

The Key Drivers of Employee Engagement: A Case Study in an Irish Private Sector Organisation

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Abstract

This research dissertation was conducted to investigate the many definitions of employee engagement, the models of employee engagement, and the key drivers of employee engagement. The researcher then wanted to interview employees in an Irish private sector organisation in order to discover whether or not the key drivers of employee engagement as reviewed in the literature were of any relevance to these employees. Employees from different departments within the organisation were interviewed. The researcher used a small sample and found that seven out of the nine interviewed were fully engaged. Using such a small sample brought up some limitations which are discussed later in this dissertation.

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Chapter One

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Chapter one of this dissertation introduces the reader to the concept of Employee Engagement, the background and context of the study. It also includes the justification for the research, and highlights the research aims, objectives, questions and the significance of the study.

The purpose of this Master's Dissertation is to investigate the key drivers of employee engagement and the relevance of these drivers in an Irish private sector organisation. There are many academic studies already carried out on employee engagement but the author wanted to get a more in-depth look into employee engagement in Ireland and in particular in a listed company in the private sector. The researcher wanted to find out if Anitha (2014) key drivers "work environment, leadership, team and co-worker, training and career development, compensation, organisational policies and workplace well-being" have an impact on employee's engagement.

CIPD define employee engagement as "being positively present during the performance of work by willingly contributing intellectual effort, experiencing positive emotions and meaningful connections to other" (www.cipd.co.uk, 2015).

Gallup Business Journal highlighted the three main types of employees; engaged employees, not-engaged employees, and actively disengaged employees (Gallup Business Journal, 2005). Organisations with engaged employees are likely to have a higher performance rate and experience more success than organisations with not-engaged and/or actively disengaged employees.

It will become clearer throughout this dissertation that there isn't just one meaning of employee engagement and that many authors have different definitions and opinions of employee engagement.

1.2 Background and Context

The organisation the researcher chose to conduct their research in is a successful, Irish, private sector organisation with offices across Europe, placing candidates in job roles.

In 2015, the organisation was voted as one of the Great Places to Work. This is one of the reasons the researcher wanted to conduct their study in this organisation as it was only recently voted a Great Place to Work, they thought it would be a good time to find out if the employees believed there was any relevance in the key drivers of employee engagement as set out in literature.

1.3 Justification for the Research

The research found there to be many different authors discussing employee engagement over the years and the various factors that drive employee engagement within organisations. Robinson, Perryman & Hayday (2004) defined employee engagement as “A positive attitude held by the employee towards the organisation and its values. An engaged employee is aware of business context, and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organisation”. Many authors of employee engagement literature, such as Bedarkar and Pandita (2014), felt that some of the key drivers of employee engagement were factors such as “leadership and communication”. The researcher felt that the key drivers of employee engagement in an Irish private sector organisation was worth researching as they haven’t come across many research projects on employee engagement in private sector organisations as there is often a focus on organisations in the public sector.

1.4 Research Aims

The main aim of this research study was for the researcher to discover and carry out more research into the key drivers of employee engagement as set out by Anitha (2014) and to find out if they are relevant to employees in an Irish private sector organisation. The researcher wanted to understand the importance and relevance of employee engagement in the organisation they were basing their research on. Conducting research should also show what motivates employees and encourages them to go the extra mile for their organisation. The researcher also hoped to find out what employees thought their organisation could do to improve the employee engagement strategy that is in place in their organisation.

1.5 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research dissertation were:

- To examine various definitions, theories and models of employee engagement

- To understand what the actual meaning of employee engagement is
- To determine the key drivers of employee engagement
- To investigate whether the key drivers of employee engagement are important to employees
- To find out what employee engagement is like in Ireland
- To find out what employee engagement is like in the private sector
- To find out what the employees in the private sector organisation think of their organisation's employee engagement method and if there are any improvements that could be made

1.6 Significance of the Study

The researcher hoped by conducting this research they would be able to add to the body of knowledge already available on employee engagement in organisations, especially Irish private sector organisations.

Chapter 2

2.0 Literature Review

This chapter will bring the reader through the various different literature that the researcher came across when researching the topic of employee engagement and see what different authors thought of employee engagement.

2.1 Employee Engagement

There are many different definitions of employee engagement in academic literature including journals and books. The most commonly used definition of employee engagement used by academics and in organisations is mentioned in an article by Anitha (2014) where she says employee engagement is *“the level of commitment and involvement an employee has towards their organisation and its values”* (Anitha, 2014). Although Sundaray (2011) agrees with Anitha, using the same definition, he adds that employees who are engaged in their own work, work to encourage their fellow colleagues to all be engaged and to better their performance in the work place to achieve better standards and strive to success. The higher a percentage of engaged employees an organisation has, the more success the organisation will experience (Sundaray, 2011).

Another way to explain employee engagement is when an employee attaches themselves to their work and their organisation. These employees will express themselves in the workplace “physically, cognitively and emotionally” (Kahn, 1990). Employee’s personal opinions about themselves can have an effect on their engagement in the workplace. They can decide how engaged they will be in the workplace and how committed they will be to their job both physically and mentally. Employees that are not engaged won’t connect with their own work or work that is to be carried out with colleagues (Kahn, 1990).

Employee engagement has become more important to organisations as engaged employees perform at a higher standard than disengaged employees, this high performance provides continued success for an organisation (IBEC, 2008). Employees are a very valuable asset to an organisation if they are fully engaged; this is because they cannot be copied by the organisation’s competitors (Anitha, 2014). Engaged

employees create a better work environment as they try to encourage their colleagues to do their best. There is quite a difference between levels of engagement. These different levels of engagement are known as engaged, not-engaged and actively disengaged. Engaged employees are passionate about the organisation they work for and the work they do. These engaged employees as already mentioned above, encourage others to work to the best of their ability to benefit the organisation. Not-engaged employees are employees who go to work every day and fulfil their job title but do not go to any great lengths to connect with their work or go the extra mile. Actively disengaged employees illustrate that they do not like their job and have no interest in their work or the organisation that they are working for. Actively disengaged employees often try to bring other colleagues down with them and don't see that their engaged colleagues are striving to be the best and to achieve the best results for the organisation they work for (Gallup Business Journal, 2005).

In research carried out by IBEC, it was found that employee engagement can affect an organisation in many ways, including; raising performance, reducing the level of absenteeism in the workplace and presenteeism, providing a better service to customers which results in loyal customers, increases revenue, allows for easier change within the organisation and provides the organisation with a lower turnover rate as engaged employees are more likely to stay in an organisation they are happy in and committed to (IBEC, 2008).

According to Porath and Pearson in their chapter in the Harvard Business Review book on Emotional Intelligence, managers and all employees need to be self aware. Employees who are not emotionally intelligent might not know how their actions are affecting others around them. To keep this under control appreciation should be shown to employees. Managers should ask for feedback from their teams to see if there is anything they need to work on. One manager who has done this found that it bothered employees when he checked his phone or email during meetings and he hasn't done it since and his team are much happier now. They now feel he is focused and interested in what they have to say (Porath & Pearson, 2015).

On the other hand, authors Little and Little question whether employee engagement is a significant concept that improves the knowledge of management or is it becoming a disused idea. They believe organisations may use employee engagement as a way of

fixing any issues in the organisation regarding employees' motivation and performance (Little & Little, 2006).

An article by Forbes explains that employee surveys carried out by organisations have three outcomes they don't think are true anymore, these outcomes are; *"every employee response is equally important, every employee opinion is credible, and engagement alone drives results"*. They believe this is the old function of employee engagement where organisations tried to create a work environment where all employees are happy and there are absolutely no problems. The author believes the following five things could change the way organisations approach employee engagement going forward (www.forbes.com, 2015).

- *Don't treat every opinion the same:* don't accept what every employee wants, engage more with the higher performers as they have shown their ability and they might deserve to be listened to more than the other employees who don't work as hard (www.forbes.com, 2015).
- *Insist on personal accountability:* encourage employees to take on responsibility and no matter what the outcome is, hold them accountable. This encourages employees to work harder and they feel like they have control over their own work. It also encourages their personal and professional development (www.forbes.com, 2015).
- *Employ quid pro quo:* employees like to ask for things, organisation's need to learn to ask the employees that makes request what they are going to do to have their requests heard. This will either stop employees from making requests or encourage them to work harder as they may be rewarded with whatever their request is (www.forbes.com, 2015).
- *Foster a "Yes" culture:* when decisions are made in organisations, employees should be taking on the changes or risks and using their skills and knowledge to work these decisions. There shouldn't be an option of resistance (www.forbes.com, 2015).
- *Stop trying to create a perfect workplace:* organisations are always going to go through change and challenges amongst many other things. Instead of trying to eliminate this they should be embracing it and training their employees to accept the changes and challenges and work to overcome them. This will result

in employees feeling a sense of empowerment and accomplishment (www.forbes.com, 2015).

A report conducted by the Harvard Business Review in 2013 showed that after coming out of the recession, organisations were focusing on employee engagement more than they had done in the past. Organisations were gaining a new or renewed interest in growing their business now that they had come out of the downturn. When business leaders were asked what they needed to achieve for success employee engagement was in the top three priorities. Previous research has shown that high levels of employee engagement in an organisation can result in a reduction in costs, for example, turnover. Vice President of Talent Management in Newell Rubbermaid, Mike Rickheim has said employee engagement *“is not just a warm, fuzzy thing. It’s about giving people the tools they need to succeed in their careers, which in turn drives the outcomes that we’re seeking in the marketplace”* (Harvard Business Review, 2013). This implies the importance and relevance of organisations investing in their employee’s engagement as it is important for the business and retaining staff.

Sirisetti (2012) discusses in their article on employee engagement culture, how employee engagement is a *“powerful retention strategy”*. To improve or create a culture of employee engagement within an organisation, Sirisetti explains four simple steps that can make this happen. Create positive relationships with your team; this is all about managers communicating with their team, if a manager has regular contact with their team members it builds a positive relationship and trust, engaging the employee. Ask team members for their opinions where appropriate; where employees are going to be affected, ask for their help in the decision making process, this is key to driving engagement according to Sirisetti. Take interest in what your employees desire; ask team members what they are looking to get from their job and if there is anything that can be done about it then act on it. Encourage professional development; encouraging employees to develop will show an interest in them and therefore they will be more engaged as the organisation has shown an interest in them (Sirisetti, 2012).

