


**EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN THE TIME OF CRISIS**

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**Abstract:**

*It is crucial to retain employees which are selected through rigorous selection procedure by HR. Employees are given training to achieve vision, mission and goals of the organization. Employee should be given responsibility with authority to work on the task independently. There are various types of crisis which are natural, man-made, created, political, social, economic and business related aspects. Crisis should be handled carefully and professionally as per the crisis management policy. Employee Engagement gives sense of belongingness to employee so that the employee will feel happy, satisfied, committed, healthy, responsible, safe, caring etc. This is to understand whether Employee Engagement will have same or different impact on the employees during crisis situation because employer limits their expenditure on certain types of expenses and employee welfare is one of them, hence the employees are given intangible rewards in form of appreciation and job enrichment.*

**Key words:** *Crisis, Employee Engagement, Intangible Rewards, Organization.*



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**Introduction**

Every person is busy through-out his life doing something or the other. During the childhood, he is busy learning new things from parents, teachers, class-mates, neighbours, relatives. The child is engaged in an activities like study, play, learn new things either by experience or observations etc. When he attains adulthood, he start focusing on career and get engaged in acquiring necessary qualification and skills. As the age progresses, he tries to achieve things



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what he has been dreaming of. He tries to set up his family and get engaged with new responsibilities of raising children. Every person wishes that he should achieve what all he wanted to. Post retirement from work also he is busy with some activities which keeps him busy, either by doing things of his choice or providing support to his family. Man throughout his life learning new things and engaged with some activities, may be for money or for pleasure.

So “engagement” is a part of life and at every stage of life the nature of activities keep changing. Employee is a person who has accepted to work for an organization or a person for consideration either in terms of money or otherwise. When an employee during the employment tries to fulfil his duties to the satisfaction of his employer, the employee obviously expects feedback in return, that could be either tangible or intangible e.g. money, hike in salary, rewards, perks, awards, gift, prizes, praises, promotion, upgradation etc.

### **Objectives & Research Methodology**

The present paper aims to understand the basic concept of what impact will have on employee engagement at the time of crisis situation. This paper is based upon understanding under which situation and to what extent the employee engagement is compromised during the period of crisis to the organization. Secondary data is collected from various websites, journals, articles and books. The study on employee engagement in crisis situation could not be viewed in any of the reference materials.

### **General Practice of Employment**

Employees are selected through rigorous selection procedure by HR. HR appoints suitable or appropriate candidate to the satisfaction of the required department. HR in consultation with the concerned department head, places the selected candidate in appropriate position. HR is responsible for completing joining formalities and induction. Once the employee is joined the organisation, it becomes responsibility of individual managers to train the employee, provide guidance and assistance in working wherever required, to measure his performance, to observe behaviour of that employee in group/team, to give feedback and advices on deficiencies of employee in working, to assess the progress and give proper training and instructions, to give awards/rewards for good work, encourage for doing good work and for showing involvement in the work, to provide opportunity to deserving employee

for growth and promotion, to provide conducive working environment, to give opportunity to learn and implement new methods in work, to give authority to do activities under his leadership and see whether he is able to carry the responsibilities shouldered on him, put that employee under refresher course periodically for updating his knowledge. This way the journey of an employee in an organisation goes on and employee progresses over a period of time.

### Need for Employee Engagement

Every organisation has vision, mission and goals. Employer wants every employee to work hard to achieve the goals that helps in progressing the organization. Every employee is expected to fulfil his part of duty diligently so that the productivity enhances. Employee Engagement is a continuous process in employer-employee relation.

