

Employee Engagement At an Information Technology (IT) Company in Chennai – An Empirical Study

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Key Words:

1. Career,
2. Care,
3. Competence,
4. Commitment,
5. Effective
6. Communication,
7. Empowerment,
8. Involvement and Organizational Citizenship

Abstract

Employee engagement is a persistent, positive, affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about his or her work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests. Engaged employees have much smoother relationship with their superiors compared to the disengaged ones. They are more focused on company's profitability rather than their own personal goals. These employees show a great degree of organizational citizenship. It is only an engaged employee who is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization, feels passionately about its goals and is committed towards its values. In times of diminishing loyalty, employee engagement is a powerful retention strategy. This research article focuses on the physical, emotional and cognitive engagement levels of employees. The various contributing factors of higher engagement are also analyzed in this research paper. It also discusses the employee engagement in India and the relationship between employee engagement and productivity. Further, appropriate strategies are suggested for engaging employees the most.

A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Employee engagement is also called work engagement or worker engagement. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about his or her work, and thus will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests. Employee engagement refers to cooperation between employees and organization where everyone works together to achieve goals of the organization and of the employees as well. The engaged employees are more focused on company's profitability rather than their own personal goals. They always spread positive messages and try to make the working environment more congenial. These employees show a great degree of organizational citizenship.

The purpose of this study is to help employees discover their true passion in their work, which results in doing the

best job they possibly can and raising their level of engagement and performance. Most organizations today realize that a 'satisfied' employee is not necessarily the 'best' employee in terms of loyalty and productivity. It is only an engaged employee who is intellectually and emotionally bound with the organization, feels passionately about its goals and is committed towards its values. In times of diminishing loyalty, employee engagement is a powerful retention strategy. Engagement is about motivating employees to do their best. Virtual work practices being the order of the day, one of the greatest challenges for global organizations has been engaging a dispersed workforce. As organizations globalize and become more dependent on technology in a virtual working environment, there is a need to connect and engage with employees to provide them with an organizational 'identity'.

Some contributing factors of higher employee engagement are:

- Understanding of corporate goals.
- Understanding of job and how it contributes to overall corporate goals.
- Clear communication of goals, expectations, directions
- Learning and Development opportunity.

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- Pride in organization
- Employee involvement in decision-making.
- Working Environment

Research has proven that wholly engaged employees exhibit:

- Higher self-motivation
- Confidence to express new ideas.
- Higher productivity
- Higher levels of customer approval and service quality
- Reliability
- Organizational Loyalty
- Lower absenteeism

3CS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: CAREER, COMPETENCE AND CARE

Career: The opportunity to grow career through promotions, rotations and significant assignments is the most important need of employees. If the company and its managers spend meaningful and genuine time in helping employees grow their careers - employees will definitely feel engaged. In a growth market full of opportunities you cannot, in any case, keep employees arrested. However, if you truly invest in careers of your employees they will stay engaged for the time they are with you - breeding enthusiasm and good will.

Competence While career is about the actual growth, competence is about the ability to grow. Opportunities to learn and apply the learning in real life tasks grow competence. And most employees are looking for competence-boosting opportunities. They would like to stretch, learn and improve as long as they feel they are growing marketable skills. Employees who know that their current jobs are helping them become competent for future jobs will stay engaged.

Care: Caring is a fine art that requires managers to be sensitive, empathetic and spontaneous. Caring is experienced by the small day-to-day gestures of managers and not by grand policies of the company. Caring is a culture that good companies foster through a set of sensitive managers who balance tasks well with relationships. Incidentally, sometimes fun and food-based entertainment helps express caring. Thus entertainment is perhaps 5% of engagement and genuine caring deepens engagement. 'perhaps 5% of engagement and genuine caring deepens engagement.

3. EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN INDIA

According to BI Worldwide, an employee engagement solution providers, 51 per cent of Indian employees are

performing intensely, making them globally the most engaged in their work. They are followed by Chinese employees (49 per cent), US (38 per cent), Brazil (36 per cent), Canada (28 per cent) and the UK (27 per cent). Though the level of employee engagement is very high in India, more than 6 in 10 Indians are not working to their potential, the report said. BI Worldwide conducted the survey to measure employee's intensity of performance and commitment at work place. The survey spanned across seven countries namely India, Brazil, Canada, China, US, UK and the Latin American region outside of Brazil and covered nearly 7264 responses. premise is that when such commitments are publicly visible in an online environment, a much higher percentage of individuals are motivated to act and hence the all-round improvement in performance is significantly greater. The old adage that people do not leave their company, they leave their manager is as true today as ever. Therefore, the focus should be on the ability of line managers to engage with their team

The report further said the older generation (born between 1960s to 1980s) in India would prefer to stay at their current employer for almost seven years while the younger lot (born between 1980s to 1990s) is planning to leave much sooner. According to the report, the top five reasons why the young employees in India plan to leave are fear, job stress, a sense of unfair pay, a bleak or unknown future and for an innovative workplace where they can contribute ideas and make decisions.

Many companies in India recognize the relationship between engagement and productivity and have already employed measures to address the problem. A large proportion, however, is yet to understand the extent of the challenge. India has employee engagement challenges which are directly impacting the productivity of its workforce. According to Richard Bandell, CEO, Grass Roots Group, the leading global performance improvement agency, best practices companies can involve the sustained use of incentives, rewards and recognition programmes combined with professional communication, education and measurement of performance. "With so many companies in India deploying only some (and in some cases none) of these techniques, low productivity, high absenteeism, and high staff attrition rates are widespread," he adds. Typically, employees value the pay and benefits they receive at 90% of the true cost to their employers. This implies that employers in India are wasting one rupee in every ten. "Our job is to reverse this statistic, to make the salary costs work



more effectively for our employers," he says.

There are two groups of protagonists — line managers and individuals in the team. A company's programmes should assist individuals to commit to improvement objectives publicly and measure their progress in real-time. The premise is that when such commitments are publicly visible in an online environment, a much higher percentage of individuals are motivated to act and hence the all-round improvement in performance is significantly greater. The old adage that people do not leave their company, they leave their manager is as true today as ever. Therefore, the focus should be on the ability of line managers to engage with their team

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the physical, emotional and cognitive engagement levels of employees in the organization.
- To ascertain the various contributing factors of higher employee engagement.
- To study the linkage between employee engagement and productivity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kahn, (1990) defined personal engagement as "the simultaneous employment and expression of a person's 'preferred self' in task behaviors that promote connections to work and to others, personal presence, and active full role performances".

Maslach et al., (2001) defined employee engagement as "a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by high levels of activation and pleasure"

Harter et al., (2004) say that "in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.

Fleming et al., (2005) have stated that the outcomes of employee engagement are advocated to be exactly what most organizations are seeking: employees who are more productive, profitable, safer, healthier, less likely to turnover, less likely to be absent, and more willing to engage in discretionary efforts.

Saks, (2006) defined employee engagement as "a distinct and unique construct that consists of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components that are associated with individual role performance".

Wagner & Harter, (2006) feel that engaged employees average higher customer satisfaction ratings and generate increased revenue.

Czarnowsky, (2008) says that employees who are mentally

and emotionally invested in their work and in contributing to their employer's success" are defined as engaged. Psychological state engagement is defined as an antecedent to behavioral engagement encompassing the constructs of satisfaction, involvement, commitment, and empowerment.

Czarnowsky & Ketter, (2008) suggest a direct employee engagement-profit linkage. It is not surprising that corporate executives are consistently ranking the development of an engaged work-force as an organizational priority.

