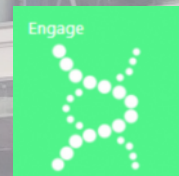


Welcome to our June 2015 e-bulletin.



Engaging your team

This bulletin:



- Page 2 - Allan Beggs on **Well-being and engagement at work**
- Page 4 - Maria Dennis on **Is your organisation psychologically sustainable?**
- Page 6 - David Frood on **Why employees don't engage**
- Page 7 - ImaginativeHR **engagement solutions**





*Expert opinion:
Allan Beggs PhD*

Well-being and engagement at work

These days, we hear a lot about something called ‘well-being’; and it is probably not an exaggeration to say an ‘engagement industry’ has recently sprung up, with countless articles, conferences and books on the topic all clamouring for our attention. In this short article, I want to explore with you what this is all about, how it came about, how the ideas are linked, and more importantly, why they have enormous implications for how we think about and organise our workplaces in the 21st century.

It all started back in 1998, when psychologists, who by then had been around for 100 years or so, suddenly sat up and noticed that the world is full of ordinary, normal people. Before that, they were pretty much exclusively involved in trying to understand and help ‘abnormal’ people. Kick-started almost single-handedly by Professor Martin Seligman of Harvard University, this ‘Positive Psychology’ revolution has revitalised the way we think about people.

One of the key insights which has exploded out of this new movement is a focus, not on mental disorder, but on feeling good about yourself, and the work you do. That is what is now called well-being.

But what has all this to do with work? In a nutshell, it gives us a new way of understanding why things have gone wrong in the past, and what we need to do in the future to put them right. Our bleak 20th Century workplaces were largely bereft of well-being, and the consequences were there for all to see. If you think back a few short decades, you will recall a world where industrial strife, strikes and go-slows were the commonplace reactions of employees who certainly didn’t feel good about being at work. In the best of our modern organisations, it is now strikingly different, but many have yet to understand why well-being at work is vital. So here is why it is important.

In a just-published review of well-being thinking and research, Seligman and his colleagues point out we have actually known why for over seventy years. The very familiar theory of motivation proposed by Abraham Maslow contains the clue; his triangular model of the basic human needs which motivate all of us is something that has appeared countless times in books, articles and training courses. What Maslow called self-actualization was at the top of the pyramid.

In fact, his concept of self-actualisation has a great deal in common with current ideas about well-being. Maslow believed that all of us strive to self-actualise, and Seligman also realised that well-being is something that all of us crave. In fact, both men recognised that it is a basic human need to want to feel good about ourselves and what we do. So much for theory – what does it mean in practice?

People spend a lot of their lives at work, and it would be extraordinary if they simply turned off this basic need as they walked in the door. People at work are still human beings; they are not simply a ‘resource’. They will still be governed by the need to feel good about themselves and what they do.

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For most of the 20th Century - and it is still going on - most organisations failed to create the workplace environment which would meet this need, and instead relied on money to 'incentivise' their people. It is probably not overstating the case that they found they had to bribe people to come to a workplace which let them down badly at a very human level.

Think of it this way - we have other human needs too; for food and water, for the company of others. If these needs were denied between the hours of 9 and 5, it really doesn't take a lot of imagination to imagine how people would feel and behave when they were at work.

They would be more bothered about their thirst and hunger than the work; some would put their head down and get through the day somehow, and others would throw their toys out of the pram. Some people would decide not to go to work sometimes, and most would be on the lookout for somewhere better to spend their time, perhaps where they would get fed and watered. Substitute a need for well-being – and you get the picture.

The roots of disengagement are quite simply a failure to meet people's need for well-being. It really is that glaringly obvious. So what needs to happen?

We are now seeing thought leaders in the field of engagement taking about the need for 'enablement' – creating the context in which well-being can flourish. The astonishing fact is – that is effectively cost-free, and the well-documented financial outcome for an engaged organisation is enormous. Two things need to happen, however, if organisations are going to reinvent themselves so that people who work there develop and sustain a sense of well-being.

First, workplaces need to be constructed where people feel involved and in control. We now know that a lack of control over your life can create 'ill-being'. Imagine how you would feel if your GP announced you are not going to recover from an illness, which was going to get progressively worse. Take away a sense of control and you feel pretty bad about life.

Part of the solution of putting people in control at work will be about making changes at a structural level – the job of HR – but much more importantly, it is about educating leaders and managers about the absolute imperative to develop an on-the-job approach and a communication style which values people and grows both their freedom and their responsibility.

Second, sustaining well-being at work absolutely has to also involve helping individuals develop the positive coping skills, the psychological tools and strategies and mindset which will ensure they can take advantage of these changes. All of this can be done at relatively little cost, and the ROI is likely to be immense.

The costs of disengagement in the UK are estimated at between £44 and £65 billion per year, and in the USA, they exceed the GDP of countries like Israel and Portugal. Figures like these mean that disengagement is very high on the agenda for many organisations these days, and the potential benefits of reducing disengagement begin to sound very attractive indeed.

