



AwardEmployees

... with the award they would choose for themselves.

Recognition: The Heart of Employee Engagement

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Is it just me or am I seeing more and more and more articles written on employee engagement? It seems like I can't pick up a magazine on any industry or subject that doesn't have something in it about employee engagement. This week alone I've seen 8 articles and had four emails from connections on LinkedIn about it. Please excuse the fact that I'm only a mere peddler who sees the world through a rather simple lens but the more I read about employee engagement, the more it reminds me of what this industry has been doing for decades. Am I the only person in the industry who sees it that way? I know I'm getting old, but I didn't think I was getting senile.

So as not to be left out of the cocktail conversation with all of my much more experienced and learned consultant friends, I thought I'd better do some quick research on the subject. My first stop was the obvious, easiest, the every present "Google" link on my internet browser. In only one click and 0.32 seconds I had over 686,000 answers to my search. Terrific, I was excited, now I could be a guru too!

It would appear that employee engagement or "Work engagement" according to Wikipedia "is a concept that is generally viewed as managing discretionary effort, that is, when employees have choices they will act in a way that furthers their organization's interests. An engaged employee is a person who "is fully involved in, and enthusiastic about, his or her work." Employee engagement it seems is now measured by items which have been linked to a whole raft of items which in turn have been linked to key business outcomes, etcetera and so forty.

On further examination of these items, imagine my surprise when I discovered that everyone of them combined to include all the data we used to use to analyze organizations before, during and after we had implemented performance improvement programs... or incentive programs as we were apt to say in those days. I found the key! All I had to do is dust off the old programs I had in the file, and I would be an employee engagement specialist! Maybe I'll just hang out the consultant shingle and get in line with the other guru's and wait for the money to roll in. After all, I'd done it before, I could do it again. It seemed too good to be true; all my research was indicating that employee engagement seemed to be exactly what some of us in the incentive industry had been selling for years! Go Figure!

But alas, employee engagement has now become the buzz word of every executive hallway in corporate America. It is written about in every publication that concerns itself with employees, assessing employees, measuring employees, communicating to employees, etc. etc. Because of this I doubt if we lowly prize peddlers will get a part of the millions and millions that will be spent on it. If we're lucky, we may get brought in at the end to provide some awards to the lucky winners who have been engaged and performed admirably. After all, providing positive consequences to reward behavior change is all we are about. And that has relatively nothing to do with engaging employees now, does it?

Hey, just in case you think it might, I've got a novel approach. What say we just treat the employees with a lot of respect, give them all the training they need to do the job, communicate with them often on how well they are doing, show them how their performance is key to the performance of the company as a whole, get their input on how they think they could help the company improve, thank them when they do a great job, and oh by the way, reward them for their positive performance. Hey I broke the code! It would seem that employee engagement is just another name for an incentive program....at least that's



what we used to call them back in the early 70's. Too simplistic an approach? I'll leave that decision up to you!

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