

**MASTERS OF BUSINESS**

**ADMINISTRATION PROJECT**

SESSION: 2018

***TITLE***AN INVESTIGATION INTO OPTIMIZING EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT TROUGH EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

*A CASE STUDY OF A CANADIAN BASED INSURANCE COMPANY - ABC INSURANCE*

***AUTHOR***

ALETHIA O’HARA-STEPHENSON

MATRICULATION NUMBER: 40295451

***SUPERVISOR***

DR. ALLAN RAMDONY

MBA Project Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this project has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. To the best of my knowledge, the work contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the project.

Title of project:

An Investigation into Optimizing Employee Engagement through Effective Leadership

A Case Study of a Canadian Based Insurance Company – ABC Insurance

Name (Print): Alethia O’Hara-Stephenson\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Abstract**

Leadership has a profound impact on an employee’s ability to perform. Research has proven that engaged employees increase productivity, reduce turnover and increase client focus by approximately 20 percent (Wallace & Trinka, Leadership and Employee engagement, 2009). This increased employee engagement is as a direct result of the employees immediate manager and their ability to lead more than any other factor in the organization.

ABC Insurance is owned by one of Canada’s largest banks and one of the largest banks in the world by market capitalization.ABC Insurance is the legal entity operating under ABC Bank of Canada, which is one of North America’s leading financial institutions. ABC Insurance is one of Canada’s largest bank owned multi-channel, multi-line insurance organization, offering a wide range of products, services and solutions to clients in Canada. Internationally, ABC Insurance provides, reinsurance for other insurance companies as well as accident, life, health and annuity insurance through various subsidiaries.

ABC Insurance launched in 1996 with the acquisition of ABC Life and continued to grow through acquisitions until 2004. Since then, ABC Insurance has focused on acquisition integration, improving its risk profile and organic growth. ABC Insurance employs approximately 2500 employees who serve over four million clients globally. ABC Insurance, including all the other subsidiaries of ABC Bank of Canada operates under the master brand name of ABC®. ABC Insurance is 6% of the total earnings of the master brand and as of Q1 2018, reported a net Income of $127 million.

This study is critical to ABC Insurance as based on the 2018 Employee Opinion survey, the total engagement score for Insurance exceeded target by only 3 percent compared to the previous 3 years where it either fell below or just met target at 55 percent. Given, the complex environment that the organization operates in, it finds its tenured and experienced employees leaving the organisation or have expressed interest in leaving while some are uncertain about the outlook for the future. The organization continues to go through structural changes in order to remain relevant and competitive in the market and as a result employee engagement is a large area of focus for the organization. As a leader in the organisation it is important to ensure there is a thorough understanding of the impact leaders have on employee engagement and ensure that there is a robust process in place to improve on and increase employee engagement. This research will investigate the viewpoints and opinions from employees in response to their managers’ leaderships style. It will look at the impact a managers leadership style have on employees in terms of overall engagement of their teams. In doing so, the paper will highlight the most dominant leadership style that will generate more positive engagement results in employees and overall organization results.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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Finally, to the staff and support team of Southpoint and Edinburgh Napier University for the support, guidance and advice and a special thanks to my research supervisor Dr. Allan Ramdhony to whom I express my appreciation and gratitude.

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# **Chapter One**

# **1.1 Introduction**

Leadership is the art of impacting and influencing individuals or groups of people in a given setting. Effective leaders have the ability to positively impact the behavior of others thus creating a culture of engagement while generating results. Working in an environment where there is constant change, it is important to understand the needs of employees and what motivates them in order to generate positive results. With the evolution of change, tenured and experienced employees have left the organization or have expressed interest in leaving while some are uncertain about the outlook for the future. The organization continues to go through structural changes in order to remain relevant and competitive in the market and as a result employee engagement is a large focus for the organisation. As a leader in the organisation it is important to ensure there is a thorough understanding of the impact leaders have on employee engagement and ensure that there is a robust process in place to improve on and increase employee engagement.

