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Engaging minds and hearts through technology: The next wave of definition and measurement of employee engagement for business growth

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Introduction: Employee engagement has been the subject of much research, however the consistent finding that only a small proportion of the workforce can be classified as 'highly engaged' points to problematic definition, measurement and/or implementation of solutions relating to, employee engagement. Understanding that effective engagement solutions are preceded by accurate definition and measurement, there appears to be much variation in how researchers and practitioners approach the concept of engagement. Traditionally, engagement is conceptualized as being related to either commitment/citizenship ('head') or psychological wellbeing ('heart'), however there is growing acknowledgment that the most effective approach is a holistic view that incorporates both 'heads' and 'hearts'. Approaches to measurement have also been problematic, with outdated web-based surveys leading to expensive and unnecessarily protracted reporting of survey results. This can be remedied through the use of smartphone technology to deliver real-time 'pulse' surveys. The purpose of this study is to explore the efficacy of a holistic conceptualization of employee engagement and trial delivery through 'pulse'-style surveys.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: Literature review was undertaken to determine a pool of survey items, which was then trialed with an organization for content validity and item performance via a smartphone 'pulse' survey application. Confirmatory factor analysis was undertaken to determine the efficacy of the proposed survey scales.

Findings: The holistic model is currently in its infancy; however, analysis of findings to-date is promising. The delivery of the survey through smartphone technology also shows promise, with participation and return rates often exceeding traditional web-based surveys.

Conclusion & Significance: A holistic view of employee engagement characterized through both head and heart factors delivered through pulse-style survey technology improves both business and employee buy-in to the measurement process and provides more useful data back to the business to inform fit-for-purpose engagement improvement initiatives.

Biography

Therese Lardner has completed a Master of Organizational Psychology at the University of Queensland and is a registered Psychologist and Leadership and Engagement Coach from Mindset Coaching and Consulting. She has more than 12 years of experience in working with local, national and international talent management consultancies. Her expertise lies in the creation of strategic selection, employee engagement and leadership development solutions for clients across a range of industries. She is driven to work with businesses to increase the engagement of their employees leading to improved productivity, happiness and business growth. The foundation of this is building a connection to one's own sense of purpose and also connection to the vision of the business.

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