

Creating **ENGAGED** Employees

It's Worth the Investment



Edited by
William J. Rothwell

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Preface

William J. Rothwell and Woocheol Kim

Employee engagement has become a cause célèbre. For some—such as managers who are not willing to devote any time or effort to it—it is indeed a controversial topic. But others see a worldwide economic crisis brewing, and employee engagement may be the answer to one of our generation’s greatest workforce needs. After all, according to Gallup’s well-known annual survey (Gallup Q12), many workers feel overworked and underappreciated. Improving employee engagement is one way to fight that trend.

Based on my work experience, many of us have had professional experiences with employee engagement. When I was in charge of human resource development (HRD) and employee relations (ER) at a global company, some of the employees were energetic, willingly put effort into what they did, and were deeply involved in their work. They demonstrated enthusiasm, inspiration, and pride in their jobs, despite work demands and pressure. All in all, they successfully achieved their goals on individual and team levels. There were other people, however, who were always torpid, unwilling to exert effort unless strongly urged to do so by managers, and were less involved—only doing the minimum amount required to

avoid negative feedback and adverse consequences. These people often failed to achieve their goals and could not meet work deadlines.

Why the difference between these two groups? Although there are many reasons, employee engagement is one possibility. If we look at employee engagement, the former group might be regarded as engaged people or an engaged workforce, whereas the latter group might be regarded as disengaged people or a disengaged workforce.

With these distinctions in mind, this book uses practical wisdom and scholarly research to examine the following questions: What is employee engagement? Why are people engaged or disengaged? How can we measure employees' engagement? Can organizations help their employees be engaged? How can organizations help and maintain engaged employees without burnout?

Organization of This Book

The primary aim of this book is to examine the importance of employee engagement according to the scholarly and practical literature in human resource development (HRD) and human resource management (HRM).

This book opens with an Advance Organizer to help you zero in on which of the seven chapters has what you're looking for.

Chapter 1 reviews diverse definitions of employee engagement, describes types and core components of employee engagement, and explains the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement using a conceptual model. It also offers a brief research history on the topic and suggests possible future research opportunities.

Chapter 2 explains the importance of employee engagement, addressing three important questions: Why should we care about employee engagement? How do business leaders and academic researchers

view employee engagement? And what are the possible outcomes of an engaged workforce?

Chapter 3 reviews well-known methods of determining an organization's level of employee engagement: the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES); the Shirom-Melamed Vigor Measure (SMVM); the Shirom-Melamed Burnout Measure (SMBM); and Gallup's Q12. This chapter also shares some insights for further research on work engagement concepts by reviewing past studies.

Chapter 4 offers an explanation for the relationship between work engagement and job performance, which has received much attention from business leaders and academic researchers. The chapter goes on to introduce the concept of workaholism, clarifying what it is and how it relates to employee engagement. It also explores the strategies in which employers stay focused on "what to do" and "how to do it" and engage their employees to improve their performance. Finally, the chapter offers techniques and strategies for engaging and re-engaging disengaged employees.

Chapter 5 focuses on ways to create an engaged work culture. It poses the simple but profound question, what does an engaged workforce look like? It then goes on to discuss ways to build engagement, and how to strike a balance between work and personal life.

Chapter 6 explains the barriers to employee engagement in association with organizational culture/climates, leadership styles, and performance. It offers guidance on how to overcome barriers to employee engagement by providing recommendations for leaders regarding organizational culture and climate, as well as supportive and transformational leadership styles.

Chapter 7 describes the future of employee engagement. This chapter discusses how to bridge the academic and business models

Preface

of engagement, examines and challenges the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, explores whether employee engagement is a concept or a proven theory, and queries whether the control of employee engagement lies with the organization or the individual. The chapter closes with a recap and assumptions about the role of employee engagement in the coming years.

Advance Organizer

William J. Rothwell

The Organizer

Complete the Organizer before you read the book. Use it as a diagnostic tool to help you assess what you most want to know about employee engagement—and where you can quickly and easily find it in this book.

Directions

Read each item in the Organizer below and circle true (T), not applicable (N/A), or false (F) for each one. Spend about 10 minutes answering the questions. Be honest! Think of employee engagement as you would like it to be—not what some expert says it is. When you finish, score and interpret the results using the instructions at the end of the Organizer. Share your responses with others in your organization and use them as a starting point for conceptualizing employee engagement. To learn more about one of these topics, refer to the number in the right column to find the chapter in which the subject is discussed.

