

THE ENGAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES AS A KEY TO CORPORATE SUCCESS

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Abstract

One of the major barriers to achieving a higher level of corporate success is the lack of employee engagement. The main goal of this article is to propose the process of engaging all employees and thus setting the scene for the future of their organisation. In the author's opinion, the only resource that most organisations do not fully utilize is the engagement and full potential of their employees. The author explains the signs of disengagement and discusses its causes. They are mainly in the area of soft processes of management, in leadership, motivation and communication. It is the author's belief that the engagement of employees strongly depends on their managers, above all their managers' soft skills. The process of how to build and develop the interest and involvement of employees is described in detail. Furthermore, the importance of manager-employees relationships for engagement is emphasized.

Keywords: *engagement, alignment, commitment, trust, recognition, personal growth.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem for many companies is to adapt to rapidly changing situations in the market and in the financial world. Many companies struggle to survive and many have issues with investments, earnings and the ever-changing market situation. Particularly in times of rapid change, for companies of any size, there is very little margin for mistakes. The companies are differently and with differing success responding to outside pressures. One of the most important activities within companies to improve and to adapt is **the engagement of all employees**. The key is, therefore, to ensure that managers, employees, teams and individuals always contribute their very best by being fully engaged in company's activities.

In his book, Johnson (2004: 1) wrote that the ability to engage employees, to make them work with the business, is going to be one of the greatest organisational battles of the coming years. Employee engagement is an important management topic

capturing the attention of executives and HR professionals. It is also becoming an academic issue (Soldati, 2007). There are many positive organisational and employee outcomes deriving from employee engagement. It is surprising that despite many potential gains, the number of engaged people within organisations is very low.

Gallup found that more than 80% of British workers are not truly committed to their work, and that a quarter of them are actively disengaged (Flade: 2003). The research (Human Performance Institute, 2010) on the effects of engagement versus disengagement shows that no less than **65% of respondents are disengaged from work** and 21% of them are toxically disengaged, meaning that they actually have a negative effect on their company and its results. These findings are shocking and have a dramatic negative impact on productivity, innovation, creativity, customer service and staff retention. Unfortunately, engagement is not one of the factors usually evaluated and measured by management when looking for areas where there is potential for improvement.

Another study by the Human Performance Institute (2009–2010) in which 358 senior executives mostly from companies listed in Fortune 2000 and one third of them in the Fortune 500 showed that **54% of executives** and professionals **consider themselves as disengaged**, even though it appears from the outside they are interested and enthusiastic about their workplace. This means that more than half of the executives and professionals could be on the verge of leaving the company. The unfortunate thing about this is that it is the executives that are responsible for making sure everyone else is fully engaged. This is not very promising news if the company is going to thrive in these challenging times.

The main goal of this paper is to shed light on the changing situations and their effects on leaders, employees and their companies. The main objective is to present a tested process by which the majority of leaders and employees in an organisation become highly engaged. It is also the objective to show how engagement of leaders and employees can help bring the company more easily through economic and organisational changes.

By discussing these issues of employee engagement, we would like to contribute to the quality of management regarding their engagement and their employees' engagement and to the success of the companies by making them more adaptable and competitive in today's world. The engagement impacts the change and development of employees, management and the company. It also impacts the customer services and profitability of the company.

2. DEFINITION AND LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

Numerous, often inconsistent, definitions of engagement exist in the literature (Robertson-Smith, Markwick, 2009: 5). Practical company approaches define it differently than academic or consultancy approaches. They all define it (at least to some degree) through organisational outcomes and employees' gains. Let us take just one definition from the business world (Catteeuw et al., 2007: 152): "Employee engagement is the degree to which

employees are satisfied with their jobs, feel valued, and experience collaboration and trust. Engaged employees will stay with the company longer and continually find smarter, more effective ways to add value to the organisation. The end result is a high performing company where people are flourishing and productivity is increased and sustained."

Academic definitions also focused on expected outcomes of engagement. They also pay more attention to the psychological state of engaged employees. Very often they do not make a connection to similar concepts to engagement. These concepts are job satisfaction, commitment and job involvement, organisational citizen behaviour, psychological contract and extreme intrinsic motivation. We agree with Macey and Schneider's (2007) suggestion that engagement is a blend of all the aforementioned concepts and greater than their mere sum.

