

“Myths, millennials, and management”

Does responsibility for employee engagement lie with the employee, or the employer? Read on for some thoughts about the answer.

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Employee engagement is essentially a positive state of wellbeing in the workplace. So, it’s feeling passionate and putting yourself into the work. It’s essentially the opposite of employee burnout.

But who’s responsible for it? In fact, it’s a two-way thing. It’s up to employees to put their effort, skills, and experience into the work they do, and to do the best they can to be engaged. But it’s very difficult to be engaged if

you work in a toxic or difficult workplace. That means the company’s leaders also have a huge responsibility. It’s up to them to create an atmosphere and culture where people can make the most of their own skills and abilities, and where they’re given trust and flexibility. After all, if people can manage their personal schedules and priorities, surely they can figure out how they can do their best work and still have time for other things as well.



“If you’re a submarine commander, you can’t take a day off to work from home or take the dog for a walk”

There’s a lot more that companies can do to make more workplaces more engaging.

Many organisations still have a 9 to 5 culture, even when they don’t need to. Clearly, there are exceptions. If you work in a hospital and you’re a nurse, telecommuting won’t work. If you’re a submarine commander, you can’t take a day off to work from home or take the dog for a walk.

But in most organisations, if the work is outcome-based, or there’s a deliverable, a goal,

and a deadline, you may not need to be in a physical space to do it. That’s partly why lots of organisations are moving towards more flexible schedules that take account of peoples’ lives and needs. That’s good. People should be working when they’re most effective. However, there has to be a structure in place with a clear line of accountability. People should know what they have to do, what the outcomes are, what the rewards are for doing it well, and what the potential consequences are.



“You need to manage people as individuals, not as lazy stereotypes”

There’s a myth that millennials are changing the workplace. In fact, research shows that the difference isn’t between groups. It’s all within any group. Millennials vary as widely as Gen X, Gen Y, or Baby Boomers. You need to manage people as individuals, not as lazy stereotypes.

A big part of engagement comes from finding meaning in your work. Employees should ask themselves what they can do better in the company and in the way they work. It could be as simple as finding people they work well with. It also depends a lot on the managers and leaders they have. If their managers don’t offer support when employees say they want to do

more and make things better, they should look for a place that’s more engaging and uses technology to build a better, more flexible workplace.

Some companies are trying to make workplaces better, more engaging and motivating, but are missing the mark. A ping pong table or ball pit isn’t going to do that. In the same way, it’s nice to have a good lunch on site, or lunch tokens, or perks and benefits and health insurance, but those will only get you part of the way. Making the work and outcome more engaging, and having the kind of culture that puts value and meaning into the work you do, is going to do more than superficial actions.



“As an entitled, narcissistic millennial, that really offends me”



I think my favourite myth is about how millennials are changing the workplace. As an entitled, narcissistic millennial, that really offends me. Research shows that there’s no difference between groups. It’s all within any group. Millennials vary as widely as Gen X, Gen Y or Baby Boomers. You need to manage people as individuals, not as lazy stereotypes.

A big part of engagement is finding meaning in your work. Ask yourself what you can do better in the company and the way you work. It could be as simple as finding people you work well with. It also depends a lot on your manager and leaders. If they don’t support you when you tell them you want to do more and make things

better, you should look for a place that’s more engaging and uses technology to build a better, more flexible workplace.

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Sometimes engagement is seen as a bit of a fluffy thing, but there’s a really strong business argument for it. For example, if it creates well-being, it’s going to reduce sick days and stress. That’s a genuine reduction, by the way, not one that’s forced on people by a culture of presenteeism. It makes people psychologically well at work, which affects their personal life as well. It also massively reduces turnover intention and turnover costs. There are some really clear financial bottom-line outcomes.

In conclusion, remember these three key points. First, take care about your mission, vision, and values, they will never filter through the organisation. In fact, people will just get cynical. Secondly, personal responsibility. You can’t engage someone who isn’t willing. People have to find a job that they can throw their whole self into. Finally, frontline managers need independence and autonomy if they’re going to work with their team in the right way for that environment.

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