

Importance of Management Level Employee Engagement in Organizations

Article by Goodluck Chimezie Uncle Elei
Ph.D. in Management, Texila American University, USA
E-mail: eleigcu@yahoo.com

Abstract

Management level employee engagement has become increasingly popular in the last two decades. The advocated constructive results of Management level employee engagement make firms to prioritize development of the culture of engagement within the workplace. Despite so much literature on the subject, very little has been acknowledged on engagement of management level workers. It is vital to engage management level workers, given that they have considerable influence on the way and style the enterprise is managed, and their daily performance adds on to the relational quality between the organization and its clientele (Fairlie, 2011). A direct link between worker attitudes and organizational performance has been noted, in that when an organization's have a higher performance index, constructive attitude will be arouse amongst the employees (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

Divergent management positions have individual specifics, and this have to be tackled in the course of engagement development process. For instance, for marketing and production managers, client satisfaction is a key issue as they deal with clients with diverse needs, even as for the HR managers, employee performance is an issue of high priority. It may, therefore, be argued that management level employee engagement tools are useable for all kinds of managers regardless of their position in the organization. Based on the above observation, this paper has been written with the objective of analyzing the importance of management level employees' engagement; analyze the level of engagement of management level workers, and what should be done to promote it (Truss, Alfes, Delbridge, Shantz, & Soane, 2013). The objective is to evaluate the findings with regards to the extant literature on management level employee engagement. Knowledge got from the literature review part of this study, and the outcomes of the study may be utilized by the top level management of organizations and HR experts, to tackle matters on engagement of management level workers.

Keywords: *Employee engagement, management level employees, disengaged, extremely disengaged, engaged, highly engaged, and not engaged.*

Importance of management level employee engagement in organizations

Introduction

Managers concur that contemporary organizations stipulates increased productivity and enhanced effectiveness, compared to the earlier one. Organizations are, therefore, making attempts at increasing their level of performance so as to be in a leadership position within the highly competitive environment (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015). At a given point, contented management level workers tend to contend with their job experience as a much better success formula, as a contented manager whose wish is to continue working with the organization, as well as add on to the productivity and stability of the company's workforce. However, time has changed immensely and such are no longer available (Fairlie, 2011). At present, the business context is universal and highly competitive, as well as basically contented, even though the stable management level employees may not be adequate to ascertain the necessary organizational outcome, contented workforces might just meet the demands of their tasks; however, this might not bring about the anticipated increased performance (Fairlie, 2011). So as to ensure effective competition, the top level management employees might have to reach over and beyond contentment, even as their workforces make attempts

at utilizing their aptitudes and potential in their work. In case this is unattainable, an integral part of the priceless management level employees' are unavailable for the organization (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

According to Sakovska (2012), management level employee engagement has spawned an immense deal of activity and interest as from its inception within organizational behavior literature. Advocated constructive results of management level employee engagement often make firms to adopt and engagement culture within the workplace as preference for the firm. Even though there is a large amount of literature on employee engagement, very little has been acknowledged with regards to the engagement of management level employees in organizations. Woodruffe (2006) opines that it is imperative to involve management level employees given that they are the individuals who possess the vital impact on the manner, approach and tone of the organization, in addition to the superiority of the individuals' daily routine adds on to the quality of the relations that the firm has with its clients and the public. The significance of management level employee engagement has been established by literature on engagement that indicates that involving milieu tends to pay off (Garber, 2012). Studies have also shown that management level employee engagement offers a base for organizational success and performance. This paper has, therefore, been written with the objective of critically discussing the importance of engaged management level workers in respect to organizational success.

Literature review: importance of employee engagement

Engagement of management level employees is a fundamental to successful organizational management and workforce performance subject to its long-established constructive up shots for the firm and its workforce (Wollard, 2011). Several positive outcomes resulting from the development of management level employee engagement have been noted, and academic and expert literatures on the subject are more or less consistent with reference to the advantages of the practice. A connection has been noted between management level employee engagement and increased profitability as a consequence of increased sales, employee retention, higher productivity, and client satisfaction (Klussmann, 2009). Other notable outcomes of management level employee engagement include productivity, positive work attitudes, individual health and employee turnover.

One of the notable importance of management level employee engagement entails organizational performance. Several studies have propped up the connection between organizational outcomes and management level employee engagement (Fairlie, 2011). For instance, the engagement of management level employees has been shown to positively impact a number of organizational performance indicators including productivity, customer satisfaction, employee turnover, safety and profits (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Increasing the degree of engagement of the management level employees, as well as the development of a milieu that assists in the fostering worker engagement may considerably increase the organization's chance of attaining success in business. Furthermore, it has additionally been observed that engagement of the management level employees is important given that it is considered as a forecaster of organizational achievement due to its prospective impact aspects such as employee productivity and loyalty, employee retention, and customer satisfactions, which often translate into positive organization performance outcomes.

