

Want to improve employee engagement? Make it part of the performance management process

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The performance management process should evaluate and focus on employee engagement in addition to job performance, according to a paper published from the University of Toronto and University of Guelph. Engagement involves high levels of identification with one's work in terms of attention, absorption and feeling integrated in the performance of one's tasks and roles.

The paper's authors – Professor Alan Saks from the University of Toronto and Professor Jamie Gruman of the University of Guelph – contend performance management should involve an evaluation of employee engagement and that for many companies enhancing employee performance can be best achieved by changing the focus of the performance management process to a focus on the management of employee engagement.

"Many companies do not recognize the importance of employee engagement to organizational performance," says Saks. "Current approaches to increasing engagement in organizations are limited because they are not directed at individual employees and they are not part of the performance management system."

The researchers believe incorporating engagement into performance management is important for improving engagement and performance management. "Engagement helps predict job performance," says

Gruman. "Employees who feel engaged in their tasks do a better job, are less likely to make mistakes, and bring more energy, dedication and vigour into their performance. There is also mounting evidence that higher levels of engagement correlate with lower turnover and less absenteeism. Thus, it makes sense to focus on employee engagement as part of the performance management process."

The paper, published by Human Resource Management Review, outlines three psychological conditions that support personal engagement:

- Psychological meaningfulness – associated with perception that one's role is worthwhile and valuable
- Psychological safety – associated with one's perception of how safe it is to bring oneself to a role without fear of damage to self-image, status or career
- Psychological availability – associated with the physical, emotional and psychological resources that can be brought to a role

Saks says there are concrete steps that organizations and managers can take during the performance management process to foster employee engagement. "Managers should make the changes that each employee needs to experience meaningfulness, safety and feel available to become fully engaged in their work. Some employees might need more autonomy in their work, more challenge, more input, or perhaps more support or training."

According to Saks, "Making [employee engagement](#) part of the [performance management](#) process not only makes it an on-going and constant issue rather than a once-a-year survey, it also signals to employees that it is important and the organization is committed to improving the engagement of its employees."

Provided by University of Toronto

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