Macey & Schneider, (2008) feel that as professional societies, consulting groups, and organizations embrace the employee engagement concept, drawn to its potential to solve intractable problems, two major challenges have surfaced. The first challenge revolves around what employee engagement is and how it should be defined. Questions are being asked about whether the concept of engagement is just a repackaging of employee satisfaction and commitment, or whether companies should seek active displays of engagement as part of their pursuit of organizational outcomes. Unfortunately, numerous consulting firms who claim to have developed interventions that aid organizations in creating employee engagement lack even a working definition of the concept, referring to engagement only as a "persistent positive state"

Howard and Foster (2009) view employee engagement as a critical tool in talent management that does not only fortify the competitiveness of the firm but also, enhance the organizational image because it helps to reduce employee attrition rate in a business firm. The implications are that, engaged employees either directly or indirectly project a positive image of their organization because their commitment portrays an impression of a responsible company.

Stone et al, (2009) feel that engaged employees have much smoother relationship with their superiors compared to the disengaged ones.

Markos and Sridevi, (2010) have stated that there is a paradigm shift in recent times towards development of casual models that help to better explain employee engagement in modern organizational setting. It is believed that this would assist to create appropriate linkage between theory and practice.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design: Descriptive research design is



adopted for the study. Descriptive research is a fact finding enquiry or investigation. Survey method is used for data collection.

Sampling Technique: Simple random sampling technique is used for selecting the sample size of 150 respondents from the population of around 3000 employees at an IT company in Chennai. In this sampling method, every unit in the population has an equal chance of inclusion in the sample and each one of the possible samples has the same probability of being selected.

Data Collection Method: Primary data is collected directly from the 150 sample respondents through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of

dichotomous, multiple choice and closed end questions.

Limitations of the Study :

- The findings of this study are based on the views of 150 sample respondents. Hence, they are to be carefully considered for generalization.
- The inferences drawn are subjected to bias and prejudice of the respondents.
- The accuracy of findings is limited by the accuracy of data collected and statistical tools used for data analysis.
- The accuracy of findings is constrained by sampling and non-sampling errors.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table :1 Respondents' views on their Engagement Level in the Organization

Engagement Level	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total Score	Mean Score
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)		
Physical engagement							
I work with intensity on my job	0	21	16	79	34	578	3.85
exert my full effort to my job	0	26	36	56	32	544	3.63
I strive as hard as I can to complete my job	0	11	26	49	64	516	4.11
Emotional engagement							
I am enthusiastic in my job	0	16	36	74	24	556	3.71
I am proud of my job	11	19	38	58	24	515	3.43
I feel positive about my job.	0	11	43	71	25	560	3.73
I am excited about my job	11	12	38	58	22	509	3.39
Cognitive engagement							
I know what is expected of me at work	0	10	32	75	31	575	3.83
I focus a great deal of attention on my job	0	28	30	77	33	583	3.89
I am fully absorbed by my job	11	10	34	51	26	503	3.35
I concentrate on my job	0		30	77	33	583	3.89

Table 2: Respondents' Views on Feedback and Suggestions Received from their Superiors about Work Progress

S. No	Feedback & Suggestions	Weight	No of Respondents	Total Score	Mean Score
1	Always	5	28	140	3.90
2	Very Often	4	78	312	
3	Sometimes	3	35	115	
4	Seldom	2	9	18	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	585	

Table 3: Respondents' Views on Learning and Development Opportunities Available in the Organization

S. No	Learning & Development	Weight	No of Respondents	Total Score	Mean Score
1	To a Great Extent	4	24	96	2.77
2	To a Moderate Extent	3	72	216	
3	To Some Extent	2	50	100	
4	Not at All	1	4	4	
Total			150	416	

Table 4: Respondents' Views on Clear Communication of Goals and Directions from Their Superiors

S. No	Clarity of Communication	Weight	No of Respondents	Total Score	Mean Score
1	Always	5	28	140	3.89
2	Very Often	4	78	312	
3	Sometimes	3	44	132	
4	Seldom	2	0	0	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	584	

Table 5: Respondents' Views on Fair and Objective Promotion Policy in the Organization

