A New Framework of Employee Engagement

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Putting HR Principles Into Practice

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Why is Employee Engagement so Important?

In a world that is changing both in terms of the global nature of work and the diversity of the workforce, engaged employees may be a key to competitive advantage. Companies that understand the conditions that enhance employee engagement will have accomplished something that competitors will find very difficult to imitate.[1]

In fast-changing environments, it becomes all the more difficult to precisely specify roles and responsibilities. To the extent that employees are likely to be faced more frequently with unanticipated and ambiguous decision-making situations, organizations must increasingly count on employees to act in ways that are consistent with organizational objectives.

In addition, many employees are looking for environments where they can be engaged and feel that they are contributing in a positive way to something larger than themselves.

Current State of Employee Engagement

If one does not know what one is measuring, the action implications will be, at best, vague and, at worst, a leap of faith. Many consultants avoid defining the term "engagement," instead referring only to its presumed positive antecedents or consequences. In 2006, The Conference Board published "Employee Engagement, A Review of Current Research and Its Implications." According to this report, twelve major studies on employee engagement had been published over the prior four years by top research firms. Each of the studies used different definitions and collectively came up with 26 key drivers of engagement. For example, Gallup's Q12 model, an employee engagement measure used by many organizations, measures important actionable aspects of the work environment that lead to employee engagement.[2] Although surveys that ask employees to describe their work conditions may be relevant for assessing the conditions that provide for engagement, they do not directly tap engagement itself.

The question remains as to whether engagement is a unique concept or merely a repackaging of other constructs. Different researchers have defined engagement both attitudinally and behaviorally.

ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIORAL DEFINITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT
Wellins and Concelman
"the illusive force that motivates employees to higher (or lower) levels of performance"[3]
Maslach et al.
Engagement can be characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy.
Dvir et al.
Defined *active engagement* as "high levels of activity, initiative, and responsibility"[4]
Schaufeli et al.
"positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption"[5]

If one does not know how to define and measure engagement, then an analysis of its drivers and outcomes will be suspect. For example, two attitudinal measures of employee engagement found in many consulting firms' surveys include employee job satisfaction and continuance commitment, which focus on employees' intentions to remain with the company. Yet, the research correlating job satisfaction and job performance has mixed results.[6] And a number of studies have found a negative relationship between continuance commitment and job performance, making it quite possible to have very content employees who perform poorly. Research has shown that the type of commitment is critical; employees who want to belong to the organization (affective commitment) are more likely to perform well than those who need to belong (continuance commitment).[7]
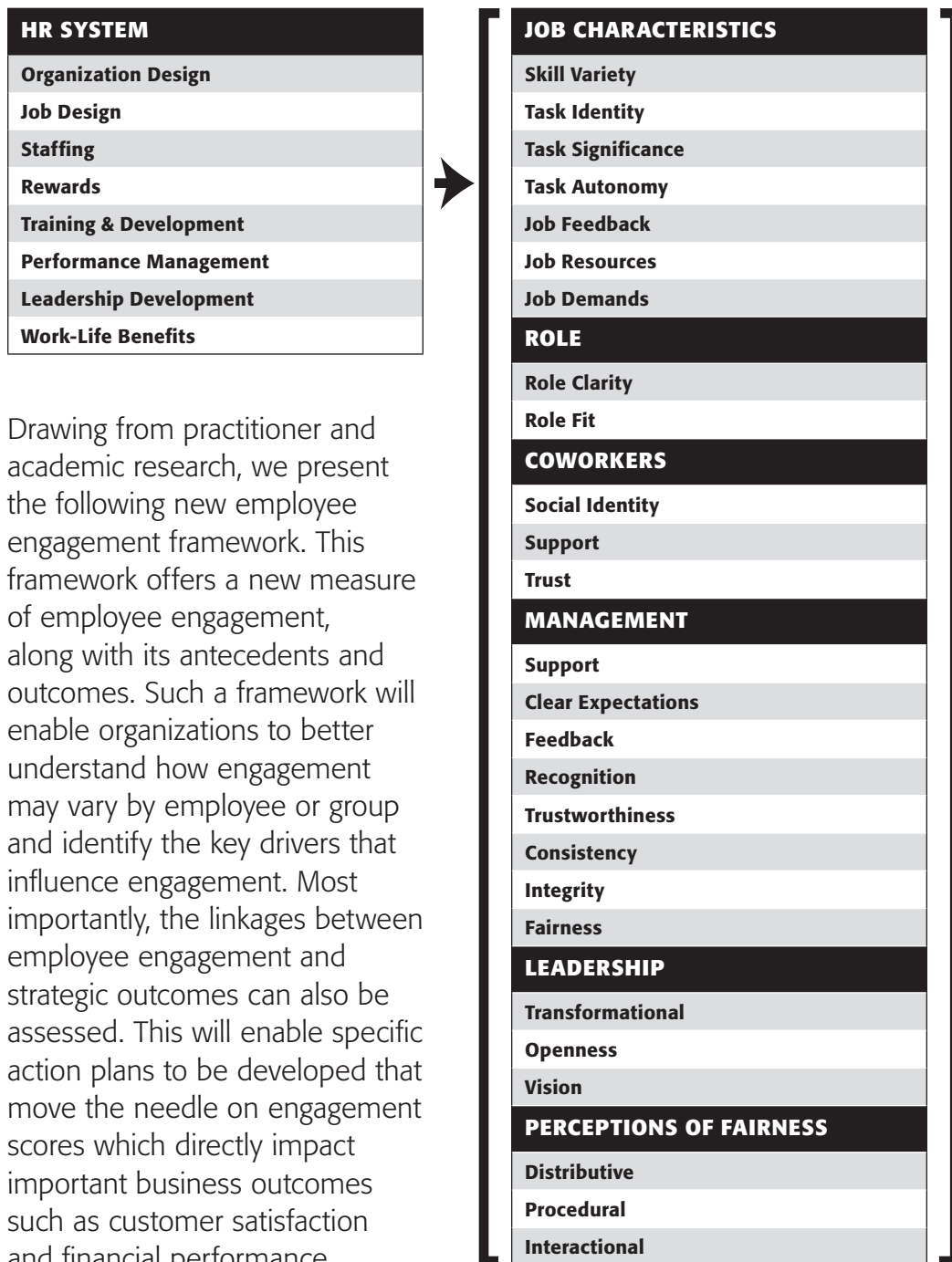
Erickson argued that "engagement is above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer."[8] Engagement is about passion, commitment, and the willingness to invest oneself and expend one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed. Organizational effectiveness depends on more than simply maintaining a stable workforce; employees must perform assigned duties dependably and be willing to engage in activities that go beyond role requirements.[9] Harter and Schmidt propose that employee engagement reflects a deeper level of involvement and enthusiasm from the employee than the terms "job satisfaction" or "organizational commitment" might imply.[10] The newer emphasis on absorption, passion, and affect better reflects the reason work attitudes matter to organizations.