Consultancy and research institutions define engagement similarly to other definitions including outcomes and psychological content. They also add the role and influence of the organisation. Based on many definitions, the Institute for Employment Studies (IES) developed a comprehensive definition claiming that engagement "is a positive attitude held by the employees towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business contexts and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation. The organisation must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee."

An engaged individual is the one who is **enthusiastic and committed** to doing his (or her) absolute best at work. We can say that he is interested in his work and in the activities of his department or team as well as in the effectiveness and growth of the company. He is motivated and trying to improve his skills and the efficiency of his and others' work. He tries to maintain positive relationships with his co-workers, superiors and subordinates. An engaged individual has the chance to grow through his job. He is recognized for his contribution and there is trust between him, his superiors and his colleagues. An engaged employee

feels physically healthy and is well balanced emotionally. He is not stressed negatively and is simultaneously mentally focused and aligned with a purpose beyond his immediate self-interest. However, as the aforementioned research has shown, many employees and managers are not engaged in what they are doing.

In line with the above understanding of engagement as a commitment and the endeavours of employees to be useful to the company by supporting the achievement of its purpose, there exist **three levels of employees regarding the engagement**: fully engaged, disengaged and toxically engaged employees. This distinction is in line with Gallup (2006) discussing three types of employees: engaged, not-engaged and actively disengaged.

Fully engaged employees are the ones that are willing to go that extra mile to get the job done. They are innovative and identify with the company mission, vision and goals. They are the ones that make their company a success. Disengaged employees are just there to get a salary and have no interest in the company what so ever. They are not emotionally involved in their work or interested in company's well-being. Toxically engaged employees are spoiling the business. They are not adding or promoting it. On the contrary, they are providing bad service to customers. They take longer to finish their assignments; they create a negative atmosphere in their department and definitely have a negative effect on company results.

3. THE EFFECTS OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

3.1 Effects of employee engagement on employees

The outcomes and gains of engagement are organisational and are found among the employees. Employee engagement clarifies the **expectations of employees**. In the past, they expected the same job for life, a salary and regular promotion in return for their commitment and loyalty. Nowadays, they change and develop many jobs; the efforts are higher as are their expectations regarding salaries, promotion and employability. They are seeking

greater fulfilment and development from their employment. Engagement provides them with the opportunity to invest themselves in their work. Seits and Crim (2006) claim that self-efficacy is also an outcome of employee engagement.

Employee engagement also has a more direct, positive or negative, **impact on health and well-being** of employees. Engagement may lead to mindfulness, intrinsic motivation, creativity, authenticity, ethical behaviour and more productive and happy employees (Kahn, 1990).

One of the large companies that work actively with developing and improving engagement is the Danish company A. P. Moller-Maersk. They have approximately 110,000 employees in 130 different countries speaking 100 different languages in 20 different businesses. Every year, an analysis is performed on how the employees and leaders perceive the company, their bosses and other important issues related to their engagement. The feedback from this analysis helps the leaders to develop and improve themselves, making A. P. Moller-Maersk the biggest and most successful company of its kind.

Studies have shown that there is a **direct link between poor managerial leadership and heart disease**. This means that working for a bad boss could increase employees' risk of heart disease by up to 50%. In the research of Nyberg et al. (2009), more than 3000 men were studied in Sweden. The results showed that men who worked for an effective boss were only one-third to one-half as likely to end up in hospital with heart disease as those who were unsatisfied with their boss.

Another study showed that workers who are dissatisfied at work (be it because of compensation, recognition or career opportunities) were nearly 2.5 times more likely to die from heart disease. Compared to smoking, this gives a two to four time greater likelihood of getting heart disease. Job dissatisfaction is a killer in the long run (Kivimaki et al., 2002: 857–860).

Engagement at work has a huge impact on quality of employees' life. It sets their current mood and influences the emotions that they express. If they are disengaged at work, it has a negative effect

on their family as it puts them in a negative mood and causes stress. Engagement at work therefore has much to do with employees' happiness and work/life balance.

3.2 The relationship between engagement and organisational outcomes

Employees' engagement has a great effect on customer service, customer satisfaction and **customer loyalty**. Levinson (2007) claims that with highly engaged employees, customer loyalty, repeat purchases and recommendations to friends are double in comparison to employees engaged on average.

