

Chapter 85

Engaging Employees With Positivity: The Role of Appreciative Inquiry in Employee Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

This chapter attempts to find the role of appreciative inquiry in employee engagement and organizational transformation. An attempt has been made to explain the impact of appreciative inquiry on employee engagement, which eventually helps in organizational transformation with minimal hindrances. Employee engagement has turned into an undeniably conspicuous issue in the region of organizational development (OD) likely because of the developing collection of research encompassing the positive connection between employee engagement and organizational development, which also comprises profit margin. Appreciative inquiry is a vision-based approach of open dialogue that is designed to help organizations and their partners create a shared vision for the future and a mission to operate in the present. The main thrust area of appreciative inquiry is to find out what works best for the organization. Instead of focusing on negativity, appreciative inquiry focuses on the positive aspect of the organization.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, employee engagement has become a very popular topic of discussion. Worldwide, many organizations have felt the need of increasing the percentage of engaged employees and they are taking steps to do so. Google, for example believes in nurturing a transparent culture in their organization in order to ensure engagement among the employees. Transparency ensures empowerment employees as well as creativity and collaboration among employees (Flintand Hearn, 2019). It is believed that by empowering employees, engagement can be achieved. In many organizations, employees are treated as partners. Since the employees are treated as partners, they take part in decision making in the orga-

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-2405-6.ch085

nizations.(Flint and Hearn, 2019). This is one of the best practices in Google Inc. Full contact, on the other hand provides paid vacation to their employees in order to encourage engagement. They inspire the employees to go on a vacation funded by the organization, but on one condition that they cannot receive any official message or call. These paid vacations will reduce the dependence on any particular employee and at the same time will lead to belief in the efficiency of the coworkers.(Maier,2016).In Virgin, it is believed that to flourish in any business, one has to build an environment where employees will love to work and feel at home.(Flint and Hearn, 2019)But why has employee engagement become a much discussed topic these days? This is because employee engagement reaps many benefits for the organization. Employee engagement leads to enhanced employee performance, reduced absenteeism, job involvement, and many more. Among the many benefits of employee engagement, employee sustainability is one of the important benefits. Employee engagement helps the employees to go beyond just earning a livelihood. Nowadays, employees are not only happy with a handsome salary. They want to be a part and parcel of the organization. Employee engagement helps to balance personal life and work life. It gives them opportunity for learning and develops passion towards work. Employee engagement develops creativity among the employees, helps them to be innovative and in the process, enables the organization to achieve competitive advantage. It also leads to job satisfaction and lower rate of attrition and increased employee sustainability.

To make employees more engaged at work, it is important that the organizations know the strengths of its employees and helps to nurture them. Best productivity can come from instances where employees are able to deliver their potential. From this perspective, one of the organizational development practices that delve into the understanding and exploring the best potentials of the individuals at work and organizations at a whole is Appreciative Inquiry (hereafter AI). In one study it was found that, in two cases, innovative ideas got established and polished through the exceptional contribution of individuals from various backgrounds under appreciative inquiry (Richer, M. C., Ritchie, J., &Marchionni, C. (2009).. The heart of any organizational democracy is talking, exploring, initiating dialogue and inquiry; through this organizational members are engaged in defining better results for their firms.

Some of the building blocks of employee engagement, as research suggests, are as follows:

- **Building High Level of Trust:** The power of trust is often undermined by the leaders of an organization. But, if trust can be built up, it can reap many rewards-engaged employees, retention of top talent, positive work culture, etc. Following are examples of behaviours that can lead to building trust:
 - i. Clarity in working of the company
 - ii. Prompt dissemination of information
 - iii. Giving impartial attention to each and every employee
 - iv. Acceptance of failure
 - v. Uniform communication
 - vi. Uniform practices
 - vii. Realistic commitment
 - viii. No fault finding
- **Treating Employees Well:** Understanding the employees' actual needs and respecting those needs is crucial for developing engagement. Giving due respect to the employees helps to boost up the morale of the employees which in turn leads to higher level of engagement.

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