

Employee Engagement: The Underlying Factors

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Abstract--*It is rare when a supervisor or a manager takes closer interest in customizing the learning process of their new employees. As time passes, this energy is deflated due to the severe lack of engagement, performance in the workplace is decreased significantly as the motivation for work declines. Hence, this work has studied the level of employee engagement in two different organizations, a senior established institution and a promising startup organization in Riyadh. The purpose was to find the important factors behind employee engagement and how to achieve a higher level of efficiency in the workplace. This paper consisted of two surveys targeting first time employees and managers in two companies, one in Jeddah and the other in Riyadh with a total of 40 participants. The survey was designed to capture responses on specific areas while maintaining a perspective of the employee's point of view. The outcome of this work showed that the most important contributing factors emphasized by the survey were task distribution and clarity of vision, career development, approachability of supervision, work/social environment in the work place, job satisfaction and performance improvement outlook.*

Keywords--*Employment; employee; engagement; factors; organization*

I. INTRODUCTION

Enthusiasm in analyzing the existence of employee engagement is encountering unprecedented notoriety in most of the organizations worldwide as it is regarded as a fundamental component influencing authoritative adequacy, development and intensity [1].

Human Resource Development (HRD) policies have described employee engagement as an act designed to ensure that employees are focused on the objectives of their association and contribute to the overall achievement of the organization [2].

Employees show their trust and responsibility when they are locked in legitimately in their work assignments [3] as it electrifies self-inspiration to play out their job productively. The importance of commitment as at first sight to hierarchical trust should be recognized [4,5].

Resolute commitment, energy and satisfying state or retention in one's work task is a portion of the fundamental essentials for representative commitment [6]. Commitment begins from the procedure of enlistment of a representative to an association and afterward is finished significantly with learning and advancement chances to carry out the responsibility [7]. Work commitment is evidential when a representative appreciates self-governance while settling on choices absent much by way of counseling with the bosses [8]. Likewise, unrivaled specialists

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permit them without interfering much when they have trust and certainty on their subordinate's capacity and capabilities [8].

Specialists and experts generally concur that supporting high worker work commitment ought to be a best need for associations. In quest for such an attractive objective, numerous organizations depend on their first-line directors to make an ingenious workplace that is helpful for employee's engagement [9]. A work by Petrou et al. [10] discovered moderate to solid relationship between work commitment and different great initiative styles, that includes transformational, moral, engaging and hireling authority. Furthermore, employee engagement and leadership style was analyzed by Carasco-Saul et al. [11] and it was uncovered exceptionally steady discoveries crosswise between these two elements.

Through and through, the consequences of these reviews by Ghadi et al. [12] and Vincent-Höper et al. [13] demonstrate a unique example: explicitly, transformational pioneers can effectively propel representatives, in this manner adding to a more elevated amount of employee work engagement. Work done by Tims et al. [14] demonstrated that transformational pioneers can improve employee work commitment on an everyday premise. Zhu et al. [15] work likewise discovered that transformational pioneers in South Africa upgraded representative work commitment and it proof to beneficial for its organization. Tuckey et al. [16] found that at the gathering level enabling initiative among unit commanders had a positive relationship with the commitment of volunteer firemen at the individual dimension. Perko et al [17] performed examination of the potential added substance impacts of transformational and reasonable initiative concerning representative work commitment, and found that these two authority styles are compatible when connected as intends to encourage worker work commitment. Schaufeli [18] proposed that a connecting with pioneer can enhance and support worker work commitment by fulfilling their essential mental requirements. Bamford and partners [19] found that the apparent individual activity fit is a critical arbiter in the connection between credible initiative and representative work commitment. Nielsen et al. [20] found that job lucidity, important work and open doors for improvement fill in as key connections in the connection between transformational initiative and positive representative results.

Shashi [21] fortified the significance of worker correspondence on the achievement of a business. She uncovered that an association ought to understand the significance of representatives, more than some other variable, as the most dominant supporter of an association's aggressive position. Sundaray [22] concentrated on different variables which lead to worker commitment and what should organization do to make the representatives locked in. Appropriate consideration on commitment techniques will expand the hierarchical adequacy in terms of higher profitability, benefits, quality, consumer loyalty, worker maintenance and expanded flexibility.

