

Real Time Employee Engagement – Concept and Strategies

***Mrs. T.Arunmozhi**

****Dr. V.K. Somasundaram,**

*Assistant Professor & Head, Department of Accounting & Finance, Shree Chandrababhu Jain College, Minjur 601 203

**Associate Professor and Head, P.G & Research Dept. of Corporate Secretaryship, Bharathidasan Government College for Women, Puducherry 605 003

Abstract

Employee Engagement is relatively a new concept which has been developed from researches on involvement, empowerment, motivation, commitment, etc. It refers to positive feelings of employees about their jobs and the organizations, and also the motivation, commitment and effort they put into their work. It is a real time effort by the organization to effectively use the services of human resource to achieve its objectives, generating positive behavior among employees in a competitive environment. The contractual relationship between employee and employer limiting the motivation to “how much I get” has been shifted to “how much we gain” due to effective strategies for employee engagement. It is no more a concept limited to employee retention but the organizational attempt to engage their employees by creating the situation where employees become emotionally and intellectually committed to the organization, where they not only speak positive about the organization, but also develop the desire to continue with it and put extra efforts for its success willingly contributing their discretionary efforts. The paper highlights the concept of real time engagement as a human resource utilization strategy which assumed importance in the context of the imperatives of global competition.

Key Words: Employee Engagement, Commitment, Involvement, Organizational Support, Engaged Employee.

Concept

Employee Engagement is a real time exercise by the organization to effectively use the services of its human resource in relation to its objectives, resources, and competitive environment. Earlier it was conceived as a contractual relationship between employee and employer explaining the terms and conditions of employment. With the onset of globalization, many organizations, in their endeavor to cope with the challenges of change and competition, found redundancy in human resource structure and systems. They first went for HR rightsizing. It was followed by strengthening the practices of HR utilization. It is in this second phase of HR utilization that the real time employee engagement assumed strategic importance.

The seminal principles of real time employee engagement are as follows:

- Real time employee engagement rests on a tripod of individual, group and organization centric activities with ultimate responsibility being laid on the organization.
- The organization is responsible for finding work for the individual employee, for unleashing the potential of the groups and for making the organizational expectations known to the human resource.
- Individuals work need to be dovetailed into group efforts contributing to achievement of organizational objectives. This is the responsibility of the organization. Any failure located at individual and group levels are to be conceived as caused by the organization.
- Work shall be 'meaningful' to the individual, 'involving' for the group and 'profitable' for the organization. In this process it shall be an ideal 'win-win' situation for all.
- As the reality is farther from the ideal, organization has to continuously develop strategies for real time employee engagement.

Characteristics of Work

- Work is a remunerative activity which is performed at the behest of the organizations. So any self serving activity is not 'work'.
- Individuals consider work as burden even though remunerative and hence try to do the minimum and if possible, avoid it. Work alienation resulting out of work avoidance is a serious malady, which need to be addressed by the organization.
- Work entrusted to and performed by groups run the risk of suffering from the possibility of "Everybody's responsibility is no body's responsibility". Therefore, work assignments, measurements and rewards are largely done at individual level.
- For successful completion of work/job; material, human, capital and technology resources get more prominence than two equally important resources namely 'time' and 'place'.
- Work engagement in a work period tapers off slowly, reaches a peak or crescendo and then falls down until an end spurt at the end of the work period. Therefore, it is not expected that one can work with same level of efficiency over a period time.
- The organization hence has to go for real time employee engagement. This imperative is now realized as never before.

Characteristics of 'Individual' as an Employee

- Individual as an employee relates one's work to the organizational functioning through the job. Job sets the identity of an employee in the organization and job description sets the boundaries of a job.
- Individual as an employee is caught in a quagmire of 'triple allegiance'-to oneself (including family); to the formal and informal groups; and to the organization.
- It is situational dynamics, which determines the potency of these three influencing forces. However, the ultimate decision to develop a 'zone of indifference' or to be fully swayed away by any one of these forces is taken by the individual basing on one's own perception of the laws of the situation.

- Individual, as an employee, tends to limit work performance and stifle potential either on one's own or at the behest of the group or because of experience in the organization.
- Individual, as an employee, expects work/job to be rewarding and satisfying, which in turn may shape one's commitment level to the organization.

Characteristics of Group Processes in Organizations

- Groups in organizations manifest in two namely formal and informal.
- Formal workgroups are designed as work in organizations requires efforts of many people in a work area leading to job overlapping. Work groups interweave into departments. Interdepartmental relations along with hierarchy culminate into total organization.
- Informal groups spontaneously emerge out of formal systems to satisfy inter-personal interests and social needs of belongingness of its members. These groups are highly normative and are valued by the members.
- The formal systems cannot escape from the informal group process even though the later could be inimical to the former. So, organizations attempt to integrate these two through teams, small group activities quality circles, kaizen groups, In this way, team is the most positive expression of group process.
- Unions, as employee associations, have got recognition as a force to be reckoned with. These bodies shape the destiny of organizations by disputes and by collective bargaining process.

Characteristics of organization as employee engager:

- Organization pursues socially approved objectives for which resources are allocated to it. It also sets job designs at micro level to make employees engage in real time work that ultimately contributes to achieving the organizational goals.
- HR as resources pulsates with life. Its engagement at the optimal level is impossible as in can resist, and stifle optimization of other resources. Organization finds a challenge here.
- Organization tends to feel that employees restrict their productivity and hence expenses on employees as a bargain able cost can be reduced. Employees and their unions, on the other hand nourish a notion that, profit maximization and competitive advantages as organizational goals are pursued at the cost of employees' interests. This mutual mistrust is a challenge for organization in real time employee engagement.
- Organization seldom gives credence to the informal group process. Even in organizing the formal workgroups and teams, it loses sight of real time problems. This failure to integrate the individual employee through a healthy group process is a challenge in employee engagement.

Conclusion

Each organization can conceive distinct strategies for real time employee engagement, provided it realizes the potency of the employee as the repositories of path-breaking ideas. One thing is but sure that the whole gamut of real time employee engagement is a kind of self discovery for the organization. A successful employee engagement strategy helps to create a community at the work place and

not just a work force. When employees are effectively and positively engaged with their organization, they form an emotional connection with the company. An enthusiastic team will be better equipped to succeed while the luster employees will drag the company down with them. It is the responsibility for all the company managements to enhance their ability to create an environment so as to inspire and lead the employees for achieving highest level of employee engagement so as to achieve the organizational goal.

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