



DRIVERS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT - A STUDY IN INDIAN MANUFACTURING SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Employee Engagement is a buzzword and a challenge for the human resource department of almost all the organizations. An engaged employee is a person who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about his or her work, thus willing to invest his/her talent for the fulfillment of organisations goal. It is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. In short, it is a positive attitude and a strong emotional bond held by the employees towards the organization and its values which further develops into organisation citizenship behaviour. It is due to this that measuring the engagement levels of the employees has become important for the organizations. With the above backdrop this paper focuses on conceptualising employee engagement with drivers of employee engagement and further highlights the relative importance of these drivers in terms of employee engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

The employees of any organisation can be its biggest asset as well as its biggest liability. It depends on the organisation how it treats its employees. In the present era with full of competitions around. Organizations need to attain competitive advantage over others, which is possible not simply through number of workforce but through talented and engaged workforce. The idea of managing and engaging talent is not new. Four or Five decades ago, it was viewed as a peripheral responsibility best related to the Personnel department. Now they have become an organizational function that is taken far more seriously. Its importance has been realised after a large economic downturn post 2006. Especially, the global companies are paying more attention to talent acquisition and retention through engagement policies as there is large cultural diversification among employees. "Josh Bersin in his article explains the evolution of Human Resource functions where he has mentioned about the emergence of "talent management and engagement" in an organization. The strategic HR continues to be the major focus of an organization however they have shifted their focus from business partner to business integration where importance is being given to the talent management and engagement. Talented workforce is not a problem as people every time are concerned and equipped with knowledge and skill for their overall development. Only having knowledge, skill and attitude to work will not solve the purpose unless and until they get properly utilized, which is termed as employee engagement. It is a process of engaging the employees productively. Having knowledge, skill and attitude to work will not solve the purpose unless and until they get properly utilized, which is termed as employee engagement. It is a process of engaging the employees productively. An engaged employee is a person who is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about his or her work, thus willing to invest the discretionary effort. It is the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organization and its values. In short, it is a positive attitude and a strong emotional bond held by the employees

towards the organization. With this backdrop it is important to measure the engagement factors that has become important for the organizations.

Literature Review

Employee engagement at work was conceptualized by Kahn (1990) as the harnessing of organizational members selves to their work roles. In engagement people express and employ themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performance. The second related construct to engagement in organizational behavior is the notion of flow advanced by Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990), he also defined flow as the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement. Flow is the state in which there is little distinction between self and environment. When individuals are in a flow state, little conscious control is necessary for their actions. Thus employee engagement is a barometer that determines the person with an organization. Engagement is most closely associated with existing construction of job involvement Brown (1996) and flow Csikszentmihalyi, (1990). Job involvement is defined as the degree to which the job situation is central to the person and his or her identity Hall (1970). Kanungo (1982) maintained that job involvement is a cognitive or belief state of psychology identification. Job involvement is thought to depend on both need and saliency and the potential of a job to satisfy the needs. Thus job involvement results from a cognitive judgment about the needs satisfying abilities of the job. Jobs in this view are tied to one's self image. Engagement differs from job in as it is concerned more with how individual employees his/her self during the performance of his/her job. Furthermore engagement entails the active use of emotions. Finally engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job.

Employee engagement has been defined as emotional and intellectual commitment to the organization (Baumruk 2004, Richman 2006 and Shaw 2005) or the amount of discretionary effort exhibited by employees in their job (Frank *et al.*, 2004). According to Kahn (1990), engagement means to be psychologically as well as physically present when occupying and performing an organizational role. In engagement people express and employ themselves physically,