Levinson and other authors also suggest that the rate of **employee retention** is higher with engaged employees. The influence of engagement on **productivity** is very much emphasized. The engagement motivates employees to achieve higher levels of performance. Lockwood (2007: 3) claims that engaged employees work harder, are more loyal and more likely to go "the extra mile" for the corporation. Robinson et al. (2007: 26) believe that "the best performers tended to be those with the highest engagement scores."

All mentioned outcomes lead to faster **growth and higher profits**. Many studies have been made on the relationship between engagement and financial results. One of the more profound findings is by Tower Watson Consulting, measuring the financial results from 40 international companies. They found that the most engaged workforce on average increased income by some 20% and earnings per share by nearly 30%, whereas the least engaged workforce on average decreased income by 33% and earnings per share by more than 10%. Another study showed that "there is a five times greater difference in shareholder value between the companies with the most engaged workers and the least" (Craig et al., 2009).

"It's impossible to overstate the importance of an engaged workforce on a company's bottom line," says Julie Gebauer, managing director and leader of Towers Watson's Workforce Effectiveness Consulting Practice. "The global workforce study establishes a definitive link between levels of engage-

ment and financial performance and, for the first time, begins to quantify that link. It demonstrates that, at a time when companies are looking for every source of competitive advantage, the workforce itself represents the largest reservoir of untapped potential" (Gebauer, Lowman, 2008; Gebauer, 2007–2008).

This engagement gap, which is clearly seen in research data with an alarming frequency, comes into play when employee commitment is at direct odds with organisational needs. If HPI's respondents are representative of all of corporate America, then, as of January 2010, more than half of corporate America feels disconnected from the task at hand, working on key projects while exhausted, distracted or burned out, with insufficient energy or drive to cope with the current work load. Job cuts and budget freezes in 2009 caused a reduced headcount to carry the workload and make do with aging infrastructure. Longer hours, rising stress and a sense that executives are out of touch sever them from the engagement they need for personal and corporate success (Understanding the True Cost of Disengagement, 2010).

3.3 Engagement and managers' soft skills

There is an increasing amount of literature dealing with the factors that represent barriers to engagement. Bureaucracy, heavy workload, job insecurity, unfairness, stressful jobs, poor management behaviour and similar factors are discussed. In contrast the drivers of engagement are also identified and discussed, which include job satisfaction, rewards, development opportunities, social responsibility, organisational culture, participative management style, proper communication etc. We can see that an important role is played by managers and the leader/follower relationships. We believe that the **managers' role is crucial** in establishing, maintaining and developing employee engagement. This especially holds true for leadership or soft skills of managers.

The most commonly mentioned reason that engagement is so low in so many companies is that top management lacks understanding of and insight into soft skills. These skills deal with human psychology and knowing how to apply coaching, stress

release and mental training techniques. **Soft skills have been neglected for decades.** Soft skills will be the “hard stuff” of the future without which employees and organisations will not survive and succeed.

As previously mentioned, earlier studies have shown that more than half of the executives feel disengaged. One of the reasons is that they do not know exactly what they want in life, i.e. what their purpose is, and what their values, visions and goals are? We have witnessed this over and over again in our coaching and consulting profession with top managers and leaders who in their busy and stressed careers sometimes forget to invest time in their own personal growth. They tend to become solely focused on results and profits and disregard the importance of human relationships and personal development. So how can we expect any company to make the right decisions when half of the leaders are disengaged and do not know what they want to get out of life? And how can we expect them to be motivated to develop ways to engage their employees when they are disengaged themselves?

Not only do the individual board members and top executives have to be engaged but they also have to work together as a fully engaged team if the company is to have a chance to succeed in the future. In our opinion, one of the major reasons for not working together as a tightly knit team is lack of trust, to which we will return later.

4. WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BECOME ENGAGED?

Employee engagement can be evaluated and measured on the basis of different engagements surveys. Many surveys have been developed, mainly by different consultancy companies. Due to differences between organisations, there is a question of whether to use a standard survey or to develop a survey considering the specifics of the organisations. In both cases, due to diversity in definitions of engagement and different specifics and requirements of organisations, it is advisable to use obtained results with caution (Balain, Sparrow, 2009). This paper will show the approach and surveys developed and used by the author.