Passionate employees often have great energy, however this energy may fade due to less guidance. In some cases, massive unsupported energy becomes negative and destructive to an employee's moral and ends up deflating their excitement. One of the main reasons behind this issue is the standardization of supervisory methods and lack of employee engagement [10-15]. The perfect condition is that the staff is completely dedicated. Being dedicated means simply that they are completely involved and immersed in the work so that it truly holds their attention and stimulates them to put forth the best of their efforts [18-20]. Employee engagement is sort of a trade-off with an end

goal of a mutual relationship of trust and respect between employer and employee [15-19]. It requires an organization leadership to communicate expectations, plainly and comprehensively with the employees, empower the employees but only at the proper levels of their capability, and create a working environment and corporate culture in which engagement will flourish.

Thus, this work has explored employee engagement within the Saudi context. For this work, two organizations were chosen as the field of investigation. The study main aim was to find factors that contribute to employee engagement or lack thereof.

II. METHODOLOGY

Setting

Organization A is a 10 + year old company, with a high retention rate of its employees. Almost all of its first time employees are still working for it. Organization B is relatively a new organization, it's less than 4 years old. Organization A is a headquarter company; it operates multiple different business, hotel, restaurant and management. While organization B is a research institute managing a public library. Both organizations hold multi-ethnic staff and both are desk-based jobs.

Participants

Participants in this study included 40 first time employees in both organizations A and B. Participation expanded to include both genders, first time employees working as entry level or above. There was no specific background or positions targeted for the survey.

Procedures and Instrument

For this work, survey was distributed through a link online, in order to make it easier to reach employees in Riyadh. The survey was designed to capture responses on specific areas while maintaining a perspective of the employee's point of view, workload and task distribution and how equipped the employee believes he is, reward and recognition for employee contribution, offered opportunities of development, work environment, immediate supervisor or team leader, communication level and quality of life. The survey that used in the study was taken from Scribd website, this survey was used because it discusses the factors mentioned above, the survey is divided into several sections, and each section discusses one or more of the factors that affect employee performance. The answers are scales starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The section that was included for analyzing the employee engagement in the survey was employee and work, rewards and recognition, opportunities, team work, immediate supervisor, communication, quality of life , and recreational activities. The data attained from the survey were analyzed in terms of basic statistic.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Looking into the results of the two organizations, the results collected are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively. The results collected about work and task distribution shows that those surveyed in organization A were more aware of their job responsibilities compared to employees at organization B. 45% of the employees of

organization B stated that they do not know what is expected of them in the conduction of their work yet they believe they are competent and fully able to handle their jobs versus. 70% of the employees in organization A had this belief too.

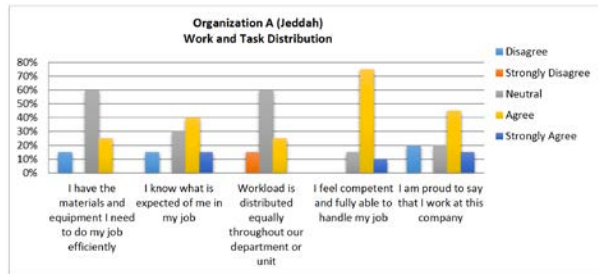


Figure 1: Work and task distribution of Organization A.

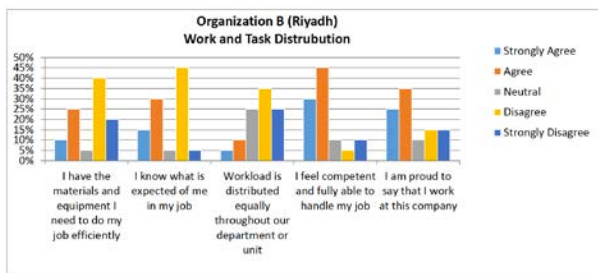


Figure 2: Work and task distribution of Organization B

True career development opportunities creates a level of loyalty between employee and employer, a sense of security that remaining in the organization will not eventually render them behind everyone else in terms of development. The results showed that more than 45% of the employees in organization A had a clearly established career path in the organization as shown in Figure 3 which reflects on how management puts forth effort in establishing a path that is both rewarding to the employee and provides a benefit towards the organizational goals. In organization B, 90% of employees mentioned they are still struggling with defining a clear career path for a number of reasons as shown in Figure 3. Among many they mentioned failure on the management side to partake in career path development investment with employees as the organization is a startup and does not yet possess a clear vision on the path of the organization itself.