The purpose of this research is to establish the link between leadership and employee engagement. It will look at the impact and influence of leadership styles on the overall employee engagement within ABC Insurance. Various notions of employee engagement will be discussed and assessed against the various styles of leadership. This research will develop a set of framework that will help leaders drive improvements with employee engagement. In doing so, this will result in increased efficiency, improved overall results and profitability for the organisation. This proposal begins with an overview of the research context. It then considers the research problem followed by an overview of the theoretical and organizational background, Aims and Objectives, Research Design and Plan and finally a set of Recommendations on how to optimize employee engagement at ABC Insurance

**1.2 Research Context**

Isaken et al. (2006) suggest that effective leadership can directly impact an organisation’s culture, engagement and overall performance. The review further states that upper echelons theory argues that decisions and choices by senior leaders influences the performance of employees and the organisation either positively or negatively. Studies on leadership and performance suggest that leadership directly influences around 15% of the differences found in performance of businesses, and contributes around an additional 35% based on the business strategy implemented (Isaksen & Tidd, 2006). This means that leadership can directly and indirectly account for half of the variance in performance observed across organizations. Studies also show that the relationship between leaders and employees play a critical role in an employee’s overall performance. Bass (1985) describes the leadership style as being able to enhance performance through employee engagement while improving an organisation’s competitive advantage. Using these theories as the foundation, will allow for a deeper dive into the role leadership plays on employee engagement while exploring types of leadership and modes of employee engagement to support the case study on ABC Insurance

**1.3 Theoretical Background**

**1.4 Problem Identification**

With any organisation large or small, you will find segments of the employee population who are either disengaged or less engaged while others are thriving and look forward to work. Reviewing the trending for employee engagement over the past five years, it is clear to see that ABC Insurace views employee engagement as not only a critical success factor but also an area of focus. As such this is a key bench mark on the annual Employee Opinion Survey. With such a large organization change is a consistent theme and with change comes disruption with work, new processes, new roles, realignment of work and teams. As ABC continues to transform the organization for growth and continued success, many employees have expressed uncertainty, fear and unease about their future with the organization. Some employees are uncertain about the outlook in terms of where Insurance is going, will it remain as part of ABC Bank or will it be sold. Due to the confidential nature of many of the transformational initiatives, employees sometimes sense that change is about to occur or will occur in the near future but this often leads to unnecessary fear, “water cooler” chatter and gossip which sparks fear and uncertainty in other employees.

As the organization continues to evolve and transition into the new work environment, employees have concerns about the leadership and the direction of the organization. Some employees have expressed the lack of direction and transparency from their leaders including direct managers. Some have expressed a lack of collaboration within teams and often while working on initiatives affecting multiple teams and areas. ABC has a people manager training module but not all leaders lead their teams in the same way, likewise not all business areas have the same structure, style and leadership model. Some leaders coach on a weekly basis while others coach on an ad-Ahoc as required basis while others meet individually with their teams once or twice per year. There is no consistent way to deliver message across the various groups in insurance, therefore when employees meet to discuss and share ideas throughout the work week, there appears to be inconsistencies and discrepancies in leadership styles.

The emotional state of employees play a significant role in their performance. Leaders need to understand what is going on in the employee’s environment, what factors contribute to their psychological state in order to determine what is impacting their performance. Leaders need to know and understand their employees to determine, what motivates them and what factors results in a trigger in order to manage performance and overall engagement.

**1.5 Organizational Background**

ABC Insurance is the legal entity operating under Royal Bank of Canada, which is one of North America’s leading financial institutions. ABC Insurance is one of Canada’s largest bank owned multi-channel, multi-line insurance organization, offering a wide range of products, services and solutions to clients in Canada. Internationally, ABC provides, reinsurance for other insurance companies as well as accident, life, health and annuity insurance through various subsidiaries.

ABC Insurance launched in 1996 with the acquisition of Westbury Life and continued to grow through acquisitions until 2004. Since then, ABC Insurance has focused on acquisition integration, improving its risk profile and organic growth. ABC Insurance employs approximately 2500 employees who serve over four million clients globally. ABC Insurance, including all the other subsidiaries of ABC Bank of Canada operates under the master brand name of ABC ®.ABC Insurance is 6% of the total earnings of ABC and as of Q1 2018, reported a net Income of $127 million (About RBC, 2018)

Insurance is led by or CEO who is responsible for 3600 employees across the globe and 8 leaders who report in directly to him. The Insurance leadership team is comprised of seventy to thirty ratio of men to women however through the various levels of leadership going down there is a bit more parity in terms of men to women.