With regards to productivity, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) observe that an increased degree of engagement of the management level employees assists workers in pursuing learning objectives and taking initiative. Thus, engaged management level employees develop novel knowledge, react to opportunities and go an extra mile to support the organization, in addition to engaging themselves in volunteering and mentoring. Furthermore, engaged management level employees are known to be extremely contented with their work, and are more devoted to their organizations as they have to push to meet demanding objectives, as well as the urge to do well (Fairlie, 2011). In concurrence, Moore, Detert, Linda, Baker, and David (2012) observe that engaged management level employees are not likely to hold back, have increased amounts of energy, but are also passionate in applying their energy in carrying out their duties (Woodruffe, 2006). Engaged management level employees are seriously

involved in carrying out their duties and always pay attention to details. Thus, involved management level employees surpass their job expectations, and energetically alter and organize their work in a manner in which it coincides with the dynamic work milieu.

In concurrence, Wollard (2011) notes that the positive attitude portrayed by engaged management level employees arouses the creative and integrative perspective that contributes value to the organization. In case the management level employees do not find implication in their duties, they may begin to either detach or alienate themselves from their work, thereby becoming less motivated and less devoted at work. On the other hand, nonstandard management level employee behaviors that include production deviance and property and production deviance that include non-attendance, leaving workplace early, theft of time, behaviors associated with work withdrawal and taking up longer work breaks have been linked directly to billions of dollars with regards to losses, and constitutes almost 30% of business enterprise failures.

Further, in agreement with above observations, Markos and Sridevi (2010) note that the significance of engagement is confirmed by the engagement literature that indicates that an engaging milieu is liable to pay off. Research performed by Lancaster (2005) has additionally proven that management level employee engagement props up organizational success and performance. Even as extant literature asserts that the results of management level employee engagement is precisely what a number of businesses are seeking, it does not surprise that top level managers are perceiving the engagement of mid and lower level managers as an organizational priority (Klussmann, 2009), even as several chief executive officers of organizations perceive the engagement of management level employees and other workers as amongst the most imperative management challenges (Woodruffe, 2006).

Fairlie (2011) observes that management level employees are engaged when their 'preferred' self is shown in the work milieu. The engagement of management level employees within consequential organizational tasks enhances the discernment of gains made from an individual's job. Research carried out by Woodruffe (2006) with regards to the engagement of management level workers in relation to performance of meaningful work disclosed that highly engaged managers had increased rates of job approval, abridged turnover cognitions, as well as increased organizational dedication (Fairlie, 2011). The research also showed that disengagement, exhaustion and turnover cognitions are unconstructively connected to consequential work characteristics. On the contrary, extremely disengaged management level employees cost organizations in terms of profitability, not only as a result of failure to go over and above their productivity levels but also due to worker turnover and theft. Organization revenues in firms with increased degrees of engagement may be as high as 40% higher compared to those with low levels, and returns per worker is considerably higher in organizations with management level employees who have increased degrees of pride in their organizations (Woodruffe, 2006). Moreover, the theft of either time or property as a consequence of absenteeism as well as work slowdowns is disparaging to both the organization and the management level employees in question. The ultimate stage of management level employee disengagement is turnover and eventual resignation. Management level workers who are unable to discover a way of feeling devoted or competent, in addition to those who ultimately come to the conclusion that things may never change despite making several attempts, eventually quit.

Another notable importance of management level employee engagement regards employee retention. According to Moore, Detert, Linda, Baker and David (2012), increased engagement of management level employees is prone to result in more stable workforces. Even though increased degree of engagement does not guarantee retention, owing to the observation that nearly a quarter of workers, regardless of their position in the organization, will still take into consideration the appropriate opportunity, it enhances the chances of attractive workers (who are labor competitive) staying in the organization.

Also, management level employee engagement encourages managers to act as advocates for their organizations. MacLeod and Clarke (2009) opines that engaged management level employees are

highly predisposed to recommend their organizations, as an apt workplace, and are also likely to believe in and recommend the services and commodities of the firm. Engaged management level employees act as advocates for their organizations given that they may be enthusiastic to approve the firm as an employer, thereby implying that prospective conscription expenses may be abridged through recommendation and introduction of novel personnel through extant worker (Markos & Sridevi, 2010)s. Also, engaged management level employees are also enthusiastic to endorse the organization's services and commodities, which, in turn, enables cost-free marketing in addition to improving responsiveness of the public on the organization. Further, it has also been observed that the engagement of management level employees is prone to play an active and significant purpose in the execution of organizational change (Wollard, 2011), given that despite doing nothing, the top management team's decisions and actions, as well as external consultants are bound to bring about mix reactions and success in the organization. Markos and Sridevi (2010) propose that highly engaged management level employees partaking in organizational change might be of great significance when it comes to enabling the organization to attain the desired changes, in addition to adapting to the fast changing and dynamic environment. On the other hand, disengaged management level employees (corporate terrorists) are prone to discourage potential employees from joining their organizations.

