

6. Employee Relations and Employee Engagement

Traditionally, employee relations is about:

- a. minimizing disputes
- b. managing trade unions, and
- c. keeping employees happy

Today, more emphasis has been put on employee engagement, as part of the employee relations initiatives, with the aim to enhance and improve relationship with the employees. By getting employees engaged into the organization, the employer is benefited with higher staff morale and the advantage of greater competitiveness as employees are willing to invest more efforts and “go the extra mile”.

Employee engagement is an ongoing process to which proactive measures need to be taken throughout the HR cycle.

6A. Handling Employee Relations and Enhancing Employee Engagement

The drive for an engaged workforce needs to build on good people management and development policies and the active support of line managers. People management strategies and policies need to be aligned with those of the wider business. Employees need to understand how their work contributes to organisational outcomes. A minority of employees may not want to be engaged; organisations may need to give particular attention to recruitment and communications.

- ✦ Common drivers of employee engagement are:
- ✦ feeling well-informed about what is happening in the organisation
- ✦ involvement in decision-making
- ✦ freedom to voice ideas upwards, to which managers listen
- ✦ feeling enabled to perform well
- ✦ having opportunities to develop the job
- ✦ feeling the organisation is concerned for employees’ health and well-being

Employers who are successful in engaging their employees observe or follow the following activities throughout the employment cycle.

6A.1 Recruitment & selection

It is always more effective to select people who fit the company culture and expectation, than to attempt to change them after they have joined the company.

Make it clear what are expected from the employees and what employees can expect from the company.

Select job fit, career fit and culture fit candidates.

6A.2 Orientation/on-boarding

The purpose of orientation/on-boarding is to help new staff settle into their jobs as quickly as possible.

When a new staff is on board, organization orientation/on-boarding activities should provide them with related organization structures, guide to workplace, health, safety and hygiene information, a clear understanding of the values and aims of the organization and more importantly to provide them with relevant supports, such as peer group support, mentoring program etc.

6A.3 Training & development

Employees who receive work-related training are significantly more fully engaged and more likely to feel positive about their long-term career prospects with the company.

6A.4 Recognition, compensation and benefits

Recognition can be in various forms. But in terms of compensation and benefits, employees will want to feel that they are being equitably paid for their performance and benefits are on things that they value.

In addition, communication channels should be in place for access to information such as company policy, expectation, opinions and grievance handling.