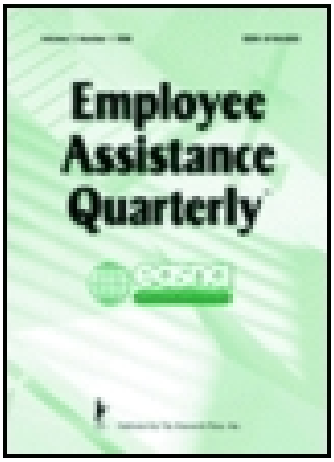
This article was downloaded by: [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield]
On: 04 October 2014, At: 14:19
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health
Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wjwb20

Measuring and Managing Employee Work Engagement: A Review of the Research and Business Literature

Mark Attridge PhD, MA [a]
[a] Attridge Consulting , Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA
Published online: 01 Dec 2009.

To cite this article: Mark Attridge PhD, MA (2009) Measuring and Managing Employee Work Engagement: A Review of the Research and Business Literature, Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health, 24:4, 383-398, DOI: 10.1080/15555240903188398

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15555240903188398

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions

Journal of Workplace Behavioral Health, 24:383–398, 2009
Copyright © Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
ISSN: 1555-5240 print/1555-5259 online
DOI: 10.1080/15555240903188398

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Measuring and Managing Employee Work Engagement: A Review of the Research and Business Literature

MARK ATTRIDGE, PhD, MA
Attridge Consulting, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

High levels of work engagement are when employees are involved with, committed to, enthusiastic, and passionate about their work. This article provides a review of the literature on employee engagement, based on studies from academic and business sources. Areas of focus include defining the concept of employee work engagement, how it is measured, how often it occurs, the costs of disengagement, the business benefits linked to positive engagement, and how workplaces can be changed to encourage engagement. The findings indicate that work engagement can be improved through adopting certain workplace behavioral health practices that address supervisory communication, job design, resource support, working conditions, corporate culture, and leadership style. Also featured are several case studies from employers who measure and use employee engagement data to improve their work culture, retain employees, and increase business financial success. Implications for improving the service of employee assistance and behavioral health providers are discussed.

KEYWORDS Employee Assistance Programs, measurement, organizational change, work engagement, workplace culture

Work engagement is a term used to describe the extent to which employees are involved with, committed to, enthusiastic, and passionate about their work (Macey & Schneider, 2008). According to the bestselling book, *First, Break All the Rules*, which first compiled the results from the Gallup organization's program of research on engagement, fewer than one in every five

Address correspondence to Mark Attridge, PhD, MA, Attridge Consulting, Inc., 1711 Emerson Avenue, Minneapolis, MN 55403, USA. E-mail: mark@attridgestudios.com

workers is actively engaged in their work (Buckingham, 1999). This low rate of engagement has continued to be found on many other surveys conducted in the past 10 years and represents a global crisis in productivity and worker well-being.

Indeed, engaging employees is one of the top five most important challenges for management, according to a survey of 656 chief executive officers (CEOs) from countries around the world (Wah, 1999). The Society for Human Resources Management (SHRM) has focused on this topic too, with articles, white papers, and trainings for business leaders (Clark, 2008; Fornal & Sanchez, 2005; Fox, 2008; Lockwood, 2007). As have executive consulting organizations such as The Conference Board (Bardwick, 2007; Gibbons, 2006), the Corporate Leadership Council (2002, 2004), and Towers Perrin (2006; Gebauer & Lowman, 2009).

Academic researchers and professional organizations are also becoming increasingly interested in employee engagement, particularly from countries other than the United States (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter, & Taris, 2008). For example, the premiere issue of the research journal *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice* was devoted entirely to employee engagement issues (see Macey & Schneider, 2008). Even the theme of the 2009 Annual Institute for the Employee Assistance Society of North America included engagement as one of three methods for restoring the workplace.

This article provides a review of the literature on employee engagement from recent studies from academic and business sources. Based on the review findings suggestions are provided for how engagement can be improved through adopting certain kinds of workplace behavioral health practices and how providers of workplace services can take advantage of these opportunities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Defining Work Engagement

Almost 20 years ago, ethnographic researcher W. A. Kahn (1990) first conceptualized *work engagement* as "the harnessing of organizational members' selves to their work roles" (p. 694). Work engagement has since been defined more completely as when employees feel positive emotions toward their work, find their work to be personally meaningful, consider their workload to be manageable, and have hope about the future of their work (Nelson & Simmons, 2003). The findings of studies conducted to create measurement tools in this area have further refined its definition to include a three-dimensional concept of work engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004). The three factors include a physical component (e.g., "I exert a lot of energy performing my job"), an emotional component (e.g., "I really

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

put my heart into my job"), and a cognitive component (e.g., "Performing my job is so absorbing that I forget about everything else").

