

# Employee Engagement Integral for Business Sustainability

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## What is Employee Engagement?

An engaged employee is a person who is fully involved in and enthusiastic about, his or her work. When employees go beyond their call of duty and invest in the future of their company, they are believed to be engaged. When employees are genuinely interested in the work they do and they truly enjoy what they do, it is a sign that they are engaged.

## What are the Benefits of Employee Engagement?

The benefits of employee engagement vary from the more tangible to the intangible:

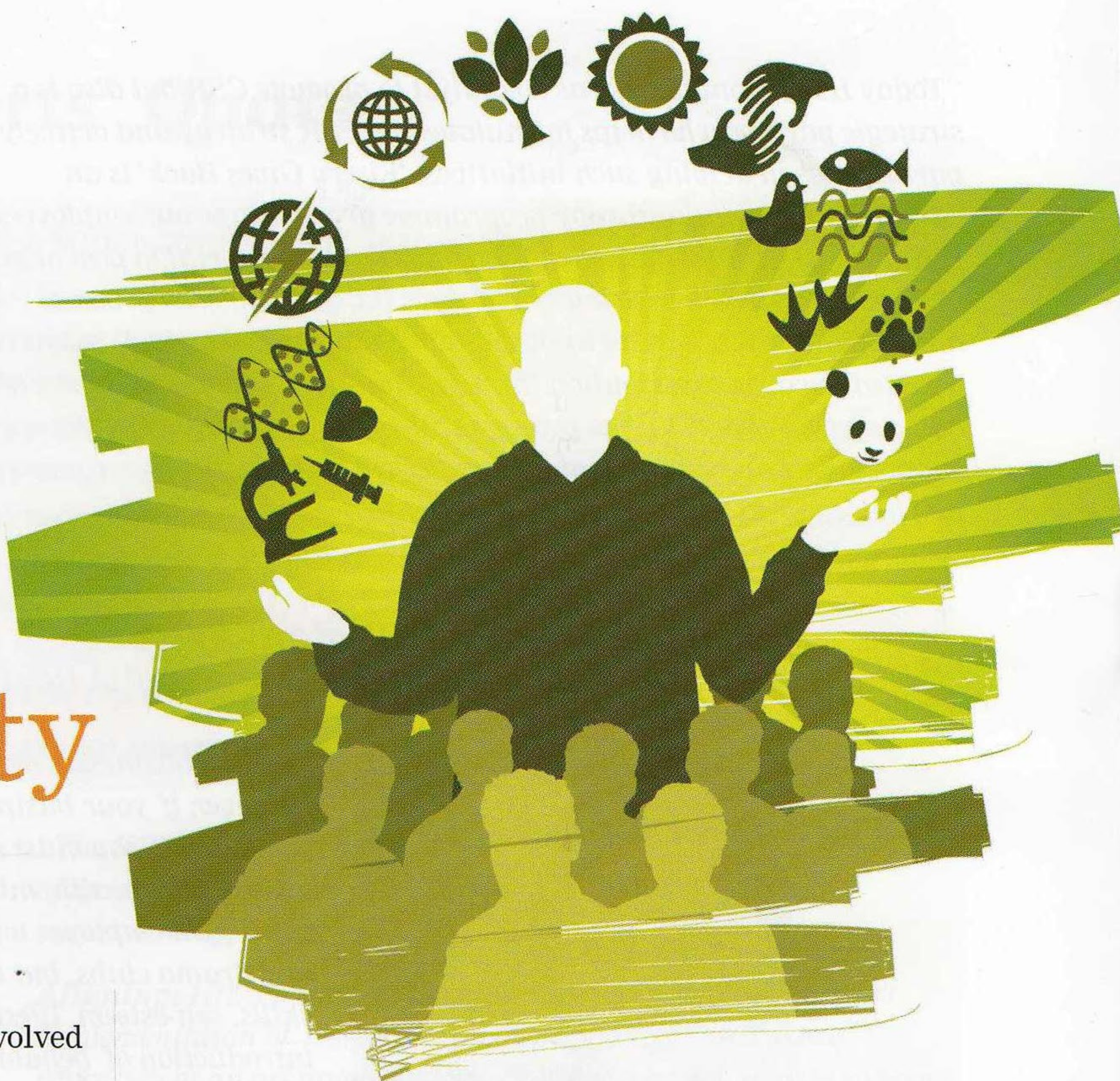
- **Employees as Mission, Strategy and Brand Ambassadors:** Having happy employees is the real secret to a profitable, viable company. Employees who are engaged and satisfied are considered as great investments in the success of the company as they come with a high level of commitment and loyalty. They promote and support the company's functions and well-being in the long-run.
- **New Products, Services and Solutions:** Highly engaged employees feel like they have a stake in the company. This motivates them to go beyond the standard responsibilities and find innovative and creative solutions to customer's issues, thereby creating new products and services.
- **Top Line Growth:** Engaged employees collaborate better. This leads to better communication across the silos that helps build an ode to the organisational