A review of the academic research on employee engagement shows the term is used at different times to refer to psychological states, traits, and behaviors. Macy and Schnedier show that engagement as a disposition (i.e. trait engagement) can be regarded as an inclination or orientation to experience the world from a particular vantage point (e.g., positive affectivity characterized by feelings of enthusiasm) and this trait gets reflected in psychological state engagement.[11] Psychological state engagement is conceptualized as an antecedent of behavioral engagement, defined in terms of discretionary effort. Thus, they see engagement as a multidimensional construct.[12]
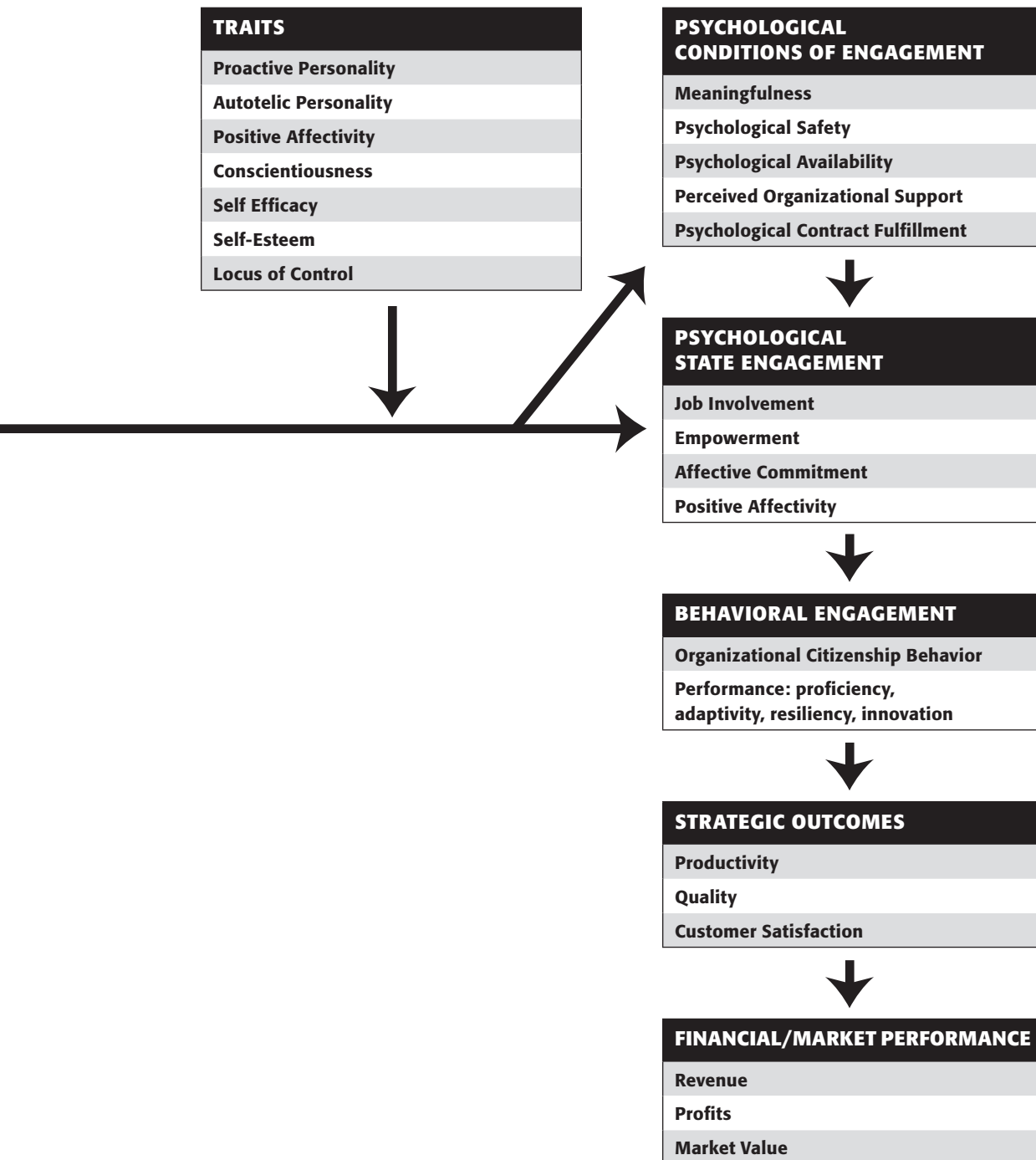
"**the type of commitment is critical; employees who want to belong to the organization… are more likely to perform well than those who need to belong**"