Measuring Work Engagement

Most efforts to measure engagement have been at the level of the individual worker. These individual-level scores can be aggregated to measure engagement at the organizational or work group level as well. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) is a popular tool that measures three areas of work engagement representing behavioral, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). These three dimensions correspond to worker engagement themes of vigor, dedication, and absorption, respectively, in one's work. The emotional vigor component of worker well-being has proven to be especially important in explaining why employees give effort at work (Robinson, Perryman, & Hayday, 2004; Towers Perrin, 2007) and can be measured by its own 12-item scale (Shirom, 2003; Smith, Wefald, Downey, & Gopalan, 2008).

Leading international business consulting companies have also developed their own proprietary survey tools and processes for measuring work engagement that address similar themes. Some of these consulting organizations include BlessingWhite, Gallup, Hewitt, Sirota, Towers Perrin, Valtera, and Watson Wyatt Worldwide. One of the more influential approaches in this area comes from the Gallup Organization (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003; Harter & Schmidt, 2008). Over the past 30 years, Gallup researchers have qualitatively and quantitatively assessed the most salient employee perceptions of management practices across a wide variety of industries. The methodology underlying this research has been centered on the study of success—the study of productive work groups and individuals—rather than the study of failure in organizations. Results of this work have yielded a 12-item Worker Engagement Index and have generated several popular books (Rath, 2007; Rath & Conchie, 2009; Wagner & Harter, 2006). Sample items from the Q^{12} index include "Is there someone at work who encourages your development?" "In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?" and "Do you have a best friend at work?"

Ford, National City Bank, and Pitney Bowes are examples of companies that have begun to measure aspects of engagement in their workforce. Ford Motor Company has collected data on how human resources and management practices affect employee work–life issues and then used this information to redesign their employee benefits (Bates, 2003). National City Bank collected various kinds of survey and operational data to examine and improve the level of retention of staff by focusing on what made employees more engaged in their work and how this was linked to improving customer relations (Bates, 2003). Pitney Bowes has been measuring employee engagement for more than a decade and has integrated engagement-enhancing

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

practices into the everyday culture of the company (Attridge, 2009). Pitney Bowes collects engagement survey data annually (with more than 80% of its global workforce of employees taking the survey in 16 languages), includes action goals for engagement in annual performance reviews of managers, and even shares engagement survey results and employee comments with senior executives and the board of directors. One of the most valuable aspects of the Pitney Bowes experience for management has been learning each year from the more than 25,000 employee responses to the open-ended question, "What one thing would you change to make Pitney Bowes a better place to work?"

Most companies, however, are not measuring employee engagement. However, at least the desire to do so seems to be increasing. A recent Deloitte Touche-Tohmatsu survey (Hansen, 2007) found that the majority of senior executives feel under pressure to measure nonfinancial information about their company—such as productivity and engagement—on a more regular basis.

Prevalence of Work Engagement

Recent studies by the Gallup Organization have determined that about 20% of U.S. employees are disengaged, 54% are neutral about their work, and 26% are actively engaged (Fleming, Coffman, & Harter, 2005). Towers Perrin has found a similar engagement profile in 2003 study, with 19% of U.S. workers categorized as disengaged, 54% as moderately engaged, and only 17% as highly engaged (Towers Perrin, 2003). Similar findings were found in a more recent study by consultants BlessingWhite (2008). Based on more than 3,000 employees in North America, this survey found that 19% of employees were disengaged, 52% were only moderately engaged, and 29% were fully engaged.

A lack of work engagement is not limited to employees in the United States—it is a worldwide problem. For example, The Corporate Leadership Council (2002) conducted a study of the engagement levels of more than 50,000 employees at 59 global organizations. This study found that about 10% of employees globally were fully disengaged and not committed to their organizations' goals. The most comprehensive studies in this area were done by Towers Perrin in 2003, 2005, and 2007, with the results of this work forming the basis for a new book (Gebauer & Lowman, 2009). The 2005 Towers Perrin survey used data collected from more than 85,000 employees from 16 countries. This study found that overall, 24% of employees worldwide were disengaged, 62% of employees were moderately engaged, and only 14% of employees were considered to be highly engaged (Towers Perrin, 2006). Other findings from this study showed a wide range between geographic regions in the percentage of their workforce who were highly engaged, with Mexico (40%) and Brazil (31%) being on the high end, the

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Unites States (21%) and Canada (17%) in the middle, and Europe (11%) and Asia (7%) at the low end. The wide range in engagement level across countries suggests that examining cross-cultural differences in employee engagement is an opportunity for further research.