#### Stagewise employment process from joining till growth in the company



Employer wants good employees should continue to work well and give best performance for the progress of the organization. Employer endeavours to provide all work related support and facilities to employee to do better jobs so that the employee remains involved in the work



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and enhances productivity. Employer gets new machines, equipment and mechanism, develops work process, creates work strategy and structure, implement SOPs and provide training to employees. Though these things alone are not enough for growth of the organization and it requires some enthusiasm in employee to work as per the expectations of the employer. So employer should understand that beyond these things, there are other material requirements that employee expects at personal level and at professional level. As we talk about professional level, then the reward and recognition plays important role. Every employee tries to work hard and give best of his abilities and expects that the management should recognize his good work and reward him suitably. For employee the workplace becomes pleasurable, when he gets respect for his presence and good work. Reward cannot be always expected in terms of money, giving credit for good contribution in the work or recognizing the efforts and supporting the employee in achieving the target is also counted as rewards and appreciated by employees. Every employee is first human being and has ego, super-ego and hence it is always better for employer to consider every employee as individual human being and treat them individually when rewarding and recognizing. If the employer is expecting higher output from employee, then it is the duty of employer to see that the employee is met with all expectations as far as work related tools and equipment are concerned. Employee is aware that he is expected to complete his tasks and duties diligently when all required facilities are provided and there is no deficiency in any support from employer.

Though the employer is providing all expected support and facilities to enable the employee to perform his task professionally, but it is also required that the employer should be concerned about individual employee to be rewarded at individual level. What is important for every employee is money that he gets in return for the work that he is doing in the organization. Employee is expecting that he should be compensated appropriately in exchange of what efforts he is putting in for fulfilment of his job in the organization. Employee will remain happy and perform best until his interest is maintained by the employer not only by recognizing his work but also by compensating enough in monetary terms for his efforts. Generally hike in salary, perks, upgradation and increment are the factors which encourages employee but at times when the employee reaches a stage where position and



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designation matters for recognizing employee's good work, then no other compensation matters much. Employer should have healthy and cordial relation with employee to keep the morale of employee up and high. Unless the employee is kept warm and comfortable, he will not put his 100% efforts to achieve the goals of the organization inspite of the fact that the employer has provided all required facilities to the employee for completing the work diligently.

### **Modes of achieving Employee Engagement**

Manager should know strength and weakness of every employee working under him. Accordingly the employee should be assigned the work and required training. Employee should be allowed to do the work independently under the supervision of his manager so that the employee will feel that he is responsible to complete the work. This kind of delegation shall gain confidence in the employee. This confidence boost the performance of employee and the employee start taking more interest in the work. Employee should be given opportunity to prove their skills and wherever and whenever required he should be provided training and support. Employee should feel that his contribution in the work is leading towards progress of the company and he feels satisfied for his efforts in delivering best performance.

There could be many reasons that inspite of giving training, support, opportunity and comfort in the work, employee may still feel dissatisfied and resentful. These employee spread negativity in the group and amongst the other employees. It is the duty of the manager to identify such employee, speak with them, if required involve HR Manager to intervene as third party regulator and get that employee out from this depression phase so as to avoid increase in such kind of people in the system and spoils the organization environment. Manager should not control or micromanage employee's work which can cause disengagement from the work, but he should adopt a participative and facilitative style, empowering their employee to get on with the job rather than bogging them down with too much direction.

Organization should have employee welfare schemes. Welfare includes benefits and facilities that is provided over and above wages and keeping wellbeing of family of employee. Welfare helps in keeping the morale and motivation of the employees high so as to retain the





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employees for longer duration. The employee welfare schemes can be classified into two categories viz. statutory and non-statutory welfare schemes. The statutory schemes are those schemes that are compulsory to provide by an organization as compliance to the laws governing employee health and safety. These include provisions provided in industrial acts like Factories Act 1948, The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (with latest amendments), The Employee State Insurance Act, [ESI] 1948, The Employee's Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, The Payment of Bonus Act, 1965.

