

RESEARCH

'A Great Place to Work' : A comparison of Employee Engagement Practices of select companies with David Zinger Engagement Pyramid

P. Gowri Kusuma* and Sukanya Madasu**

ABSTRACT

Research has consistently shown that employee engagement is powerfully linked to a range of business success factors such as: Employee performance, efficiency, Productivity, Safety, Attendance and retention, Customer service and satisfaction, Customer loyalty and retention, and Profitability. To be ranked as an Employer of Choice, the firms should follow the strategy of "Inside Out" means first internal customers (employees) have to be engaged.

This paper is a systematic review of Employee engagement initiatives at Great Places to Work.

Top five companies were listed from the 'Great Place to Work' India 2013 report. The researcher has analyzed whether these top 5 companies have practiced any Employee Engagement practices and if so how are they different and unique in engaging their most valuable assets "Employees". An effort has been made to compile all these practices and compare them with the Ten Building Blocks of David Zinger Employee Engagement Pyramid

KEYWORDS: Employee Engagement, Great Places to Work, David Zinger Employee Engagement Pyramid.

"Hiring good people is hard.
Hiring great people is brutally hard.
And nothing matters more in winning than getting
the right people on the field."
Jack Welch in 'Winning'

INTRODUCTION

March 7th is Employee Appreciation Day, when companies celebrate what makes their success possible - 'Their People'. Great workplaces make

their employees feel valued every day. Employees at Best Companies feel appreciated as people, and are able to be themselves at work with colleagues that feel like family. While saying thanks can be as simple as, saying thanks, formal appreciation and recognition programs at Great Workplaces have some common qualities that tie them together.

Companies that understand the conditions that enhance employee engagement have accomplished

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something that competitors will find very difficult to imitate. Research has consistently shown that employee engagement is powerfully linked to a range of business success factors such as: Employee performance / efficiency, Productivity, Safety, Attendance and retention, Customer service and satisfaction, Customer loyalty and retention, and Profitability. This study tries to link David Zinger Employee Engagement Pyramid Blocks with Engagement initiatives at the Best Places to Work.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

FORTUNE magazine and the Hay Group have conducted 'World's Most Admired Company' (WMAC) survey. The study was intended to analyze the relationship between employee engagement and a company's business development and consumer relationship.

The revelations of the study are:

- 94 percent of respondents from the WMAC believed that employee engagement has created a competitive advantage in the market place
- 71 percent of respondents from the WMAC believed that their company has been successful at linking employee engagement to customer satisfaction
- Employee engagement is increasingly being recognized as a major driver of business performance, revealing important information about an organization's health and future prospects
- 94% of the respondents opined that employee engagement efforts reduced employee turnover

- .85% of the respondents believed that employee engagement efforts reduced employee performance problems
- 90% of the respondents identified their company as very effective at fostering high levels of employee engagement

This study has inspired the researcher to know about the Employee Engagement practices initiated by these companies.'

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the Employee Engagement Practices of top 5 companies rated by Great Places to Work (India) 2013
2. To identify the factors identified by the companies to leverage Employee Engagement
3. To analyze and map David Zinger Pyramid blocks with that of the selected five companies Engagement practices

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Employee Engagement refers to employees being involved with and enthusiastic about their work and the company. Engaged employees have a positive emotional attachment with their work and talk positively about it to others. Engagement has increasingly been seen as a way of measuring employees 'commitment' to their organizations and their jobs and as a way of creating more highly effective workplaces (CLC2004; Robinson et al. 2004; Seijts&Crim 2006; Towers Perrin 2003). Many HR consultants use engagement models in an attempt to market to organizations the possibility of creating more effective and efficient

employees who will deliver greater organizational benefits and better organizational performance (Crabtree 2005; Echols 2005; Gubman 2004).

Employee engagement has developed into a complex and multi-dimensional concept that has gone much further than the simple notions of motivation, the psychological contract and employee satisfaction. Engagement is an organization's measure of its investment in human capital.