4.1 A self-analysis model to evaluate the engagement

If managers would like their employees or teams to become fully engaged, they have to be truly engaged themselves. To determine how engaged they are, a self-analysis can be made. They can use a questionnaire to evaluate their level of engagement systematically. Here are some of the questions they might want to ask themselves. On a scale from 0 to 5, where 0 is “extremely dissatisfied” and 5 is “extremely satisfied”, they can evaluate the following conditions.

1. Do I have enough opportunities to apply my knowledge and develop my skills?
2. How trusting and close are my relationships at work?
3. Do I feel recognized and valued for how I perform at work?
4. Am I good at coping with stress and stressful situations?
5. Are my work responsibilities and outcomes well defined?
6. How well does my physical environment (equipment, materials, location, etc.) maximize my efficiency?
7. To what extent are my personal goals and vision aligned with company goals and vision?
8. To what extent are my values aligned to the company’s values?
9. Are my talents and potential used to the full?
10. Do I have a clear understanding of the bigger picture of the company and my role in it?
11. Do I know where to turn for help if I need it?
12. Am I involved in decision-making of the company?

After totalling the points for each answer, managers can look at the results. If the sum of points is:

- 0–20, he is toxically disengaged;
- 20–30, he is disengaged;
- 30–40, he is mostly disengaged;
- 40–50, he is mostly engaged;
- 50–60, he is fully engaged.

This is a very simple and basic self-analysis. Usually, some more questions can be asked and a much more in-depth analysis is used. It is not that complicated a matter to determine what gets people engaged, no matter what their job. You just have to ask yourself the following question: “If I were in this person’s shoes, what would be the most important drivers for my engagement? What do I like and what makes me truly happy, apart from a reasonable pay?” From personal experience, I find that **the major drivers for engagement for most people are** (not surprisingly) **growth, trust and recognition**.

4.2 About Growth

“The growth and development of people is the highest calling of a leader” is the opinion of Dale Galloway. “The best leaders help people with more than their jobs; they help them with their lives. They help them to become better people, not just better workers. They enlarge them. And that has great power because growing people creates growing organisations” (Maxwell, 2008: 79).

To help employees and managers themselves develop engagement and growth, it is advisable to schedule meetings in which managers ask themselves and each individual employee the following and other similar questions.

- What do you want to get out of life – career-wise and privately? What are your major visions and goals?
- Can an acceptable percentage of these be realized by working at your present company?
- To what degree is it possible for you to develop your full potential and talent at your present workplace and position?
- Is there a formal career development process in the company?
- Are you totally clear about your job goals and how they fit into the bigger picture of the organisation?
- Do you have interesting and challenging assignments?
- Are you praised when you or someone else does a good job?

- How good is your boss at coaching and helping you?

On the basis of the answers to the above questions, managers within teams discuss what training needs there might be in connection with fulfilling employees’ goals. In order to have a happy and fulfilled life in which employees can be engaged, they need to have a personal vision and goals that they truly want to have fulfilled.

4.3 About Trust

“The followership of the people is based not on position but on performance and motives. Successful leaders put the good of their people first. When they do this, they earn the respect of their people and their following grows” (Maxwell, 2008: 78).

Trust and confidence in the employees and leaders is essential for creating engagement. Having trust means that the employee has a firm reliance on the integrity, ability or character of the manager/ leader, his colleagues and the company. **Trust is**, in many ways, **the most important ingredient** of all. If trust is lost, it is virtually impossible to get it back. When trust is lost it is like a mirror that is broken, it can be glued back together but it will never be the same.

As a consultant and an executive coach, I have worked for many different companies and organisations. It was surprising to find that a large percentage of these companies had problems with trust. This became evident when I was coaching leaders individually and when I asked them openly about trust. Many had issues with their colleagues and admitted that they did not trust them. Moreover, when talking to staff there were many times issues concerning lack of trust.

To achieve trustful employees, an appropriate reasoning has to be achieved expressed through the following and similar sayings:

- “People don’t work for me. They work with me”.
- “The best leaders know that leading people requires loving them! I’ve never met a good leader who didn’t care about people” (Maxwell, 2008: 7).