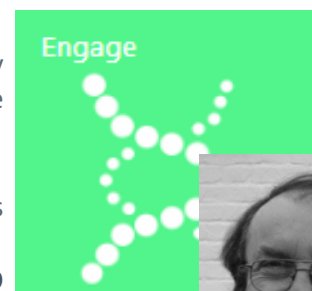
We now have it in our power to leave a century of waste and toxicity in workplaces behind us by helping organisations to deliver opportunities for their people to feel good about themselves and the work they do – and to enjoy going to work.

And when that happens, when people become engaged, the benefits for organisations are now extremely well-documented. Discretionary effort goes up, performance improves, absenteeism and presenteeism falls, and staff are retained, and the bottom line upturns make shareholders very happy.

The good news is that as Baby Boomers retire, and Generation Y step into jobs, they bring with them a very clear demand that workplaces offer well-being as part of the package. They will almost certainly help force change to happen.

That has got to be good news for people at work, and for the success of the organisations which employ them.

Allan Beggs, PhD



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Is your organisation psychologically sustainable?

Maria Dennis: ImaginativeHR Associate Consultant

We talk about ecological sustainability and for good reason. Businesses and organisations are embracing their role in protecting and preserving the environment through corporate responsibility. As we have started to embrace the importance of ecological sustainability, we are starting to apply this insight to organisational sustainability in an endeavour to future proof our organisations against a rapidly changing world.

There are four primary pillars of organisational sustainability:

- Strategy
- Finance
- Product/service
- People

It's the last one that I will focus on here. How do we future-proof our people?

Mental health statistics point to a dramatic and serious problem that organisations cannot afford to ignore. It's estimated that approximately 17% of Britons suffer from some form of depression or anxiety and the WHO estimates that by 2020 depression will become the second most important cause of disability in the world. The Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health, has estimated that the cost of ignoring mental distress at work is £1,300 for every employee in UK business. Any discussion of future proofing people, has to be conducted against this backdrop. We need to move from a linear view of human resource issues. We need to be thinking about 'Psychological sustainability'.

It's fair to say that our default thinking is linear and premised on cause and effect. We notice effect – we look for the cause – we analyse and present a solution:

- Symptom – diagnosis – treatment
- Problem – cause – solution
- Input – process – output
- Goal – plan - outcome

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This is so embedded in our world paradigm that we don't even notice it. It's our default. Peripheral vision is seen as a distraction, focus is favoured. The problem is that linear thinking denies the reality of the inter-related and inter-connectedness of life, it obscures vital connections. It supports our focus on the external, visible and measurable. We are starting to understand this and open to more holism, but there is much further to go.

There are some lessons for us in how this linear approach to the complex issue of environmental sustainability is failing to lead to the systemic change that is urgently needed.

Jungian psychology can help us to see beyond the immediate and may well provide answers to the intractable problems we are facing. In this model, the externalised problems are seen as manifestations of something within us, both individually and collectively. It acknowledges the unseen parts of our nature and the role of the unconscious. From here, our problems may be experienced, understood and solved in a very different way.

Every organisation exists within a complex interdependent whole, so with disengagement from life manifesting as a general, global trend, it could be argued that disengagement from organisational life could be attributed, to some extent, to this general trend.

In the linear model staff disengagement is attributed to issues such as culture, values and purpose. Solutions are looked for in leadership, training, coaching, mentoring and team building.

Let's look at one of the key solutions that are applied in the linear model – Leadership development.

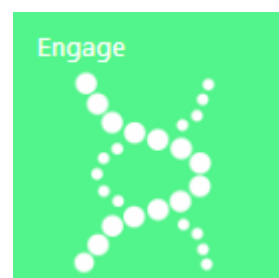
Today leadership is king. The rise of the uber successful business, seemingly attributable to their exceptional leaders, leadership has become the grail. As many organisations are faced with ever diminishing staff engagement, they turn to these glorified examples of success. They invest in leadership development, seeking ever more elaborate ways to create the alchemy that others have achieved, the elusive combination of personality and skill that they hope will inspire staff to engage and follow. The public face, the side that is linked to success is the one that is highlighted and celebrated. But, peel back, go inside and talk to the people that work with and for these leaders and a darker side is revealed.

This parallels the conscious and the unconscious, the visible and the hidden. The hidden, our 'dark side' or 'shadow' represents the things that we don't like about ourselves, our blind spots. We naively think that they remain inert, buried beneath denial. But they're very much alive and present in outward projections. The most pernicious and damaging are the projections of the leadership; these have a profound effect of staff. Linked to this is another key issue that affects staff engagement and psychological health – values.

Sadly it's common in many organisations for there to be a significant gap between their explicit, stated values and those that are actually lived day-to-day and 'felt' by the staff. For example; a company espouses that *'the customer is at the centre of everything we do'*, *'our sole purpose is to delight the customer'*; *'we exist to innovate and delight'*; yet staff feel only too acutely the shadow projection of *'do more with less'*, or *'drive profit at all costs.'* It is these sorts of values gaps that leave staff feeling cynical, disempowered and depleted.