In summary, there appears to be a general pattern such that the distribution of engagement level across all employees falls into three basic groups. Those at the bottom who represent about 20% of employees and who are actively disengaged characterize the first group. Actively disengaged employees aren't just unhappy at work—they are busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their more engaged coworkers try to accomplish. An opposite group is made up of about 20% of employees at the top of the distribution, and these employees are highly engaged in their work. Engaged employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward. The remaining group is made up of the "middle majority" of employees with a moderate level of work engagement.

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Characteristics of Engaged Employees

One study found positive associations between employee engagement at the individual level (using the UWES measure) and self-reports of perceived health, well-being, and social relationships and also negative associations between engagement and self-ratings of workaholism and job burnout (Schaufeli, Taris, & Rhenen, 2008). Another study of more than 10,000 employees in the United Kingdom, revealed that engagement levels differed depending on personal and job characteristics and with work experiences (Robinson et al., 2004). Some of the key findings from this project included managers and executives tend to have higher engagement levels than those in supporting roles; educated and highly skilled workers are more engaged but also tend to be more loyal to their profession than to the particular organization in which they practice their craft; engagement levels decline as length of service at the same organization increases; employees who have a personal development plan and who receive annual formal performance appraisals have significantly higher engagement levels than those who have not; and having an accident or an injury at work, or experiencing harassment on the job, can significantly reduce engagement.

HOW ENGAGEMENT AFFECTS BUSINESS SUCCESS

Over the years, Gallup has estimated that disengaged employees cost U.S. companies between $250 and $350 billion a year (Rath & Conchie, 2009). Comparing highly engaged employees with less engaged workers provides

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

some insights into how engagement affects business outcomes. The Towers Perrin (2006) study compared groups of highly engaged workers with groups of less engaged employees. Key findings of these comparisons show that: 84% of highly engaged employees believe that they can positively affect the quality of their company's products, compared with 31% of the disengaged; 72% of highly engaged employees believe that they can positively affect customer service, versus 27% of the disengaged; 68% of highly engaged employees believe that they can positively affect costs in their job or unit, versus 19% of the disengaged; 59% of highly engaged employees planned to stay with their current employer, compared with just 24% of the disengaged; and employees who are the most committed to the organization perform 20% better on the job.

A Conference Board study on retirement issues (2005) found that many employees have work attitudes indicating various aspects of disengagement, including that 66% of workers do not identify with or feel motivated to drive their employer's business goals, 40% of workers feel disconnected from their employers, and 25% of employees are just "showing up to collect a paycheck." Continuing this theme are findings that a number of engagement-oriented factors appear to contribute to job dissatisfaction. According to a survey of almost 5,000 recent retirees conducted by the Employee Benefit Research Institute (2008), almost two-thirds of those who were dissatisfied with their job at the time they made the decision to retire had felt that they were not valued by the company or that their work did not have long-term value as a significant contribution. In other words, employees who chose to retire had not been highly engaged in their work.

Examining the improvements of individual workers from engagement practices is a first step, but person-level data does not link the engagement practices of the organization to larger company-wide success factors. For this reason, some scholars advocate for more attention to measuring employee engagement at the organizational level (Pugh & Dietz, 2008). An example of this kind of work has been examining the attributes of organizations selected as being among the "best companies to work for." The results of these studies suggest that companies with a higher quality of work environment (e.g., opportunity for career growth, a culture of support and openness) tended to also have higher profits and business success compared to companies with a lower quality of work environment (Lau & May, 1998). Similar kinds of analyses are found in the book *Leveraging the New Human Capital* (Burud & Tumolo, 2004). These authors reviewed more than 50 studies from mostly U.S. companies and concluded that having human capital practices and benefits that emphasized positive mental health, work–life balance and company-wide wellness tended to have overwhelmingly positive effects on employee productivity, creativity, commitment, health, recruitment, and retention. A review by The Conference Board of Canada

(Bachmann, 2002) found similar results, such that Canadian employers who engaged in health promotion and other initiatives designed to improved psychosocial and physical work environments tended to see improved work productivity, better employee retention, and reduced overall health care costs. A third review study, this one conducted in the United Kingdom, also found the same pattern of effects from human capital management kinds of workplace interventions (Bond, Flaxman, & Loivette, 2006).

