifestyle. It leads to improved sleep cycles, reduced anxiety, less stress, and improved mood. All these things collectively improve [work motivation](#).
- One of the biggest reasons for the lack of productivity is absenteeism. An effective corporate wellness programme **reduces absenteeism**.





## HOW TO ENSURE WELLNESS?

- **Embrace Technology:** Wellness and technology go very well together. When you introduce a wellness initiative, try to incorporate technology in it. With so many fitness accessories and mobile applications around health (including Vantage Fit from Vantage Circle), it has become easier than ever to track physical activities and health conditions. It helps employees quantify their wellness journey and helps you keep track of the success of the programme.
- **Community driven:** Encourage community-driven engagement in health and wellness. Peer engagement plays a big role in voluntary participation of such programmes, so make sure that your programme includes team activities and group events.
- **Gamification:** Gamification in a wellness programme basically means incorporating elements of gaming in the programme. It can be in the form of leaderboards, contests, health scores, and so on.
- **Make it mobile:** If you want to make a programme successful, you must make it accessible through mobile. Employees today spend an impressive amount of time glued to their mobile phones. If they can keep track of their wellness through phones, it will ensure consistent engagement and immediate results.
- **Comprehensive approach:** Take a comprehensive approach towards wellness. It should look after physical, mental as well as the emotional well-being of an employee.

Companies, such as Microsoft are taking huge steps to promote health and wellness in the workforce. Microsoft offers an annual \$800 'StayFit' reimbursement programme to help cover the cost of gym memberships and fitness programmes.

“Running a business with unhealthy and unhappy employees is like trying to drive a car with a bad engine. It may eventually get you where you want to go, but the trip will be difficult and you'll waste time and resources.”

~ Sheana Abrahams,  
Getsmarter Wellness Manager

Source: Getsmarter blog

## LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE STATISTICS



**91%**

Employees rate **HEALTH CARE BENEFITS** as important

[2017 Employee Benefits Report, SHRM](#)



**61%**

Employees agree that they've made **HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE CHOICES** because of their company's wellness programme

[AFLAC](#)



**38%**

**WELLNESS PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS** said it helped them take fewer sick days

[HealthMine](#)



**91%**

Workers at companies that support well-being efforts say they feel motivated to do their best.

[American Psychological Association](#)



**61%**

Employees are **BURNED OUT** on the job

[CareerBuilder](#)

## 5. PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**When do employees want to stay with an organisation?**

More often than not, it is when they realise it is a place that is helping them grow as individuals, professionally and otherwise. Build avenues to facilitate such a situation. Employees will work best when they see growth in an organisation than being made to feel stagnant after a point in time. If they have no reason for 'better prospects' outside the organisation, they will have no reason to not work better as they stay and grow.



Digital Ocean, a cloud-based service provider, takes special interest in learning and development initiatives within the organisation. The company focusses on individual development planning and career growth. Employees at Digital Ocean map out what they want to accomplish each year, looking at how their professional objectives fit into the business strategy, along with their personal goals.

Additionally, career growth is something that most millennial employees seek in their job. Your ambitious employees may want to gain more knowledge in their domain outside their job-profiles. As employers, you must encourage that. You must acknowledge that an individual's professional growth is just as important as the growth of the company. The workplace must facilitate the growth of the employees, both professionally and personally, with effective learning and development programmes.

“  
**Income seldom  
exceeds personal  
development.**”

~ **Jim Rohn**

Source: Quotefancy.com



## HOW TO FACILITATE GROWTH OF EMPLOYEES?

- Have **well-defined and clear-cut goals** that will help them grow professionally. Maintain **transparency, fairness and regularity** with your promotion and recognition programmes.
- Have **proper training programmes** before new employees begin their job.
- Brainstorm and **conduct surveys** to analyse what are the popular skill sets that your employees wish to acquire.
- Introduce some **interesting and relevant courses** that may help individuals develop those skills.
- **Organise different types of events** round the year that will help your employees sharpen their lost skills. Sponsor enrollment in online/offline courses of their choice.
- **Encourage passion projects.** Give your employees the time and opportunity they need to pursue their passion projects.
- **Allow sabbaticals and education time off** if someone wishes to go for higher studies.



## 6. DEFINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

There's a very simple equation here.

**Well-defined roles = clear goals and objectives**

For people to be interested and engaged, they need to know what the company's objectives are and how they fit into it.