The Questions

	Do you believe employee engagement in this organization is already:	See chapter:
T N/A F	Based on a specific definition of employee engagement?	1
T N/A F	Linked to credible research on employee engagement?	1
T N/A F	Linked to strategically important issues to the organization?	2
T N/A F	Measured according to credible approaches?	3
T N/A F	Linked effectively to individual performance?	4
T N/A F	Linked effectively to organizational performance?	4
T N/A F	Linked effectively to organizational culture?	5
T N/A F	Implemented in a way that will address likely barriers to success?	6
T N/A F	Distinguished effectively from job satisfaction?	7
T N/A F	Considering future trends that will change the nature of work and workers?	7
_____	Total	

Scoring and Interpreting the Organizer

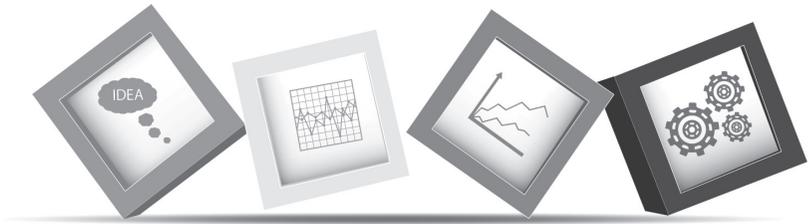
Give yourself one point for each “T” and zero points for each “F” or “N/A.” Total your score and interpret it as follows:

- **Above seven points:** Your organization may already have an effective employee engagement program. While improvements can be made, your organization has already matched many best-practice employee engagement principles.
- **Four to seven points:** Improvements could be made in your organization’s employee engagement practices. On the whole, however, your organization is already on the right track.
- **Below four points:** Your organization is far away from effective employee engagement.

1

Introduction

Woocheol Kim



What Is Employee Engagement?

The term employee engagement has been receiving a great deal of attention from scholars and practitioners in many fields, including human resource management (HRM), human resource development (HRD), organization development (OD), psychology, and business (Kim, Kolb, and Kim, 2012). One reason for this attention is that organizations tend to expect their workforces to be proactive, show initiative and collaboration with others, take responsibility for their professional development, and commit to performance with high quality standards. Thus, employers need employees who are energetic, dedicated, and absorbed in their work—an engaged workforce (Bakker and Schaufeli, 2008). Furthermore, engaged employees are very attractive to organizations because of their higher productivity levels, profitability, safety, and

low turnover rates and absenteeism (Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Despite the importance of engagement to organizations, however, scholars and practitioners can't agree on its definition (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010).

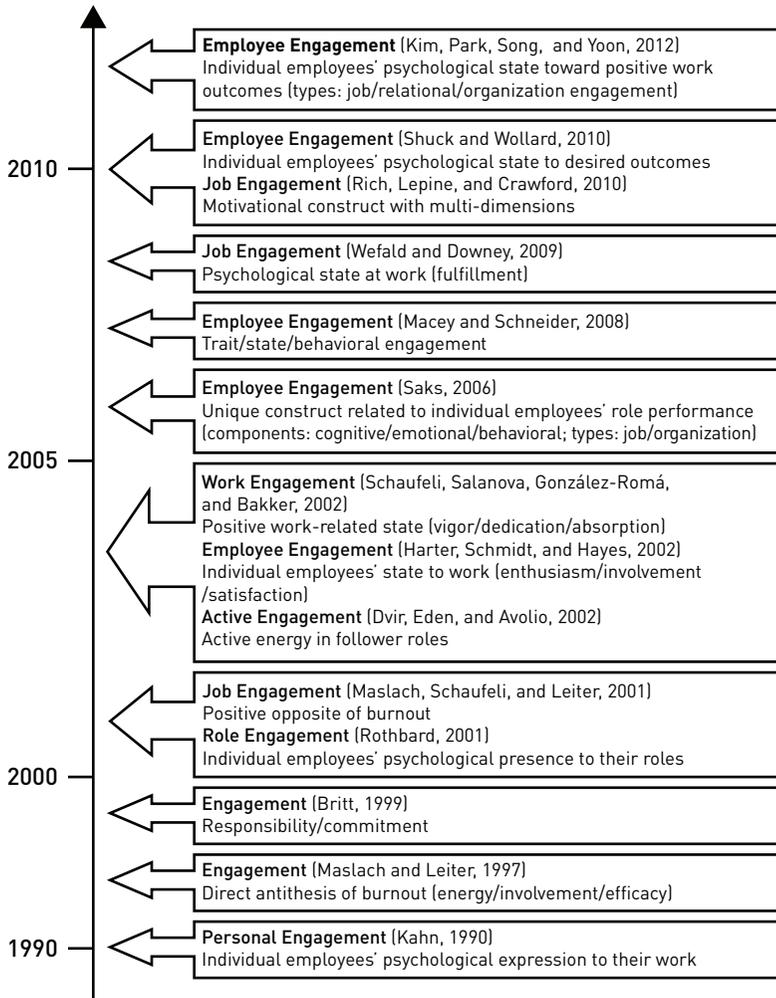
Since the first formal definition of engagement was introduced by Kahn in 1990, many scholars and practitioners have focused on conceptualizing it. Engagement has been described in different ways and has been associated with such varied terms as employee engagement, work engagement, job engagement, role engagement, and active engagement, as shown in Figure 1-1.