GREAT PLACES TO WORK

Great workplaces are built through the day-to-day relationships that employees experience. The key factor in common in these relationships is TRUST. From the Employee's perspective, a great workplace is one where they:

- **TRUST** the people they work for
- Have **PRIDE** in what they do
- **ENJOY** the people they work with.

TWELVE ATTRIBUTES OF A TRULY GREAT PLACE TO WORK

1. Commitment to pay every employee a living wage.
2. Give all employees a stake in the company's success, in the form of profit sharing, or stock options, or bonuses tied to performance.
3. Design working environments that are safe, comfortable and appealing to work in.
4. Provide healthy, high quality food, at the lowest possible prices.

5. Create places for employees to rest and renew during the course of the working day.
6. Offer a well-equipped gym and other facilities that encourage employees to move physically and stay fit.
7. Define clear and specific expectations for what success looks like in any given job. Then, treat employees as adults by giving them as much autonomy as possible to accomplish the work.
8. Institute two-way performance reviews.
9. Hold leaders and managers accountable for treating all employees with respect and care.
10. Create policies that encourage employees to set aside time to focus without interruption on their most important priorities.
11. Provide employees with ongoing opportunities and incentives to learn develop and grow both new job-specific hard skills, as well as softer skills.
12. Stand for something beyond simply increasing profits. Create products or provide services or serve causes that clearly add value in the world, making it possible for employees to derive a sense of meaning from their work, and to feel good about the companies for which they work.

"At the core of success for any firm is having a great team," "That means a team that is motivated and engaged in helping to move the firm forward,

and actively participating in creating an awesome client experience. Having team members who go the extra distance for a client, to proactively engage where and when they can, is ultimately what increases client satisfaction and retention."

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on secondary data. Information is collected from official websites of the selected companies, blogs written by employees and various reports and articles on Employee Engagement, Great Places to Work India 2013 report and BSR report.

Top 5 companies in India are listed based on the rating of 'Great Place to Work' India 2013 report. The top 5 companies in India are:

1. Google India
2. Intel India
3. American Express India
4. NIIT India
5. Forbes Marshall Private Limited.

Researcher has done a detailed study to examine whether these top 5 companies are following Employee Engagement practices? And then Employee Engagement initiatives are identified and studied.

Finally the Employee Engagement elements of these selected companies are mapped with the David Zinger Model of Employee Engagement Pyramid.

GOOGLE INDIA

Mission statement:

"To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful."

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES AT GOOGLE

Google is one of the workplace where Managers play a key role in engaging their employees. To fulfill this objective, Google has identified eight behavioral attributes that make their Managers approachable by their sub ordinates. They are:

- A Manager should be a good coach
- Empowering the team is the responsibility of the Manager
- Manager has to express interest in team members' success and personal well-being
- Being productive and results-oriented is one of the attribute of a Manager at Google
- Google believes that communication is an important element of Employee Engagement.
- Manager should strive for the career development of their team members.
- Clear vision and strategy for the team can make a big difference
- Manager should be diligent at technical skills and advise the team

Employee Engagement has been the top priority of Management as it believed that Engaged Employees can only make Google a Best Place to Work. To achieve this objective Google started various initiatives. They are:

Project 'OXYGEN'

Project Oxygen is an initiative taken by Google with some basic assumptions. It states that people leave a company for three reasons:

- They don't feel a connection to the mission of the company
- They don't really like or respect their co-workers
- They have a terrible boss

In Project Oxygen, information is gathered from more than 10,000 observations about managers across more than 100 variables, from various performance reviews, feedback surveys and other reports. All the comments are coded in order to look for patterns. This signaled a need for engaging the Employees.

1. Google Cafes: Google cafes are designed to encourage interaction between employees and cross functional teams. The concept is developing Synergy among the employees.