Some tips on how to gain trust are the following:

- Leaders demonstrate integrity when they are totally honest and when they make a mistake or misjudge a situation, they admit it and do not blame someone else or come with excuses. We all make mistakes and if we do not we are not learning. So making mistakes is a great way to learn. Just do not make the same mistake twice.
- When someone comes up with a good idea, leaders do not ever take the credit for it but recognize and praise the person who originated the good idea.
- To gain trust, leaders have to be competent at their job. It is a question of whether or not managers/leaders are able to lead their departments professionally, make the right decisions, give precise and clear directions and at the same time be an example for others in the organisation.
- As mentioned earlier, it is of the utmost importance, if wanting to achieve engagement, that managers care for and respect employees. That also means that if one of managers' colleagues reports having a problem, managers stand shoulder-to-shoulder with him and help him solve the issue.

If managers are ever in doubt about their leadership qualities, they should ask their employees to list their opinions and expectations of qualities of a leader. The answers must be anonymous to ensure that everyone can be totally honest. Managers should ask them to make a list with the things that make them most effective as leaders and also ask the employees to make a list of the areas in which managers could benefit from improving. Managers should give feedback to the group about what they have learnt from this exercise and tell them what they intend to do about it.

4.4 About recognition

To achieve the engagement of employees, it is very important that leaders recognize their efforts and ideas. Employees appreciate very much being involved in the process of preparing and conducting changes. Let us quote Ben Verwaayen, the new CEO of Alcatel. He held "town-hall meetings" at Alcatel-

Lucent sites in France, Belgium and Asia to talk to employees about how to turn the company around. He also gave his personal e-mail address to all employees, encouraging them to ask him questions or send suggestions for how to improve the company. "I've gotten truckloads of e-mail," he said in an interview. His mission was to change the culture at Alcatel-Lucent to make its 77,000 employees more reactive and responsive to telecom operators' needs in order to be closer and more relevant to their customers. "The new strategic plan was based on some of the great ideas and suggestions from the employees" (The New Strategic Plan ..., Wall Street Journal).

Recognition, in some form, is of the utmost importance and can be free of charge. A pat on the shoulder and a kind word is often enough. Yet when I ask some of my clients how often they praise their employees for a job well done, very few remember when they last did so. Asking if they ever show that they value their employees happens even less often. In one of the companies I have worked for, the CEO, when he was not travelling, always spent at least 45 minutes every day visiting one of his departments, including the employees on the production lines. He knew many employees by name and asked how they were and also how their families were doing. He cared for his people and felt an enormous responsibility for their well-being. He honestly valued his employees and showed it through his actions. Everyone respected him; the employees were fully engaged and felt truly recognized and valued. One employee, on one of the production lines, even came to work with a broken arm. When the CEO asked him why he was not at home recuperating he answered that there was work to be done and he would feel bad if he were not there to help his colleagues. Now that is going an extra mile for the company, or more so for the CEO.

On the opposite side of the scale, there was another company I worked for, where we discussed lack of motivation in the organisation. I asked the CEO if he ever recognized any workers or engineers for a job well done by praising them. The answer was no. "They get their pay and that should be enough". Then I asked him how often he made rounds in the factory. "Never", he said. "I have my work, they have theirs." Needless to say, I stopped

working for this CEO, but I did feel sorry for all the good people that were working there, for unrecognized and undervalued by their CEO.

Years ago I worked as a VP of Marketing in one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in Denmark. I had a number of product groups as my reports. At one of our meetings, all board members were asked to give a status report on how we were doing in our departments and give a short presentation. I was to present two new product launches. I had asked the responsible product managers to come and give the presentations since I wanted to show them my appreciation and give them the credit of what they were capable of. We had rehearsed the presentations beforehand and they both gave brilliant presentations at the board meeting. None of my board colleagues invited their subordinates to participate in their presentations and afterwards they even asked me if my product managers had to do the presentations because I did not know what was going on in my own department. This showed a total lack of understanding of what recognition and valuing your people means. Managers did not know how to value their employees and were ignorant of the fact that the lack of human understanding, respect and recognition had an overall negative effect on the company. Valuing someone is not a business issue – it is a person-to-person issue.

5. BOOSTING ENGAGEMENT IN THE ENTIRE ORGANISATION

One of the main reasons for disengagement is that top management does not involve employees in defining the bigger picture of the company, such as creating the values, visions and goals of the company. Not involving employees and not being able to communicate effectively creates uncertainty that again elicits scepticism and stress.

There are two main ways that can help change the engagement culture in an organisation. One is **the vision and goal-setting process**; the other is **the value development process**. The aim of both processes is to involve each and everyone in the company and boost the level of their engagement, which results in better productivity and profit. In

this paper, I focus on the value development process. It goes without saying that no company, small or large, can win over the long run without energized employees who believe in and live out the values of their company. Values are the glue that holds the company together.