Kim, Park, Song, and Yoon (2012, p. 3921) examined the diverse definitions of engagement in Figure 1-1 and revealed three major themes:

- The main scope of employee engagement focuses on work roles, activities, tasks, or behaviors.
- The definition attempts to capture individual employees' psychological states, such as commitment, satisfaction, enthusiasm, fulfillment, involvement, and motivation.
- Core components of the construct are related to organizational consequences (for example, performance).

They also synthesized the definitions of engagement into the following statement: "employee engagement is a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state of an individual employee that crosses three dimensions: job engagement (i.e., with tasks and work), relational engagement (i.e., with people), and organizational engagement (i.e., with an organization) in pursuit of positive work outcomes" (Kim et al., 2012, p. 3924).

Figure 1-1



Employee engagement and work engagement are the most popular of the terms shown in Figure 1-1 and are often used interchangeably by scholars and practitioners (Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Thus, this book does not distinguish between them. The term employee engagement is preferred by the human resources field.

Scholars have different perspectives on engagement and the employee engagement construct seems to be multi-dimensional. In that sense, how one defines employee engagement may depend on how it is perceived in a certain environment. To determine how your organization defines employee engagement, use the guiding questions found in Worksheet 1-1.

Worksheet 1-1: Brainstorming on a Definition of Employee Engagement in Your Organization

Directions: Keeping in mind the diverse definitions of employee engagement offered in Figure 1-1, think about the ways in which your organization or your HR department regards employee engagement and answer the guiding questions.	
Guiding Questions	Write Your Answers
1. Who cares about employee engagement in your organization?	
2. Why does your organization care about employee engagement?	
3. How do you care about employee engagement? What kind of policies, strategies, or activities do you currently implement or plan to implement for employee engagement?	
4. What might be the important factors that contribute to employee engagement in your organization? (List at least three factors.)	
5. Based on the four earlier questions, what does employee engagement mean to your organization?	

Types of Employee Engagement

Most definitions and studies regarding employee engagement conceptualize it as a singular concept, but other perspectives see it as a multiple concept. For Saks (2006) employee engagement is comprised of job engagement and organizational engagement. Macey and Schneider (2008) described it in terms of trait, state, and behavioral aspects.

Kim et al. (2012) divided employee engagement into three core dimensions: job engagement, relational engagement, and organizational engagement. They explained that job engagement is a task-oriented dimension focusing on the engagement between individual employees and their tasks and work; relational engagement has people-oriented dimensions focusing on engagement among people's relationships; and organizational engagement is an organization-oriented dimension focusing on engagement between individual employees and their organization.

When it comes to the timeframe perspectives of employee engagement, Sonnentag, Dormann, and Demerouti (2010) explained work engagement as occurring during a specific moment or short-time period, and trait work engagement (that is, general work engagement) as a state that occurs over a longer timeframe. While many research studies focus on general work engagement, others have targeted specific timeframes for employee engagement, such as daily employee engagement and weekly employee engagement (Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2009; Bakker and Bal, 2010).

Core Components of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement can take many forms. In the literature, most definitions of employee engagement are described in association with affective (or emotional), behavioral (or physical), and cognitive components

(Kahn, 1990; Kim et al., 2012; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Rich, Lepine, and Crawford, 2010; Saks, 2006; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). In addition, Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) further characterized employee engagement as vigor (high levels of energy and mental resilience), dedication (sense of significance and enthusiasm), and absorption (fully concentrated and deeply engrossed).