The organisation has a comprehensive leadership development curriculum that is designed for all leaders at varying stages of their leadership development. This program includes a 360 degree assessment that is designed to increase leaders’ awareness and how they are perceived by their peers and colleagues. This assessment includes a personalized coaching report that enables leaders to compare their capabilities to the core leadership behaviors of the organisation. Leaders also have access to a wide variety internal online courses, external learning programs and workshops to help enhance their leadership capabilities. Employees also have the opportunity to take both internal and external courses to help enhance their skills and career journey. ABC has various incentive programs as well as many reward and recognition programs that recognize outstanding achievement, reward and recognition for going above and beyond the ma mandate of your role, recognition for years of service and finally an award that recognizes individuals who are heavily involved in their communities.

**1.6 Aim & Objectives**

The aim of this research project is to develop an operational framework for enhancing engagement levels via the effective leadership within ABC Insurance- A Canadian based insurance company.

## **Objective**

The following objectives have been developed to achieve the overall aim of the research project.

1. To conduct a critical review of existing streams of literature on Leadership.
2. To explore the nature of the relationship between leadership and employee engagement within the Insurance sector of ABC.
3. Identify opinions and perceptions of key stakeholders on how the relationship between leaders and employees could be optimized.
4. To develop based on the findings a set of recommendations designed to optimize the relationship between leaders and employees.

The objectives will guide the flow of the research project while the literature reviews will focus on the styles of leadership and notions of employee engagement. The achievement of these objectives will guide the development of a framework that will enable leaders at ABC I Insurance to have a greater positive impact on employees’ engagement and drive improved EOS results and corporate objectives.

**1.7** **CONSTRAINTS:**

Various factors significantly impacted the timelines for this research project. The Author experienced a major automobile accident that resulted in minor injuries but a total loss of the vehicle. There was also a significant time constraint while balancing a professional life which proved challenging while working on conflicting schedules and priorities. Family obligations had significant impacts due to children’s activities and getting one child ready for post-secondary life on campus. ,

**Chapter TWO**

# **2.1 Literature Review**

Organisational leadership and its impact to employee engagement has been a topic of growing research and discussions over the years. Some of this research indicates that engaged employees positively impact productivity, reduce attrition and turnover and enhance the customer experience significantly. According to Wallace and Trinka (2009), engaged employees positively impact the customer experience by 20 percent and they directly attribute this to the leadership of the immediate managers. The review argues that the best leaders invest significant time in providing regular coaching to their employees instead of just the midyear and year end reviews. These leaders take a genuine interest in the wellbeing of their staff and show interest in their employees’ accomplishments. Through conversations, leaders are able to significantly impact employee engagement. They do so by soliciting questions that help employees think through their improvement challenges and by sharing more personal insights on situations. These are skills that most managers have and are easy for other managers to pick up (Wallace & Trinka, 2009).

# **2.1 The concept of Leadership in context**

Leadership is the subtle process of influencing others to achieve a desired result or outcome. Organisational leadership and its impact to employee engagement has been a topic of growing research and discussions over the years. Some of this research indicates that engaged employees positively impact productivity, reduce attrition and turnover and enhance the customer experience significantly. According to Wallace and Trinka (2009), engaged employees positively impact the customer experience by 20 percent and they directly attribute this to the leadership of the immediate managers. The review argues that the best leaders invest significant time in providing regular coaching to their employees instead of just the midyear and year end reviews. These leaders take a genuine interest in the wellbeing of their staff and show interest in their employees’ accomplishments. Through conversations, leaders are able to significantly impact employee engagement. They do so by soliciting questions that help employees think through their improvement challenges and by sharing more personal insights on situations. These are skills that most managers have and are easy for other managers to pick up (Wallace & Trinka, 2009).

