

## HOLISTIC EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT FOR ACHIEVING PEAK PERFORMANCE AND OVERALL SATISFACTION

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### ABSTRACT

Kahn (1990) defines employee engagement as, “*the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles. In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances*”. Holistic Employee Engagement is a concerted effort to provide conducive working conditions for all the employees to realize their potential talents through peak performance at work for the best satisfaction of themselves with an enhanced sense of their own well-being and to realize the goals and objectives of the organization. Holistic Employee Engagement is a collaborative commitment both by the employee and employer based on the highest levels of mutual trust for common good. Engaged employees tend to give their best performance and achieve higher levels of productivity with increased levels of job satisfaction. There are four levels of engagement viz; Physical, Emotional, Intellectual and Spiritual.

The engagement process may differ from various professions and organizations, however, a few common tools for employee engagement can be used for all types of employees because they all lead a multi-dimensional life, which can be said to be a professional life relating to the workplace, business career; personal life relating to the private, family as well as social life; and a deep inner life pertaining to an individual’s emotional and spiritual quotient. Balancing and engaging at all four levels enhances one’s ability to realize the full potential and peak performance leading to overall satisfaction in work and life.

**KEYWORDS:** Holistic Employee Engagement, Peak Performance, Well-Being

### INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement is a property of the relationship between an organization and its employees. An "engaged employee" is defined as one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and so takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests. Employee engagement first appeared as a concept in management theory in the 1990s, <sup>[1]</sup> becoming widespread in management practice in the 2000s, but it remains contested. It stands in an unspecified relationship to earlier construct such as morale and job satisfaction. Despite academic critiques, and job employee-engagement practices are well established in the management of Human Resources. Organizations fight to recruit and train their talent, so they need to do their best to keep hold of it.

Employee engagement, according to the Corporate Executive Board (2004) is the “extent to which an employee commits to something or someone in the organization and how long they stay as a result of their commitment”.

No one single or a set of theories/concepts/approaches that are available seem to have provided a holistic solution to the challenge of unleashing one's potential talent and realizing one's holistic engagement. Hence, more and more people and organizations across the globe now seem to be looking towards spirituality and holistic approaches of the East, particularly the rich and ancient scriptural wisdom of India for igniting the genius within/unleashing the potential, actualizing the Self and managing their work, lives and people better.

Traditionally, small and large Indian organizations have either consciously or un- consciously followed the holistic Dharmic and Karmic approaches in running their businesses and managing people for a long time. Indians have cracked the contented way of living and letting others live for over many centuries. The Indian work ethic has been one based on loyalty and commitment to one's own duty, as one's own Dharma (SWADHARMA) as an employee and employer and primarily contented with and not over ambitious. Entrepreneurs have been predominantly philanthropic in their approach to business like TATAs and Birlas. Purpose of business is not only for profit, but also pursued with the highest levels of Corporate Social Responsibility.

These organizations could win life time loyalties and retain employees for a longer time by taking care of their overall welfare. Employees had a stronger sense of belongingness, ownership, duty mindedness, balanced approach to life (SAMATWA) and satisfaction. Whereas the current global corporations seem to be struggling to attract, engage and retain the talent in spite of their so called mastery over scientific management principles and practices. HR & OD related strategic decisions related to people cannot either be totally based on hard scientific logic or on hunches and gut feelings or even on soft spiritual beliefs, but may be better done as a combination of all. For many centuries Indians have learnt, mastered, led and managed many lives in all spheres of life in a holistic and a blissful manner based on the ancient scriptural wisdom.

Principles like 'Swadharma' (Duty mindedness), action), 'Samatwa' (Balanced Mind) and 'Nishkaama Karma' (Desire less Action) have been ingrained in the souls of generations of individuals and leaders who have lead and guided peaceful and effective living and overall well-being. They have cracked the dilemma between (Material) Success and (Spiritual) Satisfaction. Hence, it is prudent to study and understand the importance and efficacy of holistic employee engagement with a special significance to the emerging concept of spiritual engagement to unleash the full potential and for achieving peak performance at work and to pursue a stress-free, satisfied, contented and fulfilling work-life balance.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Employee Engagement is a workplace approach resulting in the right conditions for all members of an organization to give their best each day. Employee Engagement is based on trust, integrity, a two-way commitment and communication between an organization and its members. It is an approach that increases the chances of business success, contributing to organizational and individual performance, productivity and well-being.

Research by Gallup has found low to moderate correlations between employee engagement and a range of outcome measures, including customer satisfaction, profit, productivity, turnover and safety.

