

**A Case Study examination into the important role and influence Managers have on
Employee Engagement, in a Public Sector Organisation,
Dublin City Council, Housing Maintenance Section**

Student Name: Sarah Catherine King

Student Number: 03280624

Course: BA (Hons) in Human Resource Management

College: National College of Ireland

Submission Date: 30th July 2010

DECLARATION

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment of the programme of study leading to the award BA (Hons) in Human Resource Management is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed:

Freah Catherine King

Date:

30th July 2010

Student Number:

03280624

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am dedicating this Dissertation to my parents, Carmel and Philip. Without their constant love, support, help and encouragement over the years, would not be the person I am today.

I would like to thank Fabian Armendariz, the Course Director, for his help and guidance over the last year.

I would like to thank my Manager and work colleagues in Dublin City Council for their participation, help and assistance in undertaking this research. Thank you.

I would like to thank Jennie Maher, my friend, colleague and fellow student. Jennie I would not have gotten through the last four years without you.

To my sisters, Lisa, Carol and Paula. You have each set the standard at a high level. Thank you for supporting and encouraging me to strive to achieve this high standard for myself. I cannot thank each of you enough for all your encouragement over the last few weeks.

An extra special thank you to Paula. I don't know what I would have done or where I would be without your daily reassurance that I could do this. You're the Best.

TABLE OF CONTENT

Chapter One – Introduction

Chapter Two – Literature Review

- 2.1 Defining Engagement
- 2.2 Benefits of Engagement
- 2.3 Employee Engagement & the Two-Way Process
- 2.4 Understanding the Types of Engagement
- 2.5 Employee Engagement & the Gallup Organisation
- 2.6 The Quest for the Engaged Employee
- 2.7 Key Drivers of Engagement
- 2.8 Engagement & the Employee
 - 2.8.1 The Employee Value Proposition
 - 2.8.2 Discretionary Employee Behaviour
- 2.9 Employee Engagement & the Role of the Manager
- 2.10 Employee Engagement & the Role of the Organisation
- 2.11 Employee Engagement & Communication
- 2.12 Employee Engagement & Rewards
- 2.13 Employee Engagement & the Industry Sector
 - 2.13.1 The Scottish Government – Public Sector Review
 - 2.13.2 The UK Government – Public & Private Sector Review
- 2.14 The Theoretical Concept

Chapter Three – The Case Study

- 3.1 Organisational Background
- 3.2 Partnership at Work
- 3.3 Dublin City Council & Professor David Ulrich
- 3.4 My Research Focus
- 3.5 The Housing Maintenance Section, Dublin City Council

Chapter Four – Research Methodology

- 4.1 The Research Question
- 4.2 Research Paradigms
- 4.3 Research Strategy
- 4.4 Research Process
- 4.5 Research Methods
- 4.6 Primary & Secondary Research
- 4.7 Location & Sample Size
- 4.8 The Interview
 - 4.8.1 Interview Structure
 - 4.8.2 Senior Management Interview
 - 4.8.3 Line Manager Interview
 - 4.8.4 Piloting the Interview
- 4.9 Analysing Research Data
- 4.10 Analysing Qualitative Research Data

Chapter Five – Analysis of Qualitative Research Results

The Interviews

- 5.1 Interview Aim
- 5.2 Interview Analysis
- 5.3 Section One – Senior Management Interview Result Analysis
 - 5.3.1 Senior Management Interview Analysis Conclusion
- 5.4 Section Two – Line Manager Interview Results Analysis
 - 5.4.1 Line Manager Interview Analysis Conclusion

Chapter Six – Research Findings

- 6.1 Section One: Common Threads between Senior and Line Manager Results
- 6.2 Section Two: Common Schools of Thought between the Literature Review and the Research Findings

Chapter Seven – Conclusion

Bibliography

Appendix Content

Appendix 1:	Dublin City Council First Post (Internal Communication) 23 rd February 2006 – Seminar Imagines Our Common Future & Professor David Ulrich
Appendix 2:	Pilot Employee Engagement Interview
Appendix 3:	Senior Managers Employee Engagement Interview Questions
Appendix 4:	Sample Transcription of Senior Manager Interview
Appendix 5:	Line Manager Employee Engagement Interview Questions
Appendix 6A:	First Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview
Appendix 6B:	Second Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview
Appendix 6C:	Third Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

“Engaged employees feel inspired by their work, they are customer focused in their approach, they care about the future of the company and are prepared to invest their own effort to see that organisation succeed.” (Cook 2008, p.3)

With the rewards for strong engagement being equally shared between the employer and employee, it is not surprising that so many organisations are now focused on raising the engagement levels of their workforce.