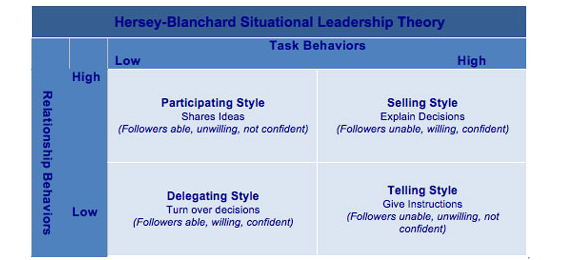
There are varying definitions of leadership across multiple disciplines. Whether the definitions focus on the goals and purpose, social dynamics, the group, organisation or the social system; or to satisfy or engage followers in challenging problem solving situations, the overarching definition remains the same. They all have an idea of exerting influence between human beings with a particular purpose and objective to be met (Hartley & Bennington, 2010). Successful leaders exert influence through the goals and performance standards they establish. They establish concepts around what the organisation will offer in terms of products and or services while ensuring that the values of the organisation are in line with the concerns the organisation has for its employees, shareholders, suppliers and the overall community.

# **2.2 Leadership Theories**

Leadership theories have evolved over time. A number of leadership theories have been posed that intersect between leadership theories and styles. For the purposes of this research a focus on specific leadership theories was reviewed in order to narrow down on specific styles for my research.

## **2.2.1 Situational Leadership Theory**

Situational Leadership theory is based on the leader’s ability to match their behaviors to the needs of the individual or group that they are attempting to influence. Situational Leadership is based on the relationship between the leader and follower and sets a framework to analyze each situation based on performance and adjust the leader’s behavior to influence the follower’s actions. This includes a diagnosis of the situation followed by appropriate communication in order to achieve the desired results. Isaken et al (2006) describes Situational Leadership as different context requiring different leadership style to match the context. This theory was developed by Hersey and Blanchard highlights the qualities of the leader that are appropriate given the specific situation. Specifically, this theory speaks to the maturity levels of those being led. Figure 1.1 below highlights the four potential leadership styles and the four maturity levels of the members of the team.



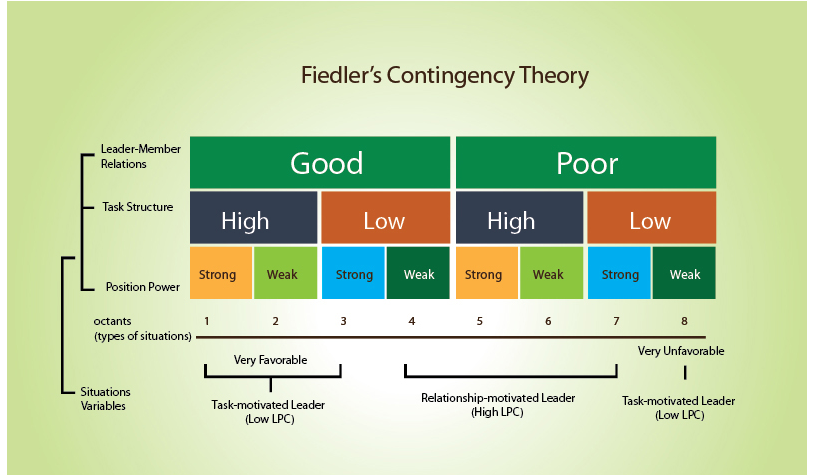
*Figure 1.1 Situational Leadership Theory*

*Source:* [*http://www.free-management-ebooks.com/faqld/leadtheory-06.htm*](http://www.free-management-ebooks.com/faqld/leadtheory-06.htm)

## **2.2.2 Fiedlers Contingency Model**

This theory states that a leader’s ability to effectively lead their followers is contingent on various situational factors including how well the leader’s style matches a specific setting or situation. Unlike situational theory, contingency theory is based on the level of fit between the leader’s qualities and styles and that of the specific situation in context

Fiedlers approach to leaderships starts with an understanding of the leader’s behavior. This is done by conducting a LPC (Least Preferred Co-worker) test where leaders describe a person who they would not want to work with. Figure 1.2 below illustrates the relationship between the leader and member, task structure based on how defined the groups are and the span of control or level of authority the leader has.



*Figure 1.2: Fiedler’s Contingency Theory*

*Source-* [*https://www.tools4management.com/article/a-detailed-study-of-fiedlers-contingency-theory/*](https://www.tools4management.com/article/a-detailed-study-of-fiedlers-contingency-theory/)

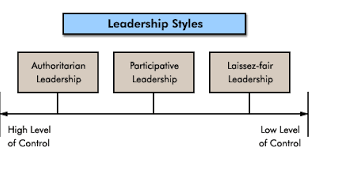
**2.2 Leadership Styles**

Kotter (2013) describes leadership as a set of behavior and not attitudes while Kippenberger (2002) defines leadership style as one that can be adopted by the leader when dealing with followers. The leadership style is impacted by different variables such as the leader and follower’s character type and the situation.

