

The Power of Employee Engagement and Experience



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Executive Summary

This study is based on a combination of direct experience working with organizations developing and executing engagement surveys, as well as extensive literature research. This whitepaper was written in response to the increased devotion of organizational resources to improving employee engagement. It is an argument for the power of engagement as a reflection of the employee experience and against the emphasis on assessing engagement through surveys and improving engagement through isolated events and one-off 'fun' activities.

Since this whitepaper was initially written in 2010, I have learned that employee engagement cannot successfully be defined by a singular activity, but rather a reflection of the ongoing experience that the employees have had within the organization. As such, attention has to be paid to this issue every day; it is a continuing process of evolution and growth.

When this paper was initially written, it focused on the importance of employee engagement without the understanding that the employee engagement score is only a momentary reflection of the employee experience.

Although employee experience and employee engagement are inseparably linked, it is becoming profusely clear that companies concentrated on **EE alone** haven't been doing enough to recognize the factors motivating it, **EX** principal among them.

My thinking on EE has evolved to understand that employee engagement is witnessed or manifests itself in the form of the discretionary effort of the employee. This effort is granted because of four main factors:

1. They feel respected by their manager
2. They feel respected by leadership
3. They trust their manager
4. They trust the leadership

Engagement frequently is defined as "getting the most out of employees." The research of this paper determines that there is little agreement on the definition of the concept of employee engagement. This lack of agreement invalidates many assessments of engagement and sabotages much of the work done to improve those scores.

Further difficulties are encountered because engagement surveys rarely take into account regional or national cultural differences, linguistic differences, or even organizational or industry-based cultural differences. They are, in effect, often trying to measure and improve engagement with a one-size-fits-all approach. Additionally, engagement surveys usually fail to assess engagement over a period of time (which would be more complete than a snapshot in time) and fail to take into account the role and impact of the manager, either positively or negatively.

Regarding your Employer Brand:

You have no direct control over that. Why? Everything anyone, especially a candidate, has read, heard, or watching on the Internet about your company has formulated an opinion about you that defines, in the person's mind, your brand. They have decided long before you posted a job if they are inclined or you are not inclined to work for you.

More fundamentally, the popular concept of engagement does not consider the critical importance of value alignments between the employee and the organization, and the reinforcement of those values through the talent management processes, the actions and decisions made by leadership, or by one's direct manager.

It is my observation that engagement, as an emotion, is a powerful human motivator of discretionary effort; it is well worth nurturing and fostering to improve organizational operations, profitability, and goodwill. I assert that EE scores have often turned out both false positives and false negatives.

Nevertheless, engagement surveys and activities are, at best, a reinforcement of existing processes, and at worst, a placebo that can bring short-term benefits without lasting impact. Often employees become disenchanted quickly with the "one-day programs" that individual companies utilize. The reality is that the scores are often a reflection of the employee experience. Paying attention to the employee experience is of greater importance than providing perks and rewards, which, are at best, fleeting.

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**“Research shows: Those who believe in a brighter and better future are the ones who take action to create it.”
– Jon Gordon**



Introduction

Too often, what is popular is not necessarily right.

In the world of business, in particular, we see this in the arena of human resources and organizational development. A new trend, a new initiative, a new assessment instrument sweeps through conferences and the pages of magazine articles, gaining fearsome momentum, becoming impossible to ignore, and nearly irresistible to adopt, churning through resources and occupying space in our limited attention and energy, and gaining supposedly meaningful measurable results without giving the organization the impact or push it desires.

Even so, leaders and managers continue to follow the pull of popular opinion and engage in activities, approaches, and strategies that prove ineffective at best and detrimental at worst. Only later we look back and see that the logic was faulty, the rigour was lacking, the impact was bound to be different than intended, or the validation was based on transferable validity. And yet, we heed the call of the next trend just as urgently.

Through my participation at global conferences and work with companies around the world, I have seen a predominant focus on becoming an 'employer of choice' by **showing strong engagement scores**.

This is where the argument of this paper begins; while no one questions the logic that high employee engagement correlates to higher levels of productivity (and consequently higher profits), few agree on what employee engagement means.

This lack of agreement goes mostly unacknowledged. Indeed, we have not seen any research or references pointing out the discrepancy, let alone comparing the expectations with the results in the light of those differing definitions.

From the research, I discovered that:

1. There are at least 40 different definitions of employee engagement being used in organizations, consulting firms, or in research papers.
2. There is a significant difference between the definition of employee engagement offered by consulting firms and the explanations put forward in academic research.
3. There are differences of opinions between the consulting world and the academic world regarding the ability of a company to take action that will result in higher levels of employee engagement.
4. Academics, consultants, and practitioners alike are in agreement that the source of an employee's sense of engagement is the employee, him or herself.

In this white paper, I explore, amplify, and test points raised in my research, as well as the implicit and explicit assumptions that exist in the field. The desire to do so arose through direct experience, working with organizations caught up in the urgency of establishing better employee engagement scores, perplexed by the results or the gap between expectations and outcomes.

For instance, during a recent trip to Southeast Asia, I spoke with leaders from over 30 organizations. To an individual, each stated that a high employee engagement score was a key organizational objective. However, these leaders expressed concern that the questions asked on typical surveys did not reflect the definition of engagement in their geographic region. As a result, they were more aware than most leaders in North America that descriptions of engagement are critical as a first step to understand if you have achieved the desired results.

During my discussions with those leaders, I uncovered a range of perspectives on the meaning of employee engagement, which raised further questions on the merit of blindly accepting the popular approach. These conversations reinforced the inefficiency of comparing one company's score to another company's scores. If each organization has its own unique culture, comparisons of scores are relatively meaningless and misleading.

According to the ADP Research Institute, global research of 19,000 employees from 19 countries, only 16% of those surveyed are fully engaged.

Harvard Business Review, The Sad State of Engagement, June 2019

I have also witnessed that employee engagement scores can be misleading. It is not uncommon for the scores to yield a false negative or a false positive. I have seen work environments where, according to the EE scores, the employees were not engaged, but, in reality, those same employees were, in fact, passionate, highly productive contributors giving emotional stories of discretionary effort. As a result, one cannot accept quid pro quo logic that highly productive and profitable firms must – according to implicit assumptions – have highly engaged employees, as well as the corresponding idea that unproductive and unprofitable firms must have disengaged employees.

This led me to question the results of employee engagement surveys and whether they accurately reflect a real sense of engagement at all. EE is only a reflection of the Employee Experience (EX). Leadership, not Human Resource or Organizational Development, must own the EX not by making speeches about the values and corporate citizenship, but instead actually living the values and being an example of an excellent corporate citizen.

Defining Employee Engagement

What is the definition of employee engagement? That is the foundational question of this research. In the combined literature of academic and consultant writings, I identified over 40 different interpretations of the term employee engagement.

