

# Role of Supervisor's Communication in Employee Engagement & Employee Wellbeing

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## Abstract

Communication is the base to the smooth functioning of organizations and which plays a vital role in maintaining and developing organizations. The growth of an organization is seen through workplace efficiency which is dependent on employee wellbeing. Employee wellbeing affects how employees think and feel about their job and organization in turn which would positively or negatively influence their attitude and performance. Supervisor's communication can greatly influence the employee's workplace efficiency. This paper focuses on analyzing the role of supervisor's communication in employee wellbeing and employee engagement. It identifies the main factors that affect employee wellbeing in the organization. It is evident from the research that organizations need to focus on improving the supervisor's communication which will enhance employee wellbeing and employee engagement and result into positive attitude and improved performance on the job.

**Keywords:** Employee Wellbeing, Supervisor's Communication, Employee Engagement, Performance and Attitude.

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## **Introduction**

Communication is the process by which people create and share information and ideas with one another in order to reach mutual understanding and get things done. Effective communication is the foundation of positive and cooperative working relationships. Managers and supervisors have positions as leaders in their workplace and need to be able to communicate effectively with employees, colleagues, and upper management. Communication skills are core competencies expected in virtually any position within the workplace. The ability to communicate with employees at every level in the organization is especially important for supervisors who want to improve department operations and the performance and productivity of the employees under their supervision. Supervisors are responsible for providing employees with constructive feedback about performance and workplace behavior. Communication skills are important because the way supervisors interact with employees affects how well employees receive supervisor feedback. A supervisor with the capability to communicate work directives and employee feedback clearly, succinctly and in a manner that motivates employees instead of alienating them is a more effective leader.

## **Objectives of the Study**

1. To identify the main factors that affect employee wellbeing in the organization.
2. To identify the personality characteristics of supervisor that positively or negatively affects employee engagement.
3. To analyze how employee well-being and employee engagement predicts job attitudes and performance.

## **Methodology**

This research is done on existing literature of supervisor's communication, employee engagement and employee wellbeing. The research has been done by systematically reviewing the literature to meet the objectives set for the study. A good number

of published papers have been reviewed and examined to get clear idea on major aspects of the research. From this exercise it gives a clear understanding of the role of supervisor's communication in employee engagement and employee wellbeing.

## **Literature Review**

### **Supervisors Communication**

Supervisor's communication is one of the major factors affecting employee performance, which in turn is one of the most important factors within business for maintaining and increasing productivity for companies (Elangovan, & Xie, 1999; Spreitzer, 1995). Some of the most common responsibilities of supervisors are to delegate work, and to give information or advice to subordinates. It is the duty of supervisors to ensure that employee job performance is at maximum potential, it would be advantageous for managers in all trades and industry sectors worldwide to understand what types of employee-supervisor interactions are associated with employee job performance. Knowledge regarding the possible association between supervisor-employee relationship and job performance would enable the implementation of more effective systems for management, and subsequently, better productivity for the company through increased job performance.

### **Employee Wellbeing**

Well-being in the workplace depends wholly on external conditions in terms of the working and organizational environment within which the individual operates (Burke, 1993; Guest, 2002; Lawson, Noblet, & Rodwell, 2009), the point here suggests that individual characteristics can play an active part in the development of well-being.

Understanding the views of various authors who have dealt with well-being we can see that well-being is a result of the interaction between subjective factors and characteristics of the workplace. It is possible to interpret that person\_ organization fit as being critical in generating wellbeing (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Cable D.M & Judge,1996 ; Mininni, Manuti, Scardigno, & Rubino, 2010), and the

three main aspects of the study; job satisfaction, positive emotions, and relational interaction which can greatly influence well-being.

### **Job satisfaction**

The initial studies, which have permitted the analysis of the relationship between well-being in the workplace and subjectivity, was the study of job satisfaction (Harris, Daniels, & Briner, 2003; Judge, Heller, & Klinger, 2008; Ter Doest, Maes, Gebhardt, & Koelewijn, 2006). According to Harter, Schmidt, and Keyes (2003), it is first connected to the theory of the person-environment fit (French, Caplan, & Van Harrison, 1982), in which well-being is connected to the presence of appropriate requests to the individual by the organization. And second relates to the performance and the quality of life of people with the presence of positive emotional states and satisfying relationships within the work environment (Isen, 1987; Warr, 1999). When their environment encourages people to seek out challenging or significant tasks, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), optimal conditions exist for mutual well-being between individuals and the work environment.

### **Positive emotions**

Another way of seeing the relationship between individual characteristics and well-being in work settings is that positive emotions generate well-being. Di Nuovo and Zanchi (2008) proved that employee participation in the company's mission, positive emotions, emotional climate, and the sense of belonging within the organization are interdependent. Custers and Aarts (2005) argue that positive affection plays a key role as a motivator towards achieving the objectives, thereby contributing to a better relationship with the working environment.