Lewin et al (1939) classifies leadership style as Democratic, Autocratic, and Laisse- faire. With a Democratic Leadership style, leaders involve the people in the decision making process. This type of decision making is generally regarded favorably by everyone, however can be very problematic when there are multiple views and opinions on a given situation.

The Autocratic Leadership style, allows the leader to make decisions without any form of consultation. This style is best suited for when there is no need for input from others to make a decision. This style is often used when a quick decision is required.

The Laissez-faire Leadership style, strives to minimize the leaders involvement in the decision making process and allows the team or individuals to make decisions even when the leader will be the one who is ultimately accountable. This leadership style is non-authoritative and can be used as a tool to develop employees. Employees who experience this type of leadership often have a sense of job satisfaction and fulfillment. This leadership would only be successful in an environment here employees have proven to be capable and self-sufficient.



*Figure 2.3 Lewin’s Leadership Style*

*Source - https://batoolabedi.wordpress.com/2015/05/01/leadership-and-management/*

Leadership styles have an impact on followers’ daily engagement. Bass’ (1985) theory of Transformational and Transactional leadership explains that there are unique variances between the two styles. Transactional leadership takes on an active approach to ensure that expectations are met. This approach forms the basis of what transformational leadership is built on to motivate followers beyond expectations. According to Bass (1999) Transformational leadership refers to an individual or leader who is charismatic and able to lead the follower beyond self-interests through inspiration, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. A transformational leader elevates the follower’s level of maturity and ideals as well as concerns for achievement, self-actualization, the wellbeing of others, the organisation and society (Bass, 1999). Diane Kucala, a leadership expert explains that leaders with great character are able to inspire others around them to do their best, which generates better results, happier employees, and increased possibilities for the future (Kucala, 2018).

Transformational leadership is heavily impacted by both the internal and external environment, as well as the personality, principles and values of the leader. Bass (1999) argues that transformational leaders are more effective during times of major changes in the organisational environment as they are able to inspire and motivate staff beyond individual performance.

Breevaart et al (2013) argues that transformational leadership behavior positively impacts followers’ daily autonomy. When leaders demonstrate more transformational leadership behaviors, this enables followers to approach their work in more creative and innovative ways in order to generate results. Allowing followers to be innovative and creative is critical to their success as it often differs from the ideas of their leaders. With this approach to leadership, followers are empowered to reach out to their peers for additional insights, remove themselves from the problem and try alternative means in solving an issue. Studies conducted shows that transformational leadership can positively impact the relationship of follower autonomy (Jung & Sosik, 2002). Breevaart et al (2013) also further argues that transformational leaders may stimulate autonomy more explicitly than transactional leaders.

The exchange between the follower and leader in terms of their own self-interest is referred to as transactional leadership. Transactional leaders also provide followers with autonomy as they allow for more decision latitude in determining on how and when to perform their task. This leader is able to provide direction through clarifying or participating so the followers in this case knows what to do in order to be rewarded. This may mean that the leader performs active management where exceptions may have to be put in place for the follower. This type of leadership allows the manager to monitor performance and take corrective action if the followers’ performance falls below standards. Transactional leaders set explicit goals and values the achievement of them. Having the autonomy to perform allows for the achievement of set goals.

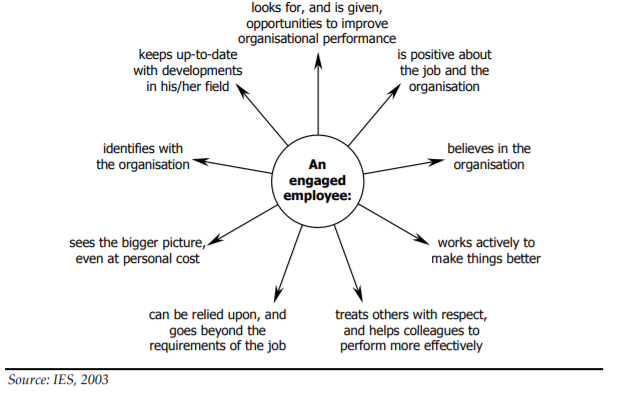
Leaders who use contingent rewards set clear expectations for their followers which may decrease the need for control over how and when the work is performed, thus allowing the followers with more autonomy in their work. Followers in this case are motivated to achieve set goals. They control their reward as their performance dictates their reward and whether to accept it or decline it. Transactional leaders are more effective when specific processes need to be followed and rules enforced to achieve a set goal. Both transformational and transactional leadership styles can impact employee engagement in either a positive or negative way. As such, having a particular leadership style could prove to be critical in achieving a specific result.

