

Employee Engagement

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Recent research among management consultants has shown links between employee engagement and positive business outcomes such as revenue growth (see, for example, the 2003 Towers Perrin Talent Report).

Simply put, fully engaged employees are those who go beyond what their job requires, putting in extra effort to make the company succeed.

In the case of newspapers, does engagement have beneficial results on readership?

There are different ways of measuring and defining engagement. Academic research (such as Katz and Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations*) has identified three levels.

1. **Joining and staying in the organization.** This includes recruitment into the company, low absenteeism and low turnover.
2. **Dependable behavior.** These indicators relate to meeting or exceeding standards of job performance.
3. **Innovative behavior.** This level goes beyond individual roles to how people collaborate with colleagues, make suggestions to improve the organization, and work to improve the organization's standing in the external environment.

Using data from the *New Readers* culture survey, Readership Institute research partner Robert Cooke built an employee engagement scale (see items below.) He then looked for relationships with other internal traits of the newspapers and with external results.

Engagement is strongly related to a constructive culture and negatively related to both aggressive and passive cultures. In terms of the effects on audience, it is positively related to Reader Behavior Scores (RBS) and content satisfaction.

In other words, constructive cultures – which promote both high performance expectations and offer strong support to members – promote more staff engagement, which in turn leads to better readership results.

Employee Engagement Scale items

The scale was created using data from the *New Readers* culture survey. Here are the factors (in bold) and statements from the surveys (bulleted under each factor) that make up the scale.

Joining and Staying

- This organization is careful to hire people who will fit in and be comfortable with the job.
- You are satisfied with your present situation in your department.
- You will probably look for a new job in the next year. (reversed)

Dependable Behavior

- The objectives and priorities of this organization are clear and understood by all members.
- Do you clearly know what is expected of you as a member of this organization?
- I am expected to do things without the necessary resources, such as equipment, information and/or assistance. (reversed)
- Your department motivates you to do the highest quality work possible.
- Would you personally go out of your way to make sure that a customer/client feels good about the service you've provided?
- Do you believe that the quality of your organization's products/services meets customer expectations?

Innovative Behavior

- The people you work with compete rather than cooperate with one another. (reversed)
- Your work group can rely on other departments to provide you with what you need, when you need it.
- Upward communications: "whatever needs to be said" as opposed to "only what they want to hear."
- Upward communications: "how we make things work" as opposed to "why things don't work."
- Downward communications: "how do we learn from mistakes" as opposed to "who do we blame for mistakes."
- Would you recommend this organization to someone like yourself as a good place to work?
- Would you recommend this organization to potential customers/clients seeking the products or services it offers?