As a result, one might quickly conclude that there is no single accepted understanding of what makes for an engaged employee.

The historical literature focused on roles. Early writings from Erving Goffman (1961) described engagement as rooted in role theory. William A. Kahn (1990) described engagement, somewhat similarly, as “the harnessing of organizational members’ selves to their work roles” and went on to say, “In engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.”

A more recent academic definition by Professor Julian Birkinshaw of the London Business School focuses on innovation, to wit:

“employee engagement is the sine qua non of innovation. In my experience, you can have engaged employees who invest their time in multiple directions (such as servicing clients, creating quality products), but you cannot foster true innovation without engaged employees.”

In a report entitled, *Engaging for Success: Enhancing Performance Through Employee Government*, the British Government, used not one but three definitions in their call to engage government employees.

According to Professor Katie Truss:

“Engagement is about creating opportunities for employees to connect with their colleagues, managers and wider organization. It is also about creating an environment where employees are motivated to want to connect with their work and care about doing a good job’. It is a concept that places flexibility, change and continuous improvement at the heart of what it means to be an employee and an employer in a twenty-first-century workplace.”

While *The Institute of Employment Studies* wrote that engagement was:

“...a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its values. An engaged employee is aware of the business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employee and employer.” And the government's report stated that engagement was “... a set of positive attitudes and behaviours enabling high job performance of a kind which is in tune with the organization's mission.”

Yet Gallup concludes that 34% at fully engaged and 51% disengages and the rest are somewhere in-between.

**August 26, 2018, Gallup Study, Employee Engagement on the rise in 30,628 full- and part-time global employees*

When we examine a variety of definitions in the corporate world, we find the focus modified in important ways.

The Credit Union National Association states that employee engagement refers to the bond employees have with their organizations and the amount of connectedness that they have with their organization’s mission.

The Conference Board developed a blended definition with key themes: “Employee engagement is a heightened emotional connection that an employee feels for his or her organization, that influences him or her to exert greater discretionary effort to his or her work.”

Towers Watson, on the other hand, defined employee engagement as encompassing three dimensions:

- **Rational** – How well employees understand their roles and responsibilities.
- **Emotional** – How much passion they bring to their work and their organizations.
- **Motivational** – How willing they are to invest discretionary effort to perform their roles well.

Gallup also used a three-part definition but emphasized the organization rather than the individual. In their words, engaged organizations have:

Accountability & Performance:	• top-driven companies focus on outcomes
Communication:	• cultural alignment between the employee and the company, paired with a strategic alignment between activities and company goals
Development:	• have a comprehensive leader and manager development programs, but they also go one step further – these programs are performance-driven and incorporate a comprehensive succession plan throughout the organization

Marcus Buckingham has stated that the key indicator of employee engagement is when an employee answers ‘yes’ to the question: “I feel this job brings out the best in me.”

The employee engagement score will not be improved by providing free beer and food, ping pong, recognition notes or sleep pods. The EE score is a reflection of how one currently feels about the employee experience. It is about how one feels about work after they leave work.

There is, in other words, there is a broad mix of understanding, perspective, and significant components of engagement when viewed across consultancies and extensive academic research.

There is also a range of opinions over what inspires engagement. Kahn purports that *the individual employee defines everything about engagement; in other words, that being engaged or disengaged is a voluntary action of the individual.*

Erving Goffman focused on the principle that successful impression management requires an appearance of “spontaneous involvement” as evidence of an individual’s sincerity.

Christina Wildermuth, in her report *The Personal Side of Engagement*, introduced the notion that certain people are more inclined to be engaged than others. Specifically, people with passion are more likely to be the people in the company who are engaged.

She concludes:

“For practical purposes, leaders need to understand that individuals of various personalities may still be engaged or disengaged. This means that there is no personal proclivity that leads to engagement but something else.”

In short, I found no clear conclusions on the definition of engagement or on how engagement is generated or enhanced within a company’s existing employee population.

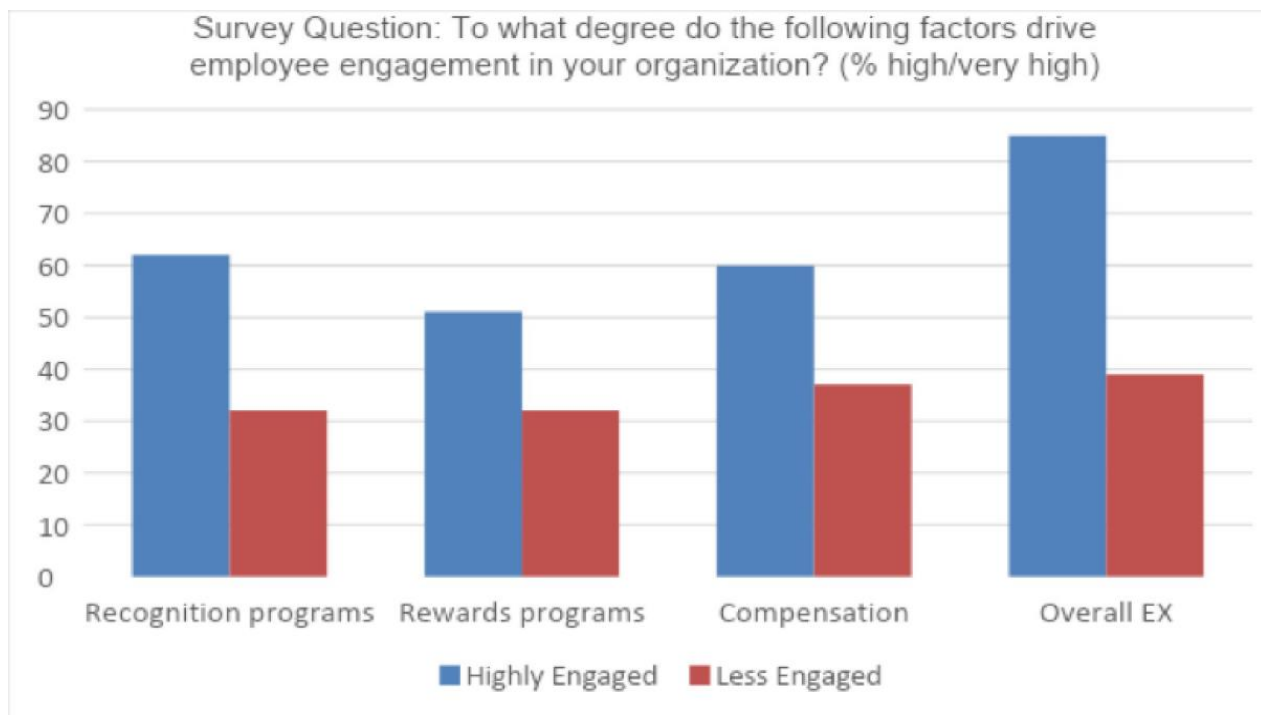
The Engagement Survey

From my literature search, it is clear that concerns about employee engagement have existed since at least the 1960s. In other words, the concept is not new. The logic underpinning the idea has also been around, in various iterations, for some time. But if we could sum up the many permutations and variations – implicit and explicit – a reasonably coherent thesis statement describing engagement might sound something like this:

An engaged employee personally identifies with the corporate culture (values), is equally aligned to the importance of the company vision (purpose and passion), feels satisfaction in his or her role, believes in the company as well as what it does and what it offers, and volunteers discriminatory effort to contribute to the organization's differentiating success.