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cognitively and emotionally during role performance. This has also been emphasised by Robinson *et al.* (2004) as a positive attitude towards the organization and its values to do the work with colleagues by understanding the business context to improve the performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. According to Brown (1996) and Flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) engagement is most closely associated with Job Involvement. It is defined by Hall (1970) as the degree to which the job situation is central to the person and his or her identity. Kanungo (1982) maintained that job involvement is a cognitive or belief state of psychological identification. Employees voluntarily involve themselves in the work they do. It comes from within the employees to be identified by the goal of the organization and the role they do. Thus job involvement is thought to depend on both need and the potential of a job to satisfy the needs. It results from a cognitive judgement about the need satisfying abilities of the job. Jobs in this view are tied to one's self image. Engagement differs from job as it is concerned more with how individual employees his/her self during the performance of his/her job. Finally, engagement may be thought of as an antecedent to job, and management must create such culture and environment where wilful engagement and involvement will be there by the employees. In recent years, more studies have begun to look at the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement. For example, Saks (2006) found a distinction between two types of engagement, job engagement and organisation engagement, which he argues are related but distinct constructs. In addition, he argued that the relationships between both job and organisation engagement, and their antecedents and consequences differed in a number of ways, suggesting that the psychological conditions that lead to job and organisation engagement, as well as their consequences, are not the same. Whilst this study has provided a new insight into employee engagement, it is important to note the survey was completed by a small sample of 102 employees in Canada. Therefore, the results may not be generalisable to employees in the UK, for example, as definitions of engagement vary in different countries and national differences may play a part in what leads to engagement in the first place.

Nevertheless, it adds a new insight into the existing body of literature as it is the first study to make a distinction between job and organisation engagement and to measure a variety of antecedents and consequences of job and organisation engagement; previous research has focused primarily on engagement at the individual level. Practitioners and academics tend to agree that the consequences of employee engagement are positive (Saks 2006). There is a general belief that there is a connection between employee engagement and business results; a meta-analysis conducted by Harter *et al.* (2002:272) confirms this connection. They concluded that, "...employee satisfaction and engagement are related to meaningful business outcomes at a magnitude that is important to many organisations". However, engagement is an individual-level construct and if it does lead to business results, it must first impact individual-level outcomes. The importance of employee engagement has been growing during these days.

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 organisation, feels passionately about its goals and is committed towards its values who can be termed thus. He goes the extra mile beyond the basic job responsibility and is associated with the actions that drive the business. Moreover, in times of diminishing loyalty, employee engagement is a powerful retention strategy. The fact that it has a strong impact on the bottom-line adds to its significance. Engagement is about motivating employees to do their best. An engaged employee gives his company his 100 percent. This is what makes the difference in an industry where the most valuable resource of a company walks out of the door every evening. 'This is of particular importance in a knowledge industry. The quality of output and competitive advantage of a company depend on the quality of its people,' believe the HR Pundits, whose major focus is on retaining the

best talent in their organizations. It has been proved that there is an intrinsic link between employee engagement, customer loyalty, and profitability. When employees are effectively and positively engaged with their organisation, they form an emotional connection with the company. This impacts their attitude towards the company's clients, and thereby improves customer satisfaction and service levels. Successful employee engagement helps create a community at the workplace and not just a workforce. Engagement is important for managers to cultivate given that disengagement or alienation is central to the problem of workers' lack of commitment and motivation (Aktouf). Meaningless work is often associated with apathy and detachment from ones works (Thomas and Velthouse). In such conditions, individuals are thought to be estranged from their selves (Seeman, 1972). Other Research using a different resource of engagement (involvement and enthusiasm) has linked it to such variables as employee turnover, customer satisfaction – loyalty, safety and to a lesser degree, productivity and profitability criteria (Harter, Schmidt and Hayes, 2002).

Defining employee engagement may not simple. "Executives are beginning to realize that employee engagement doesn't mean the same thing to everyone in every company" (Gibbons, 2007, p. 1). Increased interest in employee engagement resulted in numerous consultants creating employee opinion surveys that represent the specific consulting firm's perspective and approach to employee engagement. These differing views created substantial confusion or, as Gibbons (2007) said, "Leaders on employee engagement represent backgrounds in all of these approaches and, therefore, their contributions have led to an unfortunate outcome known as 'conceptual bleed'" (p. 2). Despite the conceptual bleeds created by individual consulting firm perspectives, when Gibbons (2006) worked with authors, researchers, and opinion leaders, they were able to build a common understanding of what employee engagement is. "Employee engagement is a heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his or her organization, manager, or coworkers that, in turn, influences him/her to apply additional discretionary effort to his/her work" (Gibbons, 2006, p. 5). Employees who have a heightened connection to their organization, supervisor, and coworkers, and who make additional effort in their work are considered engaged. (Ulrich, 2004, p. 1). This statement reflects the recent focus by human resource professionals and management on employee engagement and its connection to sustainability and profitability. In this section, I look at why employee engagement is considered important. Employers able to engage employees are more likely to retain those same employees, while simultaneously increasing output. "Organizations must capture a bigger portion of the employee mindshare" (Ulrich, 2004, p. 2).