With regards to the engagement of management level employees as a vital aspect in customer loyalty, Sakovska (2012) notes that the extent of the managers' service is significantly dependent on the organization's climate, as well as the way the worker feel at work. The manner in which the management level employees feel at work is vital owing to the observation that it impacts the quality of their performances and the contentment of the customers. This mainly occurs as a result of the customer-organization relations that management level employees are tasked with overseeing (Garber, 2012). The manner in which a firm treats its management level employees, in addition to the way the management level employees feel in the course of performing their roles, is always transmitted onto the clients given that they work closely together, meet face-to-face regularly and observe one another (Fairlie, 2011). For the duration of such interactions, customers receive both psychological and personal experience with the organization. Following the completion of such exchanges, the organization is judged with reference to the experience of the customers (Klussmann, 2009). Additionally, the degree of management level employee engagement and organizational resources also impact the organization's service climate, which, in turn, affects the performance of management level employees (when assessed by the client) and this is likely to make clients loyal and contented. Based on this observation, one may conclude that management level employee engagement is a fundamental predictor of the quality of services, and customer loyalty in any organization (Truss, Alfes, Delbridge, Shantz, & Soane, 2013).

Research methodology

The use of qualitative research is pertinent in instances where there is limited prior knowledge in the area of interest. The self-effacing insight makes qualitative research increasingly flexible, with focus on constructing hypotheses and gaining insights (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, & Jackson, 2015). The research process entails emerging queries and interpreting the implications of the data. Data gathering and analysis is continuous and this result from the restricted prior comprehension. Thus, qualitative research is mainly interested in the participant's perceptions in daily practices and daily knowledge with regards to the matter being studied. Moreover, qualitative research is also concerned with behavioral patterns and the way they are expressed.

To gauge the management level employees' engagement degree and to discover the precise engagement antecedents needed for improvement quantitative research that combines questionnaires was chosen as the key method of data collection. Quantitative research was selected for numerous reasons. The management level employee engagement gauging tools had been developed and this offered a chance to gauge engagement with the assistance of a questionnaire (Zelles, 2012). As a quantitative approach, the questionnaire generates numerical data. Moreover, extant hypotheses and

studies propose several aspects impacting management level employee engagement, as such prior research was not essential for this study. In case the study's objective was to disclose the imperative antecedents of management level employees' engagement, then the data concerning the specified group would be very limited, given that a study has already been carried out with regards to this category of workers. In such circumstances, qualitative research methodology would have been more apposite with regards to data collection (Lancaster, 2005).

Nevertheless, one of the main objectives of the study is to acknowledge which amongst the proposed aspects that have been noted within the management level employee engagement literature review section requires improvement to enable increment in the engagement levels of the infrequently studied but imperative category of managers. In such circumstances, where preliminary knowledge of the subject already exists, quantitative research is apposite (Zelles, 2012). Additionally, quantitative research offers outcomes in form of numbers that are increasingly applicable for this study, given that they may be contrasted against one another in the class of antecedent engagement, and may also indicate the engagement driving factors that requires improvement. The numbers form the foundation for additional evaluations and recommendations. Regarding the quantitative research approach, the use of questionnaire was apt as concise, standardized and straightforward information was required, even as social milieu was adequately open to allow straight and full responses. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) observe that under such circumstances, it is apposite to make use of questionnaire as research method. In conclusion, it is worth noting that the questionnaire used in the study was initially signed in English and consequently translated into Danish. Even though, the questionnaire was translated by native Danish, some negligible misconceptions might have occurred (MacLeod & Clarke, 2009).

Data analysis

The initial phase of the data analysis entailed the calculation of the personal engagement degree of all management level employee engagement. This, therefore, implied calculation of the number of management level employees that were engaged, highly engaged, extremely disengaged, disengaged, not engaged, and extremely disengaged (Wollard, 2011). This, in turn, offers a good image with regards to the general engagement degree of management level employees within an organization. The subsequent phase entailed computation of the antecedents of engagement's mean value. The aspect proffering a lower mean is conferred the prime position, even as the closest factors are conferred the successive positions. This, in turn, offers an insight into zones (availability, safety and meaningfulness) requiring improvement and in particular, the aspects that require improvement to enhance management level employee engagement (Garber, 2012).