A NEW FRAMEWORK OF

DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

HR SYSTEM
Organization Design
Job Design
Staffing
Rewards
Training & Development
Performance Management
Leadership Development
Work-Life Benefits

JOB CHARACTERISTICS
Skill Variety
Task Identity
Task Significance
Task Autonomy
Job Feedback
Job Resources
Job Demands

ROLE
Role Clarity
Role Fit

COWORKERS
Social Identity
Support
Trust

MANAGEMENT
Support
Clear Expectations
Feedback
Recognition
Trustworthiness
Consistency
Integrity
Fairness

LEADERSHIP
Transformational
Openness
Vision

PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS
Distributive
Procedural
Interactional

Drawing from practitioner and academic research, we present the following new employee engagement framework. This framework offers a new measure of employee engagement, along with its antecedents and outcomes. Such a framework will enable organizations to better understand how engagement may vary by employee or group and identify the key drivers that influence engagement. Most importantly, the linkages between employee engagement and strategic outcomes can also be assessed. This will enable specific action plans to be developed that move the needle on engagement scores which directly impact important business outcomes such as customer satisfaction and financial performance.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

TRAITS
Proactive Personality
Autotelic Personality
Positive Affectivity
Conscientiousness
Self Efficacy
Self-Esteem
Locus of Control

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT
Meaningfulness
Psychological Safety
Psychological Availability
Perceived Organizational Support
Psychological Contract Fulfillment

PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE ENGAGEMENT
Job Involvement
Empowerment
Affective Commitment
Positive Affectivity

BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT
Organizational Citizenship Behavior
Performance: proficiency, adaptivity, resiliency, innovation

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES
Productivity
Quality
Customer Satisfaction

FINANCIAL/MARKET PERFORMANCE
Revenue
Profits
Market Value

DRIVERS OF ENGAGEMENT

An organization's HR System is the primary driver of employee engagement. The HR system's staffing, training and development practices contribute to the development of employee competencies that enhance competitive advantage and help to ensure organization and employee fit. Rewards, benefits, and performance management practices help motivate employees to behave in ways that benefit the organization. Organizational and job designs help create a work environment that is conducive to employees' development and effective work systems. Lastly, effective management and leadership development helps to ensure a productive, fair, and supportive working environment in which employees feel motivated to achieve organizational objectives.

A rich body of literature has identified key drivers of employee engagement that are the result of the proper alignment of HR practices, including: job characteristics, role clarity and fit, coworker and management relations, leadership, and perceptions of fairness.

JOB CHARACTERISTICS

Much of the early work on engagement placed the task itself as central to engagement.[13] Much of the research is drawn from the job characteristics program[14] and work on the intrinsic nature of rewards and tasks.[15] It appears that when people have certain kinds of work to do (e.g., the work has challenge, variety, and autonomy), they feel engaged and behave in adaptive and constructive ways that produce results that were perhaps unexpected.

Hackman and Lawler provide evidence that job characteristics can directly affect employee attitudes and behaviors at work. Employees react positively to five core dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Research shows that employees who work on jobs high in these core dimensions show high work motivation, satisfaction, performance, and attendance.[16]

EMPLOYEES REACT POSITIVELY TO FIVE CORE JOB DIMENSIONS
Skill Variety
The degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities and a number of different skills to carry out the work
Task Identity
The degree to which the job requires completing a "whole" piece of work from beginning to end with a visible outcome
Task Significance
The degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives of other people – in the immediate organization or external environment
Autonomy
The degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to carry it out
Feedback
The degree to which the individual obtains direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance

Another theoretical approach to engagement is the job demands-resources (JD-R) model.[17]

JOB DEMANDS – RESOURCES MODEL
Job Demands
Physical, psychological, social, or organizational features that are related to physiological and/or psychological costs (e.g., work overload, job insecurity, role ambiguity, role conflict)
Job demands may become stressors in situations that require high effort to sustain an expected performance level, consequently eliciting negative responses, including burnout
Job Resources
Physical, psychological, social, or organizational features of a job that help achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth, learning, and development (job control, access to information, performance feedback, and social support)
Relationship of Resources to Demands
High job resources relative to job demands promote engagement, whereas low job resources relative to job demands contribute to burnout and reduced engagement

ROLE

Rothbard noted "within the context of the organization, people often must engage in multiple roles to fulfill job expectations."[18] Thus, it is meaningless to refer to engagement without being specific about the role in question. Roles occupied by organizational members are one's job, group, and organization role, and engagement is likely to vary from role to role. Engagement in one role has implications for engagement in other roles, and the predictors and consequences of engagement are likely to vary as a function of the role.

Role clarity helps to relieve tensions between individual and organizational needs – while role ambiguity, involving the absence of clear information about one's job responsibilities, and role

conflict, involving mutually incompatible job responsibilities, are known role stressors that diminish individuals' coping mechanisms and performance.[19]

Consistent with self-concordance theory, people willingly contribute their time when their roles are consistent with their personal goals and when they see themselves as invested in their role performance.[20] Work role fit is the relation of the individual employee to the role that he/she assumes in an organization.[21] A number of authors argue that a perceived fit between an individual's self-concept and his/her role will lead to an experienced sense of meaning due to the ability of the individual to express his/her values and beliefs.[22] Others have maintained that human beings are self-expressive and creative, not just goal-oriented.[23] That is, people seek out work roles that allow them to behave in a way that expresses their authentic self-concept. Thus, employees who see their work as consistent with their personal values will be more engaged.[24]

Organizations and especially their goals and values can also be a source of attachment and commitment, leading people to identify with the organization as a whole and, in turn, display adaptive behaviors consistent with its long-term interests.[25] The key is to ensure a fit between employees' personal values and organizational values.