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Linkage Studies

When researchers investigators are able to collect employee engagement experience data and also financial and business performance data at the department/unit or company level, these efforts are called "linkage studies." The Burud and Tumolo (2004) book describes 21 such studies. Their analysis of the results from this work shows positive associations between higher levels of use of human capital practices that emphasized employee engagement and various measures of overall financial success of the company.

The Gallup organization has provided perhaps the most convincing evidence of the link between engagement and company financial profits due to the sheer number of studies conducted, the large sample sizes used in the studies and the advanced methodologies that were employed to collect "hard data" from company records and archival databases (Harter et al., 2003). A meta-analysis of dozens of different Gallup studies compared results from business units within large companies and also compared companies with other companies. The findings showed that having a work environment that promoted positive employee engagement was consistently associated with beneficial business outcomes, including reduced employee turnover, customer satisfaction, employee productivity, and company profit. Thus, better employee engagement is related to lower levels of employee presenteeism and higher levels of other positive business outcomes.

The human capital studies by Watson Wyatt (2002) examined company stock performance over time and the company's use of various human capital (engagement enhancing) practices at 51 companies in the United States and Canada. The results showed that a "Human Capital Index" score from 1999 was significantly correlated with future financial performance 2 years later in 2001 and that this effect was four times stronger than the correlation of company financial performance from 1999. Thus, future business fiscal success was predicted relatively better by how the company treated its people than by its own past financial performance. Two other later studies replicated these primary results and enlarged the sample to include European companies (Watson Wyatt, 2004, 2005b).

Watson Wyatt then extended this investigation to explore the link between the nature of the communication practices at companies and their

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

future financial performance (Watson Wyatt, 2003, 2005a, 2007). Key findings from these studies show that effective communication with employees is a leading or predictive indicator of organizational financial performance. More specifically, the group of companies with the most effective employee communication programs provided a 91% total return to shareholders from 2002 to 2006, compared with only a 62% return for the comparison group of firms that communicated least effectively. Moreover, a significant improvement in communication effectiveness over time was associated with a 16% increase in market value of the company. Another finding was that firms that communicated effectively with their employees were four times more likely to also have high levels of employee engagement, compared to firms that communicated less effectively. Thus, employee engagement was a key driver of this communication–profit effect.

Why would better communication by management have this effect? The results of Mercer's People at Work Survey (2002) provide some insights into this question. The survey queried more than 2,500 workers in the United States and found that the effectiveness of senior management communication with employees about company strategy was related to levels of employee satisfaction, job commitment, and loyalty to the organization. When senior management communicated a clear vision of the future direction of the organization, compared to when senior management did not communicate its vision effectively, fewer employees were dissatisfied with the organization (7% vs. 39%); fewer employees said that they did not feel a strong sense of commitment to the organization (6% vs. 32%); and fewer employees said that they were seriously thinking about leaving the organization (16% vs. 40%). Thus, better communication from company executives is associated with better engagement from employees.

Case Study Examples

Employer case examples also provide evidence of the cost savings potential of greater employee engagement. The electronics company Best Buy reports that stores in which employee engagement increases by one tenth of a point (on a 5-point rating scale) have a sales increase of more than $100,000 for the year (BlessingWhite, 2008). Also, the department store JC Penney has discovered that stores in the top quartile of employee engagement scores generate about 10% higher sales volume compared to similar-sized stores in the bottom quartile of engagement (BlessingWhite, 2008).

At beverage company MolsonCoors, it was found that engaged employees had better job safety experiences (Vance, 2006). More specifically, the engaged workers at MolsonCoors were five times less likely than nonengaged employees to have a safety incident and seven times less likely to have a lost-time safety incident (i.e., disability claim), and the average cost

per safety incident was much less for engaged than nonengaged employees ($63 vs. $392) and through strengthening employee engagement in the next year, MolsonCoors saved over $1.7 million in safety-related costs.

The Automobile Association of America (AAA) division of Northern California, Nevada, and Utah conducted annual company-wide assessments of employee engagement with Towers Perrin (Andel & Davenport, 2006). Analyses found that employee engagement scores from more than 4,000 employees were positively and strongly associated with customer service satisfaction ratings ($r = .69$). Results also indicated that a 5% increase in employee engagement overall was associated with potential financial gains of more than $47 million dollars from selling more insurance and travel products. In addition, engagement was also associated with lower staff turnover, which also saved the company money not spent on new employee recruitment and training.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Employers can take action to respond to disengagement in several ways. Conceptual models suggest that such efforts should be undertaken at two levels—that of the individual employee and also at the larger organizational level (Attridge, Bennett, Frame, & Quick, 2009).