Employee engagement has been seen as a ‘soft and fluffy’ Human Resource issue that is not a concern for the rest of the organisation. However, this is not the case.

Employee engagement is not simply something that Human Resources Department of a organisation can do by themselves. For an organisation to be successful it needs employee buy in at all levels; this commitment can be achieved through engagement.

“Employee engagement is a hard-nosed proposition that not only shows results but can be measured in costs of recruitment and employee output.” (Johnson 2004, p.1)

Towers Perrin Global Workforce Study 2007 – 2008 (p.2) identified that *“Only one out of every five workers (today) is giving full discretionary effort on the job, and this ‘engagement gap’ poses serious risks for employers because of the strong connection between employee engagement and company financial performance.”*

Therefore, employees need to understand how the jobs they do help contribute to the organisation achieving its organisational goals and objectives. There needs to be a clear line of sight between employee input and the organisational output. Employee engagement will only exist if there is two-way interaction between the employer and the employee.

“The purpose of promoting engagement is to increase performance, efficiency and company resilience not just to build a happy workplace.” (Macleod 2008, p.12)

Employee engagement is very important to both Public and Private Sector organisations. This is particularly evident in the current economic climate, as customers are more selective on where they go to get their services. An engaged workforce can enable an organisation to increase their efficiency and productivity and in doing so they provide better services to their customers.

On foot of these initial findings, this dissertation will focus on a Public Sector organisation, specifically Dublin City Council.

With Public Sector spending over budget and Public Sector pay cuts and restrictions in place; I believe exploring this concept could result in the identification of the key drivers of employee engagement in Dublin City Council.

Dublin City Council is a multi-service provider to all the citizens of and communities within Dublin City.

By examining employee engagement, Dublin City Council can ensure they have the commitment and 'buy in' from their employees, to continue providing these services which is critical in these difficult times.

This dissertation will examine the principle drivers of employee engagement highlighted through the literature review in the form of a Case Study on Dublin City Council. The key drivers to employee engagement that will be explored are:

- The Concept of Employee Engagement
- The Benefits of Employee Engagement
- The Role of the Manager
- The Role of the Employee
- The Role of the Organisation

The Case Study will also examine the increasing importance on intrinsic rewards as a method of engaging employees. Organisations will see the positive effect intrinsic rewards have on aiding the release of Employee Discretionary Effort.

Employee engagement is a vast research topic. From critical analysis of the existing literature and research; identified the importance of the role of the Manager. It is a primary factor that contributes to a successful employee engagement plan.

Examining the significant role and influence the Manager has on employee engagement will be the focus of my research.

Careful consideration was given to creating a research strategy that would enable me to answer my research question. This strategy involved interviewing a cross section of the Management Team of the Housing Maintenance Section, Dublin City Council. The Head of the Human Resources Department of Dublin City Council was also interviewed as part of my research process.

Following the implementation of this research method, analysis was conducted to create the findings which helped in answering my research question.

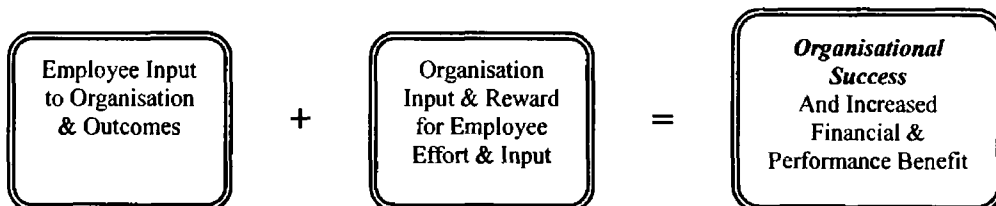
“Engagement is not a magic wand, it is a mindset that should run from the top of your organisation to the bottom. Each employee is called to willingly give just that little extra, the sum of which makes up the extra mile.” (MacLeod 2008, p.6)

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

“Engagement is 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.” (Robinson, Perryman & Hayday 2004, p.9)

Employee engagement has come to the fore front in the last number of years as a necessity for organisations, as employee engagement has been shown to positively impact employee outcomes, organisational success and financial performance.