**2.1 The concept of Employee Engagement**

Gallup, a US based global research, management consulting firm, defines employee engagement as the employees’ ability to be excited, involved, enthusiastic and committed to their work and workplace. Gibbons (2006) defines employee engagement as an increased emotional and intellectual connection that employees have for their jobs, managers, colleagues and organisation. In turn, this connection influences their day to day efforts at work. Engagement is measured by employee responses to key workplace factors that has been found to be critical in predicting organisational performance results. Great Britain’s Institute of Employment Studies indicates that the key driver for employee engagement is having a sense of feeling valued and involved. This includes components of decision making, opportunities that allows them to voice their opinion, develop their jobs and where there is a sense of wellbeing (Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004). Santiago et al (2013) describe employee engagement as the opposite of employee burnout based on Masclach’s burnout inventory dimensions. Masclach’s burnout inventory dimensions factors in the extent to which employees are exhausted, overloaded and depressed. On the contrary to burnout, Masclach’s research describes engagement as the degree to which employees are energized, have strong involvement and a sense of efficacy (Gascon, et al., 2013)

Cross et al, (2012) explains that key opinion leaders play a very important role in cultivating a positive employee engagement. These individuals are technical experts and have organizational wisdom and other knowledge that would be impactful on employees. These opinion leaders won’t have a formal reporting structure but are seen as leaders just by their informal relationships. Engagement initiatives should consider the impact these influencers have on employees as their informal relationship with employees is much more impactful than by focusing on only the relationship between direct leaders and employees. Cross et al, (2012) further goes on to state that organizational networks such as opinion leaders, help drive engagement scores when initiatives are filtered through them. This is because these leaders have ground level credibility and it is easier for them to relay this information to employees.

## **Figure 2.1: Characteristics of an Engaged Employee**



Emotional intelligence is a key factor in determining who the best leaders could be. This is based on the individual’s ability to be self-aware, show empathy, motivate and establish a broad set of social skills. This awareness has a direct impact on employee engagement as it requires the leader to be able to relate key organisation objectives and goals to employees and in turn gather favorable results. A leaders understanding of the psychological and social elements of emotional intelligence helps bridge the gap between their staff, resulting in increased cooperation and engagement.

In today’s highly globalized and educated environment, it is widely recognized and understood that to get the most out of people, they need to be inspired, motivated and led. Managing individuals as subordinates does not generate the same results as when they are led. Individuals need to feel motivated, committed and even inspired. Persuasion is said to be the key over coercion as people need to want to give their best over having to be told to do so (Kippenberger, 2002). Historical views of autocratic and hierarchical management systems have paved the way to a more democratic approach to management over the years. This style of leadership has also had an effect on how individuals want to be treated. With these new set of requirements organisations are no longer just faced with dealing with the competitiveness of a product but the competitiveness between organisations who have the potential to attract and gain their top talent. Human capital has a significant impact on an organisation’s ability to realize their strategic value. El Badawy et al (2014) describes the impact of human capital as a strategic value that adds significant costs to organisations when valued and talented employees are lost. The paper examines the positive impacts of the transformational leadership style on employee engagement and its ultimate impact on employees’ intention to quit an organisation. The literature further speaks to the importance of organisations’ ability to understand what it means to not only retain top talent, but also to optimize leadership and engagement practices to maximize performance outcomes through high performance employees. This imposes organisations to better understand the psychological factors that keep top talent engaged and productive in their jobs in order to keep them from leaving.