One place to begin at the individual level is to change the way that employees are given feedback about their job performance. Several studies suggest that employee engagement improves when job-related feedback from supervisors and managers focuses on the strengths—not the weaknesses—of employees. The Gallup researchers have found dramatic differences between engaged employees and others in this area. When asked to respond to the statement "My supervisor focuses on my strengths or positive characteristics," 77% of engaged employees agreed, compared to only 4% disengaged employees and 23% of moderately or not engaged employees (ColeySmith, 2006). In another example, The Corporate Leadership Council (2002) analyzed survey responses from more than 19,000 employees and managers and found that supervisory emphasis on the strengths of employee task performance enhanced future work performance by 36%, whereas an emphasis on the weaknesses of task performance reduced future work performance by 27%.

The message from these studies is clear: Focusing on strengths improves employee performance whereas focusing on weaknesses undermines performance. The findings also support the growing interest among business leaders in taking a positive psychology approach to management that focuses on building up employee strengths (Coplan, 2009; Rath, 2007; Rath & Conchie, 2009). Examples of companies with a "strengths-based" organizational culture include BAE Systems, Best Buy, Norwich Union, Toyota, Wells Fargo, and Yahoo! (Fox, 2008).

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Organizational Prevention Efforts to Encourage Employee Engagement

In addition to training supervisors to focus on the strengths of their staff, it makes even more sense for management to try to prevent the kinds of problems that lead to a lack of employee engagement in the first place. There are many practices that can advance the health of organizations in this way (Macik-Frey, Quick, & Nelson, 2007). Effective organizational-level prevention tools include better job design, resource support, working conditions, corporate culture, and using an effective leadership style. Each of these tactics is now examined in more depth.

Job design

Employee engagement can be improved through better job design. The specific elements and tasks of work can be redesigned to use the employee's strengths and employees can be placed into jobs that better match their abilities and talents—or what has been called person–environment fit (Barling, Kelloway, & Frone, 2005). More generally, research indicates that jobs characterized by high job strain—that is, psychologically demanding work coupled with little opportunity for make decisions or use personal skills—often can result in poor worker productivity (Quick & Tetrick, 2003).

Support and resources

Low work productivity and employee disengagement are both associated with experiencing low levels of support from supervisors and coworkers. A meta-analysis of 73 prior research studies found that low levels of perceived organizational support predicted increased job strain symptoms among employees, such as feeling fatigued or anxious or having headaches (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). A recent study of Finnish schoolteachers found that employee work engagement was improved when the organization offered them more support and job resources (i.e., supervisor support, positive appreciation, collaborative organizational climate, and innovative problem solving) (Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti, & Xanthopoulou, 2007). Thus, providing relevant kinds of job resources can buffer the negative impact of stressful job demands and poor working conditions and thus increases employee work engagement.

Working conditions

Organizations should also attempt to avoid creating difficult job demands and stressful working conditions, as these factors are the main predictors of employee exhaustion and burnout (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaulfeli, 2007). Such efforts can include removing problematic or

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

disliked parts of job tasks and technical operations, adopting more ergonomic workplace equipment, adding some flexibility to work schedules and workload, improving role clarity and decision-making authority of workers, and fostering opportunities for positive social relationships at work (Warr, 2005). Recall that one of most powerful items driving engagement from the Gallup research is the item that asks about having a best friend at work.

Corporate culture

The culture of an organization can also be changed to recognize and reduce the organizational conditions that lead to work stress, presenteeism and disengagement. Winners of the Healthy Workplace Awards from the American Psychological Association are based on the following five factors that contribute to a healthy workplace culture: Supporting work–life balance, fostering employee growth and development, encouraging health and safety on the job, praise and recognition, and employee involvement/engagement (Grawitch, Gottschalk, & Munz, 2006). There are also certain management principles that facilitate community-building efforts in organizations (Gravenkemper, 2007). Some of these principles include having a compelling company vision, creating guidelines for decision making and work behaviors that are based on principles and ethics rather than on rules and punishments, and enacting assimilation strategies for new staff so that they can understand the culture of the organization.

