

Psychometrics Canada

News Release

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Employee Engagement: Who's Responsible?

A Study of Employee Engagement in the Canadian Workplace

Psychometrics Canada, a leading assessment publisher and consultant for the development and selection of people in business, government and education, today announced the results of its study of employee engagement in the Canadian workplace. The vast majority of survey respondents (84%) indicate that senior leaders and managers are primarily responsible for employee engagement. Fair or not, it appears that it is not up to employees to engage themselves, but up to organizations to engage their employees.

The study, which involved a poll of 368 human resources (HR) professionals across Canada, shows that employee engagement is seen as problematic, with the majority (69%) indicating it is an issue in their organization. Eighty-two per cent say that it is very important that their organizations address employee engagement. In fact, less than half of one per cent feels that engagement is not an important issue for their organization.

There are differences between work environments. Those working in government (80.3%) and business (74.4%) sectors are more likely to identify engagement as a problem than are people in education (64.2%) and not-for-profit (54.2%) organizations.

To increase engagement, HR professionals rate the following as the most effective: control over how a person does their work, opportunities to use their skills, and good relationships with management and leadership. Because engagement is driven by the work environment and processes, it can only be affected by the people with influence over them: an organization's leaders.

When asked what leaders could do more of to improve engagement, respondents endorse these actions:

- Listen to employees' opinions (71%)
- Communicate clear expectations (68%)
- Give recognition and praise (58%)
- Provide learning and development opportunities (57%)
- Help find solutions to problems (39%)
- Defend direct reports (15%)

“A paycheque is not enough,” says Mark Fitzsimmons, president of Psychometrics Canada. “To keep staff engaged, organizations need to give them the opportunity to use their skills, to be creative and, most of all, to be listened to. This survey demonstrates that many organizations understand this already, but few are taking the necessary steps to address it.”

There are significant benefits to be gained from training that focuses on engagement. In organizations that provide engagement training, the percentage of engaged employees rises by more than 10%, and the proportion that see engagement as a problem drops by 20%.

The benefits of engaged employees are found in a number of organizational measures. HR professionals report that some of the most common results are a willingness to do more than expected (39%), higher productivity (27%), better working relationships (13%) and more satisfied customers (10%).

Disengaged employees also affect the output of their organizations. Survey respondents indicate that the most common results of disengagement are dysfunctional work relationships (29%), lower productivity (25%) and an unwillingness to go beyond the job description (17%). A startling finding is that disengaged employees do not quit in droves or fail to show up for work. Turnover (8%) and absences (7%) are among the lower rated results of disengagement. It appears that the disengaged do not leave their organizations; instead, they stay and damage productivity and poison relationships.

“This research clearly shows that engagement, or the lack thereof, affects both the people and the finances of organizations,” says Shawn Bakker, psychologist at Psychometrics Canada.

Top Tips for Driving Engagement

1. Build positive work relationships.
2. Ensure a good fit between people’s skills and their job requirements.
3. Provide regular feedback on performance.
4. Give opportunities to learn new skills.
5. Give employees greater control over their work: stop micromanaging.
6. Celebrate progress and recognize employees’ accomplishments.
7. Share information: communicate the direction and strategy of the organization.
8. Give employees the opportunity to share their ideas.

To read the complete report, visit http://www.psychometrics.com/docs/engagement_study.pdf

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For more information about our study, or to talk with survey participants about employee engagement in their organizations, contact

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Fact Sheet

- From November through December 2010, Psychometrics Canada surveyed 368 Canadian HR professionals working in business, government, consulting, education and not-for-profit organizations.
- HR professionals rated the effectiveness of 10 work-related issues at helping engage people. The lowest-rated areas are salary and benefits, and bonuses and financial awards.
- Recommendations for leaders hold true across all work sectors. In business, government, consulting, education and not-for-profit organizations, respondents rate communicating clear expectations and listening to employees' opinions as the top things leaders can do to improve engagement.
- The majority of organizations (55.8%) do not measure engagement. The percentage of organizations that directly address employee engagement is in the forty per cent range (41%).
- Twenty-eight per cent of organizations conduct no training on how to improve engagement, and 42.5% provide training once a year at the most.
- When it comes to addressing engagement, business organizations are the most active. Fifty-five per cent of business respondents indicate that their organization focuses directly on improving worker engagement. The number falls to the 44% to 45% level for consulting and government organizations, to 34% for not-for-profit groups, and to 23% for educational institutions.
- People aged 40 to 49 are three times as likely to be dissatisfied with their current roles as those aged 30 to 39 (18% vs. 6.2%).
- Disengaged and engaged people rate the same things as influential in improving engagement: control over their work, opportunities to use their skills, and positive relationships with the management and leadership of their organization.
- Psychometrics Canada is the publisher of the Work Personality Index and Career Values Scale and is the only authorized Canadian distributor of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator[®], Strong Interest Inventory[®], Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, FIRO-B[®], CPI 260[™], and CPI[™] 434. These assessments are available in both French and English.