COWORKERS

Individuals who have rewarding interpersonal interactions with their co-workers also should experience greater meaning in their work. When individuals are treated with dignity, respect and value for their contributions, and not simply as the occupant of a role – they are likely to obtain a sense of meaningfulness from their

interactions.[26] To the extent that co-worker interactions foster a sense of belonging, a stronger sense of social identity and meaning should emerge. Alternatively, a loss of a social identity should be negatively associated with meaningfulness.[27]

Interpersonal relations among employees that are supportive and trusting should also foster psychological safety.[28] The bases for interpersonal trust can be either cognitive or affective.[29]

THE BASES FOR INTERPERSONAL TRUST
Cognitive
Concerns the reliability and dependability of others
Affective
Rooted in the emotional relationships between individuals
Individuals generally express concern for the welfare of each other, believe in the intrinsic virtue of such relationships and are willing to make future emotional investments in the relationship. [30]

Psychological research in organizations has shown that, when people are working together, they may share beliefs and affective experiences and thus show similar motivational and behavioral patterns.[31]

Coworkers may:
- Feel collective emotions, collective moods, or group affective tone[32]
- Share perceived collective efficacy[33]
- Show high group potency[34]
- Share engagement as a motivational construct[35]
- Be involved in positive as well as negative psychological contagion processes[36]

Such affective relations among group members are also referred to as morale, cohesion, and rapport.

MANAGEMENT

Effective managers are those who get the work done with the people they have and do not try to change them; they attempt to capitalize on the competencies their people have, not what they, the manager, wished they had.[37] The relation with one's immediate manager can have a dramatic impact on an individual's perceptions of the work environment. A supportive, and non-controlling, relationship should foster perceptions of safety[38] and enhance employee creativity.[39]

Supervisors who foster a supportive work environment:[40]
- Display concern for employees' needs and feelings
- Provide positive feedback
- Encourage employees to:
  - Voice their concerns
  - Develop new skills
  - Solve work-related problems

Such supportive actions enhance employee self-determination and interest in their work.

Employees who are self-determined experience "a sense of choice in initiating and regulating one's own actions."[41] These individuals are likely to feel safer to engage themselves more fully, try out novel ways of doing things, discuss mistakes and learn from these behaviors when they are in such supportive environments.[42] Supervisory supportiveness of employees' self-determination and congruent perceptions between supervisors and employees have also both been linked with enhancing trust.[43]

Five categories of behavior that have been linked with employees' perceptions of managerial trustworthiness include: behavioral consistency, behavioral integrity, sharing and delegation of control, communication (accuracy, explanations and openness) and demonstration of concern.[44]

CATEGORIES OF BEHAVIOR LINKED WITH EMPLOYEES' PERCEPTIONS OF MANAGERIAL TRUSTWORTHINESS
Behavioral Consistency
Behaving in the same manner across time and contexts
Behavioral Integrity
Consistency between words and deeds
Sharing and Delegation of Control
Employee participation in decision-making
Communication (accuracy, explanations and openness)
Accurate explanations for managerial actions
Demonstration of Concern
Consideration, protecting employees' interests and refraining from exploitation[45]

While researching employees' perceptions of organizational support, Rhoades and Eisenberger, found that employees feel more engaged and behave in adaptive and constructive ways when they work for managers who make expectations clear, are fair, and recognize superior behavior.[46]

LEADERSHIP

There has been a great deal of research indicating that leaders who engage in "transformational/charismatic" behaviors produce transformational/charismatic effects.[47] Transformational leaders enhance employee engagement by fostering a sense of passion for work as well as the employees' capacity to think independently, develop new ideas, and challenge convention when no longer relevant.[48]

Avolio et al. defined transformational leadership as a higher order construct consisting of four components.[49]

COMPONENTS OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP
Idealized Influence
Admired, respected and trusted; considers followers' needs; consistent conduct
Inspirational Motivation
Provides meaning and challenge
Intellectual Stimulation
Stimulates followers' efforts to be creative and innovative
Individualized Consideration
Pays attention to each individual's need for achievement

Leaders also play an important role by defining and communicating the organization's vision, purpose, and goals. Top management openness, defined as the degree to which top management is believed to encourage and support suggestions and change initiatives from below, has also been shown to enhance employee engagement.[50]

PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS

Fairness consists of three types of subjective perceptions, typically referred to as distributive justice,[51] procedural justice,[52] and interactional justice.[53]

SUBJECTIVE PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS
Distributive Justice
The fairness of outcome distributions
Procedural Justice
The fairness of the procedure used to determine outcome distributions
Interactional Justice
The fairness and quality of interpersonal treatment employees experience

Much of the equity theory research was derived from initial work conducted by Adams, who used a social exchange theory framework to evaluate fairness, which was used to help define distributive justice.[54] According to Adams, people were not concerned about the absolute level of outcomes per se, but whether those outcomes were fair. Adams suggested that one way to determine whether an outcome was fair was to calculate the ratio of one's outcomes (e.g., compensation, promotions, and development) to their contributions or inputs (e.g., effort, time, education, intelligence, and experience) and then compare that ratio with that of a comparison other.