Employee Engagement is



To engage employees; opportunities and an environment must be created to enable employees to connect and interact with their colleagues, managers and the wider organisation. Employee engagement is described as a method of motivating employees to want to participate in work and really care about the work they do. The true measure of engagement is how it contributes to the overall success of the organisation.

2.1 Defining Engagement

John Smythe (2007) states that defining employee engagement *“Is still difficult as the topic is still highly fragmented, as there is little academic underpinning.”*

Writers have found it difficult to define employee engagement, as it can mean different things to the employee, the manager and the organisation as a whole.

To examine employee engagement and to assist in the explanation of what it means to the organisation, the following are some of the most prevalent definitions of employee engagement.

“Employee engagement is personified by the passion and energy employees have to give of their best to the organisation to serve the customer. It is all about willingness and ability of employees to give sustained discretionary effort to help their organisation succeed.” (Cook 2004, p.3)

“What is engagement? The simplest definition is that: it is an employee’s willingness to put discretionary effort into their work in the form of time, brainpower and energy, above and beyond what is considered adequate. Engaged employees have a desire and commitment for always doing the best job.” (MacLeod 2008, p.9)

“Engagement isn’t simply a ‘nice’ thing to do. It isn’t soft, touchy feely stuff at all. There is a considerable body of evidence that points all too clearly to the fact that engaged employees are more productive and far more likely to help your business become a success.” (Johnson 2004, p.1)

The common threads within these definitions highlight that the essence of employee engagement are the passion, commitment, sense of purpose and the energy employees have to give to their job.

2.2 Benefits of Engagement

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2008) state that *“engaged employees will help promote the brand and protect the employer from the risks associated with poor service levels and product quality. Similarly, a strong employer brand will help in attracting and retaining employees.”*

Research has highlighted that employee engagement in the present environment is a critical asset for all organisations and employers, as it;

- Helps to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation
- Delivers an improved business performance
- Provides high quality customer services
- Results in a harmonious work environment

These benefits are supported by John Smythe (2007, p.4) who lists the following benefits to organisations who have engaged employees. And they are:

- Employees are more creative and more productive
- Employees are constructively critical and challenging of the status quos and seek to initiate change
- Engaged employees can make other people's change their own
- Engaged employees will advocate the company/organisation, not as a brand messenger, but from their own critical perspective
- In short, engaged employees enjoy their work and make it enjoyable for colleagues and external parties

The potential gains for both the employee and the organisation, demonstrates and supports the concept that employee engagement relies on a two way relationship between employees and the organisation. Each party mutually benefits from their involvement and interaction with each other.

This concept of a two way relationship between the employee and the organisation is highlighted by the Equity Theory. The Equity Theory is a process theory of motivation. The theory is based on the idea that individuals compare their efforts (inputs) and rewards (outcomes) with the inputs-outcomes ratios of other comparable individuals.

Bowditch & Buono (2005, pp. 82-83) state the key to equity is whether an individual perceives equity or inequity in the following relationship:

$$\frac{\text{Individual's Outcomes}}{\text{Individual's Own Inputs}} = \frac{\text{Comparable Other's Outcomes}}{\text{Comparable Other's Inputs}}$$

If an individual views this relationship to be unequal, an attempt will be made to restore the balance of participation by either working more or less effectively, or by trying to obtain greater rewards through other means.

The Equity Theory was originally concerned with pay for work done. However the theory has been generalised over time and can be applied in other situations. This theory can be used as a method for measuring employee engagement. For Example; If the employee feels his or her input is not being appreciated or acknowledged by the organisation they will withdraw themselves, by disengaging from the workforce.

Therefore, employee engagement is seen to be a two way process, which both the employee and organisation participate in, because of what each party expects to receive in return for their involvement.

2.3 Employee Engagement & the Two-Way Process

"The interaction between an individual and an organisation is a dynamic, two way process of exchange." (Bowditch & Buono 2005, p.87)

Organisation's employ individuals with specific skills and knowledge that are essential to the organisation achieving its goals and objectives. Employees join that organisation in order to fulfil personal needs and acknowledge that this organisation can help them do that.

Sarah Cook (2008, pp. 3-4) states that employee engagement can be summed up by how positively the employees:

- Thinks about the organisation
- Feels about the organisation
- Are proactive in relation to achieving organisational goals for customers, colleagues and other stakeholders.

Research has identified that static content theories of motivation and the psychological contract are the underpinning of employee engagement.

