Employee Engagement ... Just a Buzz Word?

Business buzz words come and go, with fading emphasis. However, “employee engagement” is a catch phrase that has been around for several years. Is it here to stay? Supported by empirical research (Gallup, Blessing-White, etc.) employee engagement appears to be a valid business metric.

What is Employee Engagement?

Engaged employees are committed to their organization’s goals and values, feel a profound connection to the company, drive innovation, move their organization forward, and are able at the same time to enhance their own sense of well-being. There are good reasons for leaders to pay attention to employee engagement. Employees engaged in their work are likely to be motivated, to work with passion, to remain committed to their employer, and to stay focused on achieving business goals and driving the organization’s future.

In their classic business text “First, Break all the Rules” (1999), Buckingham and Coffman reported Gallup’s research that on average, 30% of employees are engaged. Gallup also found that 54% are not engaged (checked out, sleep walking, just putting in their time, lacking passion and commitment) while 16% are actively disengaged (acting out their dissatisfaction, undermining others, the bad apple spoiling the rest).

Disengaged employees can drag down others and negatively impact customer service, quality, productivity, retention and other critical business results.

How do you create Employee Engagement?

Engagement is all about intentionally creating a motivating workplace environment, while simultaneously aligning individual employee talents with business strategy. Yes, people want to receive financial rewards, but they also may want to feel connected and a part of something bigger. The critical element is to understand your employees and what they are thinking. The right engagement practices are powered by understanding the motivational drivers most meaningful to employees. Create a culture where the corporate values are obvious in both word and action. Committing to an intentional culture that’s open, transparent, and enables employees to thrive is important for retaining top performers. Organizations that build a culture where employee involvement really matters can optimize employee engagement and create a great place to work.