In contrast to what the Harvard Business Review (2013) said about organisations focusing on engaging their employees, an article by Royal & Sorenson (2015) in the Gallup Business Journal argues that employee engagement is not just the

responsibility of the organisation or management but in fact, the employees are also in charge of their own engagement. Through research, Gallup found that in some cases 8 out of 10 managers weren't fussed on engaging their employees, in a case like this, it is up to the employee to make their job fulfilling and engaging to prevent them from becoming "not engaged" or "actively disengaged".

So although the organisation has a big part to play in the engagement of their employees, it is also the responsibility of the employees within the organisation to engage themselves in the organisation.

Organisations may benefit from using an employee engagement model within their businesses. The researcher will discuss examples of such models in the next section.

2.2 Models of Employee Engagement

There are many models of employee engagement from over the years. The researcher will discuss a couple of the employee engagement models that have been used over the years.

The WIFI Model is an employee engagement strategy produced by Sarah Cook. This model consists of four components and when they all work together they can be very useful to an organisation. Cook's (2008) description of the model is "Like a wireless network, it's make up is invisible to the eye but once connected it allows you to work efficiently and wherever you are" (Cook, 2008). The four components that Cook (2008) believes are the key components for driving engagement are:

- Well-being
- Information
- Fairness
- Involvement

Well-being

The component of well-being means how an employee feels in and about the organisation and how the organisation treats them. There two sides to well-being and they are the external factors such as the corporate responsibility and employer branding. An organisation's corporate responsibility usually concerns four places,

these are; the environment around them, the market, their workplace, and the community they are based in (www.cipd.co.uk, 2015). Employer branding is where an employer knows what their customers and employees want and how they give it to them (www.cipd.co.uk, 2015).

The internal factors include things such as the work-life balance. To many people a steady work-life balance is very important. Previous research which has been carried out over the years has found that a work-life balance creates a stronger level of employee engagement. Employees are likely to be more engaged when they can do their work but also have the time with their family thanks to their company's HR policies encouraging the work-life balance (Cook, 2008).

Information

Employees are likely to have a higher level of engagement if they know what they are doing, what the company is doing and what is expected of them. If employees are kept up to date on what the organisation's goals are, they are able to work to reach these goals and achieve satisfaction that they have helped (Cook, 2008).

Fairness

Fairness is very important to ensure a strong level of engagement. It is believed that this fairness starts at the very beginning at the recruitment process stage. Fairness also comes under the performance management stage as employees need to know what is expected of them so they can deliver the best results. As well as the factors mentioned above, line managers and other members of management should on a regular basis be encouraging their employees and praising their work. Personal development plans are also a great way of engaging employees as they allow employees to see where their careers are going. It has also been found that companies that rank on the higher end of the employee engagement scale have fair rewards and recognitions processes in place (Cook, 2008).

Involvement

The best way to achieve high levels of employee engagement is to make sure your employees are involved in all aspects that they can be. Organisations that realise that

communication is a two way street are more likely to have a higher engagement level than those who don't. The reason for this is because employees are likely to be more motivated if their managers etc are listening to them and taking on board what they have to say. Not only can involvement increase engagement, it can also increase retention levels in an organisation (Cook, 2008).

The National Australia Group Europe has managed to encompass the complete WIFI model in their organisation. They had an annual attrition rate of 65% and realised they needed to make changes in their organisation. They introduced a leadership development programme, which was introduced to help managers improve their skills. The organisation then introduced a system to measure performance against certain indicators. While all this was happening the HR team worked very hard to create a well-being and career development programmes. After these improvements the organisation's annual attrition levels fell to below 40% (Cook, 2008).

BlessingWhite – The X Model of Employee Engagement

The model of engagement written by Cook (2008) very much surrounds the four different stages employees may feel or experience through the employee engagement in an organisation, whereas BlessingWhite's model defines the levels of engagement employees go through in an organisation.

Organisations want their employees to be involved in the goals of the business. Employees in organisations need to be engaged in the organisation so that they can feel valued by the organisation and get some satisfaction from the job they are doing. The BlessingWhite model of engagement focuses on these two things; the employees' "contribution to the company's success" and the employees' "personal satisfaction in the role" (www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).

BlessingWhite believe that the best way to achieve employee engagement is to have the organisation's employees' goals in alignment with the goals of the organisation. This helps to ensure the goals are reached as the employees know what is expected of them and their goals are aligned with the organisation so they are both striving for the same outcome. If an organisation has full employee engagement it means that there are two things in alignment with each other. These are maximum job satisfaction and maximum job contribution. The BlessingWhite model uses these two factors to

determine five levels of engagement, as can be seen in the diagram below (www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).



(www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).

The five levels of engagement are...

The Engaged: High contribution & high satisfaction: Employees in this category are at the top or highest point of engagement. Their personal and organisational goals and interests match. They are fully engaged in the organisation and their own job. They aren't interested in being recruited by other companies as they are fully committed to their current organisation. It is important for organisations with employees in this category to keep them motivated and engaged because if they were to lose them the organisation could suffer (www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).

Almost Engaged: Medium to high contribution & satisfaction: The next level is the Almost Engaged. Employees in this category are up there with The Engaged, however, they don't have a consecutive amount of fully satisfied and engaged days but they do experience these days quite often. Organisations should spend time and resources on these employees as they are almost at full engagement but just need that extra help to reach it (www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).

Honeymooners & Hamsters: Medium to high satisfaction but low contribution: Honeymooners are employees who are new to an organisation and enjoying their time

there. They are still settling in but they know what they can bring to the organisation and the best way to do it. Organisations should be eager to move these “honeymooners” from this level and on to the next level. Hamsters are employees who work hard but could be focusing on more important tasks than they do as these less important tasks don’t help as much in the organisation’s success. These “hamsters” can become a real problem for organisations as other employees end up annoyed and maybe disheartened if they have to do the other employees work (www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).

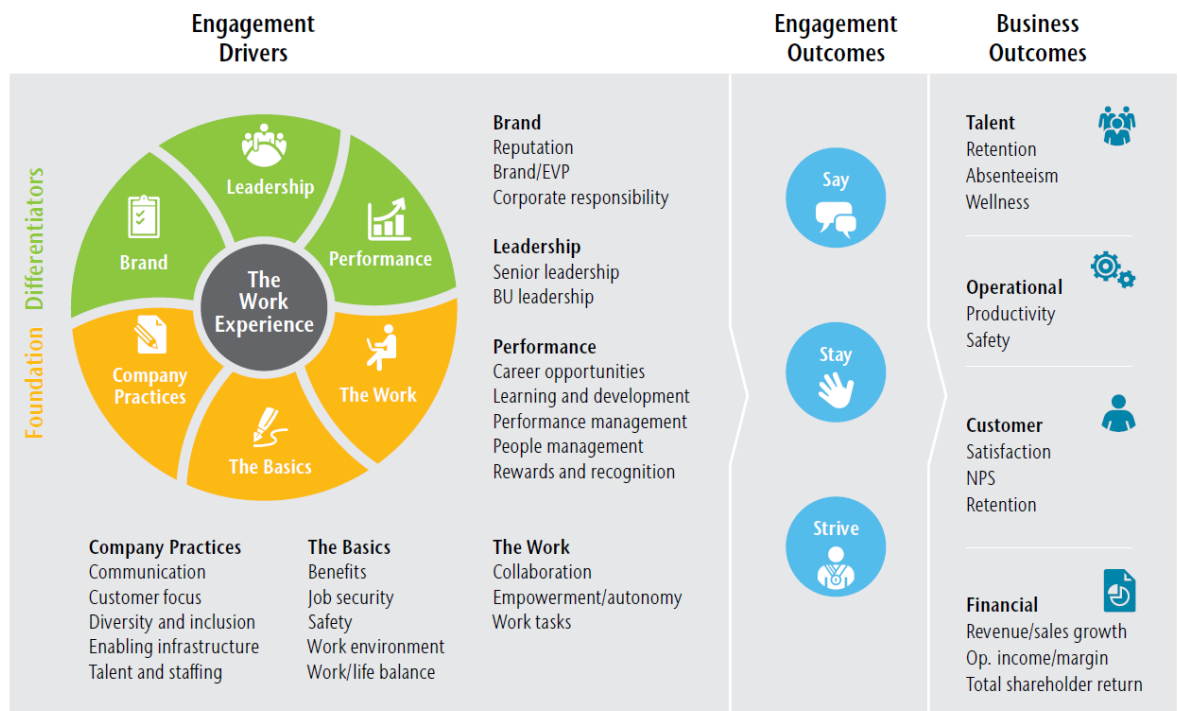
Crash & Burners: Medium to high contribution but low satisfaction: Crash and Burners are great at their jobs but lack their own individual satisfaction. These employees can be resentful towards the organisation and the management teams. Some may leave the organisation, while others may stay but become less and less engaged and slipping into the final level and this can often lead to the disengagement of others (www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).

The Disengaged: Low to medium contribution & satisfaction: In the beginning The Disengaged were probably engaged in the organisation and their job but over time became less and less engaged. They are usually negative and often bring or try to bring the people around them down as well. If the organisation cannot work with these employees to improve their engagement, then their departure from the organisation is the best thing for everyone, including themselves (www.blessingwhite.com, 2015).

Both the WIFI model and the X Model of Employee Engagement could be used in the one organisation, the WIFI model could help organisations to move their employees from the various levels of engagement outlined in the X Model up to one of the higher levels of engagement, making the organisation more successful.

AON Hewitt-Employee Engagement Model

In contrast to the two employee engagement models discussed above, the AON Hewitt model of employee engagement is based around what they think are the engagement drivers. As can be seen in the chart below, brand, leadership, performance, the work, the basics, and company practices are what drives engagement and results in three outcomes of **say, stay, and strive**.



(www.aon.com, 2015).

The say, stay, and strive model implies that engaged employees will discuss their organisation in a positive manner to coworkers, clients, and anyone they meet. They will feel comfortable in the organisation and feel that they belong there. Employees will be motivated to be the best at their job and do what they can to make their job and the organisation successful. The four main business outcomes of this model are “talent, operational, customer, and financial” (Hewitt, 2014).

2.3 Key Drivers of Employee Engagement

There are many drivers of employee engagement within organisations. Many authors and organisations focus on drivers of engagement they have heard of and try to incorporate them into their own organisations.

Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) believe there are three main drivers of employee engagement, leadership, communication and work life balance. The authors believe once a company has these three things right the organisation will have an engaged workforce and overall better organisational performance. They say employees are the key component in an organisation so they should be provided with a work life balance, otherwise the employees could become disengaged and this would overall affect the organisation’s performance (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014).

