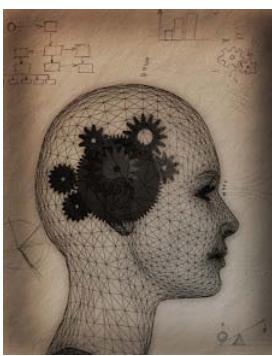




Satisfaction vs. Engagement: Human Psychology Plays Its Part

Deanna Hartley - 6/4/13

While the definitions may vary, experts agree that satisfaction is more immediate and on the surface — something felt in the moment — while engagement resonates at a more personal and purposeful level over a long period of time.



"Engagement is about purpose," said Carson Tate, founder and owner of management consultancy Working Simply. "... [It involves] the broader connection between my own understanding of my unique strengths and my purpose and how I connect to the organization."

"If I don't see how I am able to add some value, connect, contribute, make money for the broader organization, there's a misalignment."

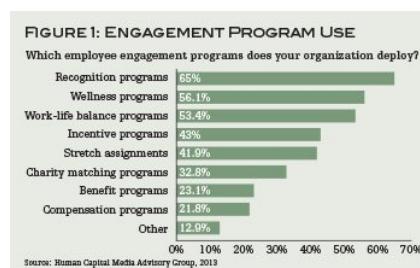
Aon Hewitt's Adler described satisfaction as "the degree to which my personal needs are met by my work experience; by how I'm treated and what I experience in the workplace." He said engagement goes far beyond that. If employees can affirmatively answer the following three components of engagement, they are more likely to be engaged, rather than just satisfied.

Say: This refers to whether employees are willing to be ambassadors for the company. For instance, do they speak positively about the company and further the brand outside of the workplace? Do they offer others the impression that the company is a great place to work?

Stay: Can an employee envision staying with the same company long term?

Strive: How much discretionary effort is the employee willing to put in? Are employees motivated to go above and beyond what they're required to do? Often this can mean the difference between doing work well versus performing at a high level.

According to a 2012 research report from Aon Hewitt, the top drivers of employee engagement are career advancement, recognition and organization reputation. Many of these drivers were mirrored in a report by the Human Capital Media (HCM) Advisory Group, the research arm of Talent Management (Figure 1).



Of those surveyed in the HCM report, 65 percent reported using recognition programs to drive engagement, 56 percent said they use wellness programs and 53 percent offer work-life balance programs. Just 23 percent reported using benefits programs to drive engagement, while 22 percent said the same for compensation programs. The point is the same: Employees' satisfaction with their jobs does not mean they are engaged.

According to the Aon Hewitt research report, employers can make the biggest difference in this regard by providing and outlining a clear path for career advancement. Engaged employees need to feel a sense of future progression and opportunity.

"I can be very satisfied at work today, but disengaged because I see my company [or my position in it] as going nowhere," Adler said.

He said employees also need to feel recognized for their effort and performance. Further, external brand is important: Highly engaged employees want to work for a company with a positive reputation — whether it is known for its corporate social responsibility effort, for providing high-quality products or for treating employees well.

Employees also want to feel a social connection to an organization. Relationships with managers, co-workers and even customers could play either a positive or detrimental role in employees' engagement. "You can be doing the most interesting job," Adler said, "but if you're socially isolated, you have a work team that doesn't collaborate, and people don't give you the recognition and don't support you in getting done what you need to get done, it's going to erode your engagement."

Finally, employees want to be concerned with more than just work. According to the Aon Hewitt research report, many seek a situation where they aren't so immersed in work that the rest of their lives are neglected. Therefore, employees are more likely to be engaged if their employer gives them the flexibility to achieve work-life balance.

[Corporate Perks: Engagement Catalyst?](http://talentmgt.com/articles/view/corporate-perks-engagement-catalyst/) (<http://talentmgt.com/articles/view/corporate-perks-engagement-catalyst/>)

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