Leadership style

Leadership style and support is crucial for encouraging employee engagement. Years of occupational health psychology research have revealed that a "transformational leadership" style is effective for this task (Barling, 2007). Such a leader provides a clear vision, inspires and motivates, offers intellectual challenges, and shows real interest in the needs of the workers. This kind of leader elevates the personal status of workers through his or her ability to demonstrate humility, values, and concern for others. Other important leadership attributes include being authentic and showing emotional competence with others (Quick, Macik-Frey, & Cooper, 2007). The result of this style of leadership is often that employees develop greater trust in management and have an improved sense of self-efficacy, both of which are factors that are strongly associated with well-being and productivity.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and other providers of behavioral health and organizational development services can also benefit from

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

these trends in employee engagement. Those who support organizations can encourage their clients to begin or expand company-wide measurement of employee engagement levels and related constructs. The results of these measurement programs can then be used to improve human resource practices and employee benefit services and other training programs, all of which are activities that EAPs, work–life, and wellness providers can help to coordinate and implement as changes at the organizational level. EAPs and other direct service providers could add specific items on engagement to their intake and follow-up clinical assessment processes to measure changes in employee engagement for individual users of counseling, coaching, and health improvement services (Attridge, 2007). Given the research linking engagement to company success, most employers would welcome this kind of outcome data (Amaral, 2008). The organizational development and more preventive services offered by EAPs are often given less priority from employers than are the individual-based counseling services used for responding to acute needs of employees and family members (Bennett & Attridge, 2008). The needed emphasis on organizational-level approaches to encouraging employee engagement thus represents an opportunity for EAPs and other providers that have staff skilled in organizational and leadership development areas to make their services known to the company and boost the more preventive side of their business model (Hyde, 2008). The finding that strength-based styles of management and supervisory communication are needed to improve employee engagement is good for the EAPs and behavioral health coaching services that already have staff experienced at providing training in this area (Taranowski, 2009). Thus, the engagement movement has created a greater potential role for EAP and behavioral health service providers to better serve their employer clients through offering assistance in measurement and training areas that support improved engagement at both the individual and the organizational levels.

CONCLUSION

This review examined the concept of employee work engagement, how it is measured, how often it occurs, the costs of disengagement and business benefits linked to positive engagement, and how the workplace can be changed to encourage greater employee engagement. Case studies from employers who measure and use employee engagement data in managing their business operations reveal benefits to the company in areas of improved organizational culture, increased employee and customer loyalty, and higher sales and profits. Thus, engagement appears to be good for business, and it may also be good for EAPs and behavioral health services providers who can assist organizations in their efforts to improve employee engagement.

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

REFERENCES

Amaral, T. M. (2008, April). *Getting noticed: Practical outcome evaluations to show EAP value*. Paper presented at the annual institute of the Employee Assistance Society of North America, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Andel, M., & Davenport, T. (2006, October). *The theory and practice of employee engagement: California State Automobile Association*. Paper presented at the Society for Human Resources (SHRM) Conference on Employee Engagement, Alexandria, VA.

Attridge, M. (2007). Answering 10 questions: EAP reports should answer 10 basic questions that drive purchaser expectations about the value of employee assistance services. *Journal of Employee Assistance*, *37*(3), 27–30.

Attridge, M. (2009). Encouraging employee engagement and preventing presenteeism: Best practices for employers. *Research Works*, *1*(2), 1–12. Available from the Partnership for Workplace Mental Health, Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Foundation.

Attridge, M., Bennett, J. B., Frame, M. C., & Quick, J. C. (2009). Corporate health profile: Measuring engagement and presenteeism. In W. Emener, W. Hutchison, Jr., & M. Richard (Eds.), *Employee Assistance Programs: Wellness/enhancement programming* (4th ed., pp. 228–236). Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.

Bachmann, K. (2002). *Health promotion programs at work: A frivolous cost or a sound investment?* [White Paper]. Ottawa, Canada: The Conference Board of Canada.

Bakker, A. B., Hakanen, J. J., Demerouti, E., & Xanthopoulou, D. (2007). Job resources boost engagement, particularly when job demands are high. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *99*(2), 274–284.

Bakker, A. B., Schaufeli, W. B., Leiter, M. P., & Taris, T. W. (2008). Work engagement: An emerging concept in occupational health psychology. *Work Stress*, *22*(4), 187–200.

Bardwick, J. M. (2007). *The psychological recession: Why your people don't seem all that excited about coming to work these days* [White Paper]. New York: The Conference Board.