The Evolution of Employee Engagement

Understanding the concept of engagement and examining its relationships with other research variables in which organizations are interested has been evolving since 1990. Looking at where empirical studies have been and where they need to move forward would be more beneficial for us to effectively apply the concept and its influences to the workplace.

Empirical Research

Even though the term engagement was coined and introduced by Kahn in 1990, it received very little attention from researchers until early 2000 (Shuck and Wollard, 2010). Since then, much effort has been put into understanding and studying the subject. In an integrative literature review Shuck (2011) found four primary approaches: need-satisfying (Kahn, 1990), burnout-antithesis (Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter, 2001), satisfaction-engagement (Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes, 2002), and multi-dimensional (Saks, 2006).

In another empirical literature review, Kim, Kolb et al. (2012) focused on the relationship between work engagement and performance. After examining 20 empirical studies, they found that 11 had reported either a direct or indirect relationship between engagement and performance,

seven examined work engagement as a mediator, and two examined the relationship mediated by another variable.

Furthermore, Kim et al. (2012) investigated 31 empirical studies on employee engagement and reported that almost half (14 studies) investigated employee engagement as a mediator, 12 looked at employee engagement as either an antecedent or a consequence, and five investigated employee engagement as both an antecedent and a consequence. They also found that employee engagement could be anticipated in advance and enhanced through the efforts of individual employees and their organizations by providing job resources and personal resources, and they concluded that employees' improved engagement would have a positive relationship with organizational outcomes, such as job performance (in-role and extra-role) and lower turnover intention.

Future Research

Despite the importance and popularity of employee engagement in organizations, there have not been many empirical studies on the topic (Saks, 2006; Shuck and Wollard, 2010). In the future, more effort should be made to clearly and comprehensively explain the subject, so as to help organizations facilitate and maintain their employees' engagement by providing and supporting appropriate resources. Scholars believe that these activities will lead to more positive organizational outcomes. Although instruments have been developed to measure employee engagement, including the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli et al., 2002), some have reliability and validity issues and others have issues with measuring preconditions of employee engagement (Jeung, 2011). Therefore, more attention should be paid to developing and measuring employee engagement in a robust manner.

Antecedents and Impacts of Employee Engagement

The antecedents of employee engagement could be any variables or constructs that might have an influence on employee engagement either directly or indirectly. Bakker and Demerouti (2008) described job resources and personal resources as antecedents of employee engagement through the job demands-resources (JD-R) model of work engagement. They maintained that sufficient job resources (for example, autonomy, feedback, and coaching) and appropriate personal resources (such as, optimism and self-efficacy) could help to enhance work engagement. Recently, Wollard and Shuck (2011) further attempted to comprehensively identify antecedents of employee engagement by reviewing extant literature and classifying the antecedents into two types—individual and organizational. They reported 42 antecedents: 21 were individual-level antecedents (such as, value congruence, motivation, and self-esteem) and 21 were organizational-level antecedents (for example, leadership, organizational rewards, and organizational culture).

Because these antecedents could be regarded as key predictors of individual employee engagement, an organization's HR department may want to consider them when establishing any engagement-related HR policies or developing activities to enhance employee engagement.

Researchers have revealed the positive impact employee engagement has on various organizational outcomes. For instance, employee engagement influences:

- organizational or individual performance (Bakker and Bal, 2010; Bakker and Demerouti, 2009; Halbesleben and Wheeler, 2008; Harter et al., 2002; Medlin and Green, 2009; Rich et al., 2010)

- self-efficacy (Luthans and Peterson, 2002; Richardsen, Burke, and Martinussen, 2006)
- turnover intention (Jones and Harter, 2005; Koyuncu, Burke, and Fiksenbaum, 2006; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004; Wefald et al., 2011)
- psychological or mental health (Koyuncu et al., 2006; Laschinger and Finegan, 2005)
- job satisfaction (Koyuncu et al., 2006; Saks, 2006; Wefald et al., 2011)
- absenteeism (Schaufeli, Bakker, and Rhenen, 2009)
- employee creativity (Zhang and Bartol, 2010)
- proactive behavior (Salanova and Schaufeli, 2008; Sonnentag, 2003)
- organizational commitment (Hakanen, Bakker, and Schaufeli, 2006; Llorens, Bakker, Schaufeli, and Salanova, 2006)
- organizational citizenship behavior (Rich et al., 2010; Saks, 2006).

