

## Employee Engagement: A Brief Introduction

### Employee Engagement: What Is It?

Employee Engagement is the extent to which employees think, feel, and act in ways that represent high levels of commitment to their organization. Engaged employees are motivated to contribute 100% of their knowledge, skills, and abilities to help their organization succeed. They care deeply about their company, want to contribute to its success, and regularly have peak experiences at work.

### Why is Employee Engagement Important?

Engagement represents the motivational capital that exists within an individual, a unit, or an organization. It is a valuable resource that can boost company performance. Our research shows that engagement is linked to a number of important business outcomes. For example, we have found the following:

- Engaged employees offer significantly higher levels of service to customers
- Engaged managers are more likely to create a work environment that is collaborative, creative, and stimulating
- Engaged work teams tend to have fewer accidents and injuries

### What factors foster Employee Engagement?

We have been studying employee attitudes since 1972. Based on a careful analysis of nearly four decades of survey data, we have found that employees seek three fundamental things from their work.




- Achievement: The vast majority of employees want to achieve something important and meaningful at work. They want to grow and develop their skills and capabilities and they want to be rewarded and recognized for their efforts.
- Camaraderie: We are social beings. Employees enjoy working productively with others while developing healthy interpersonal relationships. How managers interact with their teams is especially important in motivating employees to go above and beyond.
- Equity: Employees want to be treated fairly when it comes to pay and benefits, day-to-day treatment, and psychological and physical safety.

This represents our *Three Factor Theory of Human Motivation in the Workplace*. When these needs are met, employees are highly engaged—even enthusiastic—at work. For more information on this theory and the research behind it, please see our book, *The Enthusiastic Employee* (Sirota, Mischkind, & Meltzer, 2005, Wharton School Publishing).

## How do you measure Employee Engagement?

Based on our research and experience, we believe that there are cognitive, affective, and behavioral components to Employee Engagement. Intellectually engaged employees are constantly coming up with new and creative ideas and innovations. Emotionally engaged employees are passionate and enthusiastic about the work they do. And behaviorally engaged employees are willing to go above and beyond for their company, their customers, and their team members.

Our comprehensive survey database includes over 15 unique engagement items. Using these items, we create a customized engagement index (typically consisting of about 5 items) that fits the culture of an organization and is aligned with critical business success factors. For example, companies that rely on innovation to succeed will often include more intellectual engagement items. Organizations with a high number of customer-facing employees may want an index that includes more emotional and behavioral engagement items. By customizing our instruments, we can develop an engagement index that provides specific feedback on an organization's critical success factors. Listed below are sample Engagement Index items.

 Intellectual Engagement	I am continuously thinking of new and better ways of doing things to help XYZ succeed
 Emotional Engagement	I care about the future of XYZ
 Behavioral Engagement	I am willing to go beyond what is normally expected to help XYZ be successful

## What's the best way to build and sustain Employee Engagement levels in an organization?

First, the business case for employee engagement must be established for senior leadership. Engagement is not merely about making employees happier at work; it is about bringing out the best in people and tapping their full potential on a day-to-day basis. Second, employee engagement levels must be monitored and measured on a regular basis, particularly in an ever-changing business world. Our clients generally conduct organization-wide engagement surveys once a year, with smaller-scale pulse surveys as needed. Finally, engagement requires action. Each year, employees and managers face new challenges. Attitudes shift. Frustrations can build. By understanding changes and addressing barriers to success, organizations can ensure their workforce is motivated to do their best work.

## Need More Information about Employee Engagement?

For more information about Employee Engagement, or to find out how Sirota can support your employee research efforts, please see [www.sirota.com](http://www.sirota.com) or contact us at [surveyintelligence@sirota.com](mailto:surveyintelligence@sirota.com).