The need for our organisations to be psychologically sustainable is imperative. It will require a courageous look into the shadows, the recesses of organisational life, to explore the hidden and the unseen. This demands a very different sort of organisational support and a very different sort of leadership development and coaching.

Maria Dennis - ImaginativeHR



Email us at info@imaginativehr.com / call us at ++44 (0)845 548 4321 about our engagement and leadership / team coaching services.

Why employees don't engage

David Frood, **The Thinking Corporation** (Queensland, Australia)

Employees stay disengaged for a number of pretty good reasons.

They simply don't like the place

This has to do with an individual's match with the culture. It is a matter of whether people feel comfortable in the environment, or not. It is about relationships. That network of relationships that exist between peers, immediate supervisors and senior managers. If this environment is not one of appreciating the importance of each individual and the potential contribution that they have to make then the culture will be an issue. Depending on the severity of some of the cultural issues, the organisation will decrease the opportunity to engage employees proportionately.

Their ideas can get high-jacked

Ideas are very personal and come from an individual's own life experience. Therefore, it is easy to understand that when an organisation is asking people to give their ideas freely that there must be some resistance. If you also have an environment where these precious ideas are not treated with respect and are swallowed up as being the collective property of the Corporation, then we are severely restricting the flow of ideas.

We all know how motivating it is to follow your own idea through from conception to implementation. Just think of any entrepreneur that you know, or any creative act such as artwork, song writing, designing, or any life project, like buying or building a house. On the other hand, most of us would have experienced how de motivating it is to part with your own precious idea that has been formulated through your individual life experience, only to have it become the property of someone or something else.

They're not going to get anything for it anyway

Most people would think it reasonable that they should use their knowledge, experience and skills to execute their position description to the best of their ability. If you are a product manager for example you would look for ways of promoting the products within your portfolio. This is what you have been employed to do and all of the knowledge, expertise and skills that have been built in to the position description are offset by your salary.

What about if that same product manager came up with an idea that is totally outside of their position description? Like buying an up and coming competitor that has developed some attractive Intellectual Property. In the event that the employee goes out of their way to research the company and constructs a proposal for management to consider, should they be paid anything for this in the event that the deal goes through? If the culture is good enough people may feel as though they want to contribute anyway. However, there will always be a percentage of people with big ideas that will keep those ideas to themselves if there is nothing in it for them.

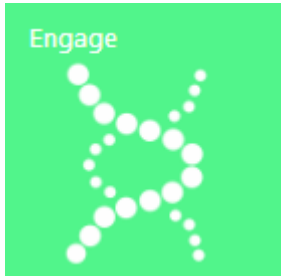
Answering the tough questions

So, if you really want to engage your employees, here are a few questions to consider:

1. Have you estimated what increasing the engagement levels of employees will do for your business, in both profits and entity value?
2. Are you willing to invest to achieve this result?
3. Considering that changes to culture can take some time, are you willing to persevere for up to 18 months before you see any really significant results?
4. Are you willing to consider circumstances under which you would be prepared to pay for employee contributions?
5. Have you thought about how you might compensate employees for the "big ideas"?



ImaginativeHR Team Engagement Solutions



ImaginativeHR's staff surveys are fully bespoke to client requirements and organisational culture; built and managed to assure survey relevance, validity and transparency for all stakeholders.

Our surveys are typically completed within 12-24 consultancy days. Consultancy days are pre-agreed, thus our clients have absolute transparency with regard to project costs.

Our process is focused on achieving clear outputs, clarity around internal 'exemplar benchmarks' and post-survey ownership of next action steps.

This is achieved via a constructive online Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) building process which ImaginativeHR builds parallel to our survey process, to ensure that stakeholders are kept informed of project progress.

This also allows our clients to confirm their objectives and anticipated benefits from staff participation, thus assuring clarity on what is / is not possible, following the survey process.

Our survey instruments typically include both quantitative and qualitative questions and secondary-level validation; i.e. the inclusion of (forced ranked) survey questions which specifically measure the relative importance of those elements measured at a primary-level in the survey.

ImaginativeHR is a bar raising UK and international employment life-cycle / talent development consultancy which partners HR to creatively align organisational, team & individual interests.

Our team has worked internationally across over 30 countries and comprises 130+ UK and internationally-based occupational psychologists, assessors, trainers, coaches, facilitators and consultants.

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- Psychometric assessment
- 360 assessment



Assimilate your talent

- Onboarding
- First 100 days coaching
- New team performance



Develop your talent

- Individual coaching
- Team coaching
- Mentoring



Engage your talent

- Staff focus groups
- Staff surveys
- Career clinics



Transition your talent

- Career reviews
- Redeployment
- Outplacement



Enable / Deploy HR

- HR coaching & mentoring
- HR permanent recruitment
- HR interim recruitment