

Avoiding the Cost of a Disengaged Workforce

Companies miss the mark when trying to achieve employee engagement without first considering inclusion. **BY NEAL GOODMAN, PH.D.**



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Engagement (or lack of engagement) is a critical driver in employee retention. According to the Corporate Executive Board's Corporate Leadership Council, engaged employees are 87 percent less likely to leave an organization than those who are disengaged.

And while it's not a surprise that engaged employees are likely to be more productive than their disengaged counterparts, when measured, the degree of impact on the bottom line is startling: Towers Perrin-ISR's "ISR Employee Engagement Report" indicates that over the course of the study period, companies with high levels of employee engagement improved 19.2 percent in operating income, while companies with low levels of employee engagement declined by 32.7 percent. That is a differential of more than 50 percent.

ENGAGEMENT AND INCLUSION

According to Global Dynamics Inc. Senior Associate and Diversity & Inclusion expert Carrie Spell-Hansson, companies miss the mark when trying to achieve employee engagement without first considering inclusion.

Employee engagement is the emotional commitment individuals have to the organization and can be measured by how they promote the organization, remain loyal to it, and strive to do their best to make the organization thrive. Spell-Hansson notes, "When you don't take individual/group diversity into account, people become disengaged. People need to feel welcomed (and included), encouraged to be involved, and know they will be provided access to opportunities, as well as information."

TRAINING TO PROMOTE ENGAGEMENT

Spell-Hansson offers several best practices for training that promotes employee engagement:

- Assist the organization in developing a consistent operational definition of employee engagement and diversity.
- Discuss perceptions and how unconsciously our perceptions prompt us to respond to others.
- Illustrate the impact of cultural differences.

- Explore the values of cultural orientation.
- Examine personal values and how they influence behaviors and interactions.
- Acknowledge, define, and leverage differences.
- Conduct Diversity & Inclusion training for managers and employees.
- Help managers and leaders see the link between engagement and productivity.

USING EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION SURVEYS

Spell-Hansson says companies working to increase productivity and reduce turnover costs are more apt to use employee satisfaction surveys. Many companies are using the data to enhance employees' experiences by offering training and coaching that address the organization's specific needs.

Companies with positive engagement data results are likely to see comments on satisfaction surveys such as "Someone encourages my development" and "I have the opportunity to learn and grow."

D&I TRAINER SELECTION

Spell-Hansson cautions that when not executed properly, Diversity & Inclusion training can backfire. She recommends selecting a trainer who has:

- An understanding of all dimensions of diversity, including cultural, gender, and developmental differences.
- The ability to create a safe space so people understand the program is for all people, not just specific groups.
- The ability to communicate to participants how the value of the program is not about raising one group at the expense of another.
- Explored his or her own biases, so he or she is approachable and can set participants at ease.
- A theoretical background in organizational dynamics and/or human development, lending credibility and data to the content.
- The ability to provide a flexible framework that can be tailored to the organization's needs.

To share your case studies or best practices in employee engagement and Diversity & Inclusion training, e-mail ngoodman@global-dynamics.com. 