

New research sheds light on the best ways to stay engaged at work

April 9 2019



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Employees who have the ability to shape their own role, work collaboratively with their colleagues, and participate in mindfulness activities are more likely to stay engaged at work, new research led by Curtin University has found.

The research, published in the *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, examined the different ways organisations can help their employees stay physically, cognitively and emotionally involved in their work roles.

Lead author Dr. Caroline Knight, from the Future of Work Institute based at Curtin University, said work engagement continued to be an important consideration for many organisations, due to the overwhelming benefits for their employees.

"Employee engagement has been linked to increased wellbeing, organisational commitment, and work performance, but can also contribute to decreased burnout, sickness absence and turnover. It is essential for organisations to have engaged employees in order to remain competitive in the workforce," Dr. Knight said.

"Part of our research looked at whether work initiatives driven by organisations and senior managers such as leadership training, increases in staffing, or improved communication and feedback systems, were as effective on employee engagement rates as those initiated by the employees themselves.

"We found that employees who were encouraged to proactively craft their own jobs, such as by taking on a challenging new work project, learning a new skill, or brainstorming with a colleague to problem solve, were more likely to stay engaged at work."

The research also found that employees who participated in health activities such as mindfulness, stress management, exercise or relaxation programs were more likely to stay engaged at work, as these activities helped to reduce symptoms like stress, anxiety and depression.

Dr. Knight explained that the research findings had important

implications for managers, as they play a key role in making sure their staff are performing at a high level to create maximum impact for the organisation.

"It is important for managers to be supporting and endorsing activities that encourage engagement, as employees may be reluctant to give up their working time to take part in something which they are not sure is endorsed by their manager," Dr. Knight said.

"In addition, work engagement research suggests that employers and managers who are able to provide social support, feedback, and development opportunities for their employees, and help them manage their workload, time pressure, and emotional demands, are more likely to see positive outcomes."

The research, supported by a bursary from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) UK, was co-authored by researchers from Sheffield University Management School in the UK.

More information: Caroline Knight et al. Work engagement interventions can be effective: a systematic review, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* (2019). [DOI: 10.1080/1359432X.2019.1588887](https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2019.1588887)

Provided by Curtin University

Citation: New research sheds light on the best ways to stay engaged at work (2019, April 9) retrieved 19 September 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-04-ways-engaged.html>

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