It's important to have clarity at the organisational level. Connect the smaller dots to get the bigger, final picture. What I mean is that it's important to clearly define the roles and results expected from each individual employee to help the business meet its goals. If employees are to be engaged, they need to know that their work matters. But for that, they first need to know what their work entails.

Foremost, it is imperative to make these three things very clear:

- 1) Who their superiors are or the person they are supposed to report to. This person will be their mentor and guide them with their work.

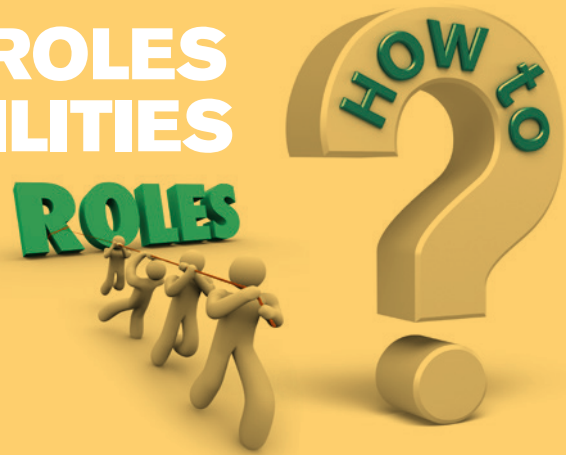
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- 2) Outline and explain the responsibilities and expectations that come with it.

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- 3) The position they'll have to take up. The level of authority they require to take decisions.

# HOW TO DEFINE ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES



- A **well-defined onboarding programme**. Make things clear from the beginning. A [study](#) reveals that companies with an engaging onboarding programme retain 91 per cent of their first-year workers. So, a comprehensive onboarding programme, which highlights the company's vision and culture and explains each individual's part in it has a much greater chance of engaging employees.
- Figure out what you already **have** and what you **need**. Make a list of the existing employees and the responsibilities that each position ought to entail. Now, analyse the roles that have actually been assigned to each of these employees. If there's anything missing, you can hold a discussion with the employees and decide how they can take up these new responsibilities.
- Having a detailed description of the job that needs to be done by each employee also helps. These are more than just the official title or designation. A **detailed job description** manual will include:
  - *A detailed description of the roles and responsibilities the employees need to undertake.*
  - *The educational knowledge they need to have.*
  - *The skills and professional experience they require for the job.*
- Another important and effective way to define roles is by **setting goals and objectives**. At Vantage Circle, employees maintain their individual OKR (objective key result) sheets where they decide upon the goals they plan to achieve in a particular quarter and track it on a weekly basis.
- Once you have laid down the roles that need to be taken up and made employees realise how they matter, it's important to let them know how you'll assess them. This is where **performance management** comes into play. What metrics will they be evaluated on? What should be their performance targets? What would be the consequences if they exceed, meet or fail to achieve?
- The last thing to be kept in mind is **flexibility**. Roles and responsibilities change with time and trends. As a manager, you should be able to decide and evolve your employees' capacity to achieve.



## 7. FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Employees crave feedback. It is true. Studies have revealed that 65 per cent of employees have said they would like to receive feedback. Also, 43 per cent of highly-engaged employees receive feedback at least once a week compared to only 18 per cent of employees with low engagement.

Employees want to know what you think of them, or more specifically, of their work. Feedback helps employees perform better. And most of the time, employees feel the feedback they receive isn't authentic. That employers either make it too negative or get too vague while trying to make it too positive.

Employees want to be evaluated and analysed for their work. Harvard Business Review has revealed that 72 per cent of employees have said they think their performance will improve if their managers provide corrective feedback. They need more than just a "good job." They want to know how they can improve and the areas where they need to improvise.

15Five is a performance management software whose motto is, "unlock the potential of your entire workforce." It believes in doing it frequently — every week. With its employee feedback platform, employees take 15 minutes a week to answer questions on personal as well as team productivity. Employers read and comment on these responses. As a result, feedback travels up the ladder through all levels of management.



## HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

- Be **specific**. Don't be vague. Tell them exactly what you think. Try to describe the specific behaviour that you noticed about them and why it created an impact on you. When you explain the impact of the behaviour, it will help them realise whether they should continue with that behaviour or not.
- It's very important that you **personalise** your observation. Every employee is different and so it naturally makes sense to tailor your observation as per the employee's age, skills and their responsibilities. 70 per cent of Gen Y wants strengths-based feedback. On the other hand, 50 per cent of older employees want constructive feedback to help them grow.
- Be **proactive** with your feedback. Don't wait till the annual performance review to give your evaluation. Whether it's positive or negative, make it a point to give the feedback whenever necessary.
- Feedback doesn't necessarily mean that it's only you who assesses your employees. Let feedback be a **two-way process**, where employees can raise any issues they otherwise feel uncomfortable discussing or express genuine appreciation for their managers.