S. No	Opinion	Weight	No of Respondents	Total Score	Mean Score
1	To a Great Extent	4	35	140	2.72
2	To a Moderate Extent	3	38	114	
3	To Some Extent	2	77	154	
4	Not at All	1	0	0	
Total			150	408	



Table 6: Respondents' Views on Working Environment

S. No	Working Environment	Weight	No of Respondents	Total Score	Mean Score
1	Highly Favourable	4	82	328	3.45
2	Favourable	3	56	168	
3	Unfavourable	2	10	20	
4	Highly Unfavourable	1	2	2	
Total			150	518	

Table 7: Respondents' Views on Understanding of Job and Corporate Goals

S. No	Opinion	Weight	No. of Respondents	Total Score	Mean Score
1	Always	5	47	235	4.22
2	Very Often	4	89	356	
3	Sometimes	3	14	42	
4	Seldom	2	0	0	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	633	

Table 8: Respondents' Views on their Involvement in the Decision Making Process

S. No	Opinion	Weight	No of Respondents	Total Score	Mean Score
1	Always	5	75	375	4.19
2	Very Often	4	28	112	
3	Sometimes	3	47	141	
4	Seldom	2	0	0	
5	Never	1	0	0	
Total			150	628	

Hypothesis Testing: Chi square test is applied for testing of hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process.

Table 8: Relationship between Age of the Respondents and Their Involvement in the Decision Making Process

Observed Frequency

Involvement / Age	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	No. of Respondents
20 – 30 years	9	5	34	48
31-40 years	36	13	3	52
Above 40 years	30	10	10	80
Total	75	28	47	150



Expected Frequency

Involvement / Age	Always	Very Often	Sometimes	No. of Respondents
20 – 30 years	9	7	32	48
31-40 years	30	16	6	52
Above 40 years	30	5	15	50
Total	69	28	53	150

Calculation

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
9	9	0	0	0
5	7	-2	4	0.57
34	32	2	4	0.125
36	30	-6	36	1.2
13	16	-3	9	0.56
3	6	-3	9	1.5
30	30	0	0	0
10	5	5	25	5.0
10	15	-5	25	1.67
$\chi^2 (O-E)^2/E = 0.958$				

Inference: Since calculated value 0.958 is less than the table value 9.49, hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

Table 9: Relationship between Experience of the Respondents and Their Views on Fair and Objective Promotion Policy in the Organization.

Observed Frequency

Fair & Objective Promotion / Experience	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	Total
Below 5 years	8	12	47	67
5-10 years	6	9	14	29
Above 10 years	21	17	16	54
Total	35	38	77	150

Expected Frequency

Fair & Objective P Promotion / Experience	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To Some Extent	Total
Below 5 years	12	16	43	71
5-10 years	6	12	16	34
Above 10 years	18	15	12	45
Total	36	43	71	150



Calculation:

O	E	(O-E)	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
8	12	-4	16	1.33
12	16	-4	16	1.0
47	43	4	16	0.37
6	6	0	0	0
9	12	-3	9	0.75
14	16	-2	4	0.25
21	18	3	9	0.5
17	15	2	4	0.266
16	12	4	16	1.33
$\Sigma (O-E)^2/E = 0.644$				

Inference: Since the calculated value 0.644 is less than the table value 9.49, hypothesis is accepted. Hence, there is no significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- 60% of the respondents have stated that they are aware of what is expected from them at work.
- 77% of the respondents agree that they work with intensity and strive as hard as they can to complete their job.
- 74% of the respondents are enthusiastic and feel positive about their job.
- 76% of the respondents agree that they know what is expected of them at work.
- 78% of the respondents focus a great deal of attention and concentration on their job.
- 52% of the respondents have stated that they very often receive feedback and suggestions from their superiors about work progress.
- 48% of the respondents feel that learning and development opportunities are available in their organization only to a moderate extent. Another 33% of them think that learning and development opportunities are available only to some extent.
- 52% of the respondents have stated that they very often receive clear directions and communication from their superiors about clarity of goals.
- 51% of the respondents feel that the promotion policy of their organization is fair and objective only to some extent.
- 55% of the respondents feel that the working environment is highly favourable and conducive to work.

