



*External engagement
influences only have short
term impacts at best*

Self-Engagement

...What would make you happier as an employee? More money? A promotion? Flexible working hours?

I'm sure, like most, you are 'yessing' in your head as you read these options. The question is if you get these things, how long will it be before you are once again seeking more?

*by Kathryn FitzGerald
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I remember when I first joined the workforce on a salary of \$35K, I believed that if I ever reached the \$60K salary milestone I would not want for anything. I can remember it vividly. It was my ultimate career objective. But alas, within months of earning a salary at this level I found myself imagining more; though my role had not changed in any significant way, nor had there been any significant increase in the cost of living. I still believed that I needed, even *deserved* more.

The problem with keeping up with the Joneses

I realise I am not alone in the misinterpretation and misunderstanding of my own psyche. Employee engagement remains a hot topic for employers everywhere. However, the trap organisations can find themselves in is providing too many benefits or simply the wrong ones, creating entitled but not necessarily engaged workforces.

If employees select job opportunities based on what is offered in terms of perks, employee benefits, training and development in order to assess their own satisfaction and engagement, then the question remains ... were they engaged in the first place?

What does an organisation do?

It would be ideal if all an organisation had to do was offer great working conditions and staff development. Sadly though, real engagement runs much deeper than more money, or employer paid training.

Real engagement is intrinsically dependent upon a combination of employee mindset and personal fulfilment, which means the external influences we throw at the problem mostly only have short term effects.

Red herring of employee benefits...

I recently attended the AHRI National Convention in Melbourne where Marshall Goldsmith, an executive coach and best-selling author, spoke. He reflected on the importance of employee engagement, but more importantly the current focus on external influences and how intrinsically low-impact these external forces actually are.

Goldsmith highlighted the prevalence of the “I will be happy when... syndrome” - the tendency to look to future events, whether it be a pay rise, a promotion or new car and think that these things will make them feel more fulfilled. The problem being that these things automatically create a sense of dissatisfaction with what you have already.

Goldsmith contends that real fulfilment and satisfaction comes from an individual’s recognition of what is important to them - in all realms of life across work, love, family, friends, health, environment and community participation.

Identify the key elements...

Goldsmith is an advocate for identifying key elements of what you value most and completing a daily checklist to see if you *as an individual* are achieving what you believe is most important. He suggests that this prevents you measuring your own success or satisfaction based on external influences such as a manager undertaking a performance review which relies heavily on numbers, statistics and figures.

Goldsmith’s theory is backed by a survey of over 1600 employees recently completed by Kronos which showed that 66% of workers were primarily motivated by enjoying the work that they undertake. 49% said that being recognised for doing good work was a primary motivator; 46% said having flexible hours; and 44% said feeling part of a team. Pay was stated to be the primary motivator of just 35% of those surveyed.

Self-reflection for self-engagement

So how can you make sure you are happy and engaged at work? Start by having your own assessment for what is important to you in your life. Goldsmith’s suggestion of creating your own checklist and measures of success means you are in control of your own fulfilment and you decide how your work fits in to this.

Secondly, do more of what you like doing at work wherever you can. Positive psychology supports the theory that the things you are good at are usually the things you most enjoy doing, so incorporate responsibilities and tasks that tap into your natural aptitudes. You might be surprised how your job function can be adapted to incorporate your talents.



*Take control of your own
engagement and start
loving what you do!*

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