

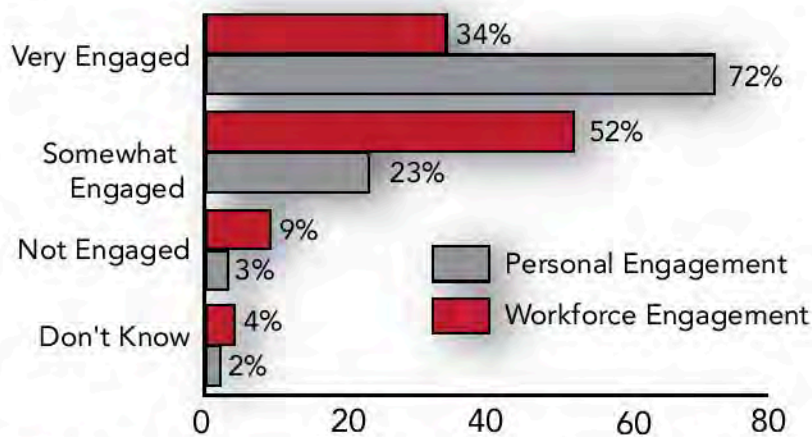
Employees who are engaged are committed to their organization, enthusiastic and devote themselves to their work while on the job. Engaged employees can be expected to act in ways that further the interests of the organization. Generally, highly engaged employees demonstrate higher retention levels, higher productivity and lower absenteeism compared to their less engaged counterparts.

In order to evaluate engagement levels among tourism sector employees, respondents were asked to rate their own level of engagement and indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements commonly used to assess commitment levels. Each response was assigned a number so that the average response across all ten statements could be calculated. The statements were worded so that strong agreement (7) indicated high engagement and strong disagreement (1) indicated low engagement.

Respondents were also presented with a list of eighteen questions about their current work situation. A positive response indicated that they were happy with that aspect of their job. For example, respondents were presented with the statements, "I am satisfied with my benefits package" and "I have a positive relationship with my peers at work". The exception was the statement, "I am actively looking for work outside of my current role". In this case, a positive response could potentially mean that a respondent was unhappy in their current position.

In general, most respondents saw themselves as very engaged (72%) but were less positive about those they worked with. Only 34% felt that the term, "very engaged" could be applied to their fellow employees. Over half (52%) viewed their organization's workforce as somewhat engaged and 9% felt it was not engaged (Graph 1).

Graph 1: Self Reported Engagement Levels Personal versus Entire Workforce



those that they worked with on a daily basis could be described as "highly engaged", while less than a fifth of front line workers felt this way. (Table 2)

Reported engagement levels increased based on seniority. Approximately two thirds (68%) of front line employees and supervisors considered themselves to be very engaged compared to 76% of senior managers and 84% of those in an owner or executive role. The same pattern occurred when respondents were asked to describe their organizations' entire workforce. Those in senior positions indicated that a greater percentage of the workforce could be described as "very engaged". (Table 1)

When asked about only those colleagues whom they worked with on a daily basis, 28% of respondents indicated that "less than half" could be described as highly engaged. Once again, as seniority within the organization increased, so did positive perceptions of engagement. About half (45%) of executive/owner respondents believed that more than three quarters of

Table 1: Perception of Organization's Workforce Engagement Level - By Position

| | Front Line | Supervisor/ Manager | Senior Manager | President/ Owner |
|------------------|------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Very Engaged | 32% | 23% | 36% | 45% |
| Somewhat Engaged | 39% | 70% | 60% | 39% |
| Not Engaged | 25% | 8% | 2% | 10% |
| Don't Know | 4% | 0% | 2% | 6% |