### **Relational interaction**

An individual to generate well-being in the workplace is connected with the study of interpersonal skills, attitude towards extroversion and active relational interaction. Kamdar and Van Dyne (2007) have identified that social exchange supported by sociability produces effects of organizational citizenship, improving employees' performance of tasks. Ryan and Deci (2000) have confirmed that the innate psychological needs for competence,

autonomy, and openness in relationships, if met, will provide greater self-motivation and, if hindered, can lead to a decrease in motivation and well-being.

### **Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is a good means to help every organization to gain competitive advantage over the others. Human resource is one factor that cannot be duplicated or imitated by the competitors and is considered the most valuable asset if managed and engaged properly. This point has been emphasized by Baumruk (2004), in that employee engagement is considered to be the most powerful factor to measure a company's vigour. Katz and Kahn (1966) have referred to the concept of engagement in their work related to organizational effectiveness. In 1990 Kahn (1990, p. 694) introduced the concept of employee engagement, giving his well known definition namely, "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances". Kahn added that three psychological engagement conditions are necessary for an employee to be rightly engaged: meaningfulness (work elements), safety (social elements, including management style, process, and organizational norms) and availability (individual distractions). Another well accepted description that is seen is by the Gallup organization's Buckingham and Coffman (1999) who commented about engagement "the right people in the right roles with the right managers drive employee engagement" (p. 248).

Employee engagement was a popular concept in industry during the period 1999-2005 where it was extensively discussed among managers, consultants, and policy makers. Academicians became interested in the concept to a large extent only from 2006 (Welch, 2011) when a number of studies extended the concept of employee engagement to job engagement, work engagement, and organization engagement. Saks (2006) used Khan's (1990) definition and developed the construct including job and organization engagement. According to Saks the antecedents of employee engagement were job characteristics, perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support, rewards and recognition,

procedural justice and distributive justice. On the other hand, the consequences of engagement were job satisfaction, organizational commitment, intention to quit and organizational citizenship behavior. Various studies suggest that the presence of higher levels of employee engagement significantly reduces turnover intention (Maslach et al., 2001; Saks, 2006). Gallup (which is known as authority on employee engagement) relates employee engagement to a positive employee's emotional attachment and employee's commitment (Demovsek D, 2008). Thus the employee engagement make employees emotionally bonded to their organization and tend them to become passionate about their work and hence results in improvement of employee retention.

### **Supervisors Communication and Employee Engagement**

Supervisors, nurturing a team of energized, committed employees should be at the top of our list of goals. There is nothing more important to your company's performance than having an engaged workforce. Employee engagement is a key driver to increase productivity, innovation, retention and competitive advantage. The actions of an employee's direct supervisor have a crucial impact on employee engagement. Managers who fail to engage their employees by creating positive relationships with them can lead to an exodus of top talent. The cost in time and resources to replace these employees can be unreasonable. It is revealed through past research that supervisors who affect engagement positively by tailoring their management and communication style help their organizations reach their strategic goals. Some of the supervisor's personality characteristics that can positively or negatively affect employee engagement are:

### **Empowering Management Style**

A supervisor's management style can make or break an employee's level of engagement. If employees perceive that their manager is too controlling or micromanages their work, they are much more likely to disengage. By developing a style that is more participative and facilitative, supervisors empower their employees to "get on with the job" rather than bogging them down with too much direction.

### **Availability and Openness**

A manager's ability to provide support and guidance is directly linked to strong engagement. Ways to support employees include showing openness and availability by sharing ideas, holding regular meetings, both formal and informal, to give employees a chance to express thoughts, and creating opportunities for exposure and connection to others in the company.

### **Constructive Communication**

One of the largest drivers of employee engagement is ongoing direct supervisory feedback. It has been proved through research that those who receive primarily negative feedback are more than 20 times more likely to be engaged than those who receive no feedback at all. Yet managers who focus on employee strengths are one-third more likely to manage actively engaged workers compared with managers who focus on weaknesses. These findings suggest the huge impact that a supervisor's communication style has on engagement. While it appears that even negative feedback is better for engagement than no feedback at all, constructive communication that focuses on employee strengths achieves the best results.

### **Working with Authenticity**

Managers who foster strong engagement from their teams gain the trust of their employees by being perceived as honest, authentic and competent. Employees gauge this by whether they believe that their supervisor is good at his own job and whether their supervisor has gained the respect of others in the company. Additionally, supervisors with engaged employees differentiate themselves by having their words match their actions. The lesson for managers of any size business is that it pays to focus on each individual employee. Those who take an active role in developing those under their charge, and who actively recognize their contributions, reap the rewards of an engaged workforce.