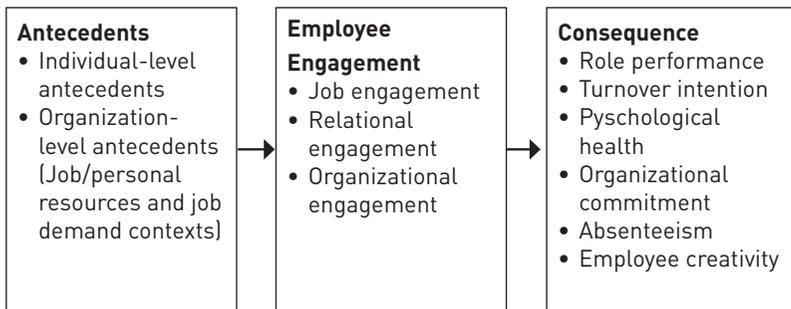
Conceptual Model of Employee Engagement

Bakker and Demerouti (2008) suggested a notable conceptual model of employee engagement known as the JD-R model, which consists of work engagement, its antecedents, and impacts.

However, we suggest using an integrated conceptual model of employee engagement, which is based on the antecedents and impacts of employee engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Wollard and Shuck, 2011). The suggested conceptual model framework (Figure 1-2) is comprised of employee engagement as a mediator, between its antecedents (the independent variables) and its impacts (the dependent variables). In this model employee engagement is comprised of three

dimensions—job engagement, relational engagement, and organizational engagement—which are based on the definition from Kim et al. (2012). In addition, the antecedents consist of individual antecedents and organizational antecedents (Wollard and Shuck, 2011), and are related to job and personal resources as well as job demands. Impacts include diverse constructs (for example, in- or extra-role performance, turnover intention, employee creativity, and psychological/mental health) based on the extant empirical research, as described in the previous section.

Figure 1-2: Conceptual Model of Employee Engagement



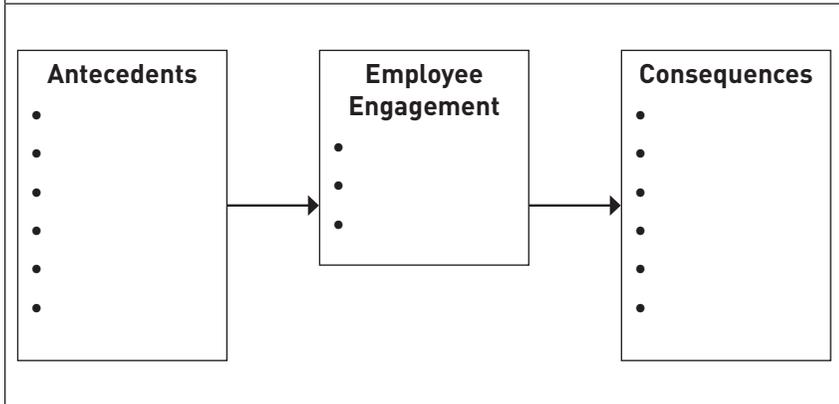
Antecedent variables in the conceptual model framework are the factors that may predict and either positively or negatively influence the engagement of individual employees in an organization, as well as explain a wide-range of outcomes that would directly and indirectly improve organizational effectiveness. Organizations may apply the relationships in this model to the workplace in order to help, facilitate, and maintain employee engagement. For example, if organizations provide their employees with clear expectations and performance feedback (organizational antecedents) and help them maintain or improve self-efficacy and work-life balance (individual antecedents), employees will be

engaged in what they do, have better in-role and extra-role performances, and experience lower turnover intention.

This conceptual model provides a basic framework for explaining how employee engagement is influenced and managed, and thus could have an impact on desired organizational outcomes. If your organization is interested in particular antecedents and consequences regarding employee engagement, you can use Worksheets 1-2 and 1-3 to create a customized model of employee engagement for your organization.

Worksheet 1-2: Employee Engagement Model in Your Organization

Directions: Based on antecedents and consequences of employee engagement in which your organization is interested or emphasizes, create your organization's own employee engagement model.



Worksheet 1-3: Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement in Your Organization

Directions: Based on the suggested conceptual framework of employee engagement in Figure 1-1, think about what your organization is interested in or emphasizes regarding antecedents and consequences of employee engagement and list them here. In addition, write down any organizational policies, strategies, and/or activities pertinent to employee engagement that have been implemented by your organization.

Antecedents of Employee Engagement	Consequences of Employee Engagement	Organizational Policies, Strategies, or Activities Related to Employee Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••