2. Direct emails: The idea behind this initiative is to provide a platform to the employees to send direct mails to any of the company's leaders. This facility has boosted the morale of the employees as they have direct communication with the leaders.

3. Google Moderator: It is an innovation Management tool designed by Goggles' engineers. Moderator helps people to discover existing ideas, questions or suggestions, vote for ideas. Google allows its engineers to spend 20% of their time on projects that interest them. By doing so it is able to attract and retain talent at Google.

4. Thank God it's Friday!: TGIF is a Google's all-hands meetings, where employees are empowered to ask questions directly to the company's top leader and other executives about any number of company issues.

5. Fixit: 24-hour sprints where Googlers drop everything and focus 100 percent of their energy on solving a specific problem;

INTEL INDIA

Mission statement:

"Delight our customers, employees, and shareholders by relentlessly delivering the platform and technology advancements that become essential to the way we work and live."

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES BY INTEL

Innovation is the key for success at Intel. Intel has identified and initiated Corporate Social Responsibility as a strategy to leverage Employee Engagement. Earlier researches have revealed that corporate social responsibility is one of the key drivers of Employee Engagement. Intel believes that an effective way to expand the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility programs is by increasing the engagement of its employees in its CSR activities.

Intel hired BSR (CSR Consultant) to do a benchmarking of leading engagement practices. Based on their recommendations Intel has launched new initiatives focusing on three strategies to enhance Corporate Social Responsibility.

1. **Raising awareness:** Employees pride and loyalty can be increased by making them aware of the company's CSR activities. It launched a new portal 'Green Intel'. The twin objectives of this portal are to inform employees about the company's CSR activities and create a tool to support interaction among employees. This portal is also used to develop community support agriculture program through which they can purchase locally grown food.

2. **Expanding opportunities for involvement:** Intel has initiated Sustainability Action Team (SAT). SAT is a network of employees who are interested in environmental sustainability, who meet to develop projects and educate colleagues.

Carbonrally is a web based platform that challenges users to reduce their personal carbon footprints. Members pledge to reduce carbon emissions both at work and office environment.

3. **Setting goals and aligning incentives:** Employees can win non-financial awards for community volunteering and outstanding achievements in environmental, energy-conservation, and pollution-prevention programs.

Employees are rewarded with a reusable shopping bag. Environmental Excellence awards for employees is initiated which showed increased levels of employee pride and satisfaction with their work.

NIIT

Mission statement: - "Bringing People and Computers Together...Successfully"

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES BY NIIT

"The key differentiator which makes NIIT a great workplace is its constant focus on improving the quality of work-life of its people and its endeavor to contribute back to the society at large."

1. **'Hats OFF':** Is a unique program which places strong attention to make appreciation a way of life with its innovation rewards and recognition program

2. **'Spotlight':** Is a unique awards program where in achievers and achievements are constantly awarded. This performance-driven culture differentiates NIIT from others.

3. **Career opportunities:** NIIT's growth is the derivative of the growth of each member in the company. The company takes on itself the duty to foster careers by creating opportunities that demand learning, thinking and innovation from each NIITian.

4. **Soft Skills:** Every individual at NIIT requires people skills for effective business interaction. Therefore, they aim to create a place where people learn how to interact with people.

Employees feel that NIIT is a great workplace because of its friendly people, HR policies, supportive bosses, and relaxed atmosphere, which encourages innovation and creativity. NIIT's people-centric policies and initiatives, incentives to learn, develop and grow is what make every NIITian excited to get to work every day.

AMERICAN EXPRESS (INDIA)

Mission Statement:

Helping customers do more and achieve more and all the financial services that American Express can provide to make that 'more' possible.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES AT AMERICAN EXPRESS:

"People join American Express for a job and stay for an experience!