When an individual is engaged, he or she is more productive, generates better service, improves operations or profits, and will likely be more committed to the organization, and a better representation of it. They will manifest a positive impact on the goodwill of customers, partners, and potential employees. In other words, an engaged employee will have a positive effect on how others see the company (the employer brand).

The typical desired outcomes of improved engagement might include lower accident rates, higher productivity, fewer interpersonal conflicts, increased innovation, increased retention, increases in quality, and reduced sick days, etc.



From HR.com 2019 paper on the state of EE.

By such logic, employee engagement is not only desirable but sound business sense. No wonder it is readily pursued by leaders and the consultants who guide them. It truly offers the company organic benefits, both internally and externally.

Enter the Engagement Survey

It naturally follows that if employee engagement is so valuable, leaders will value it, and wish to take steps to increase it. But increase what to what? What do they have to do to both stimulate and increase EE and sustain the improvement to EE?

The reality is that the engagement survey is only a snapshot in time that captures the feelings of employees at that particular moment. It comes, however, in many forms and measures many different manifestations. No doubt, this is due to the lack of a standard definition of engagement itself.

By focusing not on EE, but the score has deflected from the understanding, the score is only a marker in time. The root cause of that score is the employee experience. Without impacting the employee experience to align with how management behaves and how the employee wishes to be treated, the EE score will not change.

Measurement of engagement is not an exact science and is highly fallible. Some surveys look at the preconditions for engagement or the outcomes of engagement, while others emphasize employee attitudes or are only a reflection of employee satisfaction with the tools and resources available to them.

Typical questions include: "Do you have the right materials and equipment to do your job properly?" Or, the employee might be asked to register their agreement with statements such as "I am personally motivated to help this organization"; "I have useful conversations with my line manager," etc.

Employees at Accenture, for example, are asked to complete a "Personal Engagement List" and rank a range of factors such as rewards and recognition and quality of life. They then discuss the results with their "career counsellors" assigned by the organization, and action plans are put into place to close any gaps between importance and satisfaction. These types of questions only touch upon the extremities of the EX. They do not directly question if the employee feels trusted and respected. The feeling of trust and respect is the result of how their direct manager and how senior management interact with the employee daily. The logic then would be the action plan has to rest with the manager and management, not the employee.

By no means is a sophisticated or expensive survey always appropriate or necessary to measure engagement levels. Many organizations supplement questionnaires with staff focus groups. For small organizations, in particular, the cost of extensive surveys will almost certainly be prohibitive and may seem bureaucratic and burdensome. However, many leaders for small and medium enterprises have told us that once business grows to a size where social gatherings are no longer easy, assessing levels of engagement makes good business sense.

I suggest the engagement survey is only a stepping stone for a discussion about the best efforts and activities that can be offered to increase engagement scores. I have found the efforts are usually only momentary or material, not emotional. While initially welcomed and lauded, they soon become expected, and the impact on engaging is limited or evaporates.

Problems with Engagement Surveys

Our first problem is the practicality of engagement surveys.

In working with companies who conduct employee engagement surveys, I have observed that some highly productive and profitable companies generate low engagement scores. Conversely, I have also observed companies with high engagement scores that are anything but productive and profitable.

What are the root causes of this discrepancy?

One cause is due to the language being used in the survey itself. When I examine the research backing the academic evaluation of the data and look deeper at the employees who took the survey, it is sometimes the case that the language of the survey is not suitable for the linguistic sophistication of the employee and thereby distorts the quality of the results.

Sometimes this is due to the education level of the employee; sometimes, it is that the employee may not be a native speaker of the language used in the survey.

In the first case, as with behavioural and value-based statements, it is essential to use the language of the employee and the organization informing engagement survey questions. Terms and concepts appropriate for one job type in the organization, or organizations in other industries, regions, or with very different cultures, may severely misalign with the lingua franca of the employee.

In the second case, when the native tongue or cultural background of the employee is different from the test language and culture, we often see engagement surveys that are “lost in translation.” Simple translations of statements that are meaningful in one culture rarely align with a different culture. While this seems obvious, it is rarely accounted for in practice. This is the same problem often faced by most standardized tests.

This discussion also brings to mind the issue of cultural differences separate from linguistic differences. Cultural differences have an enormous influence on how engagement is perceived and understood. Take a simple example; it is often said – and we believe from experience that the cliché bears merit – that North Americans live to work while Europeans work to live. In such a case, it stands to reason that the factors of engagement, the language of engagement, the measures of engagement, and the engagement scores themselves will be profoundly different between two such culturally different work environments. Hence the syntax of the questions, in the engagement surveys, must be changed, not only depending on language but depending on the region. We can even observe cultural differences within a country, for example, California, compared to Alabama.

If we think of the word culture, not as a national phenomenon but as a corporate one, we quickly realize that it is necessary to consider engagement on yet another level.

It is widely understood that organizations have different, if not unique, cultures. Yet, engagement surveys that are in use by major consultancies are often predicated on the assumption that engagement and an engaged culture can be measured in the same way regardless of the organization or geography. This view is explicitly stated in the Towers Watson literature, which declares that: “All high-performance environments look and feel the same.”

In my experience, this observation does not stand up well to scrutiny. However, its implications are significant. The cultures and beliefs of two different organizations, even in the same geographic

location and same industry, must be alike if the same engagement survey can be used with equal validity. But the reality is no two companies, even competitors in the same location, have the same culture. Our years of work defining cultural values, articulating behavioural competencies, setting performance measures, and developing hiring and leadership development programs have proven time and time again that what is essential and necessary for success in one organization differs (often radically) from another organization.

The Impact of Local Geographic Culture

During the 1980s and 1990s, the common expression was ‘think global and act local’. Today, global and multi-national companies think and act as if their head office values apply to the entire world.

The research by Geert Hofstede and others has shown that there are local differences in culture that genuinely matter. These differences are reflected in several manifestations.

One of them is Power Distance. “Power Distance is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”.

This respect for those in power is learned early and carried forward into the world of school and then work. This ingrained behaviour will have an impact on how people act and react in a variety of situations.

Take, for example, an employee who has been educated and raised in Malaysia; when they are asked to provide feedback on their direct manager or the company, this local cultural behaviour will kick in, and they will inflate the EE scores. Based on both Hofstede's research and my own experience with many employees in Malaysia, they will say, regardless of the reality, that all is good. In turn, this gives a false positive to the leadership; the location is acting in accord with the expectations of the head office.

