

White Paper

Emotional Drivers of Employee Engagement

Why Emotions Matter

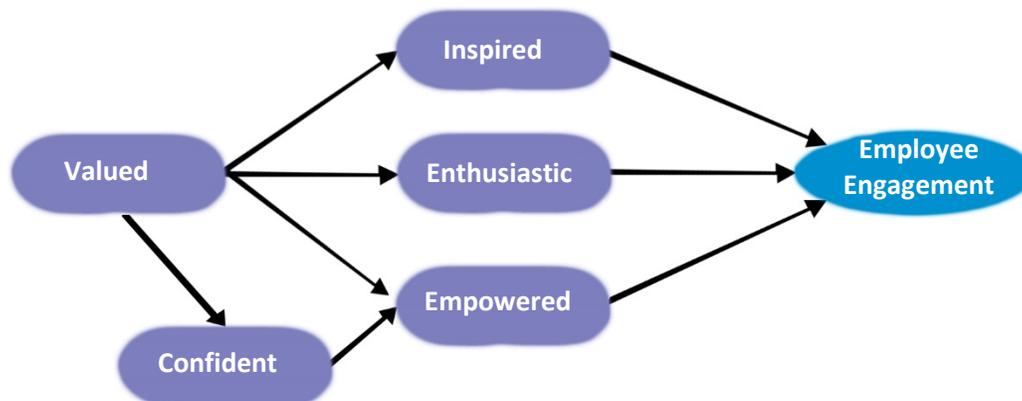
Humans like to say they make rational decisions, but in reality they are driven by emotions, which people post-rationalize when explaining their choices to others. This after-the-fact storytelling has led management to attribute a series of functional reasons why only one-third of employees are fully engaged at work and why others become disengaged and leave their organization. Strategies for recruitment and keeping workers engaged have in the past focused on practical rewards such as pay increases, bonuses or flexible working hours, but it is the feeling-based personal relationships that have the greatest influence, causing engaged employees to work effectively, stay with their company and act as ambassadors for their organization.

Dale Carnegie Training invited MSW Research to investigate the emotions of the workplace. MSW utilized its EMO*Dynamics battery, twenty-eight positive and negative emotions proved to be important in consumer decision-making across many categories. In this groundbreaking nationwide study of 1500 employees, they discovered that five of these twenty-eight emotions drove engagement and twelve provoked disengagement.

“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.”

-Dale Carnegie

The Power of Positive Emotions



Experiments have shown that people are more likely to help others when feeling positive emotions. Smiling not only makes us feel better but is infectious; we can store up positive feelings to protect us from negativity and help us through difficult times. This holds as true in our working life as it does in personal life.

Analysis shows that feeling valued, confident, inspired, enthused and empowered are the key emotions that lead to engagement. Being “valued” is the gateway to achievement. Forty-six percent of employees report feeling valued. However, by itself feeling valued does not generate engagement; rather it acts as an enabler for the other more positive emotions. Feeling valued and feeling confident together empower people to make decisions about their work and generates enthusiasm, which inspires people to try harder. Employees who are excited and enthusiastic to be at work are not just there for the paycheck or the next promotion. They care about the organization and work to further its goals.

Here are emotional responses to questions an employees ask themselves about their organization,

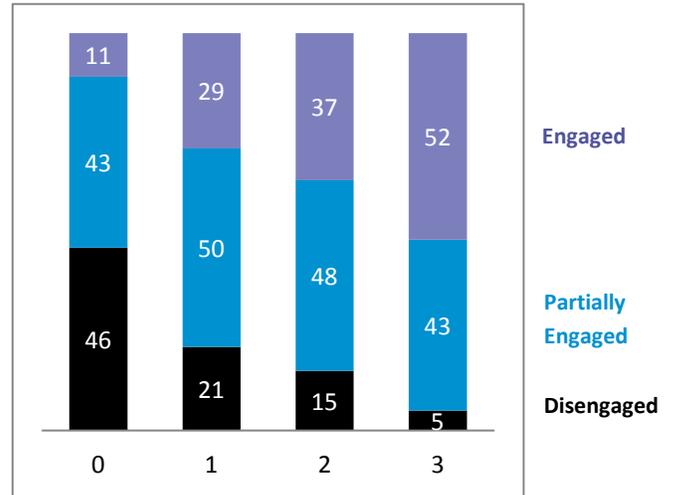
- Do I feel I am valued?
- Do I value the organization where I work?
- Do I feel I belong?

These questions are crucial to their level of engagement, affecting their performance at work and their willingness to learn within the organization. Employees want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, something they can be proud of. Feeling pride in their work energizes employees. They look forward to going to work and are more willing to put in extra effort to make the organization a success. In short, they are engaged.