design. This collaboration can then be harnessed by the organisation to approach the market as 'one company' and offer more holistic solutions to clients.

- **Healthier Bottom Lines:** Engagement leads to superior productivity as engaged employees perform better and go the extra mile. Such employees show lower absenteeism and higher motivation. They are more driven and efficient. Engaged employees are also a lot less likely to leave the organisation, helping create continuity of knowledge and client relationships. This leads to lowering of operating costs and increase in margins.

## Building Employee Engagement: In Today's Context

Employee engagement goes beyond the standard definition of the 'big boss' going around the office and shaking hands with all the employees, once a month or implementing 'Fun Fridays'. Research shows that the difference between organisations with high and low attrition and productivity is that organisations which do better on these counts are able to invest in and develop a sustainable strategy around employee engagement. For these organisations, employee engagement is an integral part of their culture and not something that HR needs to roll out as a programme, every time there is a spike in attrition. However, as any HR practitioner will tell,



building a culture is easier said than done. What is it then that successful organisations do, to build a sustainable employee engagement culture? Here is some food for thought:

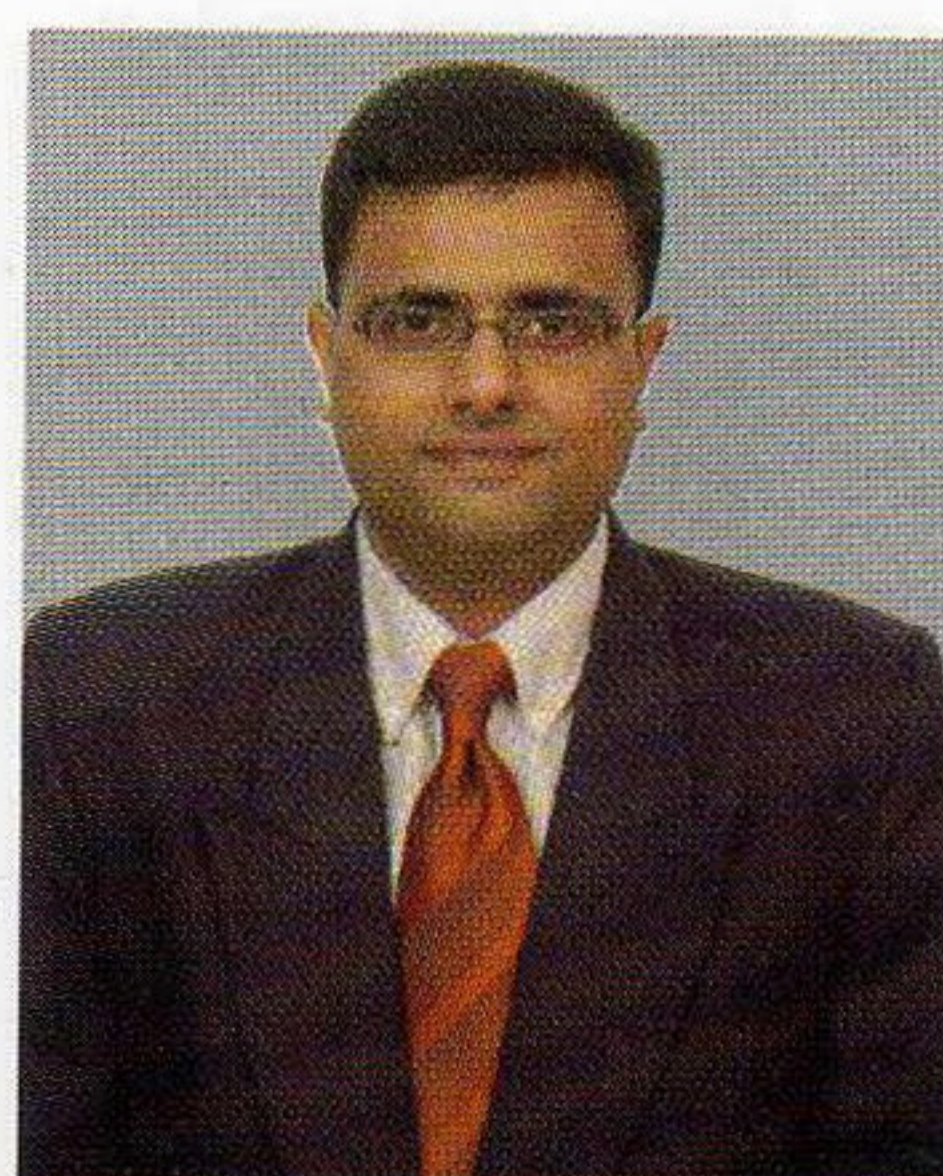
- **Build an Apprenticeship Culture:** Whether it is the older generation of employees or the millennials, employees increasingly understand the value of organisations that genuinely invest in their development and career progression. Under such a situation, the investment that leaders make in the development of their people is the best form of employee engagement. Leaders spend years showing their employees a career path; building a relationship with them and helping them develop a plan to build the skills and capability to walk down that career path. The long-term investment is both a strong signal to the employees that the organisation will care about them in the long-term and ensure that they stay engaged over a period of time.
- **Have them Buy into the Vision of the Organisation:** Just like passengers of a cruise liners enjoy their trip only when they have complete confidence in the captain, employees will stay engaged if they believe that their organisation is being led by capable individuals who have a realistic vision and the ability to realise this vision. Further, employees appreciate candid and frequent communication, so that they know they are a part of ups and downs, progress and failures that the organisation may be facing.