Another example is the behaviours associated with uncertainty avoidance. This is defined by Hofstede as: “the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions”. When the responder to the EE survey does not have a true understanding of how the results are used or they have seen the results used against others, they are likely to inflate their own scores to “fly under the radar”. This concept, for example, causes a sharp spike in scores coming from the United Arab Emirates.

Accompanying this will be the syntax of the wording and the language of the actual survey. When you take the original wording in a specific language and then translate that to a second or third language, the translation influences the concepts by the translator. While this is less important when translating fiction or theoretical work, the EE is dealing with feelings and perspectives. One word, placed incorrectly, could have a significant impact on the way people respond.

Finally, there are more isolated and individual instances in which employee engagement scores can be distorted.

An observation: If the employee experience drives the employee engagement score and each organization is unique, what is good for one person might not be good for another. Hence, without knowing the employee experience, the company's authentic values and the vision (passion) of the company; you cannot label any one place as a universally good place for everyone to work.

Timing is Also an Issue

The EE score is but a “snapshot” of a, particularly bad or good day. A difficult customer interaction, personal troubles, and a manager’s fickle mood – any number of factors can influence a snapshot score. Does this accurately reflect the truth of the engagement level? Probably not.

Additionally, we have encountered a limited number of organizations in which managers attempt to influence survey data by putting pressure on employees to elevate scores. In other cases, managers who are running their teams counter to the organization’s values, and aims may be a poor indicator of engagement scores. When the manager's performance success is linked to the EE outcomes, there is always the risk that the manager will infer to employees that they need to score her or him in a positive light. This will ultimately lead to false-positive scores.

Another issue of timing is how long a person has been with an organization or management team. When people are asked to provide feedback on instruments like 360° feedback tools, it is common for those with less than 90 days in the relationship to have to opt-out. Similarly, when a manager is considering a high potential individual with less than 180 days in the role, they are often unable to provide reliable feedback on the employee. Why then is not the same experience-based ruling applied to EE surveys?

Alignment Between Organizational Values, Engaged Employee and Employee Experience

There is a notion that a person who is engaged in his or her environment can be equally engaged in another similar environment. The common factor is not the similarity of the organization's work environment, but the factors that define the person him or herself.

In our experience, we have often seen the case that what matters is not where a person works and what a person does, but rather who a person is and how they feel about the way they are treated at work. In other words, a person is not "made passionate" by their work within an organization, but rather a person is passionate about their work before they join an organization.

It is often stated that you don't have an engagement issue, you have a hiring issue.

When an individual joins a firm to which she or he is aligned with values and purpose, engagement soon follows. This is why I have long ago concluded that **companies don't have engagement issues; rather, they have hiring issues**. Companies ultimately fail when they do not hire people aligned to the values and who are passionate about the company's purpose.

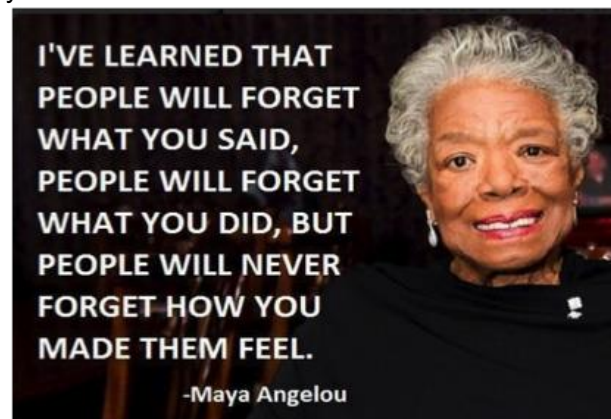
Does this mean organizations need only seek out engaged people to achieve higher engagement scores? No, they have to begin asking interview questions to discover alignment to the values and purpose of the company. Without alignment, even a naturally engaged person will find it difficult to contribute discretionary effort over the long-term.

For this reason alone, employee engagement surveys are important tools to measure the feelings of employees concerning their perspectives on the experience of working at the company. The EE score should be viewed by management as assessing the level of employee engagement in light of how the employees about the firm.

In cases where engagement scores are low, companies feel they can compensate by providing beer, good food, foosball, and ping pong tables to improve engagement scores. While they will likely see a marginal improvement in short-term engagement scores, this will most certainly be a waste in the long run. I call this the rubber band effect. After the short-term impact wears off, there will be a quick return to low productivity and commitment.

The only path for improving EE is by having an organization that allows for the employee experience to be properly aligned with the needs of the employees.

My position is that values are the foundation for the culture of an organization. The values and the corresponding behaviours are the essences of the promise to the employee experience. When they are articulated to employees, rather than lived by management, the employees become cynical. Low EE scores will certainly reflect this. The issue, for another discussion, is there is too often an overt aspirational set of values versus the covert and authentic set of current values.



Deterrents to Improved Employee Engagement

Survey scores aside, why is it so difficult to have a positive impact on employee engagement?

If organizational culture is critical to high employee engagement, then it follows that the difficulties of achieving cultural alignment are a relevant and necessary challenge.

One factor is globalization; as organizations expand globally, many find it difficult to adjust their recruitment and performance assessment efforts appropriately. While it is possible to achieve a cultural fit between organizations and individuals, it can be more challenging when that extra dimension is added.

Generational differences can also be challenging. Many articles have been written about the vast differences in values between generations, and how accommodations must be made to assuage those differences. In our experience, while behaviours, expectations, and language may be different between generations, value fit can still be achieved so long as those values are clearly understood and communicated.

Employee engagement surveys also raise expectations among employees. We have frequently encountered the belief that if engagement is an organizational priority worthy of testing, improving engagement scores will also be a priority. Sometimes this is simply not the case. A leader or manager may not be committed to following up on an engagement survey with positive changes.

Besides, we have often seen the problem of differing definitions of engagement derailing intended efforts. The organization's leadership may implicitly have a very different definition of engagement than the consulting firm conducting the survey. This can cause confusion among employees and cause leaders to distance themselves from the results. There will, consequently, be a lack of organizational support or motivation to sustain any desired changes.

Some leaders don't follow through simply because they believe engagement to be a soft-side of the enterprise, without sufficient impact on profitability or shareholder value. In other words, they give lip service only to the idea of engagement.

A more complicated problem arises when leadership views the employee engagement work as a singular event. They participate with full enthusiasm only to return quickly to old behaviours and attitudes, leaving employees more cynical than before. They are especially able to do this when top leadership does not hold themselves accountable for improvements.

On an individual level, engagement scores can fail to improve after promotion because, too often, an individual is promoted for technical ability rather than fit for the new role or fit with the overall organization.