Leventhal and colleagues can be credited with extending the notion of procedural justice into non-legal contexts such as organizational settings. Leventhal's theory of procedural justice judgments focused on six criteria that a procedure should meet if it is to be perceived as fair.[55]

To be perceived as fair, procedures should:

- Be applied consistently across people and across time
- Be free from bias (e.g. no third party vested interest in a particular settlement)
- Ensure that accurate information is collected and used in making decisions
- Have some mechanism to correct flawed or inaccurate decisions
- Conform to personal or prevailing standards of ethics or morality
- Ensure that the opinions of groups affected are taken into account

The most recent advance in the justice literature focuses on the importance of the quality of the interpersonal treatment people receive when procedures are implemented. Interactional justice is fostered when decision makers treat people with respect and sensitivity and explain the rationale for decisions.[56] More recently, interactional justice has come to be seen as consisting of two specific types of interpersonal treatment: interpersonal and informational justice.[57]

TYPES OF INTERACTIONAL JUSTICE
Interpersonal Justice
Treatment with politeness, dignity, and respect by those who execute procedures or determine outcomes
Informational Justice
The explanations of why procedures were used in a certain way or outcomes were distributed in a certain fashion

Fairness has long been considered one of the key predictors of employees' affective states and behaviors. When employees feel that they are being treated fairly, they reciprocate through the performance of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB).[58] Indeed, a substantial amount of research at the individual level of analysis has demonstrated that perceptions of fairness are tied to OCB.[59]

Additionally, Colquitt, et al. illustrated the overall and unique relationships among distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice and several desirable outcomes (e.g., job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and evaluation of authority, organizational citizenship behavior, withdrawal and performance).[60]

TRAIT ENGAGEMENT

In this framework, employees' traits modify the relationship between drivers of engagement and both state and behavioral engagement. Although it is easy to state that people who have passion for their

work are more likely to feel engaged and demonstrate engagement behaviors, it is more difficult to state why some people have passion for their work and others do not. Macey and Schneider suggest that those more likely to experience feelings of engagement and who demonstrate engagement behavior are also more likely to choose environments that provide the opportunity to do so.[61]

Traits that have been linked to state and behavioral engagement include several personality-based constructs including autotelic personality, trait positive affectivity, proactive personality, and conscientiousness. These constructs have an underlying commonality, in that they embody differences among individuals in their propensity to exercise human agency.[62]

TRAITS LINKED TO STATE AND BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT
Autotelic Personality
A general propensity to mentally transform potential threats into enjoyable challenges[63]
Trait Positive Affectivity
A proclivity for active interaction with one's environment[64] that might lead to expansive and friendly behaviors, resulting in more effective working relationships with coworkers and supervisors[65]
Proactive Personality
Consistently taking action and overcoming opposition to change things for the better[66]
Conscientiousness
Dependability, carefulness, thoroughness, responsibility, and perseverance[67]

Self-esteem, a personality trait defined as a general feeling of self-worth, is posited to be related to empowerment, a component of engagement.[68] Individuals who hold themselves in high esteem are

likely to extend their feelings of self-worth to a work-specific sense of competence.[69] Conversely, individuals with little self-esteem are not likely to see themselves as able to make a difference or influence their work and organizations. Another trait related to engagement, locus of control, explains the degree to which people believe they, rather than external forces, determine what happens in their lives.[70] Locus of control is also a key dimension of empowerment.[71] Lastly, self-efficacy, defined as having confidence in one's ability to perform, has been shown to increase personal initiative at work.[72] This is consistent with Graham's conceptual model of principled dissent, which suggests that employees with high self-confidence see principled dissent as a more feasible (that is, potentially effective) way to bring about change than employees with low self-confidence.[73]

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT

Together, the drivers of engagement impact the necessary psychological conditions of engagement, as well as the psychological state of engagement. The psychological conditions of engagement include the meaningfulness of the work, employees' psychological safety and availability, perceptions of organizational support, and psychological contract fulfillment.

Kahn proposed that three psychological conditions – meaningfulness, safety and availability – influence the degree to which one engages in his/her role at work. Together, the three conditions shape how people inhabit their roles. Organization members seem to ask themselves three questions in each situation: (1) How meaningful is it for me to bring myself into

this performance? (2) How safe is it to do so? (3) How available am I to do so? [74]

PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS THAT INFLUENCE ENGAGEMENT
Psychological Meaningfulness
"a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy"
Psychological Safety
The employee's "sense of being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career"
Psychological Availability
An individual's belief that he/she has the physical, emotional or cognitive resources to engage the self at work

These three psychological conditions exhibited a significant positive relationship with engagement.[75] Meaningfulness displayed the strongest relationship, and job enrichment and work role fit were positively linked to meaningfulness. Rewarding co-worker and supportive supervisor relations were positively associated with psychological safety. Psychological availability was positively related to resources available and negatively related to outside activities.

Kahn defined psychological meaningfulness as "a feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of one's self in a currency of physical, cognitive, or emotional energy."[76] People experience their work as meaningful when they perceive it to be challenging, worthwhile, and rewarding. Meaningfulness has also been defined as the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards.

DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL MEANINGFULNESS[77]
Employees feel that they make a significant contribution toward the achievement of organizational goals
Employees feel that the organization adequately recognizes their contributions
Employees feel that their work is challenging and conducive to personal growth

Kahn defined psychological safety as the employee's "sense of being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career." Supervisory and co-worker behaviors that are supportive and trustworthy in nature are likely to produce feelings of safety at work.

DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY[78]
Management is perceived as flexible and supportive and employees feel control over their work
Organizational roles and norms are perceived as clear
Employees feel free to express their true feelings and core aspects of their self-concepts in work roles

Psychological availability is defined as an individual's belief that he/she has the physical, emotional or cognitive resources to engage the self at work.[79] In essence, it assesses the readiness, or confidence, of a person to engage in his/her work role given that individuals are engaged in many other life activities.