Some human resource specialists consider employee disengagement a significant contributor to poor corporate performance and profitability. "Lack of engagement is endemic and is causing large and small organizations all over the world to incur excess costs, under-perform on critical tasks, and create widespread customer dissatisfaction" (Rampersad, 2008, p.1). While increased participation and information are important, they will not necessarily, on their own, result in meaningful work and, therefore, employee engagement. Other components are involved. "The work itself needs to offer opportunities for autonomy, influence, and intrinsic rewards" (Bolman and Deal, 2003, p. 144). Intrinsic rewards, such as personal satisfaction and strong self-efficacy, are also components of meaningful work (Bolman and Deal, 2003). Making work meaningful is an important aspect of improving performance and employee engagement. Wheatley (2006) connected creativity, innovation, and engagement to what interests and brings meaning to people. Wheatley believed that by watching how people spend their time and listening to what they talk about, we can begin to understand what's important to them. There are similarities between the work of Senge (2006; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers, 2004) and Wheatley (2006, 2007). Both Senge and Wheatley explored the connection between values, positive approaches, and the beliefs of leaders and their impact on

employee commitment, loyalty, and performance. There are similarities between the work of Senge (2006; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, and Flowers, 2004) and Wheatley (2006, 2007). Both Senge and Wheatley explored the connection between values, positive approaches, and the beliefs of leaders and their impact on employee commitment, loyalty, and performance. Therefore, employees are not engaged to the same extent at the same time. There are many catalysts to employee engagement. The first is the use of positive language in organizations. This includes the use of positive terminology versus negative. Senge (2006) uses several examples like the foregoing one of Inamori's to describe and support his belief that one of the catalysts of employee engagement and the resulting organizational performance is the organizational leader's positive beliefs, values, and attitude towards employees. The second element is overall positive approach to business. Finally the beliefs and values of the leader who has a clear focus on caring for employees and who enables them to be their best, is identified as a catalyst to employee engagement. All three of these elements are considered important catalyst of employee engagement. An organization's capacity to manage employee engagement is closely related to its ability to achieve high performance levels and superior business results.

Some of the advantages of Engaged employees are

1. Engaged employees will stay with the company, be an advocate of the company and its products and services, and contribute to bottom line business success
2. They will normally perform better and are more motivated.
3. There is a significant link between employee engagement and profitability.
4. They form an emotional connection with the company. This impacts their attitude towards the company's clients, and thereby improves customer satisfaction and service levels
5. It builds passion, commitment and alignment with the organization's strategies and goals
6. Increases employees' trust in the organization
7. Creates a sense of loyalty in a competitive environment
8. Provides a high-energy working environment
9. Boosts business growth
10. Makes the employees effective brand ambassadors for the company

A highly engaged employee will consistently deliver beyond expectations. In the workplace research on employee engagement (Harter, Schmidt and Hayes, 2002) have repeatedly asked employees 'whether they have the opportunity to do what they do best everyday'. Although, the fact is that only one in five employees will strongly agree with this statement. Those work units scoring higher on this perception have substantially higher performance.

Thus employee engagement is critical to any organization that seeks to retain valued employees. The Watson Wyatt consulting companies has been proved that there is an intrinsic link between employee engagement, customer loyalty, and profitability. As organizations globalize and become more dependent on technology in a virtual working environment, there is a greater need to connect and engage with employees to provide them with an organizational 'IDENTITY.'

Objective of the study

1. To identify the employee engagement factors for the organisations studied
2. Recommendations for improvement of various engagement factors in order to improve the employee productivity

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methods of Data Collection

Primary data is gathered through a survey with the help of questionnaire. Secondary data sources includes Books and Journals.

Sample size

The sample size for this research was of 150 employees across for a private sector manufacturing organisation whose name is not revealed for confidentiality purpose.