On an organizational level, engagement surveys are occasionally used in conjunction with promoting a culture shift. Culture change is exceedingly difficult and highly resisted. Such changes can cause employees to disengage and cause leaders to lose credibility.

It is clear from the HR.com report, *The State of Employee Engagement in 2019: Leverage leadership and culture to maximize engagement*, indicates that if you don't pay attention to EX, you will not move your EE scores upward.

The HR.com concludes, "The overall employee experience is far more likely to drive engagement in highly engaged organizations."

It is the Employee Experience that Enables Engagement

It would be an oversimplification to say that enablers of engagement improvements are opposite to the deterrents. However, there are some instances in which this is true. For example, while leaders and managers who treat engagement as an isolated event often fail, those who consistently identify and recognize great performance and attitude show sustained improved engagement scores. This is not magic or rocket science. Paying attention to the EE and thinking you can impact that without living the foundation of the EX is a waste of effort and often financial resources. Organizations must realize that the EE survey is not a one-off event or a KPI for the year but that the efforts to build and maintain high EE is an ongoing and never-ending responsibility of the CEO and those who lead the organization. EE is not a human resources matter, it is a business matter and must be treated as such.

Although employee experience and employee engagement are inseparably linked, it is becoming profusely clear that companies concentrated on **EE alone** haven't been doing enough to recognize the factors motivating it, **EX** principal among them.

As this paper has hopefully made clear, the primary driver of engagement is the value alignment and cultural fit. This can best be achieved in the hiring process, and then clarified and refined during training and development,

performance management, and promotion and succession planning. Do those activities properly, and you will not have to worry about engagement surveys.

Employees remain engaged when leaders and managers act consistently with the understood values and culture of the organization. Disengagement festers at the level of the manager-report relationship. It also resides in the perception of employees on how leaders act and how they make decisions.

It is often stated that employees leave managers, not organizations. I suggest that people also leave companies when they perceive that the leaders are not, in their mind's eye, ethically living the values. Likewise, employees often disengage from organizations because they have disengaged from their managers and leaders. The correct behaviour and approach of the manager at each level of the organization will ensure engagement at every level throughout the organization. Lacking that clear line of sight between management and organizational values is an indication that the organization is giving mere lip service to the efforts of engagement. As Henry Mintzberg has pointed out, the ultimate responsibility for poor management skills rests with top leadership.

It is not the speech about the values that matters; rather is is that the CEO lives those values that matters.

Furthermore, engagement efforts often overlook the silent majority of the organization. Too often efforts are focused on working with the unengaged employees who are poor performers, rather than the forgotten middle.

Similarly, engagement efforts are also frequently aimed at the high potential spectrum of top performers. But such performers are usually already engaged. Marginal improvements to the vast middle can reap better results.

Engagement is a multi-faceted phenomenon, as elusive as a moving target. Engagement surveys provide a snapshot in time and are focused too broadly on the organization and not the individual. Different environments, circumstances, and challenges engage different people. Rather than an

absolute condition, engagement may simply be the result of a perfect match between employee, task, and circumstance. If that's true, it should be the manager's job to determine how to make each individual employee engaged.

To truly engage your employees, you need to think in terms of organizational values and vision. Hire and promote according to your values and you will ensure the building blocks of engagement are in place. Demonstrate and live your values in how you execute your strategic mission and you will ensure that employees feel engaged by the work that they do. You won't need surveys to tell you your score, but you may be cited in research about the excellent performance of highly engaged companies.

Remember when economic and employment is strong, people are confident that they can find work within a few months. The US Dept of Labour Statistics indicated that over half of the labour market in the US feel they can find as good, if not a better job, in six months.

Remember that historically the accuracy of the job satisfaction surveys are more valid but satisfaction is not engagement. Are you asking satisfaction and not engagement questions? Job satisfaction would be asking if they have the resources to do their job. High satisfaction is about being content, feeling compensation is equitable to a similar role in some industry, a person is comfortable with the company and coworkers.

When engaged they move from satisfaction to feeling part of the future and wanting to give more to the organization. They are willing to go above and beyond and are in fact giving discretionary effort.

It is worth understanding that there are two primary drivers of engagement for an employee: "Role Engagement" and "Company Engagement".

Role Engagement

Role Engagement is when the individual employee fits with their specific role and area. It includes the relationship with the direct supervisor/manager, co-workers, the activities and/or outputs of the role, the customers with whom they interact, and even their direct reports. Role Engagement is about how the individual employee responds to the ambiguity, freedom, opportunities for development, and other factors within their role.

However, with Role Engagement, one might work in a company where the culture within the organization changes from area to area. This creates a substantial disconnect within the organization, as an employee who fits in one area may find themselves misaligned in another location or even department. Role Engagement will change as the factors change. If a person is engaged in one role, their engagement within another role is not guaranteed.

An organization that is seeking to optimize engagement has to understand that the onus is on the leadership to work to ensure a fit between employees and their specific work experience.

Company Engagement

Company Engagement refers to an individual's connection within the bigger picture of the organization. It also reflects the perceived respect and trust for the employee by the leaders, the frontline, and everyone in-between.

Variables impacting Company Engagement include the organization's values, vision, strategy, culture, and leadership. While there are fewer factors that impact Company Engagements, the impact of those factors are larger, stronger, and longer-lasting.

Company Engagement is also based on relationships between employees and faith in leadership. The employee with emotional commitment sees leaders as role models living the organization's values.

Therefore, we can conclude that engagement is not the domain of the company but a symbiotic flow between the organization and the individual. The relationship starts with a promise, given intentionally or accidentally, during the interview and onboarding process. The organization has the greatest opportunity to ensure engagement from recruitment, selection, orientation, and onboarding activities.

We have found no proof that one type of engagement is greater than the other. There is no generic solution.

Individuals with a greater balance toward one type of engagement will not necessarily perform better than those with the other type. As long as there is a perceived fit, within the role or company, an individual will be motivated to perform and give discretionary effort; a good sign they are highly engaged.

Since engagement is largely based on the perceived fit between the individual and the organization, the largest tipping point to ensure engagement occurs during the hiring process. By seeking those factors that indicate fit, or lack thereof, the organization can determine who will perform best within the work environment.

“Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person – not just an employee – are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled.”

- Anne M. Mulcahy, former CEO of Xerox

Some Practical Questions and Suggestions

Here are some questions I'd like to ask those who are conducting or buying engagement surveys and training:

1. If you are not engaged or excited about the work you do, would engagement training get you more involved? Conversely, if you are excited about your work, would engagement training be a waste of time?
2. What happens if the company and the consulting firm's definitions of employee engagement do not align, but you go ahead with the consulting firm's survey anyway?
3. Is it possible to feel engaged by your work and committed to your organization in spite of a negative environment, a stressful job, or a boss you don't like?
4. If you happen to feel engaged on the day of the survey, what does it mean if you don't feel engaged a month or even an hour later?
5. Is engagement a continuous process, in which employees who receive training ultimately reach a level of full engagement? Is it possible to feel engaged all the time? Should that be the goal?
6. Can an energy surge generate engagement and then lead to burnout?
7. How does engagement relate to the individual employee's sense of what's right or wrong about the organization?