Whereas, Mani (2011) thinks there are four key drivers of engagement and they are *“employee welfare, empowerment, employee growth, and interpersonal relationships”* they determined these drivers after conducting research in an organisation (Mani, 2011).

Similar to Mani (2011), Towers Watson (2009) through conducting research, discovered three forecasters of employee engagement; rational, emotional, and motivational (Towers Watson, 2009).

In 2002, the ISR international report found that around the world there were ten main things that improved the levels of employee engagement in many organisations. The top ten drivers of employee engagement are; *“senior management sincerely interested in employee well-being, improved my skills and capabilities over the last year, organisation’s reputation for social responsibility, input into decision-making in my department, organisation quickly resolves customer concerns, set high personal standards, have excellent career advancement opportunities, enjoy challenging work assignments that broaden skills, good relationship with supervisor, organisation encourages innovative thinking”* (IBEC, 2008). It is evident that some of these drivers found by ISR coincide with drivers of employee engagement found by other authors.

Although it is evident that there are many different drivers of employee engagement, the researcher has based their research dissertation on five of the key drivers of employee engagement highlighted by Anitha (2014) and they are; **“the work environment, leadership, team and co-workers, training and career development opportunities, compensation”**. The researcher also looked at the other drivers from Anitha, “organisational policies and workplace well-being” (Anitha, 2014).

Employees are more likely to be engaged in their work and organisation if the environment they work in feels safe to them and if they feel like they have support from their colleagues and management teams when it comes to having new ideas or an opinion on something (Deci and Ryan, cited in Anitha 2014).

Wallace and Trinka (Cited in Anitha 2014) carried out research which has shown that employees in an organisation are more engaged in the organisation if they have a strong and positive leader. Recognition by senior management and leaders will leave employees feeling confident in their work and their ability to do a good job (Wallace & Trinka, cited in Anitha, 2014).

Team and co-worker relationships help to engage employees as they feel they have support from other employees in the organisation. Employees are more likely to perform to higher standards if they know they have the support of others to help them along the way. Employees are more likely to share their ideas and views when they know they will be supported and don't need to fear failing (Kahn, 1990).

Training and career development plays a big role in employee engagement. People are more likely to be engaged in their jobs if they know the organisation will give them the opportunity to advance and grow their careers (Woodruffe, 2006). Training is important for employees as it teaches them how to do their job effectively (Suazo et al, cited in Towler, Watson, & Surface, 2014). A big reason for employee turnover is not having the required training to be able to do their job. Re-training or proper training in the first place will ignite engagement in one's job as they will feel confident in carrying out their everyday tasks (Sundaray, 2011).

Compensation is a big factor that influences a lot of employees' level of engagement. This compensation can be both monetary and non-monetary rewards. Of course employees' like financial reward but it is also encouraging and engaging to receive non-financial rewards such as extra annual leave days (Anitha, 2014).

Organisational policies, procedures, structures and systems are another well known driver of employee engagement. Employees are likely to be engaged if they work in an organisation where there is a policy supporting work-life balance. Having a policy in place which supports employees' home and work life means organisations can keep their best employees and the employees are also happy because the organisation accommodates their needs. Incorporating policies such as a work-life balance policy reduces the level of absenteeism as employees don't need to take as much full time off and they can still perform at their best (Devi, 2009).

The final key driver of employee engagement that Anitha recognised is workplace wellbeing. An employee's well-being is important to management in an organisation because a well employee is more likely to be engaged. By showing interest in an employee's well-being management will increase their level of engagement (Anitha, 2014).

Different organisations around the globe can relate to the seven key drivers of employee engagement as well as some more, for example, the organisation's social responsibility and employee's having a say in decision-making (IBEC, 2008).

2.4 Employee Engagement in Ireland

Employee engagement in Ireland has been on the up since 2011 when businesses realised during the recession that engaged employees are important for a successful and high performance organisation. Organisations in Ireland were trying to find a more sustainable way of delivering and managing employee engagement.

IBEC carried out a survey in 2011 and the results showed that organisations in Ireland had to have the right people doing the work as organisation had to learn to do more work with less available resources. This means it was vital for organisations to have engaged and motivated employees to deliver the best performance. Organisations with strongly engaged employees have a higher performance rate overall than those organisations with a weak level of employee engagement. In the same survey it found that even during and after the recession in Ireland, employee engagement levels were high. Results showed that 8 in 10 employees have faith in their organisation's goals and want to help achieve them, 94% know how they can add value to the organisation and the organisation's success, and 9 in 10 employees were willing to go the extra mile in order to contribute to their organisation's success (Towers Watson, 2011). Towers Watson and IBEC's research also showed that employee's well-being is important if the organisation wants to have sustainable employee engagement. It was found that employees in Irish organisations work better and are more engaged if their employers are interested in their well-being, allow two-way communication channels and have strong working relationships with their employees (Towers Watson, 2011). More recent research has shown that 4 in 10 employees are engaged at a high level, this number should be higher. The same research also found that pay is often the reason for both retention and turnover of staff (Towers Watson, 2014).

Geert Hofstede, a social psychologist, developed a model that is used worldwide by many organisations. Hofstede speaks about cultural dimensions which include; **Power Distance**, this is how employees in the organisation accept and deal with the fact that there is inequality in organisations. **Uncertainty Avoidance**, this is concerned with the future of the organisation and not knowing what may happen and how employees

and the organisation will cope with this. **Individualism/Collectivism**, this is related to how individual employees work in a team. **Masculinity/Femininity**, this dimension is concerned with the equal split of roles amongst male and females in an organisation. **Long/Short Term Orientation**, relating to employees focus on future and whether they are long or short team oriented. **Indulgence/Restraint**, this dimension is all about an employee's control over their work-life balance and happiness (Hofstede, 2011).

In relation to these cultural dimensions and employee engagement in Ireland, an article written by Hofstede himself has shown where Ireland stands in these dimensions. Under the dimension of Power Distance, Ireland scores high, whereas under the Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, Ireland scores low. A high power distance score means that in organisations employees understand that there is a hierarchical structure and that everyone has a place and job. Scoring low in the uncertainty avoidance dimension means there is more of relaxed culture (www.geert-hofstede.com, 2015). This may encourage a strong level of employee engagement as many people know where they stand in their organisation.

An example of positive employee engagement in an organisation in Ireland is Temple Street Children's Hospital. The hospital has been ranked in the Top 10 companies to work for in Ireland in the last eleven years according to Great Place to Work, and it is believed this is a result of the company having high job satisfaction and employee engagement levels (www.greatplacetowork.ie, 2015). The culture of engagement within the company starts from the very beginning, at the recruitment stage. Back in the 1990's, there wasn't a strong culture of engagement, that was until senior management made a strategic decision to make the culture a more engaged one where everyone would work together, for example, the staff and management teams. They believed and still believe that the key component for successful levels of engagement was communication (IBEC, 2008).

2.5 Employee Engagement in the Private Sector

Employee engagement in private sector organisations has been found to be higher than the level of employee engagement in public sector organisations. Agyemang & Ofei (2013) wrote that employees working in an organisation in a private sector organisation are often given incentives to motivate them to be engaged in their work, this increases performance (Agyemang & Ofei, 2013). Many believe the public sectors

main objective is to provide customer satisfaction, whereas the private sectors observation is to make money. Research conducted this year by the CIPD has found that employees in the private sector are more engaged than the employees in the public sector, backing up previous research (CIPD, 2015). In an article written by Devlin (2014), he advised public sector organisations on three main ideas to learn from private sector organisations. These three simple steps were to *“know your people, look at the work, not the job, and plan for what’s next*. The author continues by explaining how private sector organisations know the people they have working for them and the skills that those employees have. They know the employees abilities, what they are capable of and quite often show an interest in the employees and this leads to higher employee engagement levels.

2.6 Conclusion

Through reading the literature, some of the objectives the researcher had set have been met as they gained an understanding of employee engagement, the models of employee engagement and what many authors feel are the key drivers of employee engagement. It can be seen in the literature review that there are many definitions of employee engagement and also that not all authors who have discussed employee engagement fully buy in to it. Little and Little (2006) question the relevance of employee engagement in organisations. Many people link it is purely the responsibility of the organisations to promote employee engagement, however, Royal & Sorenson (2015) argued how it is not just the responsibility of the organisation but the responsibility of the employee themselves. If an organisation or manager aren’t motivating their employees or encouraging engagement then the employees need to be able to motivate and engage themselves in their own work. From reviewing the literature, the researcher could then proceed to ask employees in an Irish private sector organisation questions relating to their other research objectives, such as, the key drivers of employee engagement and other factors that may affect their engagement, such as communication. After reviewing the literature it became even clearer to the researcher that they wanted to conduct research into some of the key drivers discussed by Anitha (2014) in an Irish private sector organisation. These drivers include; “the work environment, leadership, team and co-workers, training and career development opportunities, compensation”.

Chapter Three

3.0 Research Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the research methodology used within this dissertation. It will cover the various types of research methods that researchers can use and will discuss in detail the chosen research tool and why the researcher chose it over any other one. This includes the discussion of Qualitative and Quantitative research and why the researcher chose their approach.

3.1 Research Philosophy and Approach

There are many research philosophies that researchers can adopt. A researcher who is more interested in the feelings and behaviour of people is likely to use a different philosophy than that of someone who is more interested in processes. There is no right or wrong or better or worse research philosophy, as already mentioned, everyone views things differently and it is whatever philosophy that suits the researcher and their project that is best for them. It is of course, also possible to use a mixed approach to research where the researcher uses more than one philosophy. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2008) state there are two main research philosophies and they are “*ontology and epistemology*”. Ontology is “*concerned with the nature of reality*”. There are two main features of ontology that researchers may use, objectivism, which relates to “*how social entities exist*” outside of “*social actors*” and subjectivism which relates to “*understanding the meanings that individuals attach to social phenomena*” (Saunders et al, 2008). The second research philosophy is epistemology. Epistemology is defined by Saunders et al (2008) as “*what is acceptable knowledge in a particular field of study*”. Positivism and Interpretivism are just two of the aspects of epistemology. If a researcher adopts the positivism philosophy, it is likely that they will do their work and research in the traditional way that a “natural scientist” would. Researchers who use a positivism philosophy usually like to use data or information from an experience they have had and then to work on this experience to come to “law-like generalisations”, like natural scientists would. This may lead them to investigate their research more. Interpretivism is where the researcher understands “differences between humans as social actors”. An interpretivist likes to understand the goings on

around them. Two aspects to interpretivism are phenomenology- how people view and understand the world, and symbolic interactionism- constantly making sense of and understanding the world we live in. Interpretivists must be able to enter the mindsets of the people they are basing research on. (Saunders et al, 2009).

