

Impact of Technology on Employee Engagement – Detrimental or Beneficial?

Dr.V.Rama Devi

Associate Professor and Head
Dept. of Management
Sikkim Central University
6th mile, Samdur, Tadong
Gangtok, Sikkim

Dr. M.Jyothsna

Associate Professor
GITAM Institute of Management,
GITAM University, Gandhi Nagar campus
Rushikonda, Visakhapatnam

Abstract

The purpose of the article is to highlight the outcomes of employee engagement and the impact of technology on employee engagement. Many research studies have revealed positive outcomes of employee engagement in terms of increase in employees' job satisfaction, organizational commitment, productivity and decrease in intention to quit the organization.

The article aims to discuss whether technology is detrimental or beneficial to employee engagement. Faster avenues of access of information will be useful to the employees in many ways. In addition to this, sharing of the information about what is happening in the organization with the employees creates an intangible bond that will be of value for employee engagement. Technology also brings in flexibility to the employees, reduces duplication, increases the pace of work and also helps in customer engagement. All these factors positively contribute to employee engagement. Though technology poses a threat to the stability of the employees and blurs the line between their work and personal life, the benefits outweigh the cost justifying the positive impact of technology on employee engagement.

Keywords:

Technology, Employee engagement, Flexibility, Stability, Customer engagement.

Introduction

Employee engagement is the level of commitment and involvement of an employee towards the organization and its values. Employee engagement has been defined as 'the bond employees have with their organization'; that 'when employees really care about the business, they are more likely to go the extra mile' (Lanphear, 2004).

Employees are the biggest investment and the companies should derive maximum Return on Investment (ROI) and a source of competitive advantage from it. Engaged employees are the crucial factors in every successful business. Employee engagement is measured by level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards his organization. Engaged employees will have higher

organizational commitment levels that create higher customer engagement. This in turn generates higher sales and profits ultimately resulting in satisfaction of all the stakeholders. There is a chain of positive reactions which emphasizes the importance of employee engagement. In today's cut throat competitive era, many companies realize the importance of "engaged" employees as a first step towards increased productivity and customer satisfaction.

Outcomes of Employee Engagement:

The dynamic force leading to the popularity of employee engagement is that it has positive consequences for organizations. There is a general belief that there is association between employee engagement and business results (Harter et al., 2002). Research studies have revealed that there is significant relationship between engagement, job satisfaction, job commitment, employee performance and business outcomes. Research has spread this belief by denoting that organizations with high levels of employee engagement report optimistic organizational outcomes (Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, & Truss, 2008).

Kahn (1992) presented that engagement leads to both individual outcomes (i.e. quality of people's work and their own experiences of doing that work), as well as organizational-level outcomes (i.e. the growth and productivity of organizations). As reported by Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), engaged employees tend to have a greater attachment with their organization and as a result lower tendency to quit their organization. Other studies (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Sonnentag, 2003) also revealed that engagement is positively related to organizational commitment and negatively related to intention to quit, and is believed to also be related to job performance and extra-role behavior.

Technology and its Impact on Employee Engagement:

Creating engaged employees is a challenge especially in the light of technological breakthroughs adopted by the organizations. Whether technology enables or disables employee engagement is the issue to be debated.

Beneficial Impact of Technology on Employee Engagement:

Technology offers a challenge to the employees and at the same time provides better quality of life. Technology has and continues to have impact on the way we work. It has profound impact through faster avenues of access and methods of mobility that deliver information at an exponential rate. Majority of the organizations are using HRIS that provides benefits to the organization and the employees. Through technology, employees have 24/7 access to resources, data and colleagues through internal systems. Employees have also access to data pertaining to

status of their leaves, increments, benefits availed, due, etc. In addition to this, employees feel attached when they are aware of whatever is happening in the organization. Through intranet, effective communication of the relevant information to the employees creates a feeling among them that they are considered valuable and are a part of the organization.

Over a period of time, employees' expectations from the job are increasing. Employees do not want to get stagnated and are driven by career advancement opportunities. Thorough competency mapping in an organization and appropriate access of information for career advancement of employees helps the employees to plan accordingly that will enable them to climb up the career ladder. An essential prerequisite to achieve employee engagement is employee development (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004). Unlike traditional employee development plans puzzled with minimum built-in accountability or measurement (Wellin & Concelman, 2005), an employee development plan designed for engagement aligns and monitors the employees' job and career goals to the organizations' strategic goals. This brings goal congruence which is very healthy for the organization as well as for the employees.

Tech-savvy employees are looking for employers who have invested in technology providing better platforms to work. Many employees prefer flexibility which is enabled by technology. Telecommuting appeals to the employees who prefer to sit at home and work according to their convenience. Technology helps in avoiding duplication of work and improves the pace of work. It also helps the employees in Customer Relationship Management (CRM). In customer interactions, employees are using technology in order to facilitate or increase sales, to stay in customers' minds and to provide customers with product or service overviews or choices.

Detrimental Impact of Technology on Employee Engagement:

On the other side, technology causes frustration to the employees. There is a threat to stability of employees. People will become too much dependent on technology and if something goes wrong they will become disabled. Production demands are also increasing on the employees creating more pressure. An employee has to constantly update his knowledge and skills to cope with work pressure in technologically sophisticated environment. The employees cannot afford to sit back and relax which will leave them behind and finally will not be given space in work place.

Due to technology, employees are available to the employer 24/7 leaving less space for their personal life. Technology enabled communication via cell phones, text messages,

email or virtual video conferencing tools eliminate face-to-face communication and thereby affects work place relationships. The intangible valuable bond among the employees may be reduced.

Technology can be a double edged sword for Employee engagement

Conclusion

Now-a-days we live and breathe technology. Technology has intensified competition and has kept the employees on the toes. If the organizations adopt technological advances and train the employees to adapt to technology sophistication, the employees can do the job better that triggers an increase in their productivity and satisfaction. Though technology blurs the line between personal and professional lives of the employees, the benefits stemming from the technology outweigh the costs. Engaged employees will exceed expectations and increase production levels because they want to, not because they have to. Creating a work culture and environment that focuses on employee engagement benefits the individual as well as the business.

References

- Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F.L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 87*(2), 268-279.
- Kahn, W. A. 1992. To be fully there: Psychological presence at work. *Human Relations, 45*: 321–349.
- Kular, S., Gatenby, M., Rees, C., Soane, E., & Truss, K. (2008). *Employee engagement: A literature review*. Kingston University, Kingston Business School. Retrieved from <http://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/4192/1/19wempen.pdf>.
- Lanphear, S. (2004). Are Your Employees Highly Engaged? *Credit Union Executive Newsletter*; 19, 1-2.
- Robinson, D. Perryman, S. & Hayday S. (2004), “The drivers of employee engagement”, *Institute of Employment Studies*, Report 405.
- Schaufeli, W.B. and Bakker, A.B. (2004), “Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: a multi-sample study”, *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 25*, 293–315.
- Sonnentag, S. (2003). Recovery, work engagement, and proactive behaviour: A new look at the interface between work and non-work. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*, 518-528.
- Wellin, R. & Concelman, J. (2005), “Creating a culture for engagement”, *Talent Management*. Accessed at: <<http://www.talentmgt.com>.