

# Chapter 10

## Employee Engagement Strategies With Special Focus on Indian Firms

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### **ABSTRACT**

*In today's business environment, it is highly important that organizations develop and adhere to the standing orders as well as formulate appropriate policies and reward systems for employees to sustain them in the organization. The purpose of this chapter was to highlight the Indian scenario of employee engagement. Authors described the employee engagement and its major concepts and approaches along with its background, especially in India. Further, the major challenges and encounters in employee engagement field are also discussed. In the end, the authors proposed a list of solutions comprising workplace, leadership, and culture and other ways to handle these challenges.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The concept of employee engagement has naturally evolved from past research on high involvement, empowerment, job motivation, organizational commitment and trust (Bernthal, 2009). Though employee engagement is becoming a popular term among human resource management and development consultants, with the popularity of the book *First Break All the Rules* (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999) made the term employee engagement become an overnight sensation in the business consulting world and along with that the professional societies and consulting groups (e.g., The Gallup Organization, Towers Perrin, the Corporate Leadership Council, ASTD, and SHRM) quickly staked their claims to expertise in the employee engagement arena, each with its own strategy and framework (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). Gallup Research Group defines employee engagement as the individual's involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work (Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002). High levels of engagement are

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associated with high levels of performance, citizenship behaviour and individual well-being (Truss, Shantz, Soane, Alfes, & Delbridge, 2013). Employee engagement is also an indicator of high productivity and employee retention (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2008). Employee engagement as a key to the retention of talent is an area in which the lead has been taken by practitioners and a rigorous academic research is required in this area (Bhatnagar, 2007). Further while analyzing the research focus of the other nations upon employee engagement she said that India have not investigated those. In fact, she refereed Fegley (2006) who indicated trends in the Western world that the Indian HR community needs to look into.

Post liberalization, the Indian work environment has become dynamic, making it imperative for organizations to restructure themselves, build competitive advantage through new technology, availability of resources and a competent workforce. India emerged as a big labor market for various MNCs. Opportunities opened up for the Indian youth to have a great exposure in business organization. However, globalization brought along with it the evils of rapid technological advancements, skill obsolescence, pay disparities and attrition. The prevailing HR practices were not able to contain these issues brought about by the rising complexities of business. Hence, it has become imperative for HR to go beyond the traditional roles and become a strategic partner to businesses, focusing attention on engaging employees at deeper levels in organizations, thereby ensuring a win-win for both employees and organizations. Also, the management of a vast and diverse workforce makes employee engagement all the more relevant in the Indian job market. Various studies have shown that employee engagement is closely intertwined with a number of positive business outcomes, say, performance, profitability, growth, customer loyalty, employee retention and safety.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The term, *engagement* it is defined as the emotional, physical and cognitive attachment of employees to their work, Due to its orientation towards practice, researchers have explored and tested the theories of employee engagement (Gupta, Ganguli & Ponnampalnam, 2015). Employee engagement is the cornerstone upon which rests a number of positive business outcomes such as productivity, improved bottom lines, growth, customer satisfaction, employee retention and safety. Employee engagement not only ensures full commitment from the employees but also creates passionate and enthused workers who strive hard to work towards the organisation's vision and their personal goals (White, 2008). Increasing employee engagement has traditionally been high on the agenda of Human Resource departments and research also indicates that having an engaged and committed workforce lead to numerous beneficial outcomes, such as lower turnover intentions and higher organizational performance (Bal, Kooij & De Jong, 2013).

The construct of employee engagement is multidimensional and based on prior conceptualizations of job satisfaction, employee commitment, job involvement and organizational citizenship behavior. Although employee engagement incorporates the above concepts, it is broader in scope (Kompaso & Sridevi, 2010; Kumar, 2013).

Although academic and organizational deliberations on employee engagement seem to be a recent phenomenon, actually it dates back to 1990 when the term was first used in an academic journal. The very first contribution to the academic literature on engagement is the seminal work on personal engagement by Kahn, considered as academic parent of the employee engagement work (Ghosh, Rai & Sinha, 2014). It is Kahn, who first used the term employee engagement in academia in the year 1990 and defined it as 'the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles: in engagement, people employ and

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