Employees are provided some statutory facilities such as drinking water, latrines & urinals, sufficient light arrangements, sitting/resting places, working tools, proper ventilation and air-circulation systems, first aid kit, canteen or pantry or eating rooms, lockers for keeping mobile, watches, safety equipment, wallets during working hours, changing rooms, smoking zone, hygiene and sanitization provisions under Covid-19 norms, maternity leaves and medical reimbursement, paternity leaves, crèche for women employee's benefit, sufficient no. of all types of leaves as per the statutory provisions and also providing LTA, also few important and essential provisions such as medi-claim insurance and POSH or sexual harassment prevention policies.

Employer depending upon the nature of business and types of employees can provide following non-statutory benefits such as medical check-up, reimbursement of children's school fees, personal loan at low interest rate, housing loan or subsidy, company arranged vehicle for commuting between office and home, uniforms for office which looks like casual clothing, flexi reporting hours to duty, providing mobile handsets and laptops for use during tenure in the service, arranging one day picnic for employees with their family or visit to the company along with family for Pooja and celebrate the day with entertainment program and gala meal. Gifting employees and families, felicitating good employees or achievers, give prizes for employee children for outstanding performance in exams or other extra-curricular activities. Many organization don't keep their social activities limited to the family members of the employees, but also extend it to the village, town, city or state where it is located for the benefit at large under the CSR. This gives feeling of pride to those employees whose known people get benefitted from these facilities and they talk good about the organization's good work. Example of ONGC, a public undertaking has been doing lots of such activities



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across the country. One of such help that ONGC has provided of school books, desks, chairs to teachers of school near Dharavi where the poor student come to learn in a private school. ONGC also conducts medical camps across the country and through-out the year for natives of remote villages where specialised doctors and hospitals are not available in near vicinity. Tata group of companies have been doing lots of CSR activities as they have separate group of people from the industry working on different projects for different causes. Recently Canon India adopts a village by name Parivali near Mumbai for social development under their CSR project.

### **Types of Crisis**

Organization may come across some unforeseen situations which can cause danger to the existence of the organization. Some may suspend work for temporary period, some may find it difficult to continue the business and some business may close down permanently due to crisis. In any of the above situation, who suffers predominantly are the employees. Employee has a threat of getting salary cut or a threat of losing jobs or lay off and this calamity can create havoc in employee's life. There are various situations which can cause crisis such as natural calamities like Covid-19, heavy and continuous rains for few days, flood, draught, war or war like situation, flood,

There could be few other situations which may be business oriented situations due to which there can be crisis such as cancellation of bulk order and piling of inventory, no movement or demand or sell of products, excess production done earlier and now no more new orders or there is no money that is received from sale of goods or competitor has captured the market, other options or alternate brand or development of new product which is more economical or functionally effective, or unavailability of raw material or any disturbance in machinery which causes lot of rejection of goods. Example of this can be given as one of the leading soap manufacturing companies in India got one new machine mould fitted for new brand of soap. For some unavoidable technical reason, the soap had lot of smooth surface and it was getting slipped from machine frequently leading to stoppage of work and rejection of materials. Another example of one of the famous shoe company whose machine got one small nail got skewed and this has caused huge rejection of production. Ultimately these kind of disturbances causes stoppage of work and financial losses to employees.



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Further there are man-made or created situations, such as strike, slow-down of work, non-cooperation, temporarily created stock out situation, mass prohibition of using some goods due to political or social reasons, transport and custom clearance issues, hoarding of raw materials, ban on import or export of selected materials may be again political or social reasons, etc. Recession due to economic break down can cause lock-out of the industries, automation of process or any adverse decision on import or export by government can cause crisis in the organization.