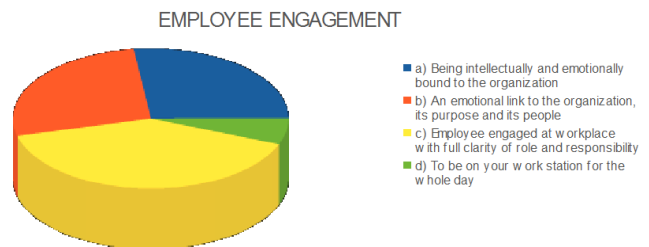
Data Analysis

Factors for Employee Engagement

The different factors that were taken into consideration for the study includes : Understanding the mission and vision of the company, culture of the organisation, fair evaluation, KPAs, co operation in the work environment, employee retention, role clarity, work life balance and compensation and benefit.

Q1. What according to you best defines the concept of 'Employee engagement'?

Options	Total
a) Being intellectually and emotionally bound to the organization	27%
b) An emotional link to the organization, its purpose and its people	27%
c) Employee engaged at workplace with full clarity of role and responsibility	40%
d) To be on your work station for the whole day	6.00%



Observations

It is evident from table 40% of the employees are engaged with full clarity of role and responsibility. A huge 27% think that engagement is the emotional link they have for the organisation. Only a small 5% think that engagement is to be on their work station through-out, which means only these 5% are the under-productive ones.

Mission/Purpose

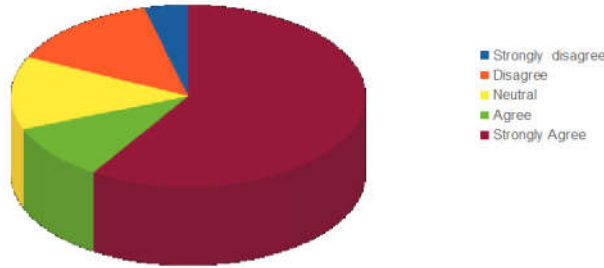
Table 2. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel that your job is important?

Strongly disagree	4.00%
Disagree	14.00%
Neutral	13.00%
Agree	10.00%
Strongly Agree	59.00%

Interpretation

From the above diagram it is quite evident that 60 % of people are engaged due to their clear understanding of the mission of the organisation. However the rest 40% has a mixed reaction. This gives an impression that even if mission exists communicating of the mission doesn't exist across the organisation.

1. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel that your job is important?



Culture

How is the culture at your work place?

Table 3.

Options	TOTAL
a. Very friendly and comfortable, I enjoy working here	59.00%
b. Average, not very employee friendly	27.00%
c. Not friendly at all	5%
d. Indifferent	9.00%



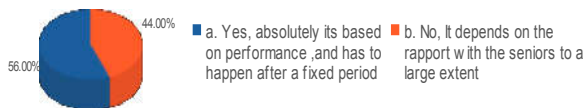
Observations

From table three we can infer that 59% of the employees feel that the work-place culture is very cooperative and friendly. This means that the employees have a positive feeling of friendliness among themselves. Feelings like negative competition, which is the general factor which leads to spoiling of relationships, whether it be with a colleague or a superior, are not very predominant among the employees. This means that on a general level, cordial relations exist among employees, which leads to positivity, thus increased productivity. However 32% employees are having negative opinion about the organisation culture. This is quite a alarming figure in terms of employee engagement.

Promotions

Table 4. Are job promotions in this organization fair objective and transparent?

Options	TOTAL
a. Yes, absolutely its based on performance, and has to happen after a fixed period	56.00%
b. No, It depends on the rapport with the seniors to a large extent	44.00%



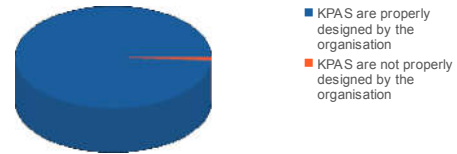
Observations

56% of the employees have a positive outlook to the fairness of job promotions. While the 44% feels that the promotions are not fair and objective and largely depend on the rapport with the seniors to a large extent.

KPAs

Table 5. Who sets your KPAs (Key Performance Areas) and on what basis?

KPAS are properly designed by the organisation 99%
 KPAS are not properly designed by the organisation 1%



It can be concluded from Table 4 that 99% of the employees are satisfied with KPAs designed by the organisation. It shows that KPAs are designed in a manner to achieve the targets of the employees.

Cooperation

Table 6. Do you get the expected cooperation from your colleagues?