The researcher of this project chose the epistemology philosophy, using interpretivism as they wanted to understand employee engagement, the key drivers of employee engagement and what employees in a private sector organisation thought of the drivers of employee engagement.

There are two research approaches a researcher can choose to pursue their study through. These are Deductive and Inductive approaches. A deductive approach is usually associated with the quantitative method of research and follows the process of natural science. Whereas the inductive approach of research is linked with the qualitative method of research.

Both the quantitative and the qualitative methods of research will be discussed further along in this chapter along with, the explanation as to why the researcher chose the method they chose.

There are many things to consider when deciding on the approach one is going to take towards their research. (Saunders et al, 2008) developed a system known as the “Research Onion”. Exactly like an onion, researchers must peel away the different layers to come to the right research methodology for their research. That is what the researcher of this study has done; they peeled away the various layers of the research onion to decide on what research method would be best for their research.

3.2 Quantitative and Qualitative Research Methods

As already mentioned by Saunders et al (2009), there are two types of research methodology designs known as quantitative (deductive) and qualitative (inductive), which the researcher has considered. The researcher went through the process of reviewing which one to use or whether they would use the two types in what is known as a mixed method approach.

3.3 Quantitative Research Method

Quantitative research methods involve statistics and evaluations (Creswell, 1994). If a researcher uses a quantitative approach in their research, they need to be able to

subtract their own thoughts and beliefs from the equation so that they conduct a fair study and results. Quantitative research methods are according to Harwell (2011) meant to make the most of “objectivity, replicability and generalizability of findings” (Harwell, 2011). A lot of researchers who use quantitative methods to conduct their research do so through surveys, they collect the data and then analyse their results using probability and statistic methods. Quantitative methods of research are both common and popular forms of research methods used by many people. The researcher of this dissertation decided not to use a quantitative research design as they wanted to get a more in-depth understanding of employees engagement and preferred to be face to face when asking the participants interview questions so that they were able to record their answers, listen to their tone and take note of their body language with the various questions and to get longer answers instead of short answers that would be given in a survey.

3.4 Qualitative Research Method

Qualitative research methods are less associated with statistics and more to do with learning about individuals and their experiences. This illustrates that qualitative research is much to do with reality (Hiatt, 1986, Cited by Harwell, 2011). Qualitative research methods is studying people in their own settings and trying to gain an understanding of the effects people have on other people and objects and so on (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, Cited by Harwell, 2011). Many instruments can be used to carry a qualitative method of research. These instruments include; participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, case studies, language-based analysis (e.g. conversation analysis), action research, and content analysis. The two instruments that the researcher considered were focus groups and interviews.

Focus groups are when groups of people are brought together to discuss an issue or topic. They encourage free flowing conversation about a topic or questions that the leader of the focus group has asked the group to discuss (Anderson, 2010). Some rules should be followed when holding or taking part in a focus group; these rules include:

- Confidentiality- what is said in the group should remain in the group
- All participants should contribute to the discussion
- The person holding the focus group must step in when needed to keep the conversation going and on the right track

- The conversation should stick strictly to the topic

Focus groups have both advantages and disadvantages. Their advantages include them saving time and allowing people to access a larger group of people at once instead of having to individually meet with people which could take up a lot of the researcher's time and the participant's time. Disadvantages include; one person could share their view and other people in the group may just agree with them because it is easier than sharing or thinking of their own opinion. More confident participants might not give other participants equal air time to get involved in the discussion (Anderson, 2010).

Interviews are meetings between two or more people. In terms of carrying out research they are usually one to one meetings between the researcher and the participant. Interviews are good for getting long and in-depth answers from the participants and understanding participant's experiences. Interviews can be structured, where the interviewer has a list of questions to ask and to stick to. Interviews can also be semi-structured where the interviewer has an idea of questions to ask and can add to these if an answer they hear prompts them to ask another question related to the answer or on a separate topic (Anderson, 2010). Advantages and disadvantages also come with interviews; researchers can gain an in-depth understanding in the participant's experience, participants may be more open about the topics if there is no one else there. Disadvantages of interviews include; interviews can take up the researchers and participants time, studying and sorting the data collected can also be time consuming.

The researcher in this study decided to use interviews for their research methodology. The reason for choosing interviews was so the researcher could meet with the participants and make a connection with them. The researcher wanted to get into rapport and be able to interact with the participants to get more honest answers and to be able to understand the participants through their reactions and body language when asked questions. Surveys would not be substantial to gain the information needed to carry out this study. The researcher decided on holding semi-structured interviews so they could ask open ended questions and add questions to their list if the participants gave an answer that the researcher could probe more into.

3.5 Participants

Participants were selected at random from different departments of the organisation. The organisation is a listed company in the recruitment business and the participants

that were selected for interview included recruiters and support staff. Participants were from different areas of the organisation and some had worked for the organisation longer than others.

3.6 Sample

The researcher used a sample of 9 people from the private sector organisation. These employees were selected at random by the HR Officer of the organisation and came from different departments in the organisation. The employees interviewed were a mix of managers, team leads and staff. The researcher understood that this was only a small amount of employees from a large organisation, and not all of the employees in the organisation would be of the opinion as the ten people interviewed.

3.7 Data Collection

All interviews with participants were of a confidential nature. The data from the interviews with the participants were recorded using the researcher's smartphone, the files were then transferred onto the researchers password protected laptop and saved in a password protected file. The only people who will be allowed access to listen to the interviews and have access to the data will be the researcher and their supervisor. Interviews needed to be recorded for the purpose of this research so the researcher could listen back to the interviews to discover anything they might have missed or overlooked during the interview, for example, reactions to certain questions through a changing tone of voice. Interviews also needed to be recorded so that the researcher could listen back and transcribe them. To get the results and be able to analyse the results the interviews needed to be recorded. The main literature the researcher has based their research on is key drivers of employee engagement so it was essential that they could go back through the interviews to discover the reoccurring themes associated with the drivers of employee engagement.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

As this research could be seen as intruding into employee's privacy, and that the employees could have been worried that their views of employee engagement in the organisation could be heard or found out by others in the organisation, it was very important to the researcher that they informed the participants that the interviews were strictly confidential. To confirm the confidentiality of this research letters explaining the study were given to all participants and the HR Director of the organisation, these

letters can be seen in appendix 1. Consent forms were provided to the participants. The consent forms issued to the participants can be found in appendix 2. The consent form was given to the participants when they met the researcher for their interview. The Company and participants will be kept anonymous.

3.9 Limitations of Research Method

Using only a qualitative research approach may have limited the researcher to finding out a lot more information. The American Behavioural Scientist (1986) discussed how qualitative research can be seen as “unsystematic” as it isn’t as structured as the quantitative approach to research. If they had used a mixed approach, for instance, they could have sent out surveys with a specific structure and guidelines to the organisation and then from those results they could have selected participants to interview to delve deeper into their thoughts on the key drivers of employee engagement in their private sector organisation.

Chapter Four

4.0 Research Findings

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the findings of the interviews they carried out within the chosen organisation. When the researcher met the employees at each of their interviews they explained once again what the purpose of the interview was and that they were carrying out the research for their dissertation. Although this information had been provided already in an information letter, the researcher wanted to gain the trust of the interviewees and make sure the employees understood that the research was for a dissertation and that all information was anonymous and confidential. The researcher also explained what the key drivers of employee engagement were according to the research they has carried out and that these drivers were what the interview questions were going to be based on. It was also reiterated that they could withdraw from the research at any time even after the interview stage.

4.1 Employee Background

Questions 1, 2 and 3 in the interview were based on the employee's job title/role, their length of service with the organisation and whether they considered themselves to be engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged. The job titles and roles of the employees varied as there was a mix of employees from different departments in the organisation. Some job titles included were manager, HR administrator, recruiter, and receptionist, to name just a few. The next question asked in the interview was how long have you worked in the organisation. Employee's length of service varied from ten months right up to eleven years. The third question in the interview asked the employees whether they considered themselves to be engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged. Answers varied for this question, the majority of employees considered themselves to be engaged, two employees categorised themselves as not engaged and nobody put themselves in the actively disengaged category. The two employees who felt not engaged are members of "support" teams and therefore they don't generate revenue for the organisation and believe they are not as valued or appreciated as the employees who do make money in the organisation.

4.2 Work Environment

The next question asked in the interview was "does your work environment affect your level of engagement". The majority of employees replied yes, and a couple felt it wasn't a big deal. Some of the departments in the organisation had recently moved building and some of the employees felt there was an increased level of motivation and engagement, with one employee even saying they have noticed "a spring in their step" when talking about noticing other employees who had moved from an old, uncomfortable and stuffy office.

4.3 Relationship & Trust with Leaders

The next question the researcher asked the participants was "Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders effect your level of engagement". The answer was almost a yes across the board, one employee didn't fully agree as they rarely see or have contact with their manager. The rest of the participants answered yes, definitely, and 100%. Many of them felt that the trust had to be a two way street with their leaders trusting them and them trusting their leaders. One person also said "I think that if you can't trust your manager you're always going to be second guessing

yourself and again your work isn't going to be your best because you're always going to be worried “am I doing that right” and it'll take longer as well”.

4.4 Relationship with Co-Workers

The next question the researcher put to the employees was “Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?”. Again, the majority of the participants said yes, giving reasons such as; “you’re not going to be able to work with people if you don’t get on well with them”, “It's very important to have people with a similar mindset working with each other. It's a lot easier to achieve a goal when you're surrounded by people who want the same”. A couple of employees didn’t think it mattered too much as their job role is to recruit so they feel that “they're their own soldier” but they understand that for some departments in the organisation it could be very important.

4.5 Training & Career Development

Following on from the question about co-worker relationships, the researcher asked the participants “would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?”. There was a range of answers to this question. Some felt the opportunity to train and develop their career was very important with comments such as “Definitely. Obviously if the company will invest in you, you're much more inclined to invest in the company as well”, some didn’t think it mattered too much “Not so much” and one of the not engaged employees said “We're not told about that. It would make a difference”.

4.6 Compensation & Benefit

The next question put to the research participants was “would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?”. The answer across the board for this question was yes. One employee said “I think your basic salary is your worth”. For some of the employees, their job is target focused so if they meet their targets they have no issue with compensation. One of the not engaged employees spoke about how their compensation makes them feel undervalued and this adds to their disengagement. From the responses given it is clear that compensation plays a big part in these employees engagement levels.

