

# Quality info

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## **A focus on employee engagement is one of the biggest trends**

A young lawyer working late into the night because it is expected of him. The small business owner is unable to sleep because his customer is late with a payment. The freelance designer scapegoated for the corporation's ever changing brief. The account manager driven crazy by bureaucracy. The doctor trying to save lives with ever diminishing budget. Ship's captain trying to meet the arrival deadline because of adverse weather.

Work stress- in all its different forms-is everywhere. Some have it worse than others but we can all relate. Even if you work for yourself, even if you are the boss, there's always someone higher up, the allegorical chequebook- waiver, hovering over you ready to make or break the day.

Up until quite recently, this was as accepted as what's called Life. Go on with it .But with many feeling the opposite-that in fact their lives are being put on hold for sake of their work-in the new digital world of increasing transparency and heightened expectations, the workers are revolting. Today, to attract and keep the best talent, the onus is on organisations to provide a productive, engaging and –yes- enjoyable experience.

For decades now, businesses have been driven by keeping their customers happy. But just as marketing and product teams have moved beyond customer satisfaction to look at total customer experience, so too, has an enormous opportunity been spotted to improve that of the workforce. And as well as luring discerning Millennial talent into the fold, it surprisingly turns out that staff that who are better looked after are better at their jobs too.

According to Deloitte's 2017 Global Human Capital Report, a new focus on employee engagement is one the biggest trends in business in decades. Deloitte says that executives and communicators know that an engaged, pleasant work environment is a top priority for employees, but how to create it is the big question.

It's not as easy as adding a nice kitchen and designer soft seating to an area of the office. Table football or lunchtime yoga class? Not enough. An interesting talk programme? A generous bonus scheme? 'Fun' teambuilding exercises? Hmmm... I have recently been working with an advisory guru who has recently co-founded a new venture on this subject. "The mistake many businesses make is in confusing the word 'engaged' with 'happy'".

Happy employees may be paid well, have lot of perks and time off but they are not necessarily any better at their jobs. Of course, people are at their best when they are free to be themselves and to take pleasure in their life and work. This shines back in their performance. But fostering genuine motivation to do well is more complex.”

They have identified a set of ‘golden rules’-actions that are essential to positive employee experience and that in various ways encourage employers to listen to, .respect and acknowledge the contributions of their people at every level. This is bigger, says the advisor, than HR. “Employee engagement has such an impact within a company that it should have complete attention, support and drive from top management. It should be considered an investment. An employee aligned with his/her organisation’s corporate strategy and values creates 30 per cent better results for the company.”

Given all the apps targeted at productivity, engagement, wellness and feedback, as well as a plethora of free online communication resources, there have never been more tools at employer’s disposal-as long as they are willing to allocate resources to the cause and prioritise it. We used to prioritise our stakeholders and shareholders first, customers second and employees third, says an executive quoted by Deloitte. “We now realize we had it backwards, If we put employees first, they in turn take care of our customers, and they in turn take care of our shareholders.”

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