Here are some suggestions for engagement surveys and training:

1. Only ask questions that you are confident you will act upon, regardless of the results – ask the questions that you will have the courage on which to take action.
2. Promptly provide the employees with the results of the survey after the conclusion to retain the most accuracy (no more than four weeks).

Promptness in getting an overview of the results back to the employee is essential. It has to be transparent. Providing the employees with a summary of the findings soon after the deadline to respond builds trust.
3. The CEO and leadership team must consider the employee experience as the foundation that drives the employee engagement scores. As such, the leadership must own the exercise as a business activity, not a "one-and-done" HR initiative.
4. To paraphrase Maya Angelou, the employees will forget what you asked them to do, they will forget short-term and one-time rewards or even some of their job activities, but they will never forget how they were made to feel by their manager and leadership. Since the EE score is merely a reflection of the EX, leaders should not waste their resources on wellness points, parties, perks, or recognition schemes; rather they have to be cognizant to live the values all day, every day, and acknowledge in person those who do so in difficult situations.
5. To "stack the cards in your favour", you should hire employees who already demonstrate the values of the company, who are passionate about the vision of the firm and find the corporate social responsibility activities meaningful. If you don't hire accordingly, your engagement scores

will always be in flux.

Remember, the reality is you don't have an engagement score problem, you have an employee experience issue. To correct that means you have to correct the selection system to hire people already aligned with the values of the company and passionate about the purpose.

6. Leadership and managers at all levels must have sustained human contact with employees at all levels of the organization and know them as real people, call them by name, engage with them about who they are and not what they do.

People like to be recognized not for what they do but rather for who they are. People like to be appreciated and acknowledge for their meaningful contributions. Recognition should be for actions they take that moves the company forward, over and beyond their KPI, goals, objectives, and so on.

7. Using a five-point Likert scale is useless, as the research shows the average is 3.2, plus or minus 0.6. Using a scale with no mid-point is preferred. Try a six-point scale with explanations of what each point means
8. The only useful comparison of your engagement scores is to your own organization, year over year. Comparisons to other companies can be highly rewarding if your scores are higher, but not necessarily the most efficient or helpful way to interpret the scores. Similarly, comparatively low scores can be disheartening but may case into actions that are not specific to the needs of your employees.
9. Once an employee is offered an opportunity to attend a learning event, conference, or other development programs, managers must not hold them back because "something urgent came up". That sends a clear message that development is not important to the organization or the manager. One of the drivers of engagement is being afforded the opportunity by the organization to develop and learn.

Engagement is related to those things that make employees feel you care. We know that financial rewards are not going to produce meaningful improvements to engagement. One of the keys to engagement is the opportunity to learn and grown. Provide employees with the opportunity to learn and expand their capabilities. Make certain when managers allow an individual to attend a learning experience of networking, they don't recall the offer at the last minute.

10. While HR has to be highly involved in employee engagement, HR is not responsible or accountable for EE; it is the accountability of management, at all levels.

Louis Gerstner, the former CEO of IBM, said it best; "I came to see, in my time at IBM, that culture isn't just one aseptic of the game, it is the game".

11. Leadership and managers are successful in owning EX and EE when the leaders ensure from that trust and respect is afforded to every employee by actively listening and collaborating, as well as recognizing contributions of ideas as well as outcomes.
12. Since EX is not an event or a program, but rather a never-ending function of sustained focus, organizations must view and act on EE as an ongoing event, measuring different groups of employees or cross-sections of employees more than once a year.
13. After discussing engagement data, the organization must take specific actions to address issues that negatively affect engagement.

Remember, employees are always looking up to find out how to follow the leader.

14. Multiple means of finding the levels of engagement must be employed, and surveys are only one of the tools that can and should be utilized.

Surveys are nice but they are only the tip of the iceberg. There are emotions under those scores. Without understanding the emotions, it is hard to know what to address and how. In addition to the survey, or in place of the survey, meet with employees for a serious discussion on how they are experiencing their work. Get to know the meaning behind the scores. Get to know the people as individuals. Most importantly, during the focus group, ask questions, listen, and remember there is no need to reply or defend in the moment; just listen and say thank you.



Suggestion for Engagement Questions

Based on my perspective that engagement is measured by discretionary efforts and that engagement is a reflection of mutual trust and respect between employees, their direct managers, and leadership, I offer the following: The company and geographic-specific cultures will determine the exact working for your organization. The shorter the questionnaire, the more likely the employee will respond thoughtfully. Some research shows that after about 35 questions the employee experiences “questionnaire fatigue” and the results start to lose accuracy at question 36. The ideal length is between 10-15 questions.

1. To what extent do you trust your direct supervisor/boss?
2. To what extent do you trust the leadership?
3. To what extent do you feel respected by your manager?
4. To what extent do you feel respected by leadership?
5. Considering the last three-months, to what extent have you given your full effort, every day, to be at work and achieve your goals/targets.
6. Do you truly do your best to make progress towards achieving your goals, not just making an effort?
7. Are you proud of your organization?
8. Are you enthusiastic about the vision of your company?
9. Are your values and the values lived by the organization clearly aligned?
10. To what extent do you feel you have the autonomy to do your work?
11. Do you feel your teammates appreciate you at work?
12. How do you feel about yourself after you leave work?
13. Do you do your best to be happy at work?
14. Does your company give you the opportunity to grow professionally?
15. To what extent are the goals/expectations of you meaningful and clear?
16. To what extent do you find meaning in your work?
17. To what extent do you feel the contribution you make is meaningful?
18. Considering the decisions made by management; do you believe the decisions align with the values of the company?

Conclusion

Consider your definition of engagement and the many dimensions that can define engagement before selecting a survey. It could very well be misleading to look at norms or benchmark scores unless they are scores created internally and over time. Off-the-shelf products are unlikely to help individual organizations collect meaningful data on the engagement of their workforce. They can provide a lot of information but not enough relevant data for the organization to utilize.

To have the most impact, it is important to understand the different types of engagement and the variables specific to the organization and each role that it impacts. If organizations can better understand the variables impacting engagement, then they can be more effective in ensuring engagement. This will help to understand what changes need to be made to enable the workforce to be engaged and work optimally.

Don't underestimate the power of engagement. But do not overestimate the benefits of engagement events and surveys.

Engagement is responsible for many of the clichés we hear these days. A few examples include:

- “It will be hard to get through the recession without an engaged workforce.”
- “High engagement scores mean unlocking people’s potential at work.”
- “Organizations function best when they make their employees’ commitment, potential, creativity, and capability central to their operation.”