DIMENSIONS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL AVAILABILITY

Physical Demands

Most jobs require some level of physical exertion, some demanding intense physical challenges that may result in injuries[80]

Emotional Demands

Some jobs require much emotional labor[81] – the frequency, duration and intensity of emotional displays can decrease emotional resources and lead to exhaustion[82]

Cognitive Demands

Some roles require more information processing than individuals can handle, overwhelming their ability to think clearly with too many "balls in the air"[83]

Activities outside the workplace have the potential to draw away individuals' energies from their work and make them less psychologically available for their work roles.[84] Managing multiple roles can drain resources.[85]

A fourth psychological condition of engagement, perceived organizational support (POS), reflects the quality of the relationship between the employee and organization by measuring the extent to which employees believe that the organization values their contributions and cares about their welfare.[86] POS develops through employees' assessments of their treatment by the organization, and they subsequently use their judgments of POS to estimate their effort-outcome expectancy.[87] Thus, to the extent that the organization treats an employee well and values his or her efforts, the employee may be expected to devote greater effort toward helping the organization achieve its goals.[88]

Drivers of Perceived Organizational Support:

• Fairness
• Supervisor support
• Organizational rewards
• Favorable job conditions

Repeated instances of fairness in decisions concerning resource distribution should have a strong effect on POS.[89] Fairness of procedures that determine the amount and distribution of organizational resources are particularly important to POS, as well as favorable treatment from supervisors.

Favorable job conditions including job security, autonomy, training, and a lack of role stressors (role ambiguity, role conflict) all contribute to enhancing individuals' perceptions of POS. Research has shown that perceived organizational support is related to outcomes favorable to employees (job satisfaction and positive mood) and the organization (affective commitment, performance, and lessened withdrawal).[90]

Lastly, psychological contract fulfillment is another key condition of engagement. The psychological contract has been defined as "an individual's beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organizations."[91] The beliefs refer to employee perceptions of the explicit and implicit promises regarding the exchange of employee contributions (e.g., effort, ability, loyalty) for organizational inducements (e.g., pay, promotion, security).[92]

Organizations can enter into either a transactional or relational contract with employees. Transactional contracts are short-term, have a purely economic or materialistic focus, and entail limited involvement by both parties. Relational contracts are long-term and broad, as they are not restricted to purely economic exchange but also include terms for loyalty in exchange for security or growth in an organization.[93]

A psychological contract breach can occur when "one's organization has failed to meet one or more obligations

within one's psychological contract in a manner commensurate with one's contributions…"[94] Perceived breach signals an imbalance in the social exchange process in which an employee does not receive expected outcomes from an organization for fulfilling his or her obligations.[95] Research has shown a positive relationship between perceived psychological contract fulfillment and desirable outcomes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance.[96]

ASSOCIATIONS WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT FULFILLMENT[97]
Positive
• Job Satisfaction • Organizational Commitment • Organizational Citizenship Behaviors • Performance
Negative
• Intention to Quit

PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE ENGAGEMENT

Employee engagement is primarily a psychological state, embracing several related ideas that represent some form of job involvement, empowerment, affective commitment, and positive affectivity. There is considerable agreement that engagement as a psychological state has a strong affective tone connoting, at a minimum, high levels of involvement (passion and absorption) in the work and the organization (pride and identity) as well as affective energy (enthusiasm and alertness) and a sense of self-presence in the work.

Job Involvement

Job involvement refers to identification with and interest in one's work and is an important facet of the psychological state of engagement.[98] In his review and meta-analysis of job involvement, Brown indicated that a "state of involvement implies a positive and relatively complete state of engagement of core aspects of the self in the job."[99]

Job involvement has been considered the key to activating employee motivation[100] and a fundamental basis for establishing competitive advantage in business markets.[101] From an individual perspective, it has also been considered a key to personal growth and satisfaction within the workplace, as well as with motivation and goal-directed behavior.[102] A state of involvement implies a positive and relatively complete state of engagement of core aspects of the self in the job.[103]

ANTECEDENT INFLUENCES ON JOB INVOLVEMENT
Job Characteristics
e.g. autonomy, skill variety, task identity and significance[104]
Supervisory Behaviors
e.g. consideration and participation[105]
Individual Differences
e.g. internal motivation[106]

Individuals who have high job involvement may also experience "flow", defined as the "holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement." When individuals are in a flow state, little conscious control is necessary for their actions, and they narrow their attention to specific stimuli. Individuals in a flow experience do not need external rewards

or goals to motivate them as the activity itself presents constant challenges.[107]

Closely related to job involvement, Kahn posited that engagement in a role refers to one's psychological presence in or focus on role activities and may be an important ingredient for effective role performance.[108] Role engagement has two critical components, attention and absorption in a role.[109]

COMPONENTS OF ROLE ENGAGEMENT
Attention
Cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role[110]
Absorption
How much one is engrossed in a role and the intensity of their focus[111]

Attention and absorption components of engagement are closely related because they both represent motivational constructs, specifically, the motivation to act. Locke and Latham referred to focused attention and intensity (two elements of engagement) as unmeasured attributes of motivated action and as reasons why goal mechanisms are motivational.[112]

Psychological Empowerment

Mathieu et al. suggested that empowerment is the "experience of authority and responsibility."[113] Thus, empowerment is not an enduring personality trait generalizable across situations, but rather, a psychological state shaped by a work environment.[114] Others have defined empowerment as the motivational concept of self-efficacy.[115] Whereas Thomas and Velthouse define it more broadly as increased intrinsic task motivation manifested

in a set of four cognitions reflecting an individual's orientation to his or her work role: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact.[116]