## 8. WORK ENVIRONMENT

As stated before, it is not always about building a 'happy' workplace but an ideal one. If you believe in a flat organisation with little or no hierarchy, open desks and minimal walls and cabins go a long way. Create a space, where your employees want to return every day. Ensure basic comfort that will help create a stress-free work culture. Breakaway areas are often a great idea.

Build a work culture that is flexible when it needs to be. It will help show your employees they are cared for.

The parameters that make the physical environment at work are, office lighting, monitor heights, office furniture and types of equipment, air quality, availability of clean drinking water, snacks, and so on. It is the responsibility of the employers/ managers to ensure that all these criteria meet the standard level.



# HOW TO CREATE THE RIGHT WORK ENVIRONMENT

- **PERSONALISE THE OFFICE SPACES:** Take notice of small and unique individual preferences and try to make it more like their own. Small efforts, such as monitoring height adjustments, type of chair, picture frames and plants in the workstation create a better and friendlier environment for the employees.
- **BRIGHTNESS AND LIGHTING:** Lighting and brightness of the workstation should be taken special care of. They impact not only the employees' physical health but also emotional and mental health. Bad lighting can create a stuffy and trapped environment whereas appropriate lighting makes the environment more relaxing.
- **TAKE THE BOARD MEETING OUT OF THE CONFERENCE ROOM:** Taking important board meetings outside the work environment can make them less intimidating for the employees. Practices, such as walking meetings are also becoming common, as they are a great way to integrate physical activity with work. Additionally, walking meetings strengthen communication and minimise differences.
- **FLEXIBLE CHOICES:** Flexible choices in the working environment are welcomed by all. Practices, such as encouraging coworking spaces, work-from-home days, standing desk options for the desk-bound employees, and so on are some of the best ways to do it.

# STORIES OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

**How some successful organisations nail it**

## CASE STUDY

- ▶ Mahindra & Mahindra
- ▶ Mphasis
- ▶ Axis Bank
- ▶ Landmark Group
- ▶ Infosys

# CASE STUDY



## MAHINDRA & MAHINDRA SECTOR: AUTOMOBILE

**Mahindra**  
Rise.

Based on an exclusive interview with

**RAJESHWAR TRIPATHI**, Chief People Officer, Mahindra & Mahindra

### How do they define employee engagement

Employee engagement reflects in voluntary actions by employees. It means that employees are willing to transgress their boundaries for achieving the goals and objectives of the company. Every individual has limitations, but an engaged employee will stretch beyond capabilities for the company and that is what makes a difference. Non-enforced commitments of employees are a true example of an engaged workforce.

Passion is another element which defines an engaged workforce. People who love what they do are highly motivated. This is extremely essential because organisations can only achieve greater goals through an engaged workforce.

### How do they do it

Employee engagement is at the top of their leadership agenda and they do it largely through their leadership practices, such as involving people in decision making, role design and job enrichment. In HR policy-making, they have addressed various segments of an organisation and call it a segmented approach to HR policies. There are policies focused on women employees and other policies such as:

**Sabbatical leave HR policies** – These policies are only meant for those who want a break from work and wish to do something that interests them and then return to work. These are mostly middle management people.

**Leave accumulation and encashment policy** – This policy is extremely supportive of older employees and helps in their retirement planning.

While making HR policies, the company is always mindful about whom it is making the policy for. At Mahindra, employee engagement is not treated as an external activity. It is more of a culmination and outcome and less of a process by itself.

### What makes their employee engagement efforts stand out

Two components:

**Inspiring purpose** – Ensures employees find meaning in what they do.

**Empowering people** – It's been observed that when people are empowered, the desire to work comes from within.

# CASE STUDY



## **MPHISIS** The Next Applied SECTOR: IT



Based on an exclusive interview with  
**SRIKANTH KARRA**, CHRO, Mphasis

### How do they define employee engagement

The progressive IT organisation goes by an industry-specific X2C2TM framework for all its business operations and it aligns all its people to believe in the strategy and work towards standing true to organisational values and beliefs.