The Achilles Heel in the accepted process of engagement work believes that a company can develop an engagement strategy despite it not already embedded into their corporate DNA. It is founded on the false premise that a company can “make” their employees do things the employee does not wish to do.

Given the variety of definitions for engagement, we believe that a company must define engagement to its own satisfaction first. Following that, they can seek out a consulting firm with a philosophy of engagement that matches or hire a consulting firm that is willing to develop an articulation of engagement that serves the organization, not the consulting firm’s preconceived views of employee engagement.

If an executive team were to learn that it loses twenty percent of its profits annually due to missing equipment, theft, misdirected orders, or other factors, committees would be formed, mandates declared, and accountability demanded. Heads would roll. But few executives truly understand the losses incurred when human capital (the intangible) turns over or disengages from the work of the organization.

Engagement surveys and activities are, ultimately, an easy bandage for those problems. Real improvements require a more ongoing and comprehensive overhaul. It would require the CEO and his or her team to stop talking about the values and vision and start actually living the them.

These include:

- Surfacing and articulating the organization’s true values
- Hiring, promoting and celebrating employees who live those values - especially in difficult times
- Admitting when mistakes are made in overlooking or contradicting values and sharing the learning

- Investing in human capital through development and training opportunities, even during difficult economic times
- Developing leadership from within
- Holding managers accountable for engagement on a daily basis

Engagement is a continuous process, not a prescribed threshold or destination. In other words, organizations, leaders, and managers must work on engagement at all times, not merely when an engagement event has seized their attention or is required by upper management. When you have engaged employees, they feel more valued, accepted, connected and fulfilled. It is a logical outcome they, in turn, give that extra effort.

One firm that we worked with had used one of the major global consulting firms for their engagement barometer. Survey after survey they ranged from 50% - 54% engagement. Soon after, they more clearly defined the behaviours of the values of the organization and its leadership. From their newly articulated values and behavioural competencies, they created an engagement survey that encompassed both strategic and local engagement. The results showed that 80% of the employees were actually engaged. When they followed up on the action items that resulted from the analysis of the data, they were able to target areas that were mutually meaningful to leadership and employees and improve the level of engagement.



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About David S. Cohen



David is an internationally recognized business consultant, educator, and thought leader focusing on talent and the challenges impacting business workforces around the world. David has a vision: organizations ultimately thrive by living their values in both good times and times of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). David came to consulting after spending 20 years in elementary and high school education, where he built a reputation for creating school communities based on purpose and social responsibility. He made the transition to corporate consulting 30 years ago.

As a consultant, David earned a reputation as a contrarian consultant; helping leaders understand what is necessary to build a reliable organization, even if it goes against the commonly accepted practices. He does not always follow what is popular.

David works with leaders to establish the best conditions to identify and sustain authentic corporate cultures, value creation, and a highly-engaged workforce for the firm to flourish. He helps leaders step into life's challenges, inspiring them to create a sustained approach through a positive values-based focus, resulting in better business results. A few of the companies David has had the privilege of partnering include:

Air Canada	HSL Contractors	Shoppers Drug Mart
Bank of Canada	Inalfa	The Saudi Aramco Shell Refinery Co. (SASREF)
Bank of Montreal	Islamic Development Bank (IsDB)	University of Notre Dame
Calgary Police Force	Massachusetts General Hospital	Zydus Pharma (Cadila Healthcare)
City of Toronto	Michelin	
Corpus Christi Polymers LLC	NASA	
Estee Lauder (Singapore)	Nemak	
FINRA	OMERS	
HEICO	Scotiabank	

David is a member of the #MG100 Coaches. David works as a thought leader in talent management, author, teacher and speaker. What brings him joy in his free time is volunteer work, spending time with his five grandchildren, attending Toronto Raptors games, and traveling the world with his wife.

David's books are:

[The Talent Edge: A Behavioral Approach to Hiring, Developing, and Keeping Top Performers \(John Wiley and Sons, August 2001\)](#)

[Inside the Box: Leading with Corporate Values to Drive Sustained Business Success \(Jossey-Bass September 2006\)](#)

I Was Google's Head of International Relations. Here's Why I Left.



Ross LaJeunesse [Follow](#)

Jan 2 · 9 min read ★

The company's motto used to be "Don't be evil." Things have changed.



Ross LaJeunesse, Democratic Candidate for U.S. Senate in Maine.

When I walked out the door on my last day as Google's Head of International Relations, I couldn't help but think of my first day at the company. I had exchanged a wood-paneled office, a suit and tie, and the job of wrestling California's bureaucracy as Governor Schwarzenegger's deputy chief of staff for a laptop, jeans, and a promise that I'd be making the world better and

more equal, under the simple but powerful guidance ***“Don’t be evil.”***

I joined Google in 2008, when those words still mattered. I saw them used to guide product designs that put the company’s success above a user’s privacy, such as during the development of Google’s ill-fated social network, Buzz. I used those words myself in 2010 as Head of Public Policy for Asia Pacific, when I executed the company’s landmark decision to stop censoring Search results in China, putting human rights ahead of the bottom line.

Google had first entered the Chinese market in 2006. At the time, founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin said that Google would only stay if the company’s presence was doing more good than harm — that users were getting more information than before, even if there was censorship of some topics. But over the years, the list of items that the Chinese government demanded we censor grew significantly, and after the Chinese government attempted to hack into the Gmail accounts of human rights advocates in 2009, Larry and Sergey decided it was time to re-assess the 2006 decision. After a series of intense discussions with other executives, they decided that the only way to continue providing Search in China while adhering to the “Don’t be evil” mantra was to cease cooperation with the government’s censorship requirements.

We knew this would cause a very public confrontation with the government, although we were never sure how bad it would get. In China, the government not only demands full access to a company’s user data and infrastructure, it also expects the full cooperation of companies to ensure that Chinese users see only content that is in line with government standards. For example, on a Maps product, the government requires that all geographic labels and information be approved by the government in advance, and that any user-generated content be strictly controlled by the company to avoid publication of anything the government deems “problematic,” which can be difficult to define.

Our 2010 decision to stop cooperating with Chinese government censorship on Search results was the first time a non-Chinese corporation stood up to the Chinese up to the Chinese government. In doing so, Google put everything on the line — its future in the world’s fastest-growing internet market, billions of dollars in profit, even the safety of our Chinese employees. At one point, I began planning for a possible mass evacuation of all our Google employees based in China, as well as their families. Although difficult, I was intensely proud of the principled approach the company took in making this decision.

