

Talent Development 20 Measuring Engagement

by Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD



Section 3.3 in the CPTD Certification program for ATD is Organization Development & Culture. Section E reads, "Skill in assessing and evaluating employee engagement."

I have seen dozens of instruments that purport to measure employee engagement. Some of these are simple 10 question surveys and others are complex blockage surveys that try to identify what is getting in the way of full

engagement.

Defining Engagement

We need to start with the definition of engagement. There are entire books that attempt to describe engagement and how to increase it. I like the simple approach with the following definition: "To what extent do all people in the group understand the vision for an ideal future state and how focused is their energy on achieving that vision"?

You can make it more complex than that, but I don't think that is necessary. If you buy into my theory, there is a very simple test that will allow you to find out how engaged any group is. It takes only a few minutes, and you do not need to have a complex survey instrument to do it.

Measure Engagement Directly

Take a three by five card and walk around listening to what people are talking about. If you hear someone griping about working conditions or what an idiot the person at the next work station is, put a hash mark on the left side of the card and walk on.

When you hear someone talking about something that relates to what the group is trying to accomplish, then put a hash mark on the right side of the card and continue walking.

In only half an hour or less you will begin to see a pattern emerge on the card. If the left side of the card is littered with hash marks and only a few or none on the right side, then the group is not engaged.

On the other hand, if most of the hash marks are on the right side of the card, it is an indication of a highly engaged group.

This System Also Tests for Trust

This method also works to measure the level of trust within a group. If most people are focused on the vision and the important work to be done, then it is an indication of a high trust group.

If most people are myopic and focused in on each other and protecting their turf, then it is an indication of a low trust group.

I hope you can appreciate the correlation between trust and engagement. When you find a group that has high trust in all directions, I promise that you will find a highly engaged group of workers.

Bob Whipple, MBA, CPTD, is a consultant, trainer, speaker, and author in the areas of leadership and trust. He is the author of: *The Trust Factor: Advanced Leadership for Professionals*, *Understanding E-Body Language: Building Trust Online*, *Leading with Trust is Like Sailing Downwind*, and *Trust in Transition: Navigating Organizational Change*. Bob has many years as a senior executive with a Fortune 500 Company and with non-profit organizations.