Engagement to them, is about alignment of employees to the goals of the organisation and its customers. This alignment comes from a comprehensive understanding of their own goals and how it maps to the overall goals of the Company. For instance, an employee who is able to satisfy the customer goes an extra mile to also use the opportunity to grow the overall revenue or provides more value through her/his contribution to business.

### How do they do it

With 'The Next Applied' as its ethos, the Company has a strong learning environment, coupled with rewards and career growth opportunities for those who demonstrate higher capabilities. Through its Talent Next programme, the Company identifies and develops new capabilities, which are mapped to the company strategy and create an ecosystem of learning. Strong emphasis on applying the learning to enhance value to customer and give out appropriate rewards for the value generated, is the way to go.

Mphasis focuses on learnability as an important element of engagement and performance and defines it with two aspects – ability and willingness to learn; and ability to apply it in real-time. It uses the 'Learning Quotient' or the 'Gig Quotient' to measure the same. In its bucket of skills, where three categories of skills – Gen Now, Gen Next and Legacy – reside, it is the Gen Next skills which fetch most of the business deals it garners at present.

### What makes their employee engagement efforts stand out

With learning, rewarding and growth opportunities at the core of its culture, Mphasis successfully keeps it people engaged and aligned to the business objectives at the same time.

# CASE STUDY



## **AXIS BANK** SECTOR: BANKING



Based on an exclusive interview with

**RAJKAMAL VEMPATI**, *Executive Vice President and Head-HR, Axis Bank*

### How do they define employee engagement

One of the popular private-sector banks in India, its vision is 'to be the preferred financial solutions provider excelling in customer delivery through insight, empowered employees and smart use of technology'. For a company that makes empowered employees an important part of its vision itself, employee engagement is of course about ensuring that employees have a great experience at every stage of their employee lifecycle.

The Company believes that engaged employees go the extra mile to show their commitment to the organisation and its goals, and put in greater amount of discretionary effort into their work. Also, engaged employees become the best brand ambassadors by advocating the workplace to their friends and family.

### How do they do it

Axis Bank focuses on the two aspects – employee experience and employee advocacy.

**Experience** - It's about managing employee experience starting from the candidature stage when one is not yet the employee. Every touchpoint matters. Then, managers play a key role in creating an engaging environment, through constant conversations including feedbacks.

**Advocacy** - Employee advocates are those that actively promote the company they work for. This can be achieved through posts on social media, word of mouth referrals, or by becoming an expert or spokesperson for the organisation.

Axis Bank tries to build advocacy to increase brand salience – corporate brand, employer brand, employee value proposition and employee experiences. It tracks employee advocacy internally through employee surveys and externally, through watching out for advocacy on social media platforms, such as LinkedIn and Glassdoor.

Through its platform Axis Blitz, that connects leaders and the employees at the grassroots level, people across hierarchies are encouraged to share their stories that exemplify #TheAxisWay. These include instances of exemplary citizenship behaviours or tales of times when they went beyond their call of duty to times when they innovated to make a difference. Stories become a way of reinforcing the purpose and culture. The senior leaders travel all over the country to engage with employees in an interactive setting in small groups. The best of the stories are recognised on the annual recognition platform - Axis Champions Awards. Doing so helps reinforce behaviours that are core to Axis Bank.

### What makes their employee engagement efforts stand out

An enabling culture that ensures constant learning and growth.

# CASE STUDY



## LANDMARK GROUP SECTOR: RETAIL



Based on an exclusive interview with

**VENKATARAMANA B**, Group President - Human Resources, Landmark

### How do they define employee engagement

Happy employees mean happy customers. This is something that most organisations know and believe in but not many are able to execute at the ground level or across levels.

### How do they do it

Standing true to its name, the Landmark Group has a landmark initiative that ensures its people are happy at work and see pride, positivity and a sense of purpose in their jobs. The initiative is called the 'Landmark Happiness Movement' and is designed to encourage camaraderie amongst people across levels. It all began in the Middle East, in Dubai, when Nisha Jagtiani, executive director and chief happiness officer, Landmark Group, realised that the region had less focus on people, more contractual employees, and no work-life balance. This is why attrition was high. People failed to see it as a career and considered it a mere job. Jagtiani wanted to change this. She knew retail is a difficult industry to be in, where one needs to be patient, perseverant, composed and smiling, despite long standing hours and tiring work regimes. With that, she also believed that business would never flow in until, the people on the floor and across levels in the organisation are happy and see meaning in what they do.