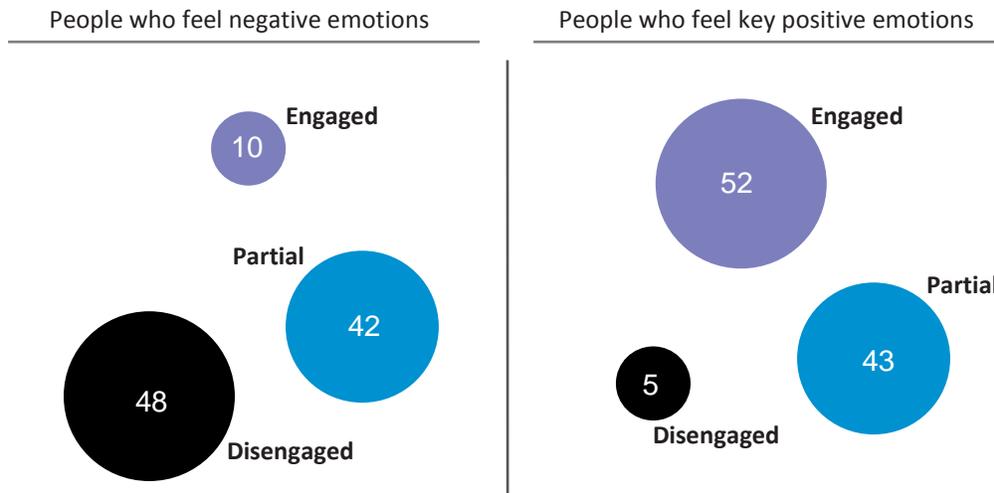
The level of engagement increases dramatically with the number of key positive emotions (Inspired, Enthusiastic, Empowered, Confident or Valued) employees feel.

Seventy percent of all employees surveyed felt at least one of these five key positive emotions, but only 12% felt three of them. Among this latter group only 5% were disengaged, while more than half were positively engaged in driving the company forward.

Engagement is more than being happy at work; in fact happiness does not greatly impact engagement. Rather, engagement is demonstrated by how personally connected and committed workers feel to their organization. It is measurable by an employee's willingness to recommend their organization as a place to work and a place to do business.

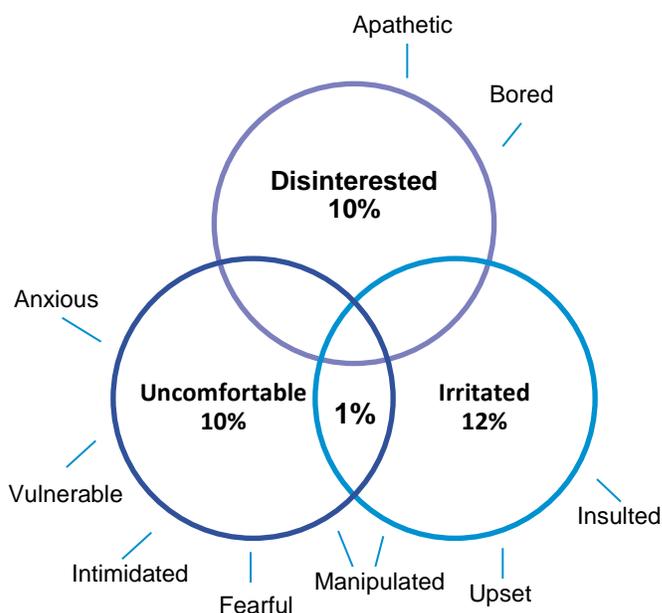


Are Negative Emotions Important?



There is a direct relationship between negative emotions and an employee's level of engagement. Employees who feel negative emotions are disengaged nearly ten times more than employees who feel positive emotions. Almost three in ten employees feel at least one of twelve significant negative emotions as a result of their interaction with their immediate supervisor.

Nearly half of these workers are disengaged and only 10% engaged, contrasting starkly with the 52% engagement measured among those who felt most positive as a result of their interaction with their supervisor.



Three core negative emotions drive disengagement: feeling Irritation, disinterest, and discomfort. Workers can't be critiqued into performing better, but being insulted by the immediate supervisor ensures an emotional disconnect and disengagement. In simple terms, a good supervisor makes people feel valued and confident; a poor supervisor irritates people and makes them feel uncomfortable.

This is important because negative emotions are more contagious than positive ones. Because they are more noticeable, they can spiral from the individual employee to impact co-workers and the organization as a whole and spread beyond the workplace to clients, potential clients and possible future hires.

What drives those emotions?

Employees personalize their job through emotions felt about the organization's actions as a whole and about their own supervisors in particular. An analysis performed to determine the link between supervisor and organization evoked feelings, revealing that there is a strong fit between these two measures. However, it is the immediate supervisor who is the chief emotional driver in the workplace; reactions to him or her explain 84% of how employees feel about their organization. Feeling happy is the only emotion driven more by the organization than the immediate supervisor.

Further analysis determined the link between the emotion felt by the employee and the level of satisfaction with their immediate supervisor. The immediate supervisor produces a polarizing emotional response. Managers who induce positive emotions foster a stronger sense of satisfaction. They receive the highest satisfaction ratings when they make employees feel inspired, enthusiastic, happy, and excited. Conversely, when immediate supervisors evoke negative emotions in employees, their satisfaction ratings are below average. Specifically, supervisors whose direct reports feel insulted, upset, or irritated by them receive the lowest levels of satisfaction. Satisfaction with line management affects the overall level of satisfaction with the organization, which is linked to engagement.

Developing Positive Emotions in Your Organization

Employees personalize their work through emotions felt about the company's actions as a whole and about their immediate supervisor in particular. Those who emotionally connect in a positive way with an organization feel a sense of ownership and are more likely to stay with it, delivering superior work in less time and reducing turnover costs. Dale Carnegie Training can help your organization build effective interpersonal skills that augment the positive emotions essential to a productive work environment and that lead to increased employee engagement.