Barling, J. (2007, May). *Ten key factors in building a psychologically healthy workplace*. Paper presented at the 2nd Canadian Congress on Research on Mental Health and Addiction in the Workplace, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Barling, J., Kelloway, E. K., & Frone, M. R. (Eds.). (2005). *The handbook of work stress*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Bates, S. (2003). The metrics maze: Measuring human capital is a tricky, evolving discipline. *HR Magazine*, *48*(12). Retrieved February 1, 2009.

Bennett, J., & Attridge, M. (2008). Preventive health services: A new core technology component? *Journal of Employee Assistance*, *38*(4), 4–6.

BlessingWhite. (2008). *The state of employment engagement—2008: North American overview* [White Paper]. Princeton, NJ: Author.

Bond, F. W., Flaxman, P. E., & Loivette, S. (2006). *A business case for the management standards for stress* (Health and Safety Executive [HSE] Special Report #RR431) [White Paper]. Sudbury, UK: HSE Books.

Buckingham, M. (1999). *First, break all the rules*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Burud, S., & Tumolo, M. (2004). *Leveraging the new human capital: Adaptive strategies, results achieved, and stories of transformation*. Palo Alto, CA: Davies-Black.

Clark, T. R. (2008). Engaging the disengaged: In times of change, five basic forces help retain and engage employees. *HR Magazine*, *53*(4). Retrieved February 1, 2009.

ColeySmith, H. (2006). *Employee engagement: Useful facts and figures* [White Paper]. Suffolk: UK ColeySmith Consulting.

Coplan, J. H. (2009). The pursuit of happiness: How the young science of happiness is helping entrepreneurs build thriving companies—or at least feel like they are. *Business Week: Small Biz, February/March*, 45–49.

Corporate Leadership Council. (2002). *Building the high-performance workforce* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Author.

Corporate Leadership Council. (2004). *Driving performance and retention through employee engagement: A quantitative analysis of effective engagement strategies* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Corporate Executive Board.

Employee Benefits Research Institute. (2008). *How job satisfaction affects decision to retire: Fast facts from EBRI #92 (July 23, 2008)*. Washington, DC: Author.

Fleming, J. H., Coffman, C., & Harter, J. K. (2005). Manage your human sigma. *Harvard Business Review*, *83*(7/8), 106–114.

Fornal, P., & Sanchez, D. (2005). *Employee engagement and organizational performance: How Do you know your employees are engaged?* [White Paper]. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.

Fox, A. (2008, April 23). The power of positive thinking in the workplace. *HR News*. Alexandria, VA: Society of Human Resources Management. Retrieved February 1, 2009.

Gebauer, J., & Lowman, D. (2009) *Closing the engagement gap: How great companies unlock employee potential for superior results*. New York: Portfolio/ Penguin.

Gibbons, J. (2006). *Employee engagement: A review of current research and its implications* [White Paper]. New York: The Conference Board.

Grawitch, M. J., Gottschalk, M., & Munz, D. C. (2006). The path to a healthy workplace: A critical review linking healthy workplace practices, employee well-being, and organizational improvements. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *58*(3), 129–147.

Gravenkemper, S. (2007). Building community in organizations: Principles of engagement. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, *59*(3), 203–208.

Hansen, F. (2007). Companies are still in the dark about their overall health. *Currents in Compensation and Benefits*, *39*(6), 10–12.

Harter, J., & Schmidt, F. (2008). Conceptual versus empirical distinctions among constructs: Implications for discriminant validity. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, *1*(1), 36–39.

Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Keyes, C. L. M. (2003). Well-being in the workplace and its relationship to business outcomes: A review of the Gallup studies. In C. L. M. Keyes & J. Haidt (Eds.), *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life well-lived* (pp. 205–224). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014

Hyde, M. (2008, April). *EAPs as workplace behavior experts: Do you share the dream?* Paper presented at annual institute of the Employee Assistance Society of North America, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of Management Journal*, *33*, 692–724.

Lau, R. S. M., & May, B. E. (1998). A win-win paradigm for quality of work life and business performance. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, *9*(3), 211–226.

Lockwood, N. R. (2007). *Leveraging employee engagement for competitive advantage: HR's strategic role* [White Paper]. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.

Macey, W., & Schneider, B. (2008). The meaning of employee engagement. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology: Perspectives on Science and Practice*, *1*(1), 3–30.

Macik-Frey, M., Quick, J. C., & Nelson, D. L. (2007). Advances in occupational health: From a stressful beginning to a positive future. *Journal of Management*, *33(2),* 189–205.

