



# Why helping your employees to learn more about themselves is a better solution to increase and sustain true engagement in your organisation

## Self-aware employees + Clear company goals = Outperforming organisation

Many organisations waste so much money and resources on hiring, developing, retaining, and rewarding "the wrong people." The outcome of these efforts has a huge impact on company results, be it profitability or productivity. Jacob Morgan, in his Harvard Business Review article, "Why the Millions We Spend on Employee Engagement Buy Us So Little" (March 10, 2017), provides compelling data and evidence of a strong correlation between company performance and employee experience. In his opinion, "most initiatives amount to an adrenaline shot. A perk is introduced .... over time the effect wears off." His study illustrates that "there is a significant return to organisations that focus on employee experience over the long term, not just engagement in the here and now."

That said, it is important to recognise that employee experience can mean different things to different people. So, we have to be careful when we use the term "employee experience/engagement." The focus should be

on the issue of "employee vs. employer" alignment if our true intention is to significantly increase organisational performance.

Employee vs. employer alignment has two basic rules:

- Ensure that employees are actually aligned with themselves (i.e., are self-aware).
- With evidence of the first rule in hand, ensure that employees are willing to align with your company's goals.

If these rules are not validated within your organisation, you are wasting valuable resources on costly incentive programmes that might only bring incremental organisational improvement.



### **How Do You Know People Are Aligned With Themselves?**

Obviously, personal alignment/self-awareness is not an easy task, prompting numerous perspectives, thoughts, and insights on the issue. Consequently, there are multiple ways that individuals can reach their destination. Although some will take longer than others, any effort is positive if it helps one to learn more about oneself. After all, a person who remains self-ignorant is not only a danger to that individual but also to society at large – a point that many people do not understand.

Of course, while we cannot expect every person to achieve self-awareness, anyone running a business should know whether the people who are working with them are self-aware. Otherwise, managers simply dwell in a land of wishful thinking, hoping that things will turn out well. In fact, they:

- Hire people and say, hopefully we made a good hire!
- Reward people and say, hopefully they will not leave!
- Train people and say, hopefully they have learned something!
- Promote people to leadership roles and say, hopefully they will lead!

- You must do better than that when you run a business. You need to know if employees and colleagues know their strengths and weaknesses, have certain values, think about their future and actively plan for it, want to contribute, have a personal mission, are compassionate about others, and so on. You also should know whether those personal needs and interest are compatible with your company.
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- Employees and colleagues who have not thought about or are not even thinking about any of these factors are unlikely to contribute to the success of your company. Instead, they will be passive contributors who aim for the bare minimum. Regardless of whatever reward programme you deploy, you will not – and cannot – outperform in the marketplace with individuals who only make the bare minimum of effort. You will continue to waste value and resources for all stakeholders, including those passive contributors.

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- **How Do You Align People vs. Your Company?**

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- Conventional wisdom simply assumes that employees should follow employers' goals if they expect to earn rewards for whatever role they undertake. This wisdom also assumes that the source of the alignment should come from the employer.
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- In reality, it should come from both parties, as a one-dimensional effort does not work – or, at the very least, does not work well. Consider: Would you like to be with people whom you know are indifferent to your presence? Would you enjoy forcing people to behave in a certain way solely due to the influence of your money and the rewards you can offer? These scenarios will not result in positive outcomes over the long-term and will not provide a foundation for outperformance.
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- **What Can You Do Now?**

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- The more that employees are aware of their capabilities and wants, and the more that they align with a company's business requirements (technical and cultural), such companies should outperform the competition. The issue is not whether people like the office environment or their boss, for example – the so-called “employee engagement/experience” per say. The right question to ask is whether employees “know” their capabilities and, thereafter, whether they “like” and “know” what they “want” to do in life. The accompanying question to ask is whether those capabilities and wants match organisational goals.
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- Sincerely, if you really love what you do and you have all it takes to achieve something, do you really care where you work? Think of those people engaged in start-up companies who are enthusiastic about what they do in spite of frequently working in miserable conditions, including garages, rundown offices, and the like. They possess creativity, passion, dedication, and ambition among many other things. Are they disengaged? Absolutely not.
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- As a first step toward moving your organisation on the road to alignment, obtain a data-driven assessment of what is actually happening in your organisation. Discover what percentage of your employees actually “know” what they “want to do” in life and are aligned with what your business wants to achieve. With a clear idea of the situation, think about how you can improve your current state. Start having internal conversations around these questions if you truly want to outperform.
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