4.7 Work-Life Balance

The participants were then asked “does a healthy work life balance effect your employee engagement levels”. This was another question that had a yes response across all of the participants. All of the employees believe that it is important to have the balance between both work and life. Most of them said that when you’re in work you’re there to do a job and when you go home in the evenings or at the weekend it is your time to relax, see friends, and spend time with family. One employee who strongly believes in a work-life balance said “Definitely have to have a healthy work life balance. Holidays every 3 months and going to gym on my lunch”. Other employees found even their nights out with their team contributed to them having a healthy work-life balance.

4.8 Culture of Engagement

The researcher asked the participants “do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation”. This question had a mix of responses. Some people felt the company do enough for employee engagement “Yes I think over the last few years there’s been a lot more emphasis on employee development and engagement”, some felt they don’t do enough “they don’t always tackle people being disgruntled or unhappy head on, they let it fester for a bit too long” and some felt they could do more “I think they're definitely moving in the right direction”.

4.9 Factors of Engagement

The participants were then asked “Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation”. Not all employees answered this question but from the employees that did answer the common responses included: being allowed to do a good job, receiving recognition, colleagues and mentors, someone to talk to. One of the not engaged employees answered this question and felt that their disengagement could be in part down to their own personal feelings, maybe it is time to move on. They also said that it could be because they are a small team and they are doing so much that it could also be having an effect on their engagement.

4.10 Value

The next question put to the participants was “do you feel valued at work?”. This is another question that received mixed responses. Some employees feel valued at work

“we do regular appraisals and that does give good feedback back”, some don’t feel it all the time “Not always. Simple case within my area, let’s say, it doesn’t matter if you’re struggling more work will be piled on top of you anyway” and some don’t feel it at all “no. We’re not included in a lot of things because we’re not fee earners”.

4.11 Motivation

The participants were asked “are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can be and does this affect your engagement levels?”. The main response to this was that the employee’s colleagues did motivate them, especially the employees in the recruiting sectors as they would be competing against others on their team and that would motivate them to do better than before. A comment that the researcher liked was “I definitely motivate myself. I wouldn’t agree with not believing in yourself, like if I didn’t believe in myself who else would?”, this was obviously important to this employee more so than being motivated by others.

4.12 Public Sector Engagement

This question had few responses as not all of the employees had worked in the public sector before. The question asked was “If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differs much to the private sector”. One employee said it is different because in the public sector “I think you get promoted there on length of service so I don’t think there’s any kind of incentives to push you more”. Another employee also agreed that is different as in the public sector “Levels of engagement from management would be a lot less but that would be down to in terms of how busy the place is”.

4.13 The effect of Manager’s Engagement and Behaviour on Employees

The researcher wanted to find out if the participants were affected by the engagement level of their managers or by their manager’s behaviour. The answer was mostly yes. One person didn’t feel the level of engagement effected them but their behaviour definitely did. Another person said “Our boss at the moment is very open, very good to talk to so that does come down through the team”. While another also agreed saying “I think it’s really important for the team and especially the company then to see people at a higher level to be engaged, being into the company, wanting it to do well, wanting everybody to perform well”.

4.14 Improving Employee Engagement

The last question the researcher asked the participants was “do you think there is any way your organisation could improve employee engagement?”. The majority of employees answering yes to this question feel there needs to be more and better communication within the organisation instead of rumours all the time. The employees want to be included more in what is going on in the organisation.

Chapter Five

5.0 Discussion & Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss in detail, the findings referred to in the previous chapter (full transcripts can be seen in appendix 4). Along with this, they will conclude the dissertation and talk about the limitations of the research, the opportunities for further research, and what recommendations they make in order to improve employee engagement in an Irish private sector organisation. For any recommendations made, the researcher will outline an estimated cost of these recommendations. The chapter will close with the researcher’s personal learning statement explaining their experiences of carrying out this research dissertation.

5.2 Discussion of Key Findings

5.2.1 Employee Background

The first three questions the researcher asked the employees were general questions to get their background in the organisation. As mentioned in chapter four, these questions included the employee's job title/role, length of service, and what category of Gallup Business Journal (2005) level of engagement they found themselves in – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged. These questions were not vital for the study but the researcher wanted the employees to have an understanding of the three categories and to feel comfortable before getting into the questions about the drivers of employee engagement.

5.2.2 Work Environment

The majority of the employees felt the work environment did affect their level of engagement which agrees with Deci and Ryan's finding in Anitha's article (2014) that employees are likely to be more engaged in their job and the organisation itself if their work environment feels like a safe place to them, and where they have the support of others. For the employees that participated in the study it wasn't just about the support from others, it was also about the physical environment around them. Some mentioned that they had recently moved offices and how this had helped with their engagement because they were out of stuffy old offices and into a new more modern building.

5.2.3 Relationship & Trust with Leaders

The researcher found that many of the participants felt it was important to have a good relationship with their leaders as it made them feel confident in the work they were doing and they weren't second guessing themselves as they were receiving the feedback from leaders. For the employees that were interviewed, the researcher felt from the responses given that having a good relationship and trust with their leaders is an important driver of employee engagement. This agrees with what Wallace and Trinka (2009) had said about employees feeling confident in their work as they receive regular recognition and feedback from their managers or leaders.

5.2.4 Relationship with Co-Workers

The employees of the private sector organisation that the researcher conducted their research in, didn't all agree with Kahn (1990) as he once said how employees would

be more confident and encouraged to share their opinions and ideas as they wouldn't have the fear of being shut down as they have the support from their co-workers. Some of the employees who were interviewed didn't feel that a good relationship was important for their engagement levels as their job roles are to recruit so they felt employees on the team are "their own soldier" but they understood that for some departments that weren't recruitment focused, it could be an important factor for employee engagement. In contrast to this, other employees felt it would be a lot easier to achieve goals if there was a good relationship with co-workers.

5.2.5 Training & Career Development

Woodruffe (2006) believed that employees would be more engaged in their job and organisation if they are given the opportunity to develop professionally, which would also encourage personal development, that in turn would benefit their engagement overall. The researcher found that training and career development is not an important factor for everyone in their careers. This became clearer when the researcher asked the employees in the interview and it wasn't a necessity for everyone's engagement. As seen in the previous chapter, one employee said "definitely, obviously if the company will invest in you, you're much more inclined to invest in the company as well", this could be how many other employees in the organisation feel and if the organisation are invested in them it is like to drive their engagement. One employee who categorised themselves as not engaged from the Gallup Business Journal (2005) rankings of engagement said they have never been told about the opportunity to develop their career and that it would make a difference to their engagement levels if they did have the opportunity.

5.2.6 Compensation & Benefit

All employees interviewed agreed that compensation plays a part in their employee engagement level, agreeing with Anitha (2014). The answers across the board were yes, but the reasons varied. For example, a recruiter who has targets to meet every month felt that compensation is important but they have never had a problem meeting their targets so it hasn't been an issue that they have to experience. In contrast to this, an employee who considered themselves to be not engaged mentioned how compensation is important and at the moment their financial compensation makes

them feel very undervalued in the organisation, which has added to their engagement levels decreasing over time.

The researcher asked some questions outside of the drivers of employee engagement so they could dive deeper into the thoughts and opinions the employees had on other factors relating to employee engagement, such as work-life balance, culture of engagement within the organisation, factors of engagement, whether or not the employees felt valued, if other people motivated them, how employee engagement methods in the public sector differ to employee engagement in the private sector, whether a manager's engagement and behaviours affected their engagement, and if they thought there was any way the engagement in the organisation could be improved, which will be discussed in 5.2.13.

5.2.7 Work-Life Balance

It was very clear from the responses of the employees that a healthy work-life balance is a key driver of their engagement, agreeing with Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) who said that work-life balance is one of the main drivers of employee engagement that an organisation needs to get right to have impressive levels of employee engagement. The employees were strong believers in a work-life balance, with the general consensus being that when you're in work you're there to do a job and a good job at that, and once you leave it is your own time to spend how you want. Some employees even considered their team nights out to be a positive contributor to their balance between work and life. An employee had said when they arrive to work on a Monday morning they want to remember they had had a good weekend without the hustle and bustle of work.

5.2.8 Culture of Engagement

Employee engagement culture in an organisation can be a great way of retaining employees in an organisation as discussed by Sirisetti (2012). Many of the employees felt that their organisation have improved or are certainly moving in the right direction towards a better engagement culture internally. One employee mentioned how they felt sometimes issues weren't dealt with quick enough and this can lower the engagement and morale on a team. As Sirisetti (2012) had mentioned, an important factor in engagement is to create a positive relationship with team members, this improves engagement.

5.2.9 The Effect of Manager's Engagement and Behaviour on Employees

Porath and Pearson (2015) conducted research and found that employees were annoyed when their managers did not pay full attention to them or others in a meeting or other work settings. Employees who were asked this question in the researcher's study felt that their manager's engagement and behaviour did have an effect on them. One employee said they felt it is important for a high level of engagement to be echoed from the top management down to their employees as it is important for the employees to see them interested in their employees and the organisation itself. Another employee said they wouldn't be affected by their manager's engagement, but definitely their manager's behaviour would affect them.

5.2.10 Improving Employee Engagement

The researcher felt it was important to find out what the employees thought their organisation could do to improve the engagement culture or if there even was any improvements needed. Although many of the employees believed the organisation has improved a lot in recent years, some felt there was room for more improvement, with one employee saying "there is always room for improvement". The main thing for these employees is that feel there needs to better communication especially between the top management and their teams and between the various different departments. Employees are interested in finding out how the other departments are doing and quite often they don't hear. A few employees spoke about the company rumours where you hear news before it is officially announced and they don't think that is right. A self-confessed "not engaged" employee spoke to the researcher about how because of their role they are last to hear news as they are not included in team emails. Many of the authors of employee engagement articles and journals highlight how important communication is within an organisation. Cook (2008) highlights in her WIFI Model how important communication is in employee engagement, not just bottom up but also top down. The employees are likely to feel more engaged and positive about the organisation if they are being included in what is going on, for example, how successful teams are each month.

As mentioned in chapter four, two other questions put to the employees taking part in the study were to do with the main factor that has them engaged or disengaged and

whether or not they feel valued in work. The researcher felt that the responses to these questions could be included in the organisation improving their engagement.