Findings and discussion

Management level employees can be classified as engaged, not engaged and extremely disengaged (Truss, Alfes, Delbridge, Shantz, & Soane, 2013). The study noted that engaged management level employees tend to be compassionate about their work, have a profound connection with their organization, and assist in making the organization move forward.

Consequently, non-engaged management level workers tend to "sleepwalk" on duty, and only dedicate their time as opposed to passion and energy in carrying out their duties at work. Disengaged management level employees are the main concern of organizations as they carry their discontent to work and spread it to other workers thereby demoralizing the outcomes attained by their colleagues.

The responses to the questionnaires pointed out that the management level employee engagement score in organizations was 3.73 implying that they are not fully engaged. Thus, engagement score, found in the engagement scale's middle position, might be clarified through the existence of extremely engaged or extremely disengaged management level employees.

Conclusion

The extant study utilized the engagement theory on a hardly ever investigated category of management level employees and observed the engagement of management level employees in organizations. The objective was to gauge the engagement degree of management level employees and to recognize the aspects that require improvement to increase the engagement level. The study outcomes indicated that management level workers in organizations are generally disengaged. Moreover, the study outcomes acknowledged specific aspects and areas that organizations must advance. Klussmann (2009) observe that three key stipulations tend to influence management level employee engagement, namely; safety, meaningfulness and availability. Research findings have also demonstrated that management level employees tend to view their job as useful, and also that they have the chance for development and adequate amounts of freedom. Nonetheless, performance feedback is the only meaningful class that lies within the non-engaging zone. This implies that the top management of organizations must alter the frequency and the way they convey performance feedback, in addition to making it an integral part of their everyday managerial duties.

Moreover, outcomes indicated that all aspects corresponding to the aptitude of the management level employees to employ themselves devoid of the apprehension of unconstructive outcomes lied in the not engaged zone. To enhance management level employee engagement, organizations have to indicate that they care about their management level workers and are willing to assist them in performing their everyday duties successfully. The level of organizational support is normally viewed by other workers through the leadership of the organization. As organizational agents, departmental leaders must increase the degree of workers dependence on them individually and consequentially on the organizations. Management level employees must indicate increased levels of support in work-related conditions over and above showing that they individually care about the workers. As such, there is a need to develop and prop up a relaxed work milieu, under which constructive work and social interactions amongst management level employees occur.

References

- [1]. Easter by-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. R. (2015). *Management and Business Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE.
- [2]. Fairlie, P. (2011). Meaningful Work, Employee Engagement, and Other Key Employee Outcomes: Implications for Human Resource Development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 508–525.
- [3]. Garber, P. R. (2012). *The Manager's Employee Engagement Toolbox*. Alexandria, Virginia: American Society for Training and Development.
- [4]. Klussmann, W. (2009). *Philosophy of Leadership - Driving Employee Engagement in Integrated Management Systems*. Hamburg: Diplomica Verlag.
- [5]. Lancaster, G. (2005). *Research Methods in Management: A Concise Introduction to Research in Management and Business Consultancy*. London: Routledge.
- [6]. MacLeod, D., & Clarke, N. (2009). *Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement: a report to government*. London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).
- [7]. Markos, S., & Sridevi, M. S. (2010). Driving Performance and Retention Through Employee Engagement. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 89-96.
- [8]. Moore, C., Detert, J. R., Linda, K. T., Baker, V. L., & David, M. M. (2012). WHY EMPLOYEES DO BAD THINGS: MORAL DISENGAGEMENT AND UNETHICAL ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR. *PERSONNEL PSYCHOLOGY*, 1–48.
- [9]. Sakovska, M. (2012). *Importance of Employee Engagement in Business Environment: Measuring the engagement level of administrative personnel in VUC Aarhus and detecting factors requiring improvement*. Aarhus C, Denmark: Aarhus University.
- [10]. Townsend, K., Loudoun, R., & Lewin, D. (2016). *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods on Human Resource Management: Innovative Techniques*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

- [11]. Truss, C., Alfes, K., Delbridge, R., Shantz, A., & Soane, E. (2013). *Employee Engagement in Theory and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- [12]. Wollard, K. K. (2011). Quiet Desperation: Another Perspective on Employee Engagement. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 526–537.
- [13]. Woodruffe, C. (2006). The crucial importance of employee engagement. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 3 - 5.
- [14]. Zelles, R. (2012). *Methodologies to measure and define Employee Engagement*. Munchen: GRIN Verlag.