Static Content Theories of Motivation:

Each manager has their own unique way of motivating their employees to engage in the workplace. These methods of motivation are based on assumptions the manager has made about the employee and what motivates them.

Some of the basic assumptions made could be:

- Manager's thinking that using threats of discipline or punishment for work and jobs not done will motivate employees
- Manager's thinking money is the most important motivator, and then spend their time trying to create financial incentives to increase employees work performance
- Manager's thinking employees are motivated by social considerations and try to ensure that their employees have a happy environment to work in, one that makes them feel supported and secure
- Manager's who think and recognise that employees are motivated by responsibility and the opportunity to prove themselves at work with challenging and interesting jobs. By letting their employees use their own knowledge and skills on a job, is a form that can motivate staff

"The assumptions that we make about people have a significant influence on how we approach motivation" (Bowditch & Buono 2005, p.66)

One of the main issues in understanding what motivates people focuses on the different variables that energise human behaviour – the content of what actually motivates people.

It is essential to acknowledge that individuals are engaged by different variables. All employees will not be motivated in the same way. Therefore organisations and managers must have a contingency approach to motivation. This approach should allow enough flexibility to create incentives that are specific to the individual employees. By having this flexible motivation approach the organisation and managers will get the maximum employee contribution that they desire.

Bowditch & Buono (2005, p.66) state that *“Content theories are referred to as static because they look at only one (or limited) points in time and are thus, either, past or present time orientated.”*

While static content theories of motivation do not necessarily predict motivation or individual behaviours, they can and do provide a basic understanding as to what motivates individuals.

The following are the main static content theories and the key elements that motivate individuals:

1. Maslow’s Hierarchy Of Needs	This approach uses the recognition and identification of individual needs, on five different levels, for the purpose of motivating behaviour. The five levels are: Physiological Needs, Security Needs, Social Needs, Self-esteem Needs, Self-actualization Needs
2. Alderfer’s ERG Theory	This approach focuses on three elements – Existence, Relatedness & Growth, which are said to motivate people
3. McClelland’s Theory of Social Acquired Needs	This motivation approach focuses on meeting the individuals need for: Achievement, Power & Affiliation
4. Herzberg’s Motivator-Hygiene Theory	This approach focuses on the balance between motivators and hygiene factors that motivate individuals

These theories focus on the nature of the work factors which motivate people and identify an individual's need for achievement.

“By appealing to an employee's unfulfilled needs, managers can attempt to influence that person's performance.” (Bowditch & Buono 2005, p. 67)

In order for an organisation to have an engaged workforce, to 'tap into' their employee's motivation and commitment, organisations must identify and relate to the needs of the employees. If the organisation only focuses on the business objectives, this potential 'buy in' maybe lost.

These needs, both for the organisation and the employee, are often implied as well as explicit. They can be identified and met through a psychological contract between the organisation and the employee.

Psychological Contract:

The psychological contract expresses the unspoken and unwritten expectations and beliefs held by an individual and his or her employer about what they expect of one another.

Schein (1965) defines it as *“The notion of a psychological contract implies that there is an unwritten set of expectations operating at all times between every member of an organisation and the various managers and other in the organisation.”*

From reviewing the literature, there are two main schools of thought which provide the psychological models for employee engagement. Both models revolve around the psychological conditions of engagement.

William Kahn (1990) found that there were three psychological conditions associated with engagement or disengagement at work;

1. Meaningfulness
2. Safety
3. Availability

Kahn's research found that workers were more engaged at work in situations that offered them more:

1. Psychological meaningfulness
2. Psychological safety

And then they were more psychologically available to the organisation.

Maslach created an engagement model known as Maslach's Burnout Model. This model is derived from the 'burnout' literature, which describes job engagement as the positive result, the exact opposite of burnout. The literature explains that burnout involves the erosion of engagement within one's job.