Where employees felt the organisation are doing enough relating to employee engagement they said that some factors that add to their engagement are things like, receiving recognition through regular feedback, and their annual appraisals. For one of the self-confessed “not engaged” employees they feel that at this stage maybe their lack of engagement could be their own personal feelings and also that there is a lot expected from them and their team and they are only a small team in this relatively large organisation.

When the researcher asked the question “do you feel valued at work?” it was clear that the employees known as the support staff did not feel as valued as the fee earners within the organisation and this was affecting their engagement within in the organisation. However, another employee who is a fee earner, said they don’t always feel valued as the work is continuously piled on top of them no matter what stage they are at with their other work.

5.3 Conclusion

This research dissertation set out to achieve a number of aims and objectives. The researcher’s question they wanted answered was whether or not some of the key drivers of employee engagement set out by Anitha (2014) were relevant to employees in an Irish private sector organisation. The researcher explored some of the various definitions, theories and models of employee engagement in order to gain a better understanding of employee engagement before delving into the key drivers of employee engagement set out by many different authors, before settling on conducting research based around some of the key drivers of employee engagement set out by Anitha (2014). The researcher had always heard of employee engagement in public sector organisations but very rarely heard or read anything on the topic in the private sector and want to investigate this more. The researcher thinks there is more room for further research and literature to be done on the employee engagement in private sector organisations. Finally, the researcher wanted to find out what employees thought of the employee engagement processes within their Great Place to Work organisation.

The researcher identified some interesting points from conducting this research. Further along in this chapter recommendations will be made to the organisation on how they can improve employee engagement on the points concluded by the researcher.

A big driver of engagement, as stated by Bedarkar and Pandita (2014) is communication. This is a common theme that the employees interviewed in this study felt their organisation could improve on so that the employees of the organisation feel more included and informed and know how the other teams in the organisation are doing.

It is noted and very encouraging that the organisation that the researcher conducted their research in was voted as one of Ireland's Great Places to Work. The employees of the organisation complete a questionnaire and the results got them ranked in the Great Place to Work. This is a major positive contributor to the engagement of the organisation.

Although the researcher only interviewed a small number of employees from support staff roles, it is clear from the findings that these employees feel undervalued in the organisation as compared to employees who are revenue earners. It should be in the interest of the organisation to have all their employees feel valued and engaged, not just the employees who generate revenue.

The organisation implemented a core values programme in recent years. It would be of great benefit to the organisation and the employees to have a refresher in this programme and to reinforce it to the teams as a core values programme is a great contributor to employee engagement.

The researcher couldn't help but notice how the investment and move from an old building to a new, modern building had improved employee engagement and how employees were positive about their new physical work environment.

5.4 Limitations of the Research

This research study definitely presented some limitations to the researcher. The researcher had planned on interviewing more employees than they got to, in the end and this was partially due to it being holiday season for some teams and busy season for some of the other teams in the organisation. Although the interview questions were

open ended and the researcher reminded employees that it was completely confidential, the researcher thinks that maybe some employees were still nervous of telling their exact thoughts. This can be seen in some of the interview transcripts where the researcher got a lot of “yes” or “no” answers with no explanation. From such a short sample of employees taking part in the research it is not possible for the researcher to say definitively how much the key drivers of engagement set out by Anitha (2014) would affect other employees in the organisation.

5.5 Opportunities for Further Research

As previously mentioned, the researcher only interviewed a very small portion of the organisation, if they were to do further research on the key drivers of employee engagement in an Irish private sector organisation they would use a bigger group of employees. The researcher would also use a mixed research method approach where they would firstly send out a questionnaire to a huge sample in the organisation and then secondly select a larger amount of employees from the sample that respond to the questionnaire to have face to face interviews with where they would be able to probe more into the answers given in the questionnaire and add in more questions that came up from the questionnaire responses. The researcher would also conduct a pilot study, so they could see whether or not their questions were suitable or if they needed to be changed to receive more information in the responses. As well as using a bigger group of employees to interview they would have a more even amount of participants in terms of their job roles, for example, an even ratio of recruiters to support staff to investigate whether more support staff feel the same as the few that were interviewed in this research dissertation or was it just a coincidence that the few interviewed felt the same.

5.6 Recommendations & Cost of Recommendations

The first recommendation the researcher has for the organisation is based around their communication processes. It was very clear to the researcher that many of the employees felt the internal communication in the organisation could be improved. An employee told the researcher how they would like to hear how the overall organisation is doing on a more regular basis, rather than at month end or year end. To improve their internal communication process, the organisation could look at emailing out weekly newsletters informing the employees of results and key happenings in the

previous week. It could also inform staff of future planned events and training/development opportunities that are in the planning pipeline. Financially this wouldn't have a significant cost implication, but time would need to be invested every week putting the information together into an email to send out to the organisation. Perhaps the information could emanate from the weekly senior management meeting and cascade through the line management and weekly newsletter.

The next recommendation the researcher has for the organisation is on incorporating their learning from the outcome of their Great Place to Work survey with the findings of this research. As mentioned previously, the employees within this organisation completed a survey for the Great Place to Work. The researcher recommends that the organisation look at the results of those questionnaires along with the results found in this study to see if there are any similarities, identify actions and communicate to staff how they intend to improve.

The third recommendation the researcher has for the organisation is one that the researcher believes should be of high importance to the organisation. The recommendation is to identify actions to support the support staff and to reengage them by making them feel valued and appreciated like all employees should. One action that could improve the engagement level of the support staff is the action of setting more Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), for example monthly KPI's that could then rewarded when they are achieved. Rewards could include something small such as tickets to the cinema, or a bigger reward would be an extra annual leave day. These actions wouldn't have huge cost implications and would be very manageable for the organisation.

Reinforcing the importance of the organisation's core values programme is the next recommendation by the researcher. Linking, integrating and communicating the core values programme to employee engagement initiatives and actions in the organisation will increase the employee engagement levels as employees will be reminded of the great work they are doing and how their contributions help the organisation to be successful. A simple first step to reinforce the core values is by having managers communicate to their teams and follow up with distributing an email communication about the importance of core values and why it is important to satisfy the values within the organisation. The organisation already has "Value Champions" who have been

trained in the Core Values Programme. These Value Champions could organise a refresher afternoon with their teams to reinforce the values and this would have very minimum cost implications for the organisation.

One of the key drivers of employee engagement is the work environment. The researcher found a lot of the employees were more engaged since moving offices to a more modern building. A recommendation by the researcher is that the organisation continues to invest in the pristine upkeep of the facilities and to communicate these investments to the employees. The regular investment into the facilities is happening on a continuous basis and the employees may not know about it so it would be a good idea to let the employees know that there is a continued investment in the facilities to create a healthy and positive work environment for employees to work in.

5.8 Personal Learning Statement

I found this dissertation both challenging and rewarding. I am proud of my achievement in completing this dissertation, as it was always something I thought I wouldn't be able for. I enjoyed carrying out this research as I have had a keen interest in the topic of employee engagement for a number of years. It was interesting to see various people's views and opinions on the topic. It would be interesting to conduct the research with a bigger sample to achieve a more accurate conclusion on the key drivers of employee engagement in an Irish private sector organisation. I am glad that I have added to a body of knowledge that I have had an interest in for quite some time now. I look forward to using the information I have learned in my own career in the future.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter to Participants

5 August 2015

Dear Interviewee,

I am currently completing my dissertation for my Masters in Human Resource Management in the National College of Ireland.

The title of my dissertation is “The Key Drivers of Employee Engagement: A Case Study in an Irish Private Sector Organisation”.

The main objective of my dissertation is to see if the key drivers of employee engagement as set out in many academic articles are true to the employees in your organisation.

All information is completely anonymous, no names will be revealed and the only people with access to the information will be myself and my supervisor in NCI. Your employer or colleagues will not see any of your information. I expect interviews to last 30-40 minutes and will be held in the office.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at orla.nic@hotmail.com.

Kind regards,

Orla Ni Cheallaigh

Appendix 2 – Consent Form

Title of Research Project:

“The Key Drivers of Employee Engagement: A Case Study in an Irish Private Sector Organisation”.

Name and Position of Researcher:

Orla Ni Cheallaigh

Masters in Human Resource Management

National College of Ireland

- ☐ I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and I have had the opportunity to ask questions
- ☐ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason
- ☐ I give my permission to record my interview through audio recording measures
- ☐ I give my permission to the researcher to use direct and indirect quotes in their project

- ☐ I agree to take part in this interview for this research project and I understand that it is completely confidential and anonymous

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Name: Orla Ni Cheallaigh (Researcher) Date:

Signature:

Appendix 3 – Interview Questions

- Q1. Job role
- Q2. How long have you worked here?
- Q3. What category do you think you fall under? – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged
- Q4. Does your work environment effect your level of engagement?
- Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders effect your level of engagement?
- Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?
- Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?
- Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?
- Q9. Does a healthy work life balance effect your employee engagement levels?
- Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?
- Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation?

- Q12. Do you feel valued at work?
- Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?
- Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?
- Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour effect your level of engagement?
- Q16. Do you think there is any way your organisation could improve employee engagement?

Appendix 4 – Interview Transcripts

Interview 1

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Manager.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

9 years.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

Engaged.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

Yes.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

100%

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

Yes.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

Absolutely.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

It does, yeah.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Definitely.

Q10. Do you think your organisation is doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

Could do more.

Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation?

Support, autonomy, recognition from a job well done, opportunity to scope out own new opportunities, they're some of the key things.

Q12. Do you feel valued at work?

Yes.

Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

In terms of recognition, both in terms of remuneration and recognition amongst peers. Responsibility and trust being placed.

Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Hasn't worked in the public sector.

Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Definitely.

Q16. Do you think there is any way your organisation could improve employee engagement?

More level playing field. Equal reward and recognition for same work can have a major impact on engagement... I did a 10 and only got a pat on the back and they did a 5.....

Interview 2

Q1. What is your job title/role?

HR Administrator.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

9 months.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

Engaged. Answering queries, telephone, email, any queries that they have. We're normally their first point of contact. I definitely enjoy that.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

Yes definitely. There's a big change since we moved offices, there's a lot more people around us compared to before, it's just easy for people to come up and ask us instead of sending an email.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

Definitely, because if you can't come to them when you have a problem or you don't feel you can speak to them.....

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

Definitely. If you're happy, job satisfaction. If you're not happy with people you work with you won't be nearly happy coming in here, so definitely. Team work as well, you're not going to be able to work with people if you don't get on well with them.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

Definitely. You wouldn't be as interested in what you're doing if you knew that you weren't going to develop in any way.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

I suppose it's kind of something like if you've no targets to meet or something to help you, like a bonus could help you to meet those targets.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Definitely. You have to be able to go out and enjoy yourself, whether it's participating in sports, you definitely have to have work life balance.