5.1 The objective of the value process, the value process and its characteristics

The value process is based on renewal from within. The company's managers, employees and other stakeholders are all invited to help create an even better and more profitable workplace. The basic objective of the value process is **to achieve a full engagement of managers and employees**. The idea is also to build a good working relationship, where employees respect each other, and use and reward each other's strengths. This creates a positive spiral where all forces are joined in a creative process involving joint values.

The value process is carried out in a relatively short period of time (from two to three months). **Steps consist of developing an interview, carrying out the interviews, analysing the data and defining the values.** Interviews are carried out with as many of the organisation's stakeholders as possible. Stakeholders are clients, employees, suppliers and possibly local government. The interviewers ask the stakeholders about their best personal stories, which reflect their personal values, group values, and their hopes for the future of the company. All interviews are anonymous. The answers are then analysed, synthesized and grouped into categories, called "themes". Themes are the basis for defining the final values. The whole process creates a huge amount of motivation and hopes for the future. In addition to that, each value is a reflection of something that was said by the stakeholders, each and every one of whom has had a chance to make a personal contribution. Through the entire process, we have to apply an appreciative approach and language.

The characteristics of the value process are the following:

- Values are chosen for a number of reasons. First, this is a topic in which everyone can participate

on even terms, regardless of their educational background or hierarchical position in the company. Executives and workers alike are engaged in the process and are working together in teams. The discussion of values is a great opportunity to become acquainted with people across departmental and formal hierarchical divisions. The process is an exercise that facilitates communication and understanding in an appreciative way.

- We want to engage as many employees as possible in the processes, preferably everyone. By engaging as many employees as possible, we create a much greater buy-in and a greater chance that the behaviours deduced from the values will be lived out on a daily basis.
- Values, when developed by our actions and later lived out through agreed-upon behaviours, become the basis for a corporate culture that everyone will be supportive of.
- Being part of the process shows that you, as an individual, are trusted, respected and appreciated. The engagement level increases accordingly.
- What we achieve through this process is not only engagement but also commitment and very importantly – alignment of the personal values with the corporate values.
- In my experience, most of the values that are the result of this process are very similar and close to the values that the CEO and board would want. Employees, when being asked and thus acknowledged, take their jobs very seriously and come up with ideas and suggestions that benefit the company.

5.2 Organisation of the value process

The value process has to be conducted by a **steering committee**. To show the importance of the process and the responsibility for its success, the **CEO of the company should be the head of the process**. The phases in the organisation process are the following:

1. **Selecting a Steering Team (ST)**. The ST must represent a cross section of functions in the company. All major functional areas must be represented. Participants must be people at a high managerial level in the organisation.

Members of the ST must have an open mind and be willing to learn, since this is as much an educational process in management, coaching and leadership as it is a process producing a specific outcome. The ST is in charge of designing the value questions that the stakeholders will be asked. The ST is also responsible for synthesizing the answers, choosing the themes and for developing the values and behaviours that follow.

2. **Training of ST members**. All members of the ST will go through a two-day training workshop. The participants will train interviewing and coaching and learn about these principles in the area of organisational and management development.
3. **Developing the questionnaire for the value process**. After the basic training, the ST members will participate in a new workshop for two days. The aim of this workshop is to develop the questions for the stakeholders. This is the most important part and the heart of the value process. It takes much consideration to choose and formulate questions in an appreciative way.
4. **Interviewers**. Once the questionnaire is finished, the ST will choose the employees that are interested in becoming interviewers. They will together be a part of the core interview team. The training of the interviewers takes one day. The ST members take the role of coaches in the process. For example, in an organisation with 1000 stakeholders we suggest 60 to 70 interviewers. In this way, we manage to involve a large number of employees and other stakeholders in the process.
5. **Data gathering**. Interviews are conducted over a maximum of 30 days. The completed questionnaires are sent to the ST.
6. **Analysing the data**. Employees who have not been interviewers or interviewed are the analysts. There must be representatives from as many different divisions/departments as possible. Analysts will analyse the answers from the questionnaires under the guidance and coaching of the ST members. This process usually takes two days. The result will be new values and the accompanying behaviours.