Table 2: Percentage of Daily Colleagues who are "Highly Engaged" - By Position

| | Front Line | Supervisor/ Manager | Senior Manager | President/ Owner |
|---------------|------------|---------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Less than 25% | 18% | 9% | 9% | 6% |
| 25%-45% | 21% | 26% | 13% | 16% |
| 50%-75% | 39% | 40% | 29% | 19% |
| 75% + | 18% | 25% | 47% | 45% |
| Don't Know | 1% | 0% | 1% | 4% |

Satisfaction with Current Work Situation

Overall, the responses regarding the respondents' feelings about their current work situation were encouraging. The majority replied "yes" to all statements. Notably, 96% of respondents had a positive relationship with their peers and 88% had a positive relationship with their supervisor. When asked if they were currently looking for another job, 63% said no, but this should be viewed as a positive response as it suggests an overall level of satisfaction with their tourism sector job.

Notwithstanding the high proportion of positive responses, certain statements did stand out due to the comparatively high number of negative responses. More than one third felt their salary was not competitive (35%) and that they were not paid fairly for the work they did (34%). Another 33% were not satisfied with the benefits package they received.

Two other potential issues are information sharing and training. When asked if their manager does a good job of sharing information, 27% of respondents answered no. Furthermore, one-third felt that information and knowledge were not shared openly at their organization. Training issues also appear to be a potential issue since 38% of respondents felt training was not given a high priority at their business. Despite this, 81% were satisfied that they had received the training required to do their job.

Average Engagement Levels among Tourism Employees

In order to get a more nuanced evaluation of engagement, respondents were presented with a list of ten statements and asked to indicate their level of agreement with each. The higher the overall level of agreement was, ranging from strong disagreement (1) to strong agreement (7), the more an engaged the employee is.

The average engagement score for all respondents was 5.8.

Of the 174 respondents, two thirds had an engagement rating of 6 or higher. On average, front line employees tended to be less engaged than senior staff; however, senior managers appeared to be more engaged than owners and general managers. The amount of time a person had been on the job also impacted engagement scores. Those who had been on the job less than six months had much lower scores than those who had been on the job for a longer period of time. However, after ten years on the job, engagement levels were seen to dip once more. Neither the total number of employees within a business nor the gross annual revenue caused significant fluctuations in average engagement scores.

Table 3: Percent of Respondents Agreeing with Work Satisfaction Statements

| | |
|--|-----|
| I have a positive relationship with my supervisor/ manager at work. | 96% |
| I have a positive relationship with my peers at work. | 96% |
| My ideas and opinions count at work. | 84% |
| Overall, I am satisfied with the training I have received at my current job. | 82% |
| Communication is encouraged in this organization. | 81% |
| My job allows me the autonomy to make decisions | 81% |
| I am in control of my work environment | 81% |
| I feel that I have received the training needed to do my current job. | 81% |
| I have all the information I need to do my job effectively. | 78% |
| I can disagree with my supervisor without fear of getting in trouble. | 78% |
| I have the resources I need to do my job well. | 77% |
| My manager does a good job of sharing information. | 73% |
| Information and knowledge are shared openly within this organization. | 68% |
| I am satisfied with my benefit package. | 67% |
| I am paid fairly for the work I do. | 66% |
| My salary is competitive with similar jobs I might find elsewhere. | 65% |
| Training is given a high priority at my business/ organization. | 63% |
| I am actively looking for work outside of my current employment. | 36% |

Table 4: Average Engagement Score by Position & Length of Service

| Employee Type | Score | Length of Employment | Score |
|-------------------|-------|---------------------------|-------|
| All employees | 5.8 | Less than 6 months | 4.9 |
| Front line | 5.6 | 6 months to 1 year | 6.2 |
| Supervisor | 5.7 | 1 year to under 2 years | 5.9 |
| Upper Management | 6.2 | 2 years to under 5 years | 6.0 |
| President / Owner | 5.8 | 5 years to under 10 years | 6.2 |
| | | Over 10 years | 5.5 |

Impact of Work Satisfaction on Engagement

To see what issues impact employee engagement, the average engagement scores of those who answered "yes" and those who answered "no" to each of the eighteen work satisfaction statements were compared.