- 59% of the respondents have stated that they very often have a clear understanding of their job and corporate goals.
- 50% of the respondents have stated that they are always involved in the decision making process. However, 31% of them feel that they are sometimes involved in the decision making process, and not always.
- There is no significant relationship between age of the respondents and their involvement in the decision making process.
- There is no significant relationship between experience of the respondents and their views on fair and objective promotion policy in the organization.

INFERENCES/CONCLUSIONS

Physical engagement level of the respondents is higher than their emotional and cognitive levels of engagement. It is clear from the study that only 16% of the respondents feel that learning and development opportunities are available in their organization to a great extent. Hence, learning and development opportunities need to be made available to all the employees. Since 51% of the respondents feel that the promotion policy of their organization is fair and objective only to some extent, the management has to ensure transparent and objective promotion policy and it should be made known to all the employees. Nearly one third of the respondents think that they are not fully involved in the decision making process.



Employee empowerment is essential for employee engagement. If employees are involved in the decision making process, they feel committed to work and strive as hard as they can to achieve the organizational objectives.

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING EMPLOYEES THE MOST

- **Link Engagement Efforts to High Performance:** Employee engagement is not about employee satisfaction. Engagement efforts have to unlock employee potential to drive high performance. Employee satisfaction will be an outcome of a great culture, but it should not be the goal.
- **Top Management Support:** Senior leaders must demonstrate support for an engaged culture by personally living their organization's values. Employees are watching everything the leaders do. Leaders have to practice what they preach.
- **Engage the First Line Managers:** The old adage, "employees join great organizations but quit bad managers" is true. Research shows the key driver of engagement is the relationship between an employee and his direct manager. If a line manager is disengaged, his employees are four times more likely to be disengaged.
- **Focus on Effective Communication:** Successful leaders recognize the power of an effective communication plan. It should be built on clarity, consistency and transparency. Organizations have to learn how to leverage the various communication media available to them, especially social media, and how to tailor communications to reach different generations. There can be frequent meetings and discussions between superiors and sub-ordinates relating to work and non-work related problems. The superiors can empathize with their sub-ordinates for an effective two-way communication. They have to communicate clear goals and expectations to their employees.
- **Individualize Engagement Programs:** Today's leaders must tailor everything, including programs their communication approaches, rewards and recognition, and training and development programs to the unique motivational drivers of each employee. It is no longer "treat people the way you want to be treated." The new mantra is "treat people the way they want to be treated."
- **Create a Motivational Culture:** To create motivational cultures, leaders need to understand the different intrinsic motivational drivers of their employees. A key engagement driver is that leaders showing empathy towards their employees. Employees will strive to work as

hard as they can when they know leaders care about them as people.

• **Create Feedback Mechanisms:** Organizations need to ask employees what they think. Employee engagement surveys are a great tool for that. It's then essential to use the feedback you receive productively to assure employees that you have heard them. Employees are no different than leadership—they want to work for a winning team. Leaders need to tell their employees where the organization is headed, how it is performing and where they fit in.

• **Reinforce and Reward the Achievement:** It's not enough to simply communicate your business goals and measure employees' progress against them. It's important to recognize, and if necessary reward, the achievement of goals, as this encourages and engages your employees. Employees are incredibly motivated by achievement, not by money. Money can disengage employees if they perceive unfairness in compensation.

• **Matching Jobs with Employees' Behaviours and Traits:** Many companies are hiring the wrong behaviours and traits to succeed in their culture. Although we place much emphasis on education and skills, people generally succeed or fail because of their behaviors and traits. It all begins with selection of the right person for the right job.

• **Encourage innovation:** Engaged employees are innovative. They're always looking for a better way.

• **Empowerment:** Empowerment is the ability to make decisions within the work environment without having to get prior approval. Empowered employees feel ownership for their jobs and their roles in them.

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