7. **Presentation and publication of data.** Once the values and accompanying behaviours have been decided and approved by top management, the values will be published and distributed to all stakeholders. The company homepage will have a special section about the process and the results.
8. **Living the values and behaviours.** The ST makes an action plan on how the values could be lived on a daily basis to create an even better and more profitable workplace.
9. **Time frame.** The whole process will usually run over two to three months if no abnormal delays occur. Keeping momentum in the process is of the utmost importance.

5.3 Major findings

All employees are involved, but only for a very short time and for a specific part of the process. The process itself only takes two to three months and in this time all employees will have been involved in some way. To sustain engagement, follow-up is needed constantly by leaders and coaches. This can easily be achieved since the Steering Team members were trained as coaches as a part of the process.

When milestones have been achieved it is equally important to celebrate and acknowledge employees for their engagement and willingness to go that extra mile for the company.

Of course, the values and especially the behaviours that come out of the process are important, but **the main achievement is to engage so many people** within a short period of time and at the same time create a new corporate culture; that is what makes this way of working unique.

Instead of other findings, I would rather quote Samo Logar, a manager within KD Group, Slovenia, and his opinion about the process of values development aiming at the engagement of employees. "When I was thinking about how to connect and engage all employees in order to strengthen the organisational culture in a rapidly growing company, which has grown from an entrepreneurial environment with a few employees and developed into a group of companies, which now offers financial

services, insurance, banking, stock brokering and funds in south-eastern Europe, I was aware of the need of a consultant. I invited Ole Bloch to participate as a consultant," Logar explained.

"We created the project, which aimed to mobilize staff and encourage them to proactively act in the environment for change, integration and cooperation, recognizing and respecting the diversity of activity in the international environment and ultimately being fully engaged in the achievement of common objectives. We defined the implementation plan of the project, which key objective was to involve each employee and to identify the values of KD. We, at the KD Group, became aware that **the values are the guidelines in our daily work**, the basis for daily decisions and the power to meet the most demanding tasks. As mentioned above, the activity of the project was aimed to involve every individual in the KD group. The fact that the project was conducted in an international environment of nearly 30 companies, filled me with respect and utmost caution, but at the same time it represented a major challenge to me. Ole Bloch's many years of experience and his suggestions for successful implementation have been especially important. This was reflected even more when we were approaching the end of the project."

In the project, there were four workshops with three groups that were different in size. The first group had 12 people, the second 60 and the third about 70 employees. The aim of the workshops was for people to regenerate their power, coming out of the positive communication (appreciative inquiry). The method of **appreciative inquiry** was the key of our project and I showed another dimension of communication from what within KD Group knew by then. The power of being positive and proactive was becoming a part of them. To them it was a good insight into their personalities that reminded them to their commitment for better understanding and cooperation in the work environment. All of this created a strong positive energy in the project, which led the participants in their work in the workshops, and also in their work environment. I tried to help them discover a new way of functioning in the workplace and in the private environment. Participants were awakened to reflect on the meaning of the "small" things that bring

people together and help them create a major change, with emphasis on the identification of common values.

Identifying the values on the basis of appreciative inquiry was done with all partners in the KD Group. The results are visible today, and we all are confident that they will be visible even more in the future. **Employees learnt the way that they behave;** the way of genuine, open and positive communication, and a choice of words in a dialogue are the key to positive change in the organisation. It is also crucial to invite and include everyone in the organisation on the path to the realization of the vision and strategies.

6. CONCLUSION

The engagement of employees, their participation at work and in the decision-making, and their identification with the company is of utmost importance for the success of the company. There are employees that offer their hands and mind to the company; many offer hands but not their mind and feelings; many of them praise the company but do not work hard; and, perhaps the majority is neither offering their hands nor their minds. It is a question of how to bring most from the employees in the first group.

Robertson-Smith and Markwick (2009: 53–55) summarize the common drivers of engagement: the nature of the work, the meaning and purpose of the work, development opportunities, timely recognition and rewards, respectful and assertive relationships, open and honest two-way communication and consultation, and inspiring leadership. These and similar drivers have to be introduced and developed within organisations and should become basic values of a culture supportive the employee engagement.

As shown in this article, this can be done by a value process aiming at developing new values within the enterprise, developing trust within the relationships among employees and especially between employees and managers, showing respect for results and ideas and making their development possible. The whole process, starting

with the analysis of present situation, continuing with the change value process and freezing the change has been discussed in the article.

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