### **Supervisors Communication and Employee Wellbeing**

It is understood that good mental health or psychological well-being has some benefits for employee performance at work. Employee mental well-being directly affects how employees think

and feel about their job and organization. Numerous researches have consistently shown that employee well-being predicts job attitudes and performance. Employee well-being is crucial and not just a “nice-to-have”. It is critical because multiple roles of the employee mean that the attitudes and performance of an individual employee matters a lot to the organization. In the organizations where employee wellbeing is taken care, there the employees do not see their work as a source of un-happiness or constant conflict with what they want to pursue or enjoy. Employee well-being also has important implications for productivity and work relationships. Satisfied and happy employees are more likely to trust their supervisors, comply with company rules and regulations, provide suggestions to improve the organization, help their co-workers, and work cooperatively as a team to achieve group goals. Such behavior contributes to a high-performing organization that is productive and innovative, with employees who are socially integrated. Therefore, it is not surprising that research has also shown that employee well-being is positively associated with customer satisfaction. It has been proved in numerous research has that employees who are dissatisfied and unhappy are also more likely to be disengaged, absent without valid reasons, cynical, non-cooperative and more likely to engage in counter-productive behavior. Exploring through research, evidence is clear that positive employee well-being is an important asset t, whereas negative employee well-being is a serious liability.

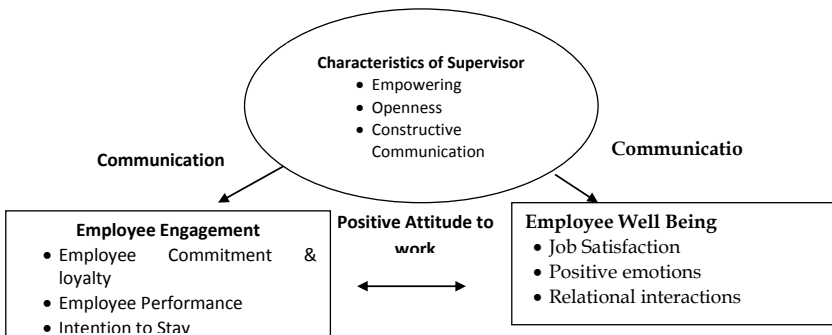
Research has shown that the quality of the interpersonal interactions that employees have with their supervisor have direct effects on their job satisfaction and emotions or moods, which in turn affect employee performance and their commitment to the organization. Satisfied and well-performing employees, with low intent to quit, are especially critical to organization because it comes with the opportunity costs for personnel selection, on-the-job training and turnover. Two important features of quality interaction with a supervisor are perceived fairness and trust. A process is more likely to be perceived as fair if the procedures are not influenced by personal bias and are implemented consistently for different employees in the same situation. It is also important to communicate relevant information and explanations for decisions that affect employees. Research has also shown that employers who



are perceived as fair are also seen as trustworthy. In addition, employees with positive perceptions of fairness and trust are more likely to engage in positive work behavior. In contrast, those with negative perceptions are more likely to engage in retaliatory and counterproductive work behavior. Interpersonal relationships provide an important source of social support. Positive social relationships increase social integration and create a mutually supportive work culture among the employees, which will enhance trust, increase helping behaviors and strengthen cooperation.

In one of the research it was found that one of the largest contributors to everyday experiences of negative emotions was not feeling respected. Other studies have found that feeling respected and accepted by others contributed more to well-being than socio-economic status. Respect is critical for employee well-being. During a busy day when everyone is performing multiple roles and meeting deadlines, we are often unaware of the negative impression we create when issuing instructions rudely or giving terse replies to others. We need to pay more attention to the choice of words and manner of communication in daily interactions, especially when supervisors communicate with employees. When employees are given personal attention, they are more likely to feel valued and respected.

Model Conceptualized from Literature Review on Role of Supervisor’s Communication in Employee Engagement and Employee Wellbeing



Communication is the key to developing positive attitude to work which will enhance employee wellbeing and employee engagement

within the organization. Communication helps to develop positive leadership and employee wellbeing both of which are essential for organizations performance. This model helps to understand that positive communication of the supervisor can lead to employee wellbeing and employee engagement which will lead to enhancing employee performance, employee commitment & loyalty and intention to stay. From the literature it was found that the empowering, openness, constructive communication and trust from the supervisor and greatly influence about how employees perceive their jobs and perform.

## **Conclusion**

It is evident from the study that there is a relationship between supervisor's communication, employee wellbeing and employee engagement as the outcome of each it leads to developing employee performance, employee commitment, employee loyalty and intention to stay which is nothing but behavior demonstrated by engaged employees. Engaged employees have become the need of the hour in this competitive work environment for organizational success. Organizations which have not been able to engage their employees are definite to see poor performance and higher costs of recruitment and selection and training and development. So it is essential for organizations to focus on supervisor's communication to develop progressive work environment and healthy supervisor-employee relationship; and also employee wellbeing to create the organization as a preferred place to work; both of which will ultimately result in employee engagement.

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