COGNITIONS REFLECTING WORK ROLE ORIENTATION
Meaning
The value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standards,[117] resulting in a high commitment & concentration of energy[118]
Competence
An individual's belief in his or her capability to perform activities with skill,[119] resulting in effort and persistence in challenging situations,[120] coping & high goal expectations[121] & high performance[122]
Self-determination
An individual's sense of having choice in initiating and regulating actions,[123] reflecting autonomy in the initiation and continuation of work behaviors and processes[124] and resulting in learning, interest in activity, and resilience in the face of adversity.[125]
Impact
The degree to which an individual can influence strategic, administrative, or operating outcomes at work[126] – associated with high performance and an absence of withdrawal from difficult situations[127]

Kanter suggested that in order to be empowering, organizations must "make more information more available to more people at more levels through more devices."[128] Kouzes and Posner stated that "without information, you can be certain that people will not extend themselves to take responsibility or vent their creative energies."[129]

**CRITICAL INFORMATION
FOR EMPOWERMENT**[130]

Mission of the Organization

People won't take initiative until they understand an organization's direction.[131]
- Helps to create a sense of meaning and purpose[132]
- Enhances an individual's ability to make/influence decisions aligned with the organization's goals[133]

Performance Information

People need to understand how well their work units are performing in order to maintain/improve performance in the future

Affective Commitment

Meyer and Allen's three-component conceptualization of organizational commitment includes affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment.[134]

**COMPONENTS OF
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT**

Affective Commitment
*Employees remain because they **want** to*

Develops due to personal involvement, identification with the relevant target, and value congruence[135]

Continuance Commitment
*Employees remain because they **need** to*

Develops as the result of accumulated investments, or side bets,[136] that would be lost if the individual discontinued a course of action or chose an alternative to the present course[137]

Normative Commitment
*Employees remain because they **ought** to*

Develops as a function of cultural and organizational socialization and the receipt of benefits that activate a need to reciprocate[138]

Research shows that affective commitment has the strongest and most favorable correlations with job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors,

attendance, and turnover. Normative commitment had moderate correlations. Most interestingly, continuance commitment tends to be unrelated, or negatively related, to these behaviors.[139]

Thus, in this framework only affective commitment is a component of psychological state engagement. Affective commitment is an important facet of the state of engagement when it is conceptualized as positive attachment to the larger organizational entity and measured as a willingness to: exert energy in support of the organization, feel pride as an organizational member, and have personal identification with the organization.

The concept of reciprocity has been postulated as a mechanism by which affective commitment is translated into behavior. The motive arising from affective commitment might best be described as a desire to contribute to the well-being of the organization in order to maintain equity in a mutually beneficial association.

Of greatest relevance to affective commitment are Kelman's identification and internalization categories.

**AFFECTIVE COMMITMENT
CATEGORIES**[140]

Identification

Individuals adopt attitudes and behaviors in order to be associated with a satisfying, self-defining relationship with another person or group

Internalization

Individuals adopt attitudes and behaviors because their content is congruent with their own value systems

Engagement as Positive Affectivity

Positive affectivity is also a key component of psychological state engagement.

Positive Affectivity Descriptors in the Positive & Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)[141]

- Attentive
- Alert
- Enthusiastic
- Inspired
- Proud
- Determined
- Strong
- Active

Schaufeli and colleagues defined engagement as a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfillment in employees that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.142

CHARACTERISTICS OF ENGAGEMENT
Vigor
High levels of energy and resilience, the willingness to invest effort in one's job, the ability to not be easily fatigued, and persistence in the face of difficulties
Dedication
A strong involvement in one's work, accompanied by feelings of enthusiasm and significance, and by a sense of pride and inspiration
Absorption
A pleasant state of total immersion in one's work, which is characterized by time passing quickly and being unable to detach oneself from the job

Kahn, in describing personal engagement, noted "people can use varying degrees of their selves, physically, cognitively, and emotionally, in the roles they perform… the more people draw on their selves to perform their roles… the more stirring are their performance."[143]

True psychological presence at and identification with work go beyond questions of simple task motivation. Rather, a true identification with work reflects an "authenticity" that results in employees connecting with work and addressing difficult issues – resulting in behavioral engagement.

BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT

Unlike most consultant models, in this framework, behavioral engagement is an outcome of state engagement. In differentiating engagement from the entire scope of behavioral work performance, engagement implies something special, extra, or at least atypical. Thus, it is common to define behavioral engagement as putting forth "discretionary effort" defined as extra time, brainpower and energy.[144] Others refer to "giving it their all."[145]

Some argue that it is limiting to define behavioral engagement solely as a matter of doing something extra. Kahn, for example, suggested that those who are psychologically present bring more of themselves to their work and thereby may do something *different* and not just something *more*.[146] Brown suggested that involvement may lead to both doing things smarter and investing greater effort.[147]

Engagement behaviors are typically defined as behaviors that extend beyond expected performance. Three major threads of research are relevant to this notion: Organizational Citizenship Behavior and relevant variants (prosocial behavior, extra-role behavior, contextual performance, and organizational spontaneity),[148] role expansion and the related constructs of proactive behavior,[149] and personal initiative.[150]

The label that is probably most relevant to human resource management research

and industrial and organizational psychologists is contextual performance.[151] Contextual activities contribute to organizational effectiveness in ways that shape the organizational, social, and psychological context that serves as the catalyst for task activities and processes. Contextual activities include volunteering to carry out task activities that are not formally part of one's job and helping and cooperating with others in the organization to get tasks accomplished.