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

Yes definitely. We have work nights out and team nights out; a sports and social club. It's a good way to get to know everyone in the company and build relationships with people you might not have known.

Q11. Do you feel valued at work?

Yes I do. Obviously I see it when you get your review or they sponsor you to do a course. Yes I definitely feel valued.

Q12. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

Yes I would be motivated to see where people are ahead of me, that I could be there and it does affect your engagement.

Q13. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Yes. Not really in this company. I got on well with everyone and was willing to approach everyone in the last company, Revenue and the Dept. of Justice.

Q14. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Yes it would if you're not able to approach someone and talk to someone, if they're not interacting with you, you wouldn't feel like you're able to speak up.

Q15. Do you think there is any way the organisation can improve employee engagement?

Not really because we have monthly meetings. I think that if we have a problem I feel that we can approach my manager or even my co-workers. I feel that we have a good relationship here with everyone on our team.

Interview 3

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Compliance, Recruitment and Training Manager at *Company name* Healthcare Nursing Agency.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

9 years.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

Engaged, because of the group's unique situation the way it was set up, a company within a company. So from my director and within Healthcare division very engaged, myself to group of *Company Name* not engaged at all.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

Yes.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

Yes 100%

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

Oh yeah.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

Oh yes and I can even see it within my team.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

Yes suppose get me more engaged.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Yes and no, simple case, when you're here you have to be here, there's no option in that.

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

Not necessarily. I see within various teams they don't always tackle people being disgruntled or unhappy head on, they let it fester for a bit too long. It seems to get morale down. So, for example, members of my team are helping another team this week and the last few weeks because morale is so low on their team due to shortage of staff but there should have been something when they could see that coming on it should have been nipped in the bud instead of letting it go on since March.

Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation?

Having someone to listen to me, in essence, vested interest in either your work performance or your wellbeing as a person because it's going to backfire on both.

Q12. Do you feel valued at work?

Not always. Simple case within my area, let's say, it doesn't matter if you're struggling more work will be piled on top of you anyway. So a member of my team is taken out to assist another team, another member went on sick leave, another on garden leave and another left, 4 staff. So I'm down 4 staff, my team member's taken off me to help team down 1 member but now I'm down 4 members of staff.

Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

I suppose my team motivates me so my answer is yes.

Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Hasn't worked in the public sector.

Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

No. My managing director is fiercely engaged. But within the group as a whole we're not.

Q16. Do you think there is anyway your organisation can improve employee engagement?

Within Healthcare getting to know what we do. We're not the standard of what the company does. We're not recruiters, not back office, somewhere in between. Getting the realization that the guys are in the office from 7am until 9.30 everyday including Christmas Day is not seen by anyone else in the company. For example, on month ends you'll see people having drinks in the kitchen, our guys still have to be answering the phones and be in again at 7 o'clock the next morning. So they don't really understand what we do and that's not their fault. It's just the fact that we are a recruitment company, we are recruiters but because the company has changed and developed so much we're not.

Interview 4

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Principle Team Lead Recruiter.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

4 years.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

Engaged.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

Tough question because my personal engagement but my job affects my engagement because I'm constantly fire fighting in that sense but from my job perspective no.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

Yes.

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

Yes.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

Yeah. I always like to be training and developing myself further because it allows me to be better at my job and then when you're learning new things you're more engaged

so you feel more confident. I'd be a confident employee so when I feel that I'm not doing my job 100% I probably won't be as confident doing it so if I'm encouraged through personal development, training and courses then I'm going to be more engaged.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

Yes. I think your basic salary is your worth.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Definitely have to have a healthy work life balance. Holidays every 3 months and going to gym on my lunch.

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

Yes I think over the last few years there's been a lot more emphasis on employee development and engagement.

Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation?

My colleagues, my team, my mentors. Encouragement. And support is a really big one. And acknowledgement.

Q12. Do you feel valued at work?

Yes.

Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

Yes. We're in a sales environment so we're constantly competing against one another which keeps pushing us to be more engaged in what we're doing. We're not sitting doing data entry.

Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Yes it's very different. I would say I spent 4 summers in the public service suppose as a summer student so I got paid but no training. I think you get promoted there on length of service so I don't think there's any kind of incentives to push you more.

Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Yeah.

Q16. Do you think there is any way the organisation can improve employee engagement?

There's always things you can do to improve. It's hard from the perspective of this company, we're sales driven, if we don't work we don't get paid so I think that maybe senior management might forget that in order for us to earn more money they have to ensure they're engaging us in other ways, whether it's a team night out at the end of the month or a lunch. A cup of coffee. A small pat on the back. That's at the lower end of engagement.

Interview 5

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Nursing Recruitment Consultant with a permanent nursing team. So we source nurses from throughout Europe, Spain Portugal, Italy, Romania, Poland mostly for the UK market so UK NHS Trusts. Started now recruiting for Ireland. It's picked up, the public sector HSE has started recruiting again so we're moving along.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

2 years in September.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

Engaged.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

We work as a team so I think it's a big massive team focus. On our interview trips everybody works as a team to make it successful. No one person can do it on their own. So I think it's a big factor that everybody is engaged and focused to make it successful.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

Yes definitely. If you don't have fun and you can't interact with people, especially in this job, with calling 100 people or more every day, I think it's very, very important the constant communication between everybody and good relations with co-workers.

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

Same as above no not so much.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

No not so much.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

The job is target focused so it is necessary to reach targets every month. Things are going very well at the moment so it's not an issue.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Yeah I think, especially having social nights out, team bonding. Everything plays a factor. It's very, very important really, nights out. Everybody can let off some steam.

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

Yes, I think so. We do try to organize nights out, activities such as a team meeting in Athlone as half the team is in Galway, so it's important to interact.

Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation?

The main factor, to make the job successful to be honest. If you come in and don't communicate with anybody you won't last.

Q12. Do you feel valued at work?

Yes with appraisals, things like that. We do regular appraisals and that does give good feedback back. Yearly reviews in terms of salary which does benefit you, if you're doing well.

Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

On the team we have a yearly chart to see who does best in terms of sales targets. Everything is done with good banter. There isn't anything, but you always want to do better than anybody else.

Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Yes. I would say so. My experience is hospital work .Levels of engagement from management would be a lot less but that would be down to in terms of how busy the place is. I think there would like to be more engaged managers, now this is based in hospitals, but they just don't have the time.

Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Yes. So I've worked in jobs where you wouldn't have managers...where you wouldn't be able to talk to them. Our boss at the moment is very open, very good to talk to so that does come down through the team.

Q16. Do you think there is any way the organisation can improve employee engagement?

I have to think about that. It's not bad. The whole way down from the top *company* is very open. To managers and directors, the whole company.

Interview 6

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Purchase Order Management, part of the Finance team.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

I've been here about a year and a half now.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

I would say engaged, as part of my role I would have to be.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

Yes it definitely does. It depends on who you're working with, what team you deal with on a day to day basis, immediate supervisor or even senior management, has massive affect on your engagement because that's who you work with on a day to day basis and how you get any feedback, find out how you're doing and really encourage you to work more in the company or what way, I suppose you're going to progress. But I suppose also you need engagement from senior management otherwise you don't really know what your small part is, if you don't understand where the company is going, what goals are, then it's hard to really understand where your part is in all that.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

Of course. I suppose you need a very good relationship with your immediate supervisor, because that's who you work with on a day to day basis and how you get any feedback, find out how you're doing and really encourage you to work more in the company or what way, I suppose, you're going to progress. But I suppose also you need engagement from senior management otherwise you don't really know what your

small part is. If you don't understand where the company is going, what goals are, then it's hard to really understand where your part is in all that.

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

Definitely. It's very important to have people with a similar mindset working with each other. It's a lot easier to achieve a goal when you're surrounded by people who want the same.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

Definitely. Obviously if the company will invest in you, you're much more inclined to invest in the company as well.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

Yes, of course. I definitely think a good reward structure should be in any company. It's very motivating if you work hard and get a reward from it. Also it can be very demotivating if maybe other people are rewarded equally if you've worked harder. Or sometimes you work hard and you're skipped over. It's important there's clear goal structures and targets and that way you know what to aim for and you're much more engaged.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Yes I do. It can be difficult to do both, it's really up to the goals that you're set. If you set realistic goals. I guess sometimes you might be set a goal and there's no clear timeline so it's up to you to put as much time in or as little as you want, so I think as long as you've got the support there you're much more inclined to do it.

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

I think they're definitely moving in the right direction. I think previously this company was a small company and it's expanding so it's still trying to catch up in many ways with larger companies or any of the Fortune 500 companies. It might still be a little bit

behind but it's starting to move towards that by setting people goals and being more, I suppose, target based than it was previously.

Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation?

I suppose a sense of worth in what you're doing. if you're just going in there and bashing buttons and getting out as soon as the clock hits half 5 you're not really going to last very long or else you're not going to work as hard as you can. But if there's a reward there or you can see yourself progress or learn new skills, advancement, you also get on with the people, you know you look forward to going to work, not dreading it, I think you'll be more engaged too.

Q12. Do you feel valued at work?

I'd like to think so but I think as well it's important for managers to understand what the people under them do. I think It's often you'll find that managers will get caught up in their own work and they don't actually understand the challenges that their team will do on a day to day basis. So I think that's a good way to understand or value people once you've walked in their shoes a little bit.

Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

Yes I think it's always good to have a strong leader. You know if someone leads by example or someone is willing to jump in and lend a hand, that's quite motivating, you know. You want to do the same yourself. You want to do it for others. On the other side then if someone is telling you to do something but not doing it themselves you'll find that you'll slack off and disengage.

Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Hasn't worked in the public sector.

Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Most definitely.. something on a weekly basis. on a day to day basis, you see how they carry themselves or how they interact with the team and that either spurs you on or detracts from what you're doing.

Q16. Do you think there is any way the organisation can improve employee engagement?

I think they're moving in the right direction. I think definitely if there's training for lower level management. often people are promoted to into leadership roles but they're never given any leadership training. So I think there is a lot more to leading a team than just saving your best person on the team. So I think you need to know how to manage people and how to motivate them and how to and how to set goals and how to lead by example. So yes I think that will be an added benefit if that was part of the managerial training.

