

Why "Employee Engagement" Sometimes Makes Me Want to Plug My Ears

By *Simma Lieberman, The Inclusionist*



There are times when I hear the term employee engagement and just want to add the words, "blah, blah, blah!" **Here are five reasons:**
1-Employee engagement has become a buzzword with no meaning in some workplaces. What some managers really mean, is that they are engaged in theoretical discussions. They seem to think that if they loudly declare that their whole workforce is engaged, even if few people are, they will be considered a great place to work.

It's common knowledge that engaged employees are more productive, but it is also all too common for organizations to have no idea what that looks like in terms of organizational and employee behavior.

There is also an assumption that increasing diversity increases engagement. It's not about the numbers; it's the culture and what you do with the people.

2- Clients have complained about consultants who promise to create employee engagement, and just conduct management training in active listening, suggest a diversity potluck and change language to sound inclusive. Nothing changes in the culture.

3- Some organizations measure employee engagement by in-house surveys that ask employees if they're happy. I've had employees tell me that no matter how much confidentiality is promised, there is no way they feel they can tell the truth if the organization is running the survey.

4- The term "employee engagement" can be akin to the word "diversity" in many organizations; someone gets hired as manager of diversity, or employee engagement, but they're not given any authority, or a budget to do anything, except attend a conference and hear speakers.

5- Organizations still resist developing a new kind of culture where employees are given opportunities to use talents, and genius that no one knew they had. You can't "engage" employees unless you ask employees for their ideas or know what talents and experience they bring to the organization.

Instead of just talking about employee engagement, leaders should engage themselves to discover, acknowledge, and leverage employee genius at every level. Let's talk about

ETO, **Employee Talent Optimization**. That's how people get engaged in their success and the success of the organization.

Let's talk about creating a sense of community in organizations, where every day employees, can be integral members of that community, and develop their own passion to help the "workplace community," be successful. This is how we develop **ETO, or Employee Talent Optimization**.

Three ways leaders can create Employee Talent Optimization

1- Ask employees what they need in order to be able to demonstrate their skills and talents and be engaged. Allow them to help you.

2- Identify skills and talents the organization needs in order to create breakthrough products and services. Share that information with employees and offer with incentives for contributing their "personal genius."

3- Develop and implement, systems and processes to solicit success ideas from all employees, not just people in management. Include entry level and hourly employees.

They will be happy to tell you what they need to make their jobs easier, provide distinct customer service and be more productive.

You might discover that your employees have additional talents and passions that would benefit the whole organization. You won't know if you don't ask.

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