However, the decision infuriated not only the Chinese government, but also frustrated some Google product executives eyeing the huge market and its accompanying profits. In fact, within a year of the 2010 decision, executives for the Maps and Android products began pushing to launch their products in China. I argued strenuously against these plans, knowing that a complete turn-around in our approach would make us complicit in human rights violations, and cause outrage among civil society and the many western governments which had applauded our 2010 decision. I also explained that none of these plans would move forward because the Chinese government was furious with us, and would refuse to meet with us to even discuss these projects. In fact, over the next two years, the Chinese government only agreed to meet with us once, when relatively low-level staff at the Ministry of Land and Resources politely listened as we asked about launching a Maps product. When we affirmed that our Maps product would also not comply with censorship requirements, they stopped responding to additional requests.

After close to three years in Asia, the company asked me to be Head of International Relations in late 2012, a role responsible for Google's relationships with diplomats, civil society and international organizations like the UN, and for global issues like trade, internet governance and free expression. As I was growing in seniority and responsibility, the company was growing rapidly in size and revenue — from an already large and successful company to a tech behemoth that intersects with the daily lives of billions of people across the globe. The number of employees was also growing quickly, with new staff and executives being hired to develop products and pursue new lines of business, such as Cloud computing, in every corner of the globe.

In my new role, my team and I continued to engage with product executives who were increasingly frustrated by the phenomenal growth in the Chinese market and pushed hard for our re-entry into China. I was alarmed when I learned in 2017 that the company had begun moving forward with the development of a new version of a censored Search product for China, codenamed "Dragonfly." But Dragonfly was only one of several several developments that concerned those of us who still believed in the mantra of "Don't be evil." I was also concerned that Cloud executives were actively pursuing deals with the Saudi government, given its horrible record of human rights abuses. Cloud executives made no secret of the fact that they wanted to

hire their own policy team, which would effectively block any review of their contracts by my team. Finally, in December 2017, Google announced the establishment of the Google Center for Artificial Intelligence in Beijing — something that completely surprised me, and made it clear to me that I no longer had the ability to influence the numerous product developments and deals being pursued by the company.

My solution was to advocate for the adoption of a company-wide, formal Human Rights Program that would publicly commit Google to adhere to human rights principles found in the UN Declaration of Human Rights, provide a mechanism for product and engineering teams to seek internal review of product design elements, and formalize the use of Human Rights Impact Assessments for all major product launches and market entries.

But each time I recommended a Human Rights Program, senior executives came up with an excuse to say no. At first, they said human rights issues were better handled within the product teams, rather than starting a separate program. But the product teams weren't trained to address human rights as part of their work. When I went back to senior executives to again argue for a program, they then claimed to be worried about increasing the company's legal liability. We provided the opinion of outside experts who re-confirmed that these fears were unfounded. At this point, a colleague was suddenly re-assigned to lead the policy team discussions for Dragonfly. As someone who had consistently advocated for a human rights-based approach, I was being sidelined from the on-going conversations on whether to launch Dragonfly. I then realized that the company had never intended to incorporate human rights principles into its business and product decisions. Just when Google needed to double down on a commitment to human rights, it decided to instead chase bigger profits and an even higher stock price.

It was no different in the workplace culture. Senior colleagues bullied and screamed at young women, causing them to cry at their desks. At an all-hands meeting, my boss said, "Now you Asians come to the microphone too. I know you don't like to ask questions." At a different all-hands meeting, the entire policy team was separated into various rooms and told to participate in a "diversity exercise" that placed me in a group labeled "homos" while participants shouted out stereotypes such as "effeminate" and "promiscuous." Colleagues of color were forced to join groups called "Asians" and "Brown people" in other rooms nearby.

In each of these cases, I brought these issues to HR and senior executives and was assured the problems would be handled. Yet in each case, there was no follow up to address the concerns — until the day I was accidentally copied on an email from a senior HR director. In the email, the HR director told a colleague that I seemed to raise concerns like these a lot, and instructed her to “do some digging” on me instead.

Then, despite being rated and widely known as one of the best people managers at the company, despite 11 years of glowing performance reviews and near-perfect scores on Google’s 360-performance evaluations, and despite being a member of the elite Foundation Program reserved for Google’s “most critical talent” who are “key to Google’s current and future success,” I was told there was no longer a job for me as a result of a “reorganization,” despite 90 positions on the policy team being vacant at the time.

When I hired counsel, Google assured me that there had been a misunderstanding, and I was offered a small role in exchange for my acquiescence and silence. But for me, the choice was as clear as the situation. I left. Standing up for women, for the LGBTQ community, for colleagues of color, and for human rights — had cost me my career. To me, no additional evidence was needed that “Don’t be evil” was no longer a true reflection of the company’s values; it was now nothing more than just another corporate marketing tool.

I’ve been asked many times since returning home, “What changed?”

First, the people. The founders and visionaries behind the company, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, disengaged and left management in the hands of new senior executives. A new CEO was hired to lead Google Cloud and a new CFO was hired from Wall Street, and beating earnings expectations every quarter became the key priority. Every year, thousands of new employees join the company, overwhelming everyone who fought to preserve the company’s original values and culture. When I joined the company there were under 10,000 Googlers and by the time I left, there were over 100,000.



Second, the products. Some will say that Google was always a bad corporate actor, with less than transparent privacy practices. But there is a significant difference between serving ads based on a Google search and working with the Chinese government on artificial intelligence or hosting the applications of the Saudi government, including Absher, an application that allows men to track and control the movement of their female family members. Executives hell-bent on capturing cloud computing revenue from Microsoft, Oracle, and Amazon had little patience for those of us arguing for some form of principled debate before agreeing to host the applications and data of any client willing to pay.

I think the important question is what does it mean when one of America's marquee companies changes so dramatically. Is it the inevitable outcome of a corporate culture that rewards growth and profits over social impact and responsibility? Is it in some way related to the corruption that has gripped our federal government? Is this part of the global trend toward "strong man" leaders who are coming to power around the globe, where questions of "right" and "wrong" are ignored in favor of self-interest and self-dealing? Finally, what are the implications for all of us when that once-great American company controls so much data about billions of users across the globe?

Although the causes and the implications are worth debating, I am certain of the appropriate response. No longer can massive tech companies like Google be permitted to operate relatively free from government oversight. As soon as Google executives were asked by Congress about Project Dragonfly and Google's commitment to free expression and human rights, they assured Congress that the project was exploratory and it was subsequently shut down.

The role of these companies in our daily lives, from how we run our elections to how we entertain and educate our children, is just too great to leave in the hands of executives who are accountable only to their controlling shareholders who — in the case of Google, Amazon, Facebook and Snap — happen to be fellow company insiders and founders.

Two weeks after leaving Google, I returned home to Maine. It's where I was born and raised, and where I was taught basic values like the importance of working hard, standing up for what is right, and speaking the truth. Sharing my story with my neighbors and my family has helped me understand why I was so often in conflict with the company's leaders as Google changed. There are many people here in Maine and throughout the country who live by the credo "Don't be evil." We may not use that language, and we don't have billion dollar marketing budgets to convince the world of our goodness. But, we live by those words every day, and we expect our government and our corporations to do the same.