From an employer's point of view, employee engagement is concerned with using new measures and initiatives to increase the positive emotional attachment felt and therefore productivity and overall business success. An engaged workforce produces better business results, does not hop jobs and more importantly, is an ambassador of the organization at all points of time.

Engaged employees are perceived to form a part of an organization's brand and an engaged, happy workforce can have a knock-on effect on customer retention, recruitment of key talent and the ability to attract new customers in a world where a company's value is crucial to the consumers.

The definitions, as seen, focus on the employer as well as the employee. Today's millennial workforce is more informed, connected, willing to work given learning opportunities. Personal growth, opportunities to learn and explore is becoming a primary driver. Equity more than pay is a driving force. Catering to the changing needs to foster engaged employees is the need of the hour.

Thus, an engaged employee is someone who thinks hard about their work, feels positive when they do a good job and discusses work related matters and improves those around them.

## **TYPES OF ENGAGEMENT**

### **Physical Engagement**

Today's organization seeks greater levels of commitment, production, and efficiency of employees, at the same time it is expected that they must begin to care for the whole person (Bell and Taylor, 2001). "To thrive in contemporary and dynamic business environment, organizations require employees to be more productive, proactive, innovative, smart working, and totally engaging with their role and remain committed to performing to their potential (Bakker and Leiter, 2010). Physical Work engagement is the engagement of psycho motor abilities and skills as a "positive, fulfilling work related state of mind that is characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption".

While Vigour refers to high levels of physical energy at work, Dedication is intense involvement at work encompasses feelings of inspiration, pride, enthusiasm, significance and challenge. The final dimension of engagement is absorption, characterized as being totally focused on one's work such that one is absolutely immersed one with the work and seeks joy of working with complete involvement.

### **Emotional Engagement**

The phrase 'emotional engagement' has been found in the engagement literature since the early 1990s, beginning with the work of William Kahn, who first identified engagement on the part of employees. Kahn (1990) said 'personal engagement' has three dimensions – cognitive, affective (or emotional) and physical.

The emotional components (or beliefs) define employee's positive attitude, how they "feel" about their employer, company's values, leaders and working conditions (Kahn, 1990; Towers Perrin, 2003; Robinson et al. 2004)

He saw emotional engagement very much in terms of people empathizing with others at work, or feeling satisfaction/dissatisfaction with their performance. So, for example, he described how a diving instructor 'employed himself emotionally, in empathizing with the fear and excitement of the young divers.'

Engagement can be influenced by negative emotional experiences at work. These could include frustration and exhaustion with the inability to complete a task to a level of personal satisfaction or being exhausted with having to respond to diverse demands of many different people. Kahn also proposed that the three dimensions of engagement are arranged in a hierarchy, with emotional engagement as the 'deepest' level, which underscores that for him 'emotional engagement' is only one dimension of overall engagement., it should now be clear that psychological well-being is important for employees. In fact, it may be even more important for employers and organizations. Emotional Engagement

is a powerful connection between one's true emotions, thoughts and feelings with the job (Khan 1990) leading to feelings of enthusiasm and pride.

### **Intellectual Engagement**

Intellectual engagement also typically known as IQ is defined as "personal psychological and cognitive investment in learning." and refers to the degree to which employees are invested in their work. Employees who are intellectually engaged will go the extra mile, rather than just exerting the minimum physical effort. They will constantly look for better ways to get things done. They are self-motivated. Disengaged employees think about other things while they are at work, while intellectually engaged employees think about work while they are doing other things. Not only that, but they are happy to expend their discretionary effort because they feel valued and know that their contributions matter. This type of engagement is more related to the 'Buddhi' the intellect which is the controller of human emotions and hence considered as the next best level of engagement.

### **Spiritual Engagement**

In today's organization, professionals consider having meaningful work, good working conditions or work itself, earning, and supportive peers as the most influential factor for their stability and professional growth (Mitroff and Denton 1999).

Workplace spirituality is defined as the work situation by which leader and follower has high spirit toward work completion and achievement of organization objectives.

Employee engagement (May et al, 2004) and spiritual intelligence (Gardner, 1993), are important concepts to consider when dealing with changes at work and improving performance.

Mitroff and Denton (1999a) has argued that today's organizations are suffering from a deep spiritual emptiness and many work related problems in organizations are potentially resulting from this spiritual impoverishment.

Robert, et al (2006) indicated that *spiritual wellbeing*, *religious well-being*. And *existential well-being* had an impact to job satisfaction.

Similarly, Garcia-Zamor (2003a, pp. 331-332) states that there has been sizeable empirical evidence supporting that workplace spirituality creates a new kind of corporate culture in which employees feel happier and are encouraged to perform better.

