

Personal relationships contribute to staff retention

Management attributes a series of functional reasons as to why only one-third of employees are fully engaged at work and why others are disengaged and leave the organisation, rather than addressing the emotional reasons. Strategies to ensure workplace engagement have largely been focused on practical rewards, such as pay increases or bonuses, but it is the 'feeling-based' personal relationships that have the greatest influence, causing engaged employees to work effectively, remain with their employer and become ambassadors for the organisation.



Power of positive emotions

Analysis shows that feeling valued, confident and inspired are some key emotions that lead to higher engagement levels. The emotional responses to questions that employees ask themselves about their organisation are crucial to their level of engagement, affecting their performance at work and their willingness to learn within the organisation:

- Do I feel I am valued?
- Do I value the organisation where I work?
- Do I feel I belong?

Neville De Lucia, business director at Dale Carnegie Training, Gauteng, says people will not excel in their working environment unless they have fun in what they are doing. "Workplace irritation, disinterest and discomfort are the three core negative emotions that drive disengagement. Workers cannot be critiqued into performing better and constant negative feedback from a manager or supervisor ensures an emotional disconnect and disengagement."

Importance of addressing negative emotions

Managers who encourage positive emotions foster a stronger sense of satisfaction. They receive the highest satisfaction ratings when their employees feel inspired, enthusiastic, happy and excited. Alternatively, when immediate supervisors evoke negative emotions in employees, their satisfaction ratings are below average. This has to be addressed, as negative emotions are more contagious than positive ones. These emotions are far more obvious and can spiral from individual employees to impacting co-workers, the organisation and clients.

Cultivate positive emotions

Engagement is more than being happy at work, as happiness does not greatly affect engagement. It is demonstrated by how personally connected and committed workers feel towards the company. Employees personalise their work through emotions felt about the company's action as a whole and about their immediate supervisor in particular. Those who emotionally connect in a positive way feel a sense of ownership and are likely to stay and deliver superior work. "This positive engagement is measurable by an employee's willingness to recommend their organisation as a place of work and a place to do business," concludes De Lucia.

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