Employee engagement critical to business success

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Lexington, KY - How satisfied and engaged are the employees at your organization? Do you know? You should. Employee engagement is the driving force of your business’s success.

What is employee engagement, and how does it differ from employee satisfaction? Engagement is a strong emotional and intellectual connection that an employee has for his/her job, organization, coworkers, or manager that causes that employee to put forth more effort than required in his/her work. Whereas a satisfied employee likes her job, an engaged employee likes her job and goes above and beyond the call of duty for her company because she’s so committed to it. Employee engagement is job satisfaction taken to the next level.

There is an abundance of research proving the many organizational benefits of engaged employees. Gallup recently conducted a highly rigorous meta-analysis of 199 research studies on employee engagement across 152 organizations. In all, 955,905 employees in 26 countries were included. This comprehensive study indicated that employee engagement is significantly related to nine critical business outcomes: Profitability, productivity, quality, customer loyalty, turnover, absenteeism, employee safety incidents, patient safety incidents, and lost merchandise.

Essentially, if your employees are highly engaged in their work, your business will be more profitable, be more productive, produce a better product or service and have higher levels of customer loyalty. You’ll also experience less absenteeism, less turnover and have fewer safety incidents — improvements that can dramatically improve your bottom line. There are tremendous benefits to having engaged employees.

Unfortunately, Gallup finds that only 28 percent of employees are truly engaged. In fact, while 54 percent of the remainder are not engaged, a full 18 percent are actively disengaged. It is estimated that the 18 percent of workers who are actively disengaged miss 118.3 million more work days than engaged employees, have 33.3 million more sick days, and use seven times as much health care.

American businesses today are realizing the importance of employee engagement and are eagerly assessing it. Employee surveys are filling this role, giving organizations critical information about the attitudes and behaviors of their workforces.

Jack E. Burch, executive director of the Community Action Council in Lexington, is sold on the merits of employee engagement surveys. According to Burch: “Community Action Council needs engaged employees to ensure the services we provide meet the high standards we set for ourselves. Employee surveys are an excellent way to measure the effectiveness of our initiatives to engage our employees with the council’s mission and goals as well as to identify matters that need attention. Whether [it’s] a small matter that is easily fixed or something that requires an investment of resources and leadership’s long-
term involvement, surveys give us an unfiltered, unvarnished picture of what our employees think about their jobs and Community Action Council.”

Logan Aluminum’s human resources team leader, Doris Moody, agreed.

“At Logan Aluminum, our annual employee survey is a valuable upward communication tool that measures employee engagement, satisfaction, communication and teamwork. It is also a measure of the health of our work culture.

The Institute for Workplace Innovation (iwin) has seen a sharp increase in the number of organizations interested in employee engagement surveys. Organizations realize that the beauty of these surveys is that they allow employers to assess not only engagement but also employee satisfaction with a number of workplace issues (e.g., work-life fit, compensation, benefits, leadership, wellness programs, social support, facilities, etc.). The organization can then see how well it is performing on each issue in order to understand which ones require more time and attention from management.

More importantly, advanced statistical techniques can also determine which issues are the biggest predictors of engagement at that particular organization, which enables the organization to prioritize its efforts. For example, if employees are dissatisfied with both the facilities and benefits, but analyses suggest that workplace facilities are a much bigger predictor of employee engagement, then the organization will know to focus their improvement efforts on facilities to produce a bigger impact.

In conclusion, many successful, innovative organizations have added regular employee engagement surveys to their toolboxes and are convinced of the benefits to their employees and their organizations as a whole. For more information about employee surveys, go to iwin.uky.edu and register for a free webinar titled "Employee Surveys: Tools for Improving Morale and the Bottom Line" to be held on June 6.

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