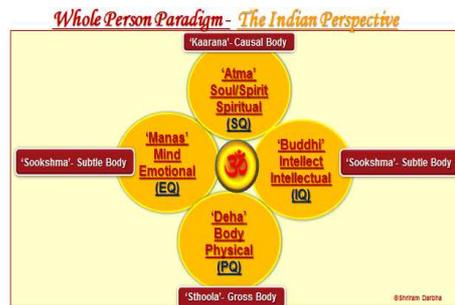
Research has highlighted many positive aspects related to workplace spirituality whereby both organizations and individuals are benefited.

An extended definition of the construct was provided by Marques (2005) who defined workplace spirituality as "an experience of interconnectedness and trust among those involved in a work process, engendered by individual goodwill, leading to the collective creation of a motivational, organizational culture, epitomized by reciprocity and solidarity; and resulting in enhanced overall performance, which is ultimately translated in lasting organizational excellence".

A person's spirit is the vital principle or animating force traditionally believed to be the intangible, life-affirming force within all human beings. It is a state of intimate relationship with the inner self of higher values and

morality as well as recognition of the truth of the inner nature of others. Today, many individuals are struggling with what their spirituality means for their work since this is where they spend the vast majority of their waking hours. The office is now where more and more people eat, exercise, date, drop their kids, and even nap. Many naturally look to their organizations as a communal center because they lack the continuity and connection found in other settings. Moreover, recent polls have found that American managers and leaders want a deeper sense of meaning and fulfillment on the job even more than they want money and time off. Thus Spiritual engagement (SQ) with a clear purpose and meaning in whatever activity and pursuit one is engaged in ensuring overall and total involvement of all the above three aspects of PQ/EQ/IQ in a holistic manner to achieve peak performance.

**Conceptual Framework and Discussion**



**Figure 1: Whole Person Paradigm – The Indian Perspective**

<b>PQ</b>	<b>DEVELOPING THE THREE MAIN COMPONENTS OF PHYSICAL INTELLIGENCE (PQ)</b>	<b>IQ</b>	<b>DEVELOPING THE THREE MAIN COMPONENTS OF MENTAL INTELLIGENCE (IQ)</b>
	Wise Nutrition		Continuous, Systematic, Disciplined Study and Education
	Consistent, Balanced Exercise		Cultivation of Self-Awareness (Making Assumptions Explicit)
	Proper Rest, Relaxation, Stress Management, and Prevention Thinking		Learning by Teaching and Doing
<b>EQ</b>	<b>THE FIVE MAIN COMPONENTS OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE (EQ)</b>	<b>SQ</b>	<b>DEVELOPING THE THREE MAIN COMPONENTS OF SPIRITUAL INTELLIGENCE (SQ)</b>
	Self-Awareness		Integrity (Being true to one's highest values and Conscience)
	Personal Motivation		Meaning (A sense of contribution to people and causes)
	Self-Regulation		Voice (Aligning work with one's unique calling and gifts)
	Empathy		
	Social and Communication Skills		

*Source: 8<sup>th</sup> Habit by Stephen Covey*

**Figure 2: Nurturing PQ, IQ, EQ, SQ**

**Holistic Paradigm and Levels of Individual Existence**

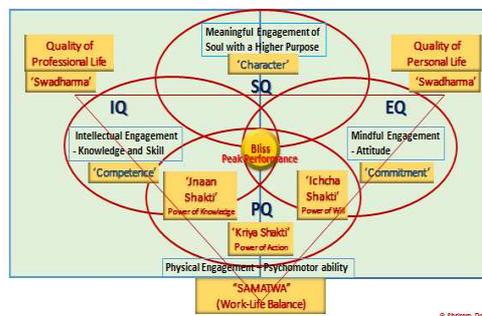
An individual can exist on various levels. We play multiple roles both in personal and professional lives. We are endowed with four unique intelligences or quotients as human beings. Overall effectiveness is based on holistic balance of all the four intelligences. Stephen Covey in his bestselling book the '8<sup>th</sup> habit' has also enumerated each of the quotients as in the above figure-2.

The first and the outermost part is the physical body or the gross body (Sthoola Deha). This physical quotient (PQ) is all about how to positively use the level of body energy you have. It is a foundational element to living a balanced life. Without energy we have very little initiative and ambition. We become complacent, lazy and at times apathetic. Understanding why this matters is critical. Making more informed choices in the sea of temptations is based on educating yourself and being sold on the long term benefits of preventive maintenance. There are hundreds of different paths to achieving higher levels of energy and fit such as healthy and wise consumption of food, consistent and balanced exercise

along with engaging in proper rest relaxation and stress management activities. They say that ‘sound mind in a sound body’ hence taking care of the physical health and well-being of the body and effectively engaging the physical energy to carry out the psychomotor activities on the given job is the first step in the holistic engagement. But the engagements of sensory organs are always at the prompting and the stimulation of the mind at the subtle level.

