Exploring the Relationship Between Purpose and Employee Engagement

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Introduction
Does an organization having a stated purpose positively impact employee engagement?

Competitive advantage used to come from new knowledge or technologies. Unprecedented access to information and improvements in productivity and efficiency have diminished those kinds of advantages. Engaged employees bring commitment and passion to go above and beyond what is required, which the organization may profit from in their own unique way. 

And yet, we are in an engagement crisis.

Methods
Primary Research
- Qualitative research approach
- In-depth, confidential interviews
- Six U.S.-based companies that developed organizational purpose
  - Identified via The Purpose Institute
  - 100–250,000 employees
  - Wide range of industries
  - Findings developed through identification of common categories and themes

Secondary Research
- Extensive review of scholarly literature and key books

Literature Cited


Purpose and Mission, Vision, Values = Terms like Purpose, Mission, Vision and Values are defined differently by organizations

To Measure or Not to Measure = A common theme: Success of purpose shouldn’t be about numbers. It should be judged by how it manifests in the way people treat each other.

Why Explore Purpose? = The companies studied developed a statement of organizational Purpose for a variety of reasons. Some were trying to address morale issues; others were experiencing a change in business model; Another sought to bring more meaning to their work. All faced significant change, or were trying to drive change.

Leader Involvement = Significant leadership commitment and involvement – ideally the CEO – in purpose development is imperative. That occurred with most of the companies in my study, though there were variations in who led purpose development.

Purpose is subjective and the process needs to reflect the organization – how it’s operating, its values, engagement, culture, whether they are trying to drive change, grow, etc.

Employee Involvement = Employees were involved to varying degrees. More often, involvement was significant. One exception was Company C, which drew upon its rich history to find something that would resonate with employees. The greater the number of employees, the more complex in engaging employees. It was simple for Company E, with 100 employees all in one location. It was far more challenging for Company F, with tens of thousands in two divisions with many locations; and Company B, with 250,000 employees globally.

Bringing Purpose to Life = Some organizations unveiled with great fanfare, while others approached it in a soft-spoken way that would allow it to grow organically. All recognized sustaining Purpose was a significant commitment, and they would need employees’ support at scale so that it became the responsibility of all.

Gratitude
Heartfelt appreciation to:
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