### **Requirement of Employee Engagement during crisis**

HR will definitely work on Employee Engagement in the organization, but other departments are equally expected to extend all kind of support and keeping all employees morale up and high. All types of crisis will be handled carefully and professionally by HR through experts in the field of crisis management. Every organization has crisis management policy and there could be Covid-19 like situation which was never expected and had any past record and for that one can take help of government guidelines and other international case studies if available. There are numerous examples in the past of those industries who have undergone critical situations due to various reasons and one can study those cases to understand how they have mitigated their problems through various techniques. One of the known example of this is Nokia mobile phone company. When the world was changing from feature phones to smart phones, they did not change their features of mobile and thus started getting extinct in the race. Finally, Microsoft took over the company and started manufacturing smart phones using their own software as operating system (OS). Similarly Kodak also got vanished in the race of electronic camera invented and continue to sale by the competitors. Kodak kept on producing film role camera and paper production which ultimately disregarded by consumers.

Employee engagement is required to increase productivity, work quality and retain top talent. Employee is required to be involved in their work, enthusiastic about the organization they work for, have a sense of belonging and should have flexibility to work at any shift, schedule and location as per the requirement of the organization. Employee are the assets of the company and all development, changes, prosperity, reputation, standard are all revolving around the conduct of the employee. Employee's behaviour, either inside or outside the





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organization, reflect their organization's culture and values. Employee engagement has emerged as a critical driver of business success in today's competitive marketplace. High levels of engagement promote retention of talent, foster customer loyalty and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value.

### **Advantages of Employee Engagement**

Employee Engagement is nothing but giving sense of belongingness to employee so that the employee will feel happy, satisfied, committed, healthy, responsible, safe, caring etc. Engaged employees go above and beyond the basic requirements of their job. HR wants employee engagement because of its immediate benefits in employee retention, recruitment, job satisfaction, and happiness. Engaged employees don't have a reason to look elsewhere for work. Engaged employees care deeply about their jobs, and thus, customers. Engaged employees are healthier employees who positively impacts company's bottom line. They want to own tasks that uses their strengths and have access to opportunities to develop in their roles and career. Employee wants to work for leaders and teams that put people first, value employee contributions, and show integrity. HR should take ownership of employee engagement initiatives and hold other department team heads accountable. Immediate Managers should build good relationships with each employee. He should convey employee's feedback and suggestions to management, recognize and celebrate individual and team performance. Team head should provide continuous performance feedback and help employees develop and grow.

### **Disadvantages of Employee Engagement**

When employees get benefits and facilities as per the Employee Engagement policy of the company, it becomes tough when the organization is going through difficult period. The first thing that the employer does under recession or when the organization is going under hard times is to stop the benefits and facilities that the employee gets. When the company phases difficult times, they want to save money and curtail expenses on welfare and goodwill activities. Employee start feeling pinch of such curtailment and he start worrying about the future of the company. Many employee think that as these kind of situations can lead to closure of organization in worst scenario and hence they start hunting jobs outside. Employee cannot accept the situation that any facility that has been offered is withdrawn by the company



ever and under any circumstances. So these kind of situation downgrade the reputation of the company and no person would like to join such organization when the vacancies arises. So while providing some benefits under employee engagement, the organization must consider that with small marginal hardship faced by the organization such benefits are not withdrawn.

### **Concluding remarks**

Employee Engagement is most important feature of the organization today as dealing with educated and socially worldwide connected employee is not an easy task. Organizations having robust and resilient Employee Engagement policies sustained through the crisis. Employer should be careful while reducing or withdrawing any employee benefit scheme in the crisis situation as it will have negative impact on employees. During the crisis every organization contemplates the depth of crisis and depending upon the severity and longevity of the crisis situation. Unless it is inevitable, the organization shall not reduce or withdraw any non-statutory employee benefit scheme. So it is proved that under the situation of crisis, the employee engagement benefit will be compromised and employee will have to adjust and understand that this reduction or withdrawal of the employee benefit may be temporary and soon as the condition gets improved the benefit will be restored.

### **Future scope of study**

Further research is required to identify which are those benefits and welfare schemes that matters most and which are the types of industries that the researcher will chose for doing this study. Employees of different industries will have different priorities and importance with respect to their facilities and benefit are that they seek and are getting from their organization and also to study which could be the benefits that the employees are ready to compromise with.

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