

What exactly is employee engagement?

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The term 'employee engagement' has been bandied around for a number of years. But what exactly does it mean, and why is it so important for businesses to have engaged employees?

Employee engagement has been defined by The Conference Board, a prestigious, non-profit business membership and research organization located in the U.S, as "a heightened emotional connection that an employee feels for his or her organization, that influences him or her to exert greater discretionary effort to his or her work".

Engagement in the workplace is important as there is clear and mounting evidence that high levels of employee engagement correlates to individual, group and business performance in areas such as retention, turnover, productivity, customer service, safety and loyalty.

According to The Gallup Management Journal there are three types of employees:

1. **Engaged employees** work with a passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the business forward.
2. **Not-engaged employees** are essentially 'checked out'. They are sleepwalking through their work day, putting time, but not energy or passion, into their work.
3. **Actively disengaged employees** aren't just unhappy at work they are busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day these workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish.

So what can you do to engage your people? There are a number of simple steps you can take that may improve employee engagement on a day to day basis including:

- Talking to your employees. Ask them how they are, find out what they do outside work and show an interest in what they are doing in their job.
- Develop and communicate your vision. People become motivated if they are excited about the purpose of a business and how they can contribute to that.
- Be a role model. Your attitude and behaviour sets the tone. If you communicate positively and with energy your employees will respond to that.
- Invest in employee development. Provide employees with the opportunity to develop professionally.
- Regularly recognise and reward effort and results. This could be as simple as acknowledging an employee in a staff meeting.
- Help your employees find a work and life balance. You may allow staff to attend their child's sports day or provide a gym membership as part of the employee package.

Employee engagement may sound like another fancy human resource term, however there is solid evidence that shows that an engaged workforce is a productive workforce.