Options	TOTAL
a. Yes, everyone is very helpful	55%
b. Sometimes, whenever there are deadlines to meet from the superiors	18%
c. Hardly, it depends on the rapport with the person concerned	16%
d. Never, people are very reluctant as far as helping is concerned	11.00%

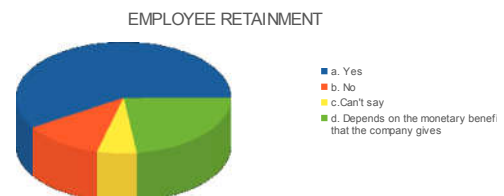
Interpretation

A majority of the employees feel that their colleagues are very cooperative. This shows that as a result of cordial work place relationships employees feel more engaged and thus are able to perform their best. Many of the employees also feel that the employees get together and work in cooperation only when there are deadlines to meet.

Employee Retainment

Table 7. Do you see yourself in the same company five years down the line?

Sr. No.	Discription	Percentage
a	Yes	59.00%
b	No	12.00%
c	Can't Say	6.00%
d	Dependence on the monetary benefits that the company gives	23.00%



Observations

Almost 59% of the employees see themselves in the same organisation five years down the line. This means that the employees have a feeling of being treasured by the organization and also feel that their caliber is being aptly utilized by the organisation.

Table 7. Do you get a chance to show your innovation and creativity in your job?

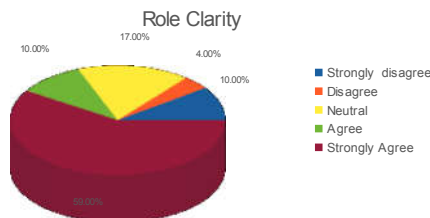
Observations

Options	TOTAL
a. Yes, I have been given the flexibility to do things differently	35%
b. Yes, I do try to be creative, but sometimes	40%
c. No, the things are supposed to be done as per the set standards, there is no room for creativity	25%

It can be inferred from Table 7 that only 35% of the employees feel that they have been given flexibility to do things differently, whereas another 40% get a chance to show their creativity at times whenever possible. One fourth of the employees say that things to be done as per the SOPs only. Above all the above data indicates there is a strong need of giving freedom and flexibility in the way things are done in order to make people more engaged and workshops and brain storming sessions can be organise where people from the specific deptt can discuss the innovative way to do the same thing which makes people less bored and more motivated to achieve the set goals.

Table 8. Role Clarity

Role clarity	
Strongly disagree	10.00%
Disagree	4.00%
Neutral	17.00%
Agree	10.00%
Strongly Agree	59.00%



It can be inferred from table 8 that 69% of people strongly agree and agree that there exists role clarity in the organisation. And 17% really a very high number are of no opinion about the factor. And the rest 14% the response was negative meaning that they had no role clarity. As per the employee engagement supporting literature role clarity has a very important role to play in driving employee engagement so line managers must bring role clarity in their respective departments.

Work life balance

Table 9

Worklife balance	
Strongly disagree	20.00%
Disagree	15.00%
Neutral	11.00%
Agree	20.00%
Strongly Agree	44.00%

Work Life balance

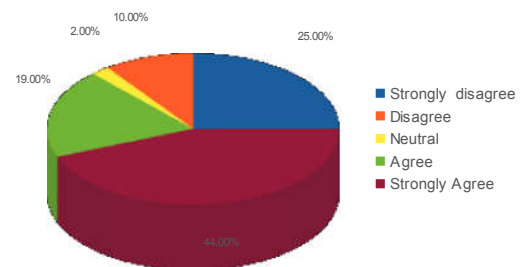


It can be seen from Table 9 that only 44% say that there exists work life balance .Around 35% do not agree. So the work life balance parameter has to be improved upon to retain more number of employees in the organisation. Though it is difficult to have different work life balance options like flexitime, work from home etc in a manufacturing sector but still organisations must find different innovative means for creating work life balance for their employees in order to make them more engaged and thereby be more productive.

Compensation and benefits

Table 10

Compensation and benefits	
Strongly disagree	25.00%
Disagree	10.00%
Neutral	02.00%
Agree	19.00%
Strongly Agree	44.00%



It is observed from table number 10 that 44% are only satisfied with compensation and benefit. In a country like India money continue to motivate people across levels. So the organisation should work on this component must design a compensation plan which market driven and competitive because in an organisation where satisfaction level due to compensation is below 45% it must be really difficult to reach target and be performance driven.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a few recommendations which should be implement in order to create more employee engagement.