May, D. R., Gilson, R. L., & Harter, L. M. (2004). The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *77*, 11–37.

Mercer. (2002). *Mercer People at Work Survey 2002* [White Paper]. New York: Author.

Nelson, D. L., & Simmons, B. L. (2003). Health psychology and work stress: A more positive approach. In J. C. Quick & L. E. Tetrick (Eds.), *Handbook of occupational health psychology* (pp. 97–119). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Pugh, S. D., & Dietz, J. (2008). Employee engagement at the organizational level. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *1*, 44–47.

Quick, J. C., Macik-Frey, M., & Cooper, C. L. (2007). Managerial dimensions of organizational health: The healthy leader at work. *Journal of Management Studies*, *44*(2), 189–205.

Quick, J. C., & Tetrick, L. E. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of occupational health psychology*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Rath, T. (2007). *StrengthsFinder 2.0*. New York: Gallup Press.

Rath, T., & Conchie, B. (2009). *Strengths based leadership: Great leaders, teams and why people follow*. New York: Gallup Press.

Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*, 698–714.

Robinson, D., Perryman, S., & Hayday, S. (2004). *The drivers of employee engagement—Report 408* [White Paper]. London: Institute for Employment Studies.

Schaufeli, W. B., Bakker, A. B., & Salanova, M. (2006). The measurement of work engagement of with a short questionnaire: A cross-national study. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *66*(4), 701–716.

Schaufeli, W. B., Taris, T.W., & Van Rhenen, W. (2008). Workaholism, burnout and engagement: Three of a kind or three different kinds of employee well-being? *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *57*(2), 173–203.

Shirom, A. (2003). Feeling vigorous at work? The construct of vigor and the study of positive affect in organizations. In D. Ganster & P. L. Perrewe (Eds.), *Research*

in organizational stress and well-being (Vol. 3, pp. 135–165). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.

Smith, M. R., Wefald, A. J., Downey, R. G., & Gopalan, N. (2008, September). *Factor analysis and construct validity for a vigorous well-being measure*. Paper presented at the conference of the International Commission on Occupational Health, Quebec City, Canada.

Taranowski, C. (2009). Advocating for a positive workplace. *Journal of Employee Assistance*, *39*(1), 7–9.

The Conference Board. (2005, February 28). *U.S. job satisfaction keeps falling, The Conference Board reports today* [Press Release]. New York: Author.

Towers Perrin. (2003). *2003 Towers Perrin global engagement workforce study* [White Paper]. Stamford, CT: Author.

Towers Perrin. (2006). *Ten steps to creating an engaged workforce: Key European findings. Towers Perrin global workforce survey 2005* [White Paper]. Stamford, CT: Author.

Towers Perrin. (2008). *2007–2008 Towers Perrin global engagement workforce study* [White Paper]. Stamford, CT: Author.

Vance, R. J. (2006). *Employee engagement and commitment: A guide to understanding, measuring and increasing engagement in your organization* [White Paper]. Arlington, VA: Society for Human Resource Management Foundation.

Wagner, R., & Harter, J. K. (2006). *12: The elements of great managing*. New York: Gallup Press.

Wah, L. (1999). Engaging employees a big challenge. *Management Review*, *88*(9), 10.

Warr, P. (2005). Work, well-being, and mental health. In J. Barling, E. K. Kelloway, & M. R. Frone (Eds.), *The handbook of work stress* (pp. 547–573). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Watson Wyatt Worldwide. (2002). *Watson Wyatt Human Capital Index: Human capital as a lead indicator of shareholder value* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Author.

Watson Wyatt Worldwide. (2003). *Connecting organizational communication to financial performance: 2003/2004 communication ROI study* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Author.

Watson Wyatt Worldwide. (2004). *Watson Wyatt Human Capital Index: Replication study* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Author.

Watson Wyatt Worldwide. (2005a). *Effective communication: A leading indicator of financial performance: 2005/2006 communication ROI study* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Author.

Watson Wyatt Worldwide. (2005b). *Maximizing the return on your human capital investment. The 2005 Watson Wyatt Human Capital Index report* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Author.

Watson Wyatt Worldwide. (2007). *Secrets of top performers: How companies with highly effective employee communication differentiate themselves: 2007/2008 communication ROI study* [White Paper]. Washington, DC: Author.

Xanthopoulou, D., Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2007). The role of personal resources in the job demands-resources model. *International Journal of Stress Management*, *14*(2), 121–141.

Downloaded by [Computing & Library Services, University of Huddersfield] at 14:19 04 October 2014