- **Ongoing Learning:** Helps employees feel they are continually developing themselves and are improving, both professionally and personally.
- **Pride in Employment:** Serving clients with distinction and doing cutting edge work are some ways to drive pride in the workforce. Research also suggests that this pride is directly correlated to and cause for stronger employee engagement.
- **Being Part of a Strong Team:** A sense of belonging and a consistent flow of social interactions are important for collaboration and bond, which a team needs to form when working together. Employees are engaged if they feel they are part of a larger entity where they belong and can contribute to.
- **Being Heard:** Employees need to know that they have a voice, and that their opinions count. Actively encouraging employees to come up with new ideas, or

new ways to improve what they're already doing, does wonders in terms of engagement.

- **Investment in Health and Well-being:** Organisations in India are facing high rates of attrition and absenteeism, along with increased stress among employees and an ever widening talent gap. Therefore, they are increasingly focussing on developing a broader employee value proposition, beyond the usual suspects such as compensation, to attract and engage the new generation of employees. HR managers are making enduring efforts to ensure that wellness programmes are being leveraged to create a competitive advantage in the war for talent. These programmes are especially important for organisations that employ Generation Y workers in large numbers and want to keep them engaged.

The younger generation sees the overall benefit plans, in their current avatars, as only "nice to have", when compared to their more senior colleagues. This stems out from the younger generation's belief that they are healthy and indestructible. Research however suggests that they are more stressed and less healthy compared to their older counterparts. These increased levels of stress are a result of the younger generation's desire for having everything right here and right now, rather than delaying gratification. They want responsibility at work, a well-balanced family life and a fast rate of career progression, while taking out the time to work out and socialise regularly as well.

It should be obvious that HR managers need to keep their eyes on the ball when it comes to employee engagement. An efficient way to do this is to ensure that engagement is measured periodically. There are numerous third party vendors that offer effective tools to gauge engagement and help to benchmark it across the industry. The proof of the pudding lies in the execution. Engagement needs to be driven from the top; it needs to be an integral part of the organisation's strategy and ingrained into the corporate culture.



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