**Barriers to employee engagement**

When seeking to increase employee engagement, organisations need to understand the barriers to employee engagement. Organisations often focus on the perks and providing frills to employees but these are generally short lived as they don’t sustain engagement, instead, organisations would be better served focusing on and addressing the underlying problems with employee engagement. . There are several factors that drive employees’ behavior to quit an organisation. Alam and Mohammed (2009) describes intentions as the most immediate determinants of actual behavior. Kim et al, (1996) defines intention to quit as the extent to which an employee intends to continue their relationship with an organisation. It is often said that employees quit their manager not their organisation, however, regardless of the reason, attrition, low engagement levels and employee burnout are all factors that can lead to low organizational performance (Ballard, 2012). Organisations are therefore concerned with employee turnover as there are both tangible and intangible costs associated with it. There is the loss of knowledge and experience, cost to hire, and train new staff, cost of loss productivity, increased errors by new staff, increased supervision of new staff, and reduced performance prior to an employee leaving the organisation Hilmer et al, (2004). These are all costs both tangible and intangible that impact an organisations performance and profitability. As a result of these factors, organisation must retain their employees and in order to do so, they need to understand the reasons behind employees’ tendency to leave their jobs and find solutions to prevent it. One way of impacting this tendency to leave is through transformational leadership (El Badawy & Bassiouny, 2014).

According to the Engage for Success management website, management is still the biggest barrier to employee engagement. With this, includes lack of trust, as a result of the number of inconsistent practices within the organisation. Lack of trust with people not being able to make sense of the changes occurring within the organisation and why they are occurring.

According to Rothwell, (2016), there are five dominant barriers to employee engagement. These include, lack of clarity, cynicism bureaucracy, lack of work life balance and poor management decisions (Rothwell, 2016).

Based on the literature review, there is an overwhelming amount of evidence suggesting that leadership plays a significant role on employee engagement. Transformational leadership specifically, plays a key role on positively impacting engagement results. The research provides lots of material on the impact transformational leadership has on employee engagement however does not provide much literature on training and development on how one can become a transformational leader. This will lead us to believe that you are either transformational or not based on your ability to relate to employees, empathize with employees, and positively influence their behaviors. This ties directly into a leader’s ability to be charismatic.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Table 1. Conceptual Framework** | | |
| **Group** | **Contents** | **Rationale** |
| Definitions and conceptual issues of employee engagement | Approach to employee engagement and concepts | Understand the different meanings and definition of employee engagement (note similarities and differences) |
| Definitions and styles of leadership | Approach to leadership concepts, styles and definition | Define leadership and various styles of leadership |
| Theoretical perspectives and content | Different theoretical perspective | Define engagement from other concepts |
| Factors and drivers of employee engagement | Factors that drive employee engagement | Determining the contributing factor for employee engagement or lack of engagement |

## **Conceptual Findings:**

The framework is derived from the literature review in identifying theories of Leadership, Employee Engagement and the impacts leadership has on engagement.

# **Chapter Three Research Design**

# **3.1 Research Design/Approach**

The research design will take on a mixed approach in order to develop a rich and comprehensive set of data and theoretical understanding (Saunders, 2015). An exploratory approach will be used to capture both primary and secondary data sources.

What about your research philosophy? How does this inform your methods? You also need to consider other key elements of your methodology in more specific terms, such as design, timings, approach, etc.

## **Method**

In terms of research method to be used, a mixed approach of both qualitative and quantitative methods will be employed from both primary and secondary data sources.

The first approach used will be a deductive approach drawing on existing research material on leadership and employee engagement (Saunders, 2015). This will be conducted using, literature reviews found in academic journals, text books and websites. The second approach will be in the form of untested material in the form of structured interviews and questionnaires. This will ensure the use of current and relevant information on the subject and will form the basis of an inductive format to support this research (Saunders, et. al, 2015). Using structured interviews will allow for deeper investigation into the topic being researched in order to obtain more rich and substantial data.

The qualitative data that will be gathered from both managers and employees in the form of interviews and questionnaires will be quantified based on the structure of the interviews, questions and responses. A quality framework will be created to ensure that the data is free from errors and biases (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The collected data will be used to explore the impact and influence of leadership style on employee engagement. It will also be used to identify patterns and a conceptual framework for this research. You need to explain this more clearly.