To ensure employees feel inspired, valued and engaged, American Express strives to create an open environment in which employees can ask questions or make suggestions at any time; even to senior leadership. Various Communication vehicles were launched. They are:

- Frequent staff meetings
- Group lunches with department leaders
- One-on-one discussions with Managers
- Discussions and announcements on the company intranet
- Blogs, instant messaging, and teleconferencing

A Global Survey is conducted annually to assess the performance of the company. The feedback generated is used to leverage opportunities. Once surveys are complete, Employee Engagement Action Teams in each business area assess the findings and solicit additional feedback in areas targeted for improvement.

1. **Project Pulse:** In 2010, a survey was conducted to introduce a new way for encouraging employee-leader dialogue and feedback about business priorities, leadership behaviors, and employee experience by creating the Employee Pulse. Employees will benefit from more open-ended questions to better express their opinions and experiences.
2. **Open communication:** American Express follows a system of Open Communication. By adopting an open communication system a culture of trust and confidence is built among employees.
3. **Developing the next generation of leaders:** Building leadership skills begins with a comprehensive orientation and continues throughout the career at American Express. Training is atop corporate priority, both to ensure that employees are developing their professional abilities and to foster personal growth.
4. **Development Partners:** Every employee is expected to have a meaningful and specific development plan that outlines how he/ she intends to build the skills and attain the experience needed for career advancement. Employees design their own plan, with their direct supervisors acting as "development partners,"
5. **Creating a more flexible work environment:** A variety of work arrangements, including; working virtually from home, job sharing, Flexible hours and

part-time work, are the options available based on the job and its requirements.

6. Investing in employees' physical health:

As a three-time winner of the National Business Group on Health's "Best Employer for Healthy Lifestyles" (2009-2011), American Express remains committed to their employees' health.

7. Financial health: Employees' financial health is also a priority at American Express. With their Smart Saving initiative, they created a suite of services that are easily accessible to all employees; Smart Saving offers free financial counseling.

8. Safety: Global Emergency Preparedness Standard has been developed to ensure quick and effective response in the event of an emergency. Every location has a response plan in place that is regularly tested, including employee drills.

FORBES MARSHALL PRIVATE LIMITED

Mission Statement: Customer Delight.

Employee Engagement Initiatives at Forbes Marshall

The main Employee Engagement tenets that make Forbes Marshall one of the best places to work are:

- Forbes Marshall Culture which is very open and family oriented is one important aspect.
- The senior leadership team's approach to people policies and processes is another aspect which is rated high by the members of the organization.
- The learning culture which is nurtured in the organization and tracked very closely with the active involvement of the senior leadership team also adds great value.
- The focus given by Forbes Marshall in engaging its own employees in CSR initiatives and the satisfaction they derive out of this involvement is another key area.
- The involvement of families of members is another area which also is topped with a strong focus on FUN at work.
- The people friendly policies also add to making Forbes Marshall being a Great Place to Work.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES AT THE SELECTED COMPANIES

Name of the company	Employee Engagement Initiatives	Identified Drivers for Engagement
Google India	Project 'Oxygen', Google Cafes, Google Moderators, Thank God It's Friday, Direct emails, Fixit.	Manager Behavior, Leadership, Innovation, Open Communication, Creativity and Innovation.
Intel India	Green Intel, Sustainability Action Team (SAT), Carbonrally, Environmental Excellence Awards, Community support agriculture programs, Reusable shopping bag.	Corporate Social Responsibility, Environmental and Community consciousness
NIIT	'Hats Off', Spot Light, Soft Skills	Quality of Work Life, Culture, Performance, Rewards, Innovation & Creativity, Supportive Bosses, HR policies, Career Opportunities.
American Express India	Project Pulse, Open communication, Developing next generation leaders:, Development Partners, flexible work environment, physical health, Financial health, safety,	Leadership styles, Communication, Flexible Work, Wellbeing(Physical, Health, safety, financial), Compensation
Forbes Marshall Pvt.Ltd.	Family FUN programs, People Friendly policies, Community welfare programs, Quality Commitment.	Quality, Social service programs, open culture, team spirit, Corporate Social Activities, Leadership

DAVID ZINGER PYRAMID MODEL

David Zinger a practitioner on Employee Engagement, with his experience he has built a pyramid of employee engagement. The pyramid is unique as it consists many blocks and there is a flexibility to interchange the blocks.