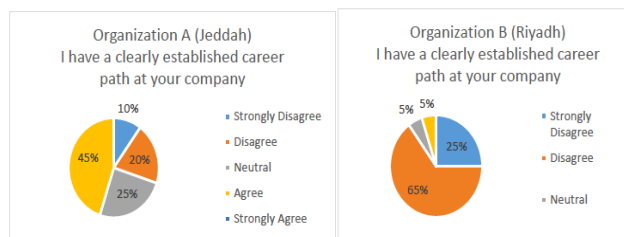


Figure 3: Established Career Path of Organization A and Organization B

The ability to approach the manager or supervisor with problems, comments or general suggestion is very crucial, yet often neglected as an important factor in engaging employees. When the bridges of communication between an employee and their manager is nonexistent, there will be no real or serious exchange of concerns or openness of any kind. The employee will not directly know what the manager exactly needs or is concerned about when it comes to the task nor will the manager be aware of the process of thought of the employee, and miscommunication happens. 70% of the employees in organization A reported feeling comfortable approaching their supervisor with problems or concerns while 60% of them mentioned they can easily offer suggestions and comments to their managers. On the other hand, 55% of the employees in organization B reported hesitancy and reluctance in approaching their supervisors with problems/ offer suggestions or comments.

While managerial factors, like communication between supervisor and employee, approachability, etc., play a major role in achieving employee engagement, yet the surrounding environment can be equally as important. Having a sense of comradely between employees, a sense of friendship, significantly improves moral, which eventually improves the level of comfort of an employee who will feel at his place of work and hence increases his productivity and engagement. The organization itself could have a great hand in facilitating this to its employees, through the encouragement and adoption of social interactions amongst them, and other things tactics too. Through the survey, organization A in Jeddah, came back with 60% of its employees stating they have best friends/friend at work, while in organization B in Riyadh only 10% stated that. While this is in no way a reflection of the effort the organization puts into social development but it spotlights the level of socialization in organization B as opposed to its counterpart in Jeddah.

One wonders if job satisfaction, which is defined as the extent by which an employee's ambitions, desires and expectations of his job are fulfilled can be an indicator of employee engagement. Job satisfaction can be looked at as the general or overall satisfaction with employment, and it covers satisfaction about specific aspects of the employment such as salary, benefits, work structure, development opportunities, work environment and the quality of relationships between co-workers which are factors expected to increase the level of employees satisfaction in any organization. In both organizations A and B, when employees were surveyed about it, based on Figure 4, 65% of the employees in organization a agreed that the most significant item to improve their job satisfaction is career development opportunities and training compared to 50% in organization B based on Figure 5, which reflects an understanding of how career development is perceived to encompass the improvement of all the other factors affecting job satisfaction level like salary, benefits, etc. In organization A the employee believe that two of the most important factors noted for their performance improvement is having more resources at the work place be it software or hardware resources and having a mentor or a coach other than their immediate supervisor. Whereas in organization B, 40% believe that development opportunities will be the factor to elevate job performance.