1. There has to be at least three workshops in a year to clearly communicate the mission of the organisation to the employees.
2. To improve the culture of the workplace management can create the a task force from amongst the 59% of employees who agree that the workplace culture is co operative and friendly for creating a positive work environment and further specific research can be undertaken to study organisation culture.

3. Since 44% of people feel that job promotion in the organisation is influenced by the seniors to a large extent hence the seniors should be counseled in this regard so that the right talent can be developed rewarded fairly.
4. Further of late, we observe irrespective of sector employees are becoming very critical about their exact role. Thus there is a need that HR managers along with the line managers design a clear cut roles for each employee with clear identification of task and subtasks along with deadlines.
5. Specific compensation benchmarking should be done and accordingly revision of compensation and benefits should be done in regular intervals to make the salary more competitive and employee friendly.
6. Invest in Training and Development - Besides the company's training activities, career plans and professional development opportunities ought to be routinely discussed and formalized. Once your employees feel your company has invested in them in this manner, they are far more likely to uphold its best interests and keep an eye to furthering its goals and enhancing its welfare.
7. Work Life Balance – Innovative work arrangements increasingly available at leading corporations – and which you should aim to implement - include flexible hours, part-time, job-sharing, telecommuting in additions to sabbaticals for long-serving personnel or those pursuing special outside interests and extended leave periods for new parents.
8. Participate in community outreach programs- Corporate philanthropy has shown to increase employee loyalty. Why not adopt CSR programs- not just as a means to give back and to participate in your larger communities but also as a measure to win the support and respect of your employees? Employees feel a greater sense of pride and purpose working with an employer that is publicly committed to altruism, particularly when the causes the company is committed to are in line with theirs and benefit the greater community in a tangible manner.
9. Identify the motivators that matter– Most companies continue to believe that employees are motivated by traditional workplace sticks and carrots such as compensation and promotions. While things like compensation certainly matter, recent research by Daniel Pink suggests that people are primarily motivated by autonomy, mastery, and purpose.
10. Close the loop by turning engagement into action – Engagement for the sake of engagement is just that. Happy employees are good, but happy employees that contribute to the business by performing in exceptional ways are better. It's also critical to remind employees and management that engagement is a two way street – the company will do great things for employees and employees will do great things for the company. Very few companies get this right, but those that do create a virtuous cycle of employee engagement where the company does more for its people and the people do more for the company which in turn causes the company to do even more for its people.

Conclusion

Employee Engagement has become the latest mantra for the HR professional to improve the motivation levels of employees and in making them better assets for the company. It has become a mantra for controlling the attrition rate of the organizations.

As we look at the data of the sample that had been chosen, it shows very evidently that the employees are on the whole very satisfied with the company. The employees are well aware of the vision of the organisation, thus are active participants in its growth. They feel that their role is important in the organisation, which makes them give their best since they can feel their contribution in the success of the organisation. Most of the employees are very confident in the ability of the organisation reaching its goals. It is this confidence that not

only helps in retaining the employees, but also in allowing them to shoulder the responsibility of the success of the organisation. Employees feel excited in coming to the workplace. This means that they feel a sense of pride and excitement when they do their work, which is very important for the growth of any organisation. The employees are well aware of the concept of Employee engagement.

Most of the employees would want to see their friends and relatives work in The organization, which means that they not only take pride in their organisation, but also feel that it is the best for their closest ones. The major reason that most of the employees want to stick to their current job is the satisfaction which they get out of working here. This is a very positive picture, since if the employees are only working for monetary benefits; they would leave for better options as soon as they get one. This means that their loyalties are towards the organisation and not the money. Almost 60% of the employees feel that their workplace culture is very cordial and friendly. This instills a very positive feeling in the employees and acts as a motivating factor.

Although confusion continues regarding what employee engagement is, experts defined employee engagement as, "Employee engagement is a heightened emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his or her organization, manager, or coworkers that, in turn, influences him/her to apply additional discretionary effort to his/her work" (Gibbons, 2006, p. 5). Meaningful work can be created through the provision of autonomy, influence, and intrinsic rewards. Meaningful work also includes the opportunity for employees to co-create their work. The ability for an employee to influence the structure and design of their work also assist in creating meaningful work.

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