Organ initially proposed five dimensions of Organizational Citizenship Behavior,[152] but later emphasized only three.[153]

DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR
Altruism *(Redefined in later version as "Helping")*
Helping others with their work, orienting new people
Conscientiousness
Being on time, having good attendance, making proper use of work time
Courtesy
Notifying others before acting in a way that will affect them
Sportsmanship *(Deleted in later version)*
Maintaining a positive attitude, not complaining
Civic Duty *(Deleted in later version)*
Attending meetings, reading organizational communications

Organ and Ryan's meta-analysis found that attitudinal measures – including perceived fairness, organizational commitment, and leader supportiveness – correlated with OCB, whereas dispositional measures did not correlate nearly as well with OCB, with the exception of conscientiousness.[154]

Others have defined active engagement (behavioral engagement) in terms

of initiative as well as activity and responsibility.[155] Employees who are engaged take personal initiative characterized by self-starting, proactivity, and persistence,[156] all of which can be described as adaptation in response to organizational challenges.

Engaged employees also exhibit innovative behaviors. Innovative behaviors reflect the creation of something new or different. Innovative behaviors are by definition change-oriented, because they involve the creation of a new product, service, idea, procedure, or process.[157] Intrinsic task motivation contributes to innovative behaviors.[158] In addition, because empowered individuals believe they are autonomous and have an impact, they are likely to be creative.[159]

Incorporating behavioral engagement research, Griffin, Neal, and Parker proposed a modern performance concept with three independent factors.[160]

INDEPENDENT FACTORS IN MODERN PERFORMANCE CONCEPT
Proficiency
"fulfills the prescribed or predictable requirements of the role"
Adaptivity
"copes with, responds to, and supports change"
Proactivity
"initiates change, is self starting, and future-directed"

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The intended focus of employee engagement outcomes is organizational effectiveness. Thus, the organization is the appropriate unit of analysis for employee engagement.[161] However, when assessing the linkages between

employee engagement and strategic outcomes, employee survey data can be aggregated by any meaningful unit above the individual level, e.g., work group, business unit, division, etc. In doing so, the focus is on assessing "engagement climate." The question is how individual engagement feelings and behaviors emerge to create organizational success.

If you treat your employees well, they will treat your customers well, and that will enhance organizational performance.[162] Treating your employees well is not about making them feel happy or satisfied in their jobs; it is about ensuring that certain key factors are in place.

Key factors that trigger the value creation chain:

• Job involvement

• Affective commitment

• Empowerment

• Positive affectivity

All of these are leading indicators of customer, profit, and revenue.

Employees contribute to organizational effectiveness when they:

• Are involved and see the intrinsic value in the work they do

• Are empowered to make decisions

• Understand the organization's strategy and see a clear line of sight between their job and the organization's goals

• Feel they are treated with dignity by those who lead them

Research on the consequences of engagement has shown its relationship with positive individual outcomes such as job satisfaction, low absenteeism and lateness, low turnover, and high organizational outcomes such as commitment and performance.[163]

Other research has linked employee engagement to such variables as customer satisfaction-loyalty, safety, productivity, and profitability.[164]

FINANCIAL / MARKET PERFORMANCE

Hewitt Associates indicate that they "have established a conclusive, compelling relationship between engagement and profitability through higher productivity, sales, customer satisfaction, and employee retention."[165]

Organizational level state & behavioral engagement positively relate to:[166]

• Organization-level customer satisfaction indicators of cash flow and brand equity

• Return on assets

• Profits

• Shareholder value

A certain amount of basic trust in the organization has to exist to show engagement behavior. In addition, self-efficacy needs to be high; that is people have to be sure that effort actually leads to positive effects in the organization. Finally, aspiration levels have to be high; we have to be able to conceptualize that positive effects can be achieved.[167]

Fleming, Coffman, & Harter researched the relationship between employee engagement (defined using the Gallup measure) and customer engagement. They found that employee attitudes affect customer attitudes, and customer attitudes affect financial performance.

IMPACT OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON WORK GROUPS[168]

Positively Engaged

- High levels of productivity
- High levels of profitability
- Better safety and attendance records
- Higher levels of retention

Negatively Engaged

- Cost companies $300 billion per year in lost productivity in the United States alone
- Destroy customer relationships with remarkable facility, every day

Lastly, a meta-analysis of the financial performance of 1,979 business units in ten companies found that business units that score above the database median on both employee and customer engagement metrics were, on average, 3.4 times more effective financially (in terms of total sales and revenue, performance to target, and year-over-year gain in sales and revenues) than units that rank in the bottom half on both measures.

CONCLUSION

The research linking employee engagement with strategic and financial outcomes is impressive. However, we feel confident that the relationship between employee engagement and organizational outcomes would be stronger if better measures were used. Most important, in order for organizations to achieve the strategic outcomes they desire, they need to better understand how different employees are affected by different drivers of engagement.

We believe this framework provides a better measure of engagement, along with important measures of the drivers, conditions, and outcomes of engagement. Thus, organizations that use this framework

will be able to understand which drivers have the greatest impact on employee engagement for different employees and the relationship between employee engagement and strategic outcomes.

Rutgers University Center for Human Resource Strategy can work with your organization to include the measures developed in "A New Framework of Employee Engagement" in your employee engagement surveys. We also have the capability to design and deliver your employee engagement surveys and analyze your results. In addition, our expertise can help you develop the HR systems that have the greatest impact on enhancing employee engagement in your organization and achieving the strategic and financial results you desire.

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