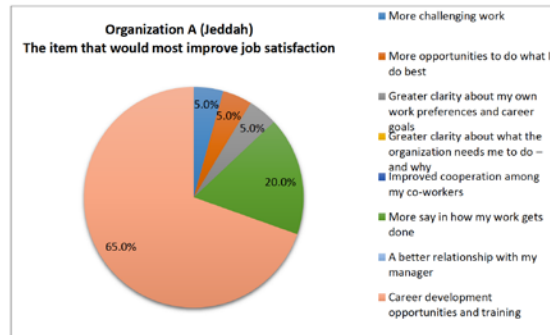


Figure 4: Items that improve job satisfaction for organization A

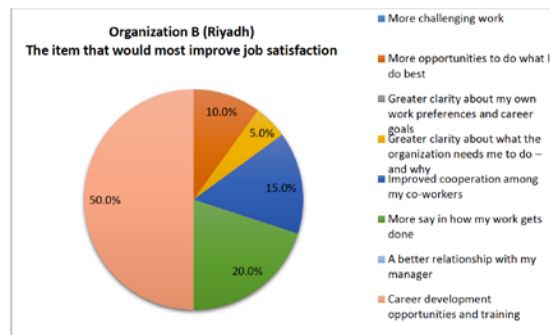


Figure 5: Items that improve job satisfaction for organization B

Thus as overall discussion, when an employee is not engaged, she tends to put forth focus on the task itself rather than the goals and the outcomes they are expected to achieve. They need to be told exactly what to do and how to do it, to reach a ‘goal’ of completing the task. Unengaged employees tend to feel that their hard work and contributions go unnoticed. This often occurs as a result of the lack of productive relationships with supervisors or coworkers. As mentioned earlier, studies have shown that there are some critical factors that lead to employee engagement. Among these factors is career development, sound leadership, empowerment, approachability to management as well as a multitude of other equally important factors. Numbers too sometimes such as less employee turnover, high customer loyalty, more productivity and more earnings, measures employee engagement solidly.

As the purpose of this paper was to explore some of these factors within two organizational contexts, the study highlighted a number of important differences in the level of employee engagement between the two organizations showing a higher engagement levels in organization a in Jeddah. The most important contributing factors emphasized by the survey were task distribution and clarity of vision, career development, approachability of supervision, work/social environment in the work place, job satisfaction and performance improvement outlook.

It seems that these factors are not the only factors affecting employee engagement, among these are cultural/ contextual differences that seemed to exist between the two organizations under study. It is worth mentioning that organization A in Jeddah, was established in a time before what can be called the “revolution” of women employment in Saudi Arabia initiated by the Ministry of Labour through its Nitaqat program which

encouraged, among many other things, the facilitation of women integration in a once male- only environments. While conducting this study, multiple visits were made to the organization based in Jeddah, and contact with the female division of the organization was made through which a system in place defining a method of comfortable and productive communication between the female and male divisions was in place. When the Nitaqat program became effective in 2012/2013, the structure of the organization was not changed, there was already a stable system in place and the employees didn't have to adjust to new environmental conditions that may not be welcomed by specific cultural backgrounds. While the situation in organization B in Riyadh was fundamentally different, the organization started around the same time this program was enforced and due to some cultural sensitivity and more strictly held traditions and norms, in Riyadh versus Jeddah, the integration of the female figure may not have been as smooth. This is also due to the similar ethnic background situation in Jeddah, where normally there is a great mix of similar ethnic backgrounds in any given work place setting. People of similar backgrounds such as the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asian employees are more attracted to work in Jeddah. People of such ethnic backgrounds have more in common and share a lot of cultural and religious similarities which makes the possibility of a more harmonized place of work much higher than otherwise. By contrast, organization B in Riyadh had a significantly more diverse population. There are almost 17 nationalities, with hardly any cultural or background similarities among them which creates more differences than similarities. Such differences might make it even harder for the employees to feel socially related or to share a common concern. All these factors in addition to factors accounted for in the study seem to contribute to the level of employee engagement as they work together as an intricate web that constitutes a harmonious and homogeneous work environment.

IV. CONCLUSION

This work has studied the level of employee engagement in two different organizations, a senior established institution and a promising startup organization in Riyadh. The main objective was to analyze the significant factors behind employee engagement at these two organizations in Saudi Arabia and how to achieve a higher level of efficiency in the workplace. The outcome of this work showed that the most important contributing factors emphasized by the survey were task distribution and clarity of vision, career development, approachability of supervision, work/social environment in the work place, job satisfaction and performance improvement outlook. Also, it is recommended to use engagement metrics in performance criteria, establishing baseline measures of organization health and employee engagement levels in the first year scorecard process and monitor it. In addition, for the employees whom achieve engagement levels in subsequent years can be rewarded.

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