The researcher has compared these Employee Engagement building blocks, with that of the top five companies from the Best Places to Work India 2013. An effort has been made to map these blocks with Employee Engagement initiatives of the selected companies.



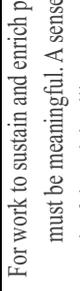
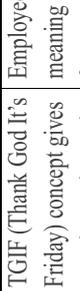
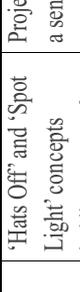
Fig 1

The pyramid is a bold model for employee engagement. The blocks starting at the top and going down the pyramid from left to right are: achieve results, maximize performance, path progress, maximize performance, foster recognition, build relations, enliven energy, leverage strength, make meaning, master moments, enhance wellbeing.

TABLE 2
SUMMARY OF DAVID ZINGER EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT PYRAMID BLOCKS AND PRACTICES AT TOP
FIVE BEST PLACES TO WORK

Block	Description	Google India	INTEL India	NIIT	American Express India	Forbes Marshall Pvt.Ltd
 Achieve Results	Employees should be aware of results to be achieved and their involvement will increase their engagement levels.	Emphasizes on results with its unique program 'Fixit'.	'Sustainability Action Teams' help in achieving the results.	'Hats Off' program is key to achieve results.	Flexible working hours enable to achieve better results.	Aims results through Quality commitment
 Path Progress	Progress is the single biggest key to motivation and engagement for Knowledge workers. Organizations should learn how to structure work for progress	Managers envision their subordinates and provide career path to them	With intranet and blogs employees interact with seniors and discuss their career.	Spot light program helps in building career path.	Development Partners help in career path building.	Career growth of the employee is the primary task at Forbes Marshall
 Maximize performance	Making key performances worthy of employee's attention and offering feedback that is actually heard and acted upon by employees, can really engage the employees.	'Moderators' help in maximizing the performance.	Employees are highly empowered to showcase their inner talents.	Soft skills are a part of employee development, which focus on maximizing performance.	Employees themselves design their performance targets.	Quality Commitment is one element through which performance can be maximized.
 Foster recognition	Recognition is strategic, and powerful. Recognition is the "re-thinking" of engagement in our everyday interactions and recognition for progress creates a strong multiplier for engagement.	Management never step behind in recognizing and rewarding their employees	Excellence Awards' are designed to foster recognition.	"Hats Off program is built exclusively to foster recognition.	Project 'Pulse' identifies and recognizes the achievements of the employees.	Developing the next generation Leader ultimately recognizes the Talent.
 Build relationships	Results and relationships can make an ordinary work place into a Great Place to work.	Google Cafes are helpful in building relationships	'Green Intel' and various intranet portals help in building relations.	Friendly Organizational culture is the key in building relations.	Open communication system ultimately binds all the employees at Intel.	Family Fun programs achieve the objective of building relations.
 Leverage strengths	. Powerful managers "spot" employees' strengths and make strength training a daily endeavor.	Google Moderators and 'Fixit' helps in leveraging strengths.	Sustainability Action Teams identify and the strengths of employee at Intel	Supportive Bosses and excellent career opportunities result in leveraging strengths.	Development partners focus on Leveraging strengths of the employees.	Open culture and team spirit leverages the strength of the employees.

