

How engaged are your service employees?

One way to increase employee productivity is to increase employee engagement. Sibson Consulting's "Rewards of Work" survey provides a basic definition and advice on increasing engagement in the workplace. Following are some highlights of the survey report.

Leading companies might try to avoid "making employees happier just for the sake of making them happy," as Christian Ellis of Sibson Consulting puts it in the article "Customer-centric companies invest in staff productivity," appearing in the August issue of *Customer Service Newsletter*. But there's no doubt that employee engagement is related to employee productivity. According to Sibson's most recent "Rewards of Work" Survey, "employees who reported high levels of engagement also reported that they spent more than 75 percent of their time at work being productive." Employee engagement will also contribute to higher retention and improved organizational results.

Understanding and measuring engagement in an organization, however, requires a consistent definition, and one that defines "engagement" in the context of performance and productivity. Sibson's study determined that two attributes of high-performing and productive employees

emerged: 1) *Knowing what to do at work* (e.g., understanding the organization's vision of success and how the employee can contribute to achieving that vision is an underlying factor of performance and productivity), and 2) *Wanting to do the work* (e.g., obtaining a sense of satisfaction from the job and work content and being motivated by the organization to perform the work).

Using this basic definition, Sibson identified four levels of engagement:

Engaged employees know what to do and want to do it — 52 percent of employees fall into this category according to Sibson's study.

Renegades know what to do, but do not want to do it — 11 percent are in this category.

Disengaged employees do not know what to do and would not do it even if they did — 33 percent are in this category.

Enthusiasts want to do their work, but do not know what to do —

5 percent are in this category.

How do you increase your percentage of engaged employees? "There's no single silver bullet for improving employee engagement and productivity," Ellis says. "However, there are several types of interventions that over time have proven effective for improving engagement." They include:

- Increasing the business literacy of your staff, so they better understand how their work contributes to the success of the organization.
- Actively involving a broad base of employees in the development of organizational actions and initiatives.
- Designing work processes and jobs that represent meaningful work and have a clear line of sight to customer outcomes and business results.
- Infusing flexibility, autonomy (where sensible), and accountability into work processes and the overall workplace culture.

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