The next level of existence is the intangible subtle body (Sookshma Deha) consisting two most important aspects of Mind (Manas) governing the Emotions and the Intellect (Buddhi) directing and controlling the Mind. The IQ (Intelligence Quotient) is the level of human intelligence. We must continue to learn and accumulate knowledge at all times and not only from books but also from other sources like social and spiritual learning. To develop and enhance one’s intelligence there is a need for systematic and disciplined education and garnering knowledge both by way of studying, continuous learning and teaching (Adhyayan and Adhyaapan). The second part of the subtle body is the Emotional Quotient related to the Mind. Emotional Quotient (EQ) is different from the Intelligence Quotient (IQ). EQ is a measure of one’s emotional intelligence. Emotional Quotient thus is the ability to sense, understand and effectively apply the power and acumen of emotions to facilitate high levels of collaboration and productivity. In the business environment, Emotional Quotient and Emotional Intelligence are essential to leverage the awareness of emotions for interpersonal effectiveness. Five main components of EQ/Emotional Intelligence as per Daniel Goleman are; *Self-Awareness, Personal Motivation, Self-regulation, Empathy and Social skills*.

The third and the final level of an individual’s existence is the Causal body or the ‘Kaarana Deha’, where the spirit and the Soul are at conscious work. Thus to be 'spiritual' is to think, act and interact from an awareness of self as a spirit and not a bodily form. We humans mostly believe that we are our physical/material forms, by identifying ourselves with our body by the name, form, colour, nationality, race, religion, gender, profession, title, designation, etc. This wrong sense of self is what creates all fear, anger and sadness in life due to attachment. From a spiritual point of view these emotions are always the result of Ego (Ahankar /mis identification), which then blocks access to one’s true spiritual nature which is the same part of universal consciousness and bliss. Awareness of that truth about us being essential part and form of the same Spirit which has infinite potential releases us of all worldly and materialistic bondage. Such conscious awareness is the Spiritual Quotient (SQ). The three components of SQ are: *Integrity- Being true to one’s highest values and conscience*; *Meaning- A sense of contribution, to the people and the causes*; and *identifying and listening to one’s own internal calling/prompt or ‘Voice’- Aligning work with one’s unique calling and gifts*. All the four unique endowments of human existence as enumerated above have been depicted in the figure below.



**Figure 4: Holistic Employee Engagement Model by Shriram Darbha**

The above model has been developed by the author showing that an employee can be engaged at different levels. The fundamental premise based on the fact of life is that, we all lead multiple aspects of life and we all play multiple roles,

broadly dividable as, professional and personal lives. In the context of work and holistic employee engagement, it can begin from being only physical engagement which puts to use only the psychomotor skills of an employee called “Kriya Shakti” (the power of action). Further, there can be complex forms of engagement in the work by involving intellectual engagement (Jnaan Shakti) of an employee at work which along with the psychomotor skills will build the skills of an employee enhancing their ‘Competence’. This could be enriched by adding the emotional involvement (Ichcha Shakti) of the employee which reflects his ‘Commitment’, with a sense of duty mindedness (*Swadharna*) and will to perform to the best of one’s potential and in building of one’s ‘Character’. The holistic employee engagement can be achieved by meaningful engagement of one’s soul into work with a higher purpose of his contribution to the society than for the mere selfish purpose. The resultant outcome of this holistic employee engagement can be the attainment of equilibrium between work and life or ‘*Samatwa*’ and thereby achieve peak performance and overall satisfaction and bliss in life.

## CONCLUSIONS

Employee engagement is concerned with the emotional, cognitive and physical aspects of work and how these factors combine. The concept of employee engagement should not be considered just another fluffy HR initiative. Holistically engaged employees at work and committed to their organizations tend to give their best to the growth and development of their own selves and the organizations on longer term linked to core aspects of the business such as, values, culture and managerial philosophy. Employee engagement can be seen to have four elements, the cognitive, the physical, emotional and then spiritual. Due to the fact that employee engagement is a multifunctional concept comprising interacting elements, strengthens the argument that a manager cannot force an employee to be engaged. Employees need to be immersed in a working environment which will entice them to display the discretionary behaviour that organizations are seeking. An organization that wants to increase engagement levels will attempt to foster the factors which have a positive effect of engagement through every business activity they perform.

The ancient Indian scriptural wisdom perspectives discussed in the above framework of holistic employee engagement will surely be helpful in effectively engaging the full selves of the employees in achieving peak performance and overall satisfaction in all aspects of both personal and professional lives.

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