'A Great Place to Work' : A comparison of Employee Engagement Practices of select companies with David Zinger Engagement Pyramid

 <p>Make Meaning</p>	<p>For work to sustain and enrich people it must be meaningful. A sense of meaningful work instills a strong and rich intrinsic motivation.</p>	<p>TGIF (Thank God It's Friday) concept gives meaning to the work Googler's perform.</p>	<p>Employees derive meaning not only from regular job but by actively participating in programs like 'Carbonally'</p>	<p>'Hats Off' and 'Spot Light' concepts imbibe a sense of meaning among the employees.</p>	<p>Project 'Pulse' gives a sense of pride and meaning to employee at American Express India.</p>	<p>Open culture and community Welfare Programs give Meaning to the Work at Forbes Marshall.</p>
 <p>Master Moments</p>	<p>Engagement resides in the moment. Learn to master moments. When we balance challenge and skills we enter the flow zone as we dwell and work within the moment. Working in the moment also reduces stress.</p>	<p>Appreciation is a part of Google's work culture.</p>	<p>Employees at Intel enjoy and experience every moment.</p>	<p>Innovation and creativity initiatives make NITians enjoy every moment at work place.</p>	<p>With the help of physical and mental activities, stress is reduced and ultimately employee lives every moment.</p>	<p>Family Fun programs and Team initiatives Help in mastering every moment.</p>
 <p>Enhance wellbeing</p>	<p>Create a profound wellbeing where people leave work energized and enriched rather than depleted and deadened.</p>	<p>Project 'Oxygen' fuels the wellbeing of the employees.</p>	<p>Employee wellbeing is a part of Intel's work culture.</p>	<p>Quality of Work Life aim at enhancing the wellbeing of the employees</p>	<p>Financial health, safety are key elements which enhance wellbeing</p>	<p>Employee Welfare programs Are the life blood At Forbes Marshall</p>
 <p>Enliven energy</p>	<p>Energy comes in a variety of forms: mental, emotional, physical, organizational, and spiritual.</p>	<p>Physical fitness is valued at Google</p>	<p>Employee energizes through various community welfare programs.</p>	<p>Flexible HR policies result in organizational wellbeing.</p>	<p>Special emphasis is laid on employee's physical, wellbeing by focusing on health and safety elements.</p>	<p>People friendly policies and Social welfare Programs focus on generating Energy.</p>

LIMITATIONS

The rationale behind the selection of the companies is purely judgmental. The present study is totally based on secondary data available from the Company's websites and other blogs written by employees. The existing reviews and comments by the employees have been considered as a basis to conclude the study.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Relationships are at the heart of every Great Work Place. The relationship between employees and management, between employees, and an individual's relationship to his or her work, combine and collude to create a great work environment, where employees feel engaged, happy, and proud. To have an engaged workforce, it is important that the CEO and Line Managers engagement levels should also be high. When leadership does not walk the talk, employees perceive the superficiality of their efforts, and are less likely to follow along.

It is found that the ten block of David Zinger Pyramid are used by these companies giving preference to some blocks. Corporate Social Responsibility is also identified as one major driver of Employee Engagement.

'Great Places to Work' continuously focus on ability to attract and retain talented people Quality of management Social responsibility to the community and the environment, Innovation, Quality of products or services, Wise use of corporate assets, Financial soundness, Long-term investment value, Effectiveness in doing business globally and ultimately it is Employee Engagement initiatives which help these companies to raise the

bar of excellence every time they are chosen as 'Best Place to Work'.

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QUOTES

Every time you state what you want or believe, you're the first to hear it. It's a message to both you and others about what you think is possible. Don't put a ceiling on yourself.

Oprah Winfrey, Media mogul

It's fine to celebrate success but it is more important to heed the lessons of failure.

Bill Gates, Chairman, Microsoft

Failure is simply the opportunity to begin again, this time more intelligently... A business absolutely devoted to service will have only one worry about profits. They will be embarrassingly large.

Henry Ford, Founder, Ford Motor Company

One of the huge mistakes people make is that they try to force an interest on themselves.

You don't choose your passions; your passions choose you.

Jeff Bezos, Chairman and CEO, Amazon