

# March 2008

By Richard Hohmann

## Employee Engagement

I am starting to get really frustrated with all the hoopla about Employee Engagement. All of the research firms are telling us that we lack employee engagement as a country in this global marketplace. Our workers no longer compare to workers in other nations and our commitment to work has gone out the window. Why do we think that “employee engagement” is a new thing? In the fact, it’s just another word for the same old thing. The conditions in the world, like the impending retirement of the baby boomers, a highly competitive global marketplace, generational diversity, and more are forcing us to make sure our workers are happy. We need to teach our managers these drivers immediately so they can supervise these unhappy workers back into the Land of Oz.

These drivers of engagement center on the employee’s connection between their work and the success of the organization as a whole. In other words, it is the belief that the employee’s work is valuable and matters to the organization. So, what’s new? Hasn’t that been the case since we hired the first worker? Doesn’t everyone want to work for a winning company and be told periodically that their effort matters and hopefully they will find the position challenging and exciting.

Managers are now being asked to pull out all stops because these unengaged people are jumping ship and this is costing us dearly. We need to retain these people and some people are telling us that we should conduct “stay” interviews because all generations want to stay in one job. We must know what drives every worker. Didn’t we do that almost a half a century ago by using Maslow’s Hierarchy of Need? Now it must be called something new.

I attended a conference on this subject and we were given a small group assignment to design an employee engagement strategy. Some used a specific model like the one created by Accenture, the Personal Engagement Scorecard. Based on the Hewitt Associates Engagement Model.



The employee is asked to rank Opportunities, People, Quality of Life, Competitive rewards, and work in terms of level of importance and then rate them at their level of satisfaction. Some used that format and others came up with their own ideas. It really boiled down to a level of trust between the employee and their manager. It’s not senior management’s job to improve employee engagement. It is the responsibility of both the employee and their supervisor to communicate in an open and candid manner to make sure that the development of the employee is on track.

The supervisor must understand that we are talking about a career track that may be satisfying to the employee at this point in time and if it isn’t, we will need to cooperatively develop a plan that works for both the organization and the employee. So many companies are spending millions of dollars to perform engagement studies resulting in strategies designed to satisfy the needs of the executive management team.

Let’s step back, spend the money in areas that will make a difference. Start training your middle management team on the things that make a difference to their staff like: business ethics, communication, interpersonal responsiveness, understanding behavioral styles, and so on. The employee wants to work for a manager that respects their values and beliefs, demonstrates integrity at all times, communicates on a level that can be empathetically understood, and is goal-oriented. All people want to be successful and find happiness at the end of their journey.

### Explore Manager Training



P: 609-390-2830  
F: 609-390-0558  
ILDV.org