Quantitative research will be conducted using Survey Monkey. This method will allow for unbiased approach to data collection as there will not be any allowance for the variability by the interviewer or corruption of data. It also removes room for interviewer interpretation. The reliability and validity of the data will be heavily impacted by the response rate of the participants, structure of the survey questions and broad depth of coverage of the survey questions in respect to the research topic. Data will be collected and analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Questionnaire reliability will factor in the robustness of the questions and whether the results will produce consistent results under similar conditions and at different times (Saunders et al, 2015). What type of sampling will you use for your questionnaire survey?

To suppport the questionnaires, qualitative interviews will be conducted with a select few leaders from various levels in the organisation – what is your sampling strategy?. These interviews will be face to face and will be recorded using a secure audio device such as Microsoft OneNote, voice recording on a coroporate laptop or voice recording software on a corporate issued and secure phone. These interviews will be semi-structured and allow for open conversation with the interviewee in order to dig deeper or obtain facts (Saunders et al, 2015). A transcript of each interview will be downloaded after the interview to ensure that all details and facts are captured without any bias (Saunders et al, 2015).

All materials and data collected will form the basis of a case study specifically designed using ABC Insurance.

For better marks, you need to include detailes sections on ‘data analysis’ and ‘limitatinos of study’

## **Ethical Considerations – you need to reference this section**

Since the research will be conducted using ABC employees, ethical considerations will have to be given to ensure that all information collected will remain confidential with no chance for negative repercussions. Since there will be no requirement for personal information the potential for ethical issues will be limited. Participants will have the ability to opt out at any stage of the process. Participation is strictly voluntary for all particiapants and no incentive or prize will be awarded for participation. Informed organisational consent will be secured with participants signing a consent form prior to participating in the research. Organisational consent will be gathered as well in order to use the legal name in this case study. All information will adhere to ABC ’s privacy policy as well as the privacy policies of the regulatory bodies of both UK and Canada. All material used from literature reviews will be properly referenced. You could have referred to the templates your will use as participant information sheet and consent form and include these as appendices.

# **Research Plan**

The following phases detail the plan on how the research will be conducted using both literature reviews from existing theoretical perspectives (Saunders et al, 2015), structured interviews and questionnaires relating to leadership and employee engagement.

The following phases outlines the research plan:

**Phase 1**

* Conduct exploratory review of research material from literature reviews on leadership styles and models of employee engagement currently being used to compare against models being used within the organisation. This will be used to form the basis the survey questions.
* Conduct introductory discussions with Managers and HR Business Partners in the organisation to generate interest and obtain approval to proceed with contacting employees
* Contact potential participants via telephone, in-person meetings and email to introduce research and conduct initial sampling for the questionnaires.

**Phase 2**

* Compile a list of potential candidates to participate in both the structured interviews and the online survey.
* Collate the structured interview questions
* Design/adopt the questions and sample size to the research topic for the survey
* Pilot-test questionnaires
* Adjust questionnaires (where necessary)

**Phase 3**

* Structured interviews will be conducted with approximately 15 managers, senior managers and executives within the organisation, from different departments
* Transcripts will be analyzed qualitatively shortly after to ensure accuracy
* Questionnaires will be conducted online using Survey Monkey and emailed to approximately 150 participants – You do not mention this in your methods section - you need to explain this in the methodology in as specific terms as possible.
* Develop coding to analyze the data gathered from the questionnaires using Microsoft Excel

**Phase 4**

* Document findings
* Draft Research Report
* Document and share recommendations with HR
* Submit draft research for review and feedback
* Edit Research Report
* Submit Final Research Report

## **Gant Chart**

The Gant Chart below illustrates a pictorial view of how the research plan will be structured and carried out. Detailed planning and preparation is essential for the success of any project and as such the Gant Chart will help keep the project on track ensuring that each task is carried out on time (Saunders, 2015).

Literature reviews have already been conducted which leaves more time to formulate questions, conduct the research, collate information, code and analyses the results. The months of May and June will allow sufficient time to conduct interviews and send out questionnaires, allowing time in July to collect and analyse the information against literature reviews. August will be focused on writing, the final report with 1 week allocated for review and critique. It will be important to schedule regular check points with the thesis director in order to ensure that the research is on track given the minimal time allowed at the end for formal feedback.

# **CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS**

# CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSIONS

# CHAPTER 6 RECCOMENDATIONS

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APPENDICES