Interview 7

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Account Manager. I've got 3 accounts that I manage in the Pharmaceutical sector. And I do a little bit of interaction, so interaction with our sister company that is our outsourcing partner for sales engagement, pre-sales, customer service and they do a bit of finance too.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

I'll be 10 years in May. So whatever that is now.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

I think after nearly 10 years I'm engaged.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

I suppose it does to some degree. You need some sort of.....what's the word I'm looking for?...You need some sort of stimulation from your surroundings not just interaction with people but somewhere nice to work. I mean Merrion Square was lovely and all that but in summer it was awful-it was roasting hot, you couldn't breathe. so that's going to turn you off a little bit but you still had to get the work done but you might not do it to the best of your ability.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

Oh yes definitely. And I think that's not just a personal thing, I think that probably accounts for everybody. I think that if you can't trust your manager you're always going to be second guessing yourself and again your work isn't going to be your best because you're always going to be worried "am I doing that right and it'll take longer as well.

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

I do and I don't. I mean for this industry for a recruiter it probably doesn't because they're their own soldier and, it's probably not a good thing to say about them, they're just here to make money, they're not here to make friends. For me, you do need to trust your colleagues particularly as I'm trying to manage what they're doing in terms of their delivery to me for my clients, so I do need to trust them and they need to trust the information I'm giving them as well. So it's kind of a 2 way avenue in an account management or service management role but in other areas of the business where it's solely recruitment no, I don't think so.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

It would. I'm not driven by title, I just want to do a good job. It's not even about getting kudos for it, I just want to be sure that I know I'm doing a good job. You know if I get feedback from my client, that probably goes further than what I would get from my manager. It is a strange way to look at it. It's more job satisfaction than engagement to me.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

I can 2 ways with this question. Again it would go back to job satisfaction for myself. but yes, it would be great if I had more money.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Totally, absolutely. 100%

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

Yes I think so. There's a lot of new initiatives they're starting up. Specifically under my director's kind of initiation, month end stuff, start of the new month there's

breakfast and stuff like that. As a team we go out at least twice a year and do team building stuff and it's not the usual American type of stuff, it's actually a bit of fun and you go for dinner afterwards and you go for drinks after that. So there's a lot of stuff going on to help us engage with each other.

Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation?

Doing a good job and being allowed to do a good job.

Q12. Do you feel valued at work?

Most of the time.

Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

Yes, I'm a competitive kind of person in a lot of different ways so, and that's not a kind of Conor McGregor type of, I'm not going to swear.... I've a mad way about doing things but I think the competitiveness will drive me to do a good job.

Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Hasn't worked in the public sector.

Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Behaviour definitely. Level of engagement, not so much.

Q16. Do you think there is any way the organisation could improve employee engagement?

No, I think, personally speaking they're doing enough. Like I said, with all the different things that are going on throughout the course of a month.... The one thing I will say and it's a perennial; thing for any organisation I worked in, either a staff or as a vendor, contingency work, it is about company information, what the company is doing and where they're going. Auditors in at the moment, end of year accounts to be announced in a month's time. It would be great to hear of other stuff going on. You know acquisitions, there aren't any going on at the moment that I know of. Wider

community. Great to hear what our team is doing and the team across from us, how they're doing, You know, people getting promotions. But on wider PLC scale what's *Company Name* direction? what do they want to be? I know Anne is driving for a billion euro a year. How close are we to that?. We'll find out roughly speaking in a month's time when the results come out but the initiative to get her there, we don't get that. At my level we don't get that, maybe 2 steps above me will get it but not at my level.

Interview 8

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Employee wanted to stay completely confidential.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

Nearly 4 years.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

I would probably consider myself as not engaged. I think that it's a number of reasons. The fact that I've been here now nearly 4 years, that's quite, I suppose, a considerable amount of time, especially in an industry like this, the recruitment industry. Although I'm not doing the recruiting myself there generally is a high turnover of younger people coming like graduates from college and stuff. Another thing is when you're working in the recruitment industry when you're not recruiting yourself there is, so I would be counted as support staff, so we're constantly seen as a cost to the company, which we are. But I think that is reflected in how we are treated, to a level. Nobody treats us badly. But sometimes it feels like we're a bit like skivvies.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

Absolutely, yes. Let's say that before summertime last year we were split up in 4 different offices and had been for years and there was one of the accounts teams was in this dingy little office that we were renting and the level of engagement, the level of motivation was shocking because their work environment was brutal. So I can see that since we've moved now, most of us are in one building and people are definitely more motivated. I couldn't tell you about their level of engagement really but they're definitely... there's a spring in their step.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

Definitely. Now I can only come from the point of view that I do have a good relationship with my boss but I couldn't imagine working with her if I didn't have that. I think it's really important to know that they trust you and that they respect you so it's not just going one way, it's both ways. I think that definitely helps, when you think why am I bothering to throw everything into this but you know it'll be appreciated.

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers effects employee engagement?

I think so. I don't know would everybody think that but I think it's absolute murder sitting on a team with people you don't like. It definitely effects how you feel about going to work, how you feel about doing the work. Like if you're sitting not wanting to talk to people. It's very difficult to keep yourself motivated. I know that can't be helped, you're not always going to get on with everybody but from seeing somebody that maybe would have put a negative impact on the team, having since left, it did wonders and I think for new people coming into the team it showed them that work isn't brutal and you can enjoy yourself.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

Yes I think so. Well for me it's important. I know maybe not everybody. For me it's important that I'm continually learning, improving myself and that the company believes in me, that I can do that as well. Like I know my director is brilliant for "yeah do this course, get upskilled". If it's relevant to the job, it's relevant to the company, relevant to us, relevant to you in your career and your future so I think for me it's very important.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

Absolutely. I think it's huge and maybe coming from the point where I feel that I'm probably undervalued in terms like compensation and benefits. I think it would make a lot of difference to my engagement if that was to be increased. Now obviously there's a lot to be doing...if I was still doing a crap job I wouldn't, you could pay me all the money in the world and I'd still be depressed out of my mind but it would soften the

blow of doing the crap job if you get paid as how you see, how your value levels would be.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

I think definitely. You don't want to be working all the hours under the sun and then going home and not enjoying yourself. I suppose you're meant to work your hours, do the extra if required but then go home and enjoy yourself and meet up with your friends, go out and have fun. I think that it does make a huge impact in coming into work on Monday morning knowing that we had a good weekend and haven't been sitting round depressed out of your mind.

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

I think it varies. Maybe it's different for me because I do have a little more oversight of what other teams are doing but I think as a whole organisation *Company Name*, no, they're not doing enough. I think HR are trying to do things but we don't have enough people to implement initiatives. We don't have enough, I think, financial support to implement initiatives. And I think for such a high flying company we could do a lot more.

Q11. Overall what do you think is the main factor that makes you engaged/disengaged in the organisation? Disengaged in this case.

I think at this point I have to say that maybe some of it is personal. The fact that I think, or I have it in the back of my head that it's time to move on. But from a company perspective, I think a big factor for me, obviously would be the compensation and benefits, any benefits. But as well having the support maybe for more team members. I just think we're trying to do so much at the moment and there's not enough people to do it. So yeah, probably compensation and more manpower.

Q12. Do you feel valued at work?

Sometimes. Sometimes, like it's hard when....I suppose we're a small team, if somebody's out, say the director, everybody's coming to me and it's just like "do this, do that, do this, I want it yesterday" so at those points you don't really feel valued, but

I know I am, or think I am, by my team, the team itself. I think I'm valued and I think they appreciate the work I do.

Q13. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

I think motivated by others....I definitely motivate myself. I wouldn't agree with not believing in yourself, like if I didn't believe in myself who else would? But I think it's really important to kind of, I suppose, do the best that you can as often as you can. I think it would affect my engagement levels, I think honestly I would have given up a long time ago if I didn't keep pushing myself. But in terms of being motivated by others, I don't think so.

Q14. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

Hasn't worked in the public sector.

Q15. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Absolutely I think if you're working for somebody and with somebody that couldn't care less then you're not going to care less. I think it's really important for the team and especially the company then to see people at a higher level to be engaged, being into the company, wanting it to do well, wanting everybody to perform well. I think it's very important for our engagement.

Q16. Do you think there is any way the organisation could improve employee engagement?

I think definitely. I suppose it's going to come from the support staff. I think definitely the compensation needs to be looked at in line with market rates. Doing more as a company in terms of it could be seen that the Dublin offices get all the initiatives, the regional offices not as much. And I think as well, communication is key. There's kind of a culture in here where there's kind of *Company Name* whispers as I call it because somebody knows something and they tell 100 people but it hasn't come from the top down like it should.

Interview 9

Q1. What is your job title/role?

Anonymous.

Q2. How long have you worked here?

4 years in September.

Q3. What category do you think you fall under – engaged, not engaged, or actively disengaged?

They don't engage with us so not engaged.

Q4. Does your work environment affect your level of engagement?

Yes.

Q5. Does having a good relationship and trust with your leaders affect your level of engagement?

I'm just in a room on my own so I don't...

Q6. Do you think a good relationship with co-workers affects employee engagement?

Yes.

Q7. Would the opportunity for training and career development affect your employee engagement levels?

We're not told about that. It would make a difference.

Q8. Would compensation and benefits play a part in your employee engagement levels?

Yes.

Q9. Does a healthy work life balance affect your employee engagement levels?

Yes.

Q10. Do you think your organisation are doing enough to create/maintain a culture of employee engagement within the organisation?

No.

Q11. Do you feel valued at work?

No. We're not included in a lot of things because we're not fee earners. Last week a new structure for the company went out and we were the only department in the whole place missed off... the new structure.

Q12. Are you motivated by others and yourself to be the best you can and does this affect your engagement levels?

I kind of motivate myself. What I do or what I don't do wouldn't have any effect on anybody else. I could sit there all day doing absolutely nothing and I could sit there all day breaking my neck and nobody knows the difference.

Q13. If you have ever worked in the public sector does engagement and how companies engage their staff differ much to the private sector?

No.

Q14. Does your manager's engagement and behaviour affect your level of engagement?

Yes.

Q15. Do you think there is any way your organisation could improve employee engagement?

More transparent. They could communicate better with all like even email communication is always to different sections. There are loads of different email groups, and then it is quite easy to forget to email one group, so I'm in a building and I'm the only person not on a team in that building so when somebody is emailing, so when they need to email everybody in *location* they'll email everyone and just forget about us. When there are group emails going around I'm the only one not getting sent the email, getting left out. You hear a lot through the grape vine or rumour but

never get emailed. If there is anything going on in the company you always hear the rumour before anything official.