

Looking Behind the Benefits: The Key Drivers of Employee Engagement

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The brutal truth - employees want a workplace in which they can grow, thrive on challenges, be bold in their thinking, and inspire others with the spark of innovation. They want to enter work each day knowing their purpose and how it connects with the business strategy. The brutal truth is powerful and even more directly, employees want work to be enjoyable intertwined with moments of fun, laughter and constant burst of energy. However, creating a culture of engagement is not something that happens *before the sun sets*. It is a deliberate practice of engaging employees to Think (*head*) Feel (*heart*) Act (*hands*) in *positive ways* toward their job, their work, and their company.

For the past ten years, I have spent a great deal of time examining studies on employee engagement and reviewing companies having successful employee engagement cultures. I have formally presented engagement to professional organizations and frequently write about employee engagement as a business strategy. But most importantly, I have helped businesses establish employee engagement cultures. In all the above mentioned experiences the *bottom liners* continue to raise their hands asking how does it benefit the business? Following are samples of benefits found by businesses who successfully engage their employees:

- Stronger financial returns as employees go the extra mile in performance to create business success. Research from a cross-section of contributors indicates an average of 12-18% improvement in financial performance.
- Better market performance as the business builds an enduring reputation for customer service and rapid response to diverse needs.
- Cost reduction of 15-20% due to employee involvement in problem solving.- with employees stepping up to problem solve, create solutions and take ownership for implementing the actions.

Although the benefits are numerous and easily documented, little discussion has been given to what drives engagement. In other words, there are the key drivers that cause employees to be more productive, make more money for the business and the emotional bond that contributes to a good work environment. Companies having successful employee engagement cultures practice using following key drivers:

Know Me – Take time to get to know the employee and begin to understand their aspirations. Learn how they work best as well as respect and understand their strengths and opportunities. At all times be aware of the challenges that face them at work.

Grow Me – Show the employee what success looks like by making the path forward clear for their success. Protect the employee along the way by helping them master job skills. Challenge them to be better than they ever thought they could be. Most of all, formally commit to their ongoing development.

Inspire Me – Understand what inspires an employee. Understand how to motivate them through bold ideas, innovative creations and inspirational leadership.

Involve Me – Enable employees by giving them ownership to solutions. Spend a great deal of time helping employees think things through rather than constantly telling them what to do.

Recognize Me – Be the employee's biggest fan and bring him/her to the attention of others when they succeed. Recognize good work and celebrate successes.

The benefits of employee engagement are numerous and far-reaching in growing a business. However, it is critically important to understand that any employee engagement strategy must include key drivers that engage the head, heart and hands of employees. To be sure, the success of your business depends largely on how well you commit to engaging employees. Going that extra mile is an investment in your business and, to be sure, your employees.

