

TALENT DEVELOPMENT: A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

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Article No: 203

ISSN 0974 – 9497

Year: November 2010

Volume 4, Issue 4/4

Abstract: The paper tries to identify the impact of talent development initiatives of the organization on employee engagement. The data were collected from 30 small and medium enterprises in Delhi and National Capital Region with a total sample size of 1406 employees. Data were collected on five point likert scale on both employee engagement and talent development from every employee. A regression model was formulated to anticipate employee engagement with the talent development initiatives as the predictor. The findings suggest that employee engagement can be enhanced by talent development initiatives.

Key Words: Talent Development, Employee Engagement, Regression

Introduction

Talent management is one of the most buzzing words in the present industry. However, the organizations mostly keep themselves busy in human resource planning, recruitment, selection and retention strategies. The other important aspect of talent management which is largely ignored is to develop the values, norms, competencies, knowledge, skills and abilities of the employees to develop a strategic fit with the organizational goal. Once the employees develop the required talent to lead the organization in the long run, the employee becomes an asset to the organization. The employee feels committed and gets engaged with the organization. The objective of the present paper is to identify the effectiveness of talent development in

accruing the benefits of employee engagement.

Literature Survey

Employee Engagement

The term employee engagement, in its present usage, was coined by the Gallup Organization, as a result of 25 years of interviewing and surveying employees and managers. After Hundreds of focus group and thousands of interviews with employees in a variety of industries, Gallup came up with Q. 12, a twelve-question survey that identifies strong feelings of employee engagement. They have identified 12 questions that most effectively measure the links (the Gallup Q12).

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. Do you have the materials and equipment you need to do your work right?
3. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?
6. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?
7. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?
9. Are your associates (fellow employees) committed to doing quality work?
10. Do you have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?
12. In the last year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

Harter, Schmidt and Hayes (2002) define employee engagement as “the individual’s involvement and satisfaction with as well as enthusiasm for work” (p. 269). HR consulting firm (Hewitt Associates LLC, 2005, p. 1) indicates that they “have established a conclusive, compelling relationship between engagement and profitability through higher productivity, sales, customer satisfaction, and employee retention.” Some practitioners view engagement as having evolved from prior research on work attitudes, directly implying that this newer concept adds interpretive value that extends beyond

the boundaries of those traditions. Three basic aspects of employee engagement according to the global studies are:-

- The employees and their own unique psychological makeup and experience
- The employers and their ability to create the conditions that promote employee engagement
- Interaction between employees at all levels

Thus it is largely the organization’s responsibility to create an environment and culture conducive to this partnership, and a win-win equation.

Kahn (1990) defined engagement at work as “harnessing organizational members’ selves to their work roles”. Engaged people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally as they perform their roles. The notion of flow, which Csikzentmihalyi (1975) advanced, is also related to employee engagement. Csikzentmihalyi defines flow as the “holistic sensation” that people feel when they act with total involvement. Flow is the state in which there is little distinction between self and environment. When individuals are in the state of flow, they need little conscious control for their actions.

Talent Development

Talent building endeavors should be business driven, future focused, integrated, and deliver measurable results. There are two major methods for developing talent – instruction-based and experience-based methods. Instruction-based methods include using such resources as in-house training; external executive education providers; and/or

self-paced computer-aided instruction. Experience-based methods include mentorships, executive coaches, and/or certain job assignments. Research shows that carefully planned job experiences are among the most powerful and effective means of developing critical leadership attributes. The use of key experiences should complement, not replace instructional methods of development. Such experiences can be particularly critical in succession planning and in providing a proving ground for a high-potential manager before a long-term commitment is made to that individual. (Haskins & Shaffer, 2010).

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to develop a regression model that can be used to anticipate employee engagement in an organization depending upon the effort of talent development. Thus, the dependent variable in this model is employee engagement and the independent variable is talent development. The research was conducted in 2010. The sample comprises 30 small and medium enterprises in Delhi and National Capital Region. From each of the enterprises, 50 persons are randomly selected and the questionnaire was handed to them. In total, 1500 people were selected through stratified random sampling. However, once the filled up questionnaire was received, 94 questionnaires were rejected since they were incomplete. Therefore, the actual sample size for the analysis of data was restricted to 1406 with a distribution of 23 percent females and 77 percent males. The average age was 34 years and the minimum

qualification was an undergraduate degree.

Data Collection Design

Multi-item scales were used to measure the two variables i.e. employee engagement and talent development. Literatures from human resource development provide the basis for the measurement of the two variables. For both the dependent and the independent variables, the data were collected on a five-point likert scale (where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = somewhat disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = somewhat agree and 5 = strongly agree). The dependent variable of employee engagement was measured through a summated scale of twenty five items:

1. Overall the Company is a good place to work.
2. I will recommend the Company to my friends
3. I see a future for myself at the Company.
4. I trust my manager.
5. I am clear on my work priorities - i.e., what I need to achieve in the next 3-6 months.
6. I am proud to work here.
7. I think of my work as more than "just a job."
8. I like the work that I do.
9. I trust the senior leaders of this organization.
10. I understand how my own work priorities support the organization's strategy.
11. I do more than is expected of me.
12. I have career opportunities in this organization.
13. More often than not, I am very satisfied to work here.
14. I have a great working relationship with my manager.

