



ENGAGE THE OVERWHELMED EMPLOYEE

Information overload and the always connected, 24/7 work environment are overwhelming workers, undermining productivity, and contributing to low employee engagement. According to a survey conducted by Deloitte in 2014 concerning talent and leadership issues, 65% of executives rated the “overwhelmed employee” an “urgent” or “important” trend, while 44% said that they are not ready to deal with this issue. Research conducted by Gallup also concluded that 13% of employees worldwide are actively engaged in work, and that more than twice that amount are so disengaged that they are likely to spread negativity to others. With the likeliness that almost 30% of workers will begin to negatively impact your company’s overall performance by spreading negativity to your currently engaged workers, the plight of the “overwhelmed worker” is more urgent than ever.

“Today, employees don’t want a career, they want an experience,” says an HR leader surveyed by Forbes in a study they conducted on the ‘overwhelmed worker.’ Two-thirds of today’s employees feel overwhelmed and the concepts of work-life balance have been lost. The key to working towards engaging the overwhelmed employee is to redefine engagement by looking at 5 factors:

1. the work itself

Companies that are work-centric foster employees that are not easily distracted and remain engaged. One great way to make sure that your company is focused on being work-centric is to implement regular training sessions for your employees to keep them engaged in their work. By implementing training sessions for your employees you are keeping them engaged and active in their work and are helping them find meaning in their work. Satya Nadella, the new CEO of Microsoft says, “.... I truly believe that each of us must find meaning in our work. The best work happens when you know that it’s not just work, but something that will improve other people’s lives. This is the opportunity that drives each of us at this company.”

2. management environment

Companies that wind up on the “Best Places to Work” lists don’t just have ping pong tables and free-flowing booze, they have “soul” and that is what today’s workforce is looking for. To succeed in keeping your employees at ease and their creative fires satiated you will need to invest in developing your management and leadership teams, and most importantly train your employees so that they can grow. Many leaders have been working in the same fashion for decades and are afraid to make radical changes. Adobe, for example, now uses “pulse” surveys to analyze employee engagement four times a year - and this, coupled with a totally revamped performance management process, has reduced turnover among high performers by over 30%.

3. nurturing mindfulness

The “mindfulness industry” is the fastest growing markets in the world. Arianna Huffington’s new website The Third Metric focuses on a work-life balance, stressing the importance of your work life having flexibility and is also her fastest growing property. The UN Happiness Report also shows that countries such as Denmark, Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands, and Sweden are the happiest and coincidentally the ones with the best work-life balance. Businesses in these countries are quite successful as a result of building work environments that are humanistic and allow their employees think. The modern employee is interested in working for a company that focuses on mindfulness and making your work environment more forgiving is just good for business.

4. environment of inclusion

Research by Deloitte shows that work teams that have high levels of inclusion outperform others by 8:1. Creating takes time, effort, and demands a lot of commitment to implement it properly. However, the payoff is completely worth it. Implementing an inclusion strategy will affect all aspects of your business from hiring, training, to leadership behavior. New research, conducted by Forbes, shows that even though more than 80% of companies promote themselves as “highly inclusive”, only about 11% admit that they really are. Think of your employees as customers. Use surveys to figure out what your employees want, and use the information collected to implement your employees ideas and make sure they are heard.

5. environment of trust

One concern that many leaders have is that if they become more flexible with their employees, then their employees may become more lax with their work. However, part of building a great company is building trust. Gallup places the number of disengaged employees at about 70%, which should be an alarming figure to any productivity expert. Trust can often be found as a fragile commodity in management, but a highly valuable one. Having an environment of trust in your office could make the difference between an employee who is engaged and emotionally connected to your organization, and one who is disengaged.