The Landmark Happiness Movement was thus launched to reinforce values, such as passion, speed and simplicity, innovation, ownership and entrepreneurship, that forms the core foundation of the Group's philosophy of creating exceptional value. Several initiatives under the movement contributed to connecting employees, increasing overall engagement, encouraging work-life balance and driving focus towards employee wellness. At Landmark, the first Friday of every month is a Yellow Day when the 450 locations across the country indulge in fun and engaging activities, such as Yoga, Zumba, wellness sessions on health, investment planning and so on. Yellow being the colour of happiness, the idea is to provide people a holistic experience, making each one an innate part of the movement.

The Landmark Happiness Movement, especially the interactions on Yellow Day, have benefited the people greatly. Sandwich leave was an industry-prevalent practice earlier, but during interactions with the workforce on Yellow Days, it was observed that it was one of the pain points for people, and hence, they abolished sandwich leave for all Landmark employees.

Similarly, the Company also has a leave bank—any person's lapsed leaves are stored in the bank and in case of an illness of self or family, one can utilise 10 additional leaves other than the usual medical leave, when required.

### What makes their employee engagement efforts stand out

The movement is designed to let people feel equal, enjoy and have fun while working hard.

# CASE STUDY



**INFOSYS**  
SECTOR: IT



Based on an exclusive interview with  
**RICHARD LOBO**, Executive Vice President, Infosys

## How do they define employee engagement?

Employee engagement at Infosys is about ensuring a positive employee experience and is centered around the three areas – physical, digital and emotional. Infosys believes that employee experience is not just about what an employee experiences through the regular HR-led initiatives and activities, but it is about an overall, end-to-end experience across various touchpoints. It starts right from when the organisation hires someone and inducts people, and runs through their entire employee life cycle. Hence, every function, and not just HR, plays a critical role in ensuring a great employee experience.

## How do they do it?

Here's how Infosys provides its people a holistic employee experience through these three areas:

**Physical** – This is about having a comfortable and inviting campus and outstanding infrastructure. The on-campus facilities that Infosys' employees enjoy, include a swimming pool, a laundromat, a basketball court, a bowling alley and a lot more. It is also about providing a safe and secure environment to people at work.

**Digital** – It is about the tech experience it provides to its people through various employee self-service apps, intranet portal and other automated transactions. Keeping in mind the fact that the employee is also an internal consumer in a way and every individual these days expects a consumer-like experience from everything – instant, mobile and user-friendly – even within the workplace, Infosys has carefully planned and implemented its digital tools that let people experience ease of operations.

Apps, such as the InfyGold+ allow instant rewards for performance, with an ease of usage and flexibility of choice of the reward. Taking engagement to a new level, the rewards employees get access to, through InfyGold+, can also be accessed by their families making them a part of the system. Another app for new joiners allows a smooth transition of people into the organisation wherein, they are able to complete all the joining formalities on their first day itself.

**Emotional** – An emotional connect with the organisation is about how well people connect with the value system of the organisation, and also includes caring for their physical and mental well-being. It's programme, HALE, is a holistic well-being initiative that includes planning interventions around physical health, emotional/mental health, employee safety and leisure.

Additionally, Infosys sees employee volunteerism as a great spirit for a strong emotional connect as it also lets people see a purpose in what they are doing. Through a programme called 'Be the Navigator', Infosians get to innovate more and collaborate better. It is an opportunity to do the things that move its clients forward towards their digital future, and help its people realise their own aspirations in the process. Navigators who create and monetise new digital opportunities through this programme, get to earn both financial and non-financial rewards.

## What makes its employee-engagement efforts stand out?

It is the focus on three areas – physical, digital and emotional – that ensures a holistic employee experience. The entire approach to employee engagement through various initiatives and making it more an organisational responsibility than an HR mandate alone, makes Infosys a great example.



# WRAP

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At the end of the day, employee engagement is really as simple as the term sounds. It is about having your heart in the right place when leading an organisation. You acknowledge that it is the team that is working together to achieve a common goal and if the team is not motivated enough, see work as a chore, the repercussions will be alarming.

All it takes is a regular checking of the boxes to ensure a happy and healthy workplace. It isn't for nothing that employees are said to be your best brand ambassadors. When you keep them engaged and remain sensitive to their needs of growth and development within the workplace, you are helping greatly the cause of attraction and retention of coveted talent.



**Always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers. ”**

**~ Stephen Covey,**  
Author of the very popular book  
*'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People'*

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By HRK News Bureau