By comparing these scores, it is possible to get an idea of which issues are most likely to impact employee engagement in a negative way. Interestingly, certain items such as pay

Table 5: Work Satisfaction and Engagement Score

| Response to Statement | Yes | No |
|--|------|------|
| I have a positive relationship with my supervisor/manager at work. | 5.70 | 6.09 |
| I have a positive relationship with my peers at work. | 5.69 | 6.12 |
| My ideas and opinions count at work. | 5.78 | 5.98 |
| Overall, I am satisfied with the training I have received at my current job. | 5.83 | 5.81 |
| Communication is encouraged in this organization. | 5.93 | 5.69 |
| My job allows me the autonomy to make decisions | 5.90 | 5.68 |
| I am in control of my work environment | 5.81 | 5.81 |
| I feel that I have received the training needed to do my current job. | 5.75 | 6.01 |
| I have all the information I need to do my job effectively. | 5.90 | 5.59 |
| I can disagree with my supervisor without fear of getting in trouble. | 5.93 | 5.49 |
| I have the resources I need to do my job well. | 5.87 | 5.55 |
| My manager does a good job of sharing information. | 5.94 | 5.36 |
| Information and knowledge are shared openly within this organization. | 5.87 | 5.72 |
| I am satisfied with my benefit package. | 5.82 | 5.87 |
| I am paid fairly for the work I do. | 5.75 | 5.85 |
| My salary is competitive with similar jobs I might find elsewhere. | 5.81 | 5.87 |
| Training is given a high priority at my business/organization. | 5.84 | 5.33 |
| I am actively looking for work outside of my current employment. | 5.81 | 5.87 |

and benefits seemed to have little impact on engagement. In fact, the employees who were dissatisfied with their pay and benefits had higher average engagement scores than those who were satisfied.

The greatest negative impact on engagement was seen when an employee's independence within the workplace was curtailed. A lack of control and autonomy, inability to disagree with one's supervisor, and feeling that the employee's ideas and opinions are not valued all negatively impact engagement levels. The impact is particularly significant among supervisors and mid-level managers. Supervisors who felt they had the autonomy to make decisions had an engagement score of 5.9—those who did not scored 4.8. Similarly, engagement dropped from 5.9 to 4.9 if the supervisor or manager did not believe that their ideas and opinions were valued.

A lack of open communication and information sharing also negatively impacted engagement. Once again, middle managers and supervisors were more sensitive to this aspect of people management than front line or senior level staff. Supervisors who felt that information and knowledge were shared openly scored 6.0 compared to 5.2 for those who felt access to information and knowledge was restricted. Supervisors whose managers did a good job of sharing information had a higher average score (6.0) than those with managers who did not share information (4.8).

On average, training or a lack thereof did not impact overall engagement scores. However, this was largely due to differences in how front line employees and supervisors rated this element of workplace culture. A lack of training had no negative impact on engagement amongst front line employees. However, the opposite was true of supervisors and managers. Those who were not satisfied with their training had lower engagement scores. In addition, supervisors and managers who did not feel that their organization gave training a high priority had a much lower score (5.0) than those at organizations where training was a high priority (6.2).

Conclusion

These findings are quite positive overall. While front line workers may be less engaged than other employees, the average engagement score of front line tourism employees was still quite high. This trend was also seen with the self-reported levels of engagement. However, the data also suggests that top levels of

management tend to overestimate how engaged their workers are. This may be because they assume that their own very high levels of engagement are reflective of the entire workforce.

It is notable that a negative response to one of the job satisfaction statements is much more indicative of lower engagement among those in mid-management positions. This suggests that the HR inducements examined in this study are key factors in maintaining high productivity and reduced turnover and absenteeism amongst supervisors and junior managers. Making sure that supervisors have the autonomy to make decisions, provide input and adequate training is likely to increase their engagement.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

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