15. My manager encourages me to use my talents as much as possible.
 16. My manager asks for and acts on my input.
 17. My manager recognizes and rewards my achievements.
 18. My manager treats me as an individual with unique interests and needs.
 19. My manager provides regular, specific feedback on my performance.
 20. My manager delegates assignments effectively without micromanaging me.
 21. My manager has built a strong sense of belonging within our team or department.
 22. Senior leaders act in alignment with our organization's core values or guiding principles.
 23. Senior leaders communicate honestly.
 24. Senior leaders link the work of the organization to a larger purpose.
 25. Senior leaders have created a work environment that drives high performance.
1. My manager provides opportunities for me to gain new knowledge or skill.
 2. In the last six months I have used newly gained knowledge or skill to do my job better.
 3. I can look forward to moving into a higher role when I am ready for it.
 4. The company provides opportunities for good performers to move into higher positions.
 5. My manager guides me in doing my job better.
 6. My manager understands the strengths & weaknesses of individual team members and helps us to develop ourselves.

As seen from Table 1 below, the instruments used in this study were reliable, with Cronbach's α ranging from 0.89 to 0.76, which exceeded the minimum acceptance level of 0.70.

The independent variable "Talent Development" was measured through a summated scale of 6 items.

Table 1: Reliability Coefficients of the Instruments

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's α
Employee engagement	25	0.89
Talent development	6	0.76

Results

From Table 2 attached below, it can be observed that the mean value for "Employee Engagement" is 3.7, with the

standard deviation of 1.05. The mean score computed for "Talent Development" is 3.68 and standard deviation is .82.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Employee Engagement	1406	1.00	5.00	3.6999	1.04996
Talent Development	1406	1.00	5.00	3.6875	.82358
Valid N (listwise)	1406				

Table 3 attached below, presents a correlation matrix which shows that both “Employee Engagement” and “Talent Development” positively and significantly correlate with each other.

Table 3: Correlations

		Talent Development
Employee Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.504**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	1406

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Using SPSS, a regression model was developed relating the employee engagement (the dependent variable that is predicted) with the talent Development initiatives (the independent variable). The model summary for the regression model is

shown in Table 4. From Table 4, the coefficient of determination (R^2) for this model was found to be 0.254, indicating that more than 25 percent of variation in employee engagement is explained by variability in the talent development initiatives.

Table 4: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.504 ^a	.254	.254	.90711

a. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Development

The result of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) for the regression model is shown in Table 5 below. From Table 5, it was found that the p-value

(significance for the model) was almost zero, indicating the regression model is significant.

Table 5: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	393.621	1	393.621	478.366	.000 ^a
Residual	1155.274	1404	.823		
Total	1548.896	1405			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Talent Development

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

In Table 6, the t-test for significance of independent variable exhibits that at the significance level of 0.01 (equivalent to a confidence level of 99%), “Talent Development” is statistically significant in the model. Since the model proved to be significant and the strength of association between the dependent and

the independent variable was rather high, it can be used for predicting the employee engagement. The results of the regression analysis are shown in Table 6. We could form the equation using the intercept and coefficient from column “B” in Table 6 as follows—

$$Y = 1.33 + .64 * X_1 \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 1}$$

where:

Y = Employee Engagement

X₁ = Team Development

Table 6: Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.330	.111		11.979	.000
Talent Development	.643	.029	.504	21.872	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

The estimated increase in employee engagement for every unit increase (in Likert Scale) of “Talent Development” is given by the coefficient of the respective variable. For instance, if “Talent Development” is increased by 1 (in Likert Scale), employee engagement

are estimated to increase by .64, keeping all other variables constant. To use this model for prediction, we only require data to be collected on talent Development initiative, in a given organization.

Discussions and Conclusion

The result shows an empirical relationship between employee engagement and talent development and states that with the increase in the talent development initiatives, the employee engagement also increases. A person while working for an organization considers enhancement of wisdom and the enrichment of talent as experience. If the organization is a learning organization, it would not only give him chances to increase his knowledge base but also would ignite the urge to innovate in him. Talent Development practices like job enrichment, encouragement to diversity, focus on innovation, performance management, proper resource allocation and encouragement to positive communication, recognition, growth opportunities, and career development help in building up self esteem of the employees which nurture the exploratory attitude of the employees. The accumulation of achievement leads to a

feeling of personal growth accompanied by a sense of responsibility. Ultimately it culminates into the employee engagement. The research findings enrich the manager's understanding of the benefits of talent development in ensuring the benefits of employee engagement.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Since the objective of the paper was not to explore the factors contributing to employee engagement, only 25 percent of the variability of employee engagement was explained in the present research by taking only one factor, namely, talent development. Future research can be conducted to identify the variables which contribute significantly to employee engagement and the maximum variability of employee engagement could be explained by them. Future research can also be conducted on the effectiveness of talent development initiatives on other dependent variables like organizational performance and human resource development.

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