According to Maslach (2001) there are six areas of work-life that lead to burnout and engagement and they are:

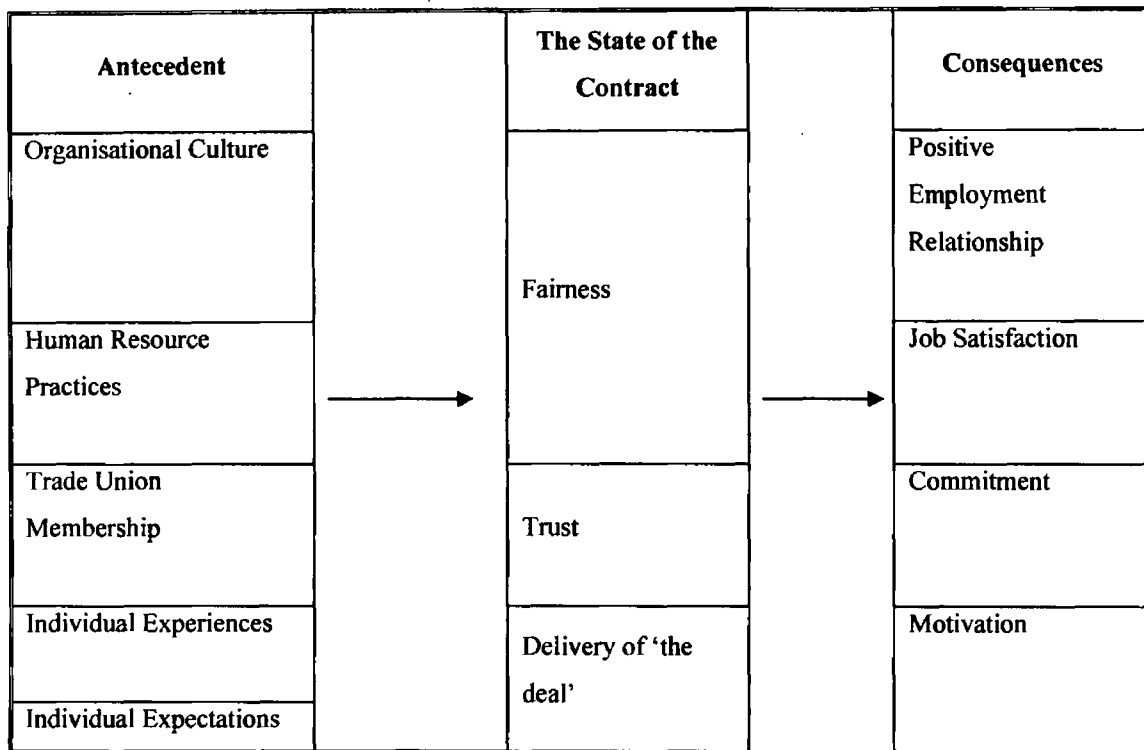
1. Workload
2. Control
3. Rewards and recognition
4. Community and social support
5. Perceived fairness
6. Values

Maslach argued that an employees' level of engagement with their job is associated with;

1. A sustainable workload
2. Feelings of choice and control
3. Appropriate recognition and reward
4. A supportive work community
5. Fairness and justice
6. Meaningful and valued work

These are all unwritten or implied terms associated with an employment contract. The employers hope to provide the employee with all of the above elements in order to prevent having disengaged employees.

These Kahn and Maslach's schools of thought are reinforced by David Guest's (1998) Model of the Psychological Contract.



At the centre of this model lies the state of the psychological contract. The key questions that need to be considered are:

1. Does the employee feel that they are being fairly treated and valued?
2. Does the employee trust management?
3. Does the employee feel that their expectations are being met?
4. Is the deal being delivered to them by their employers?

Guest's model condenses Kahn's and Maslach's models and clarifies a more practical perspective for employers. It clarifies that if you, as an employer can deliver on these elements, unwritten, psychological elements, your workforce will be engaged.

"Employee engagement is more a psychological contract than a physical one" (Cook 2008, p.3)

These schools of thought on motivation and the psychological contract support modern day thinking that engagement can be described as the new social contract between employer and

employee. It is a two way process. Engaged employees feel inspired to work and they are more customer focussed in their approach. They care about the future of the organisation and are prepared to invest their own effort to see that the organisation succeeds.

It is evident that it would be beneficial for organisations to identify the degree to which their employees are engaged or disengaged. With a clear view of the present state of engagement, a plan to build on from here should be established.

2.4 Understanding the Types of Engagement

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2009) research has identified engagement as having three dimensions in which employees engage on and they are:

1.	Emotional Engagement	Being very involved emotionally with one's work
2.	Cognitive Engagement	Focusing very hard whilst at work
3.	Physical Engagement	Being willing to 'go the extra mile' for your organisation

Employees can engagement themselves in the organisation on all of the above levels or just one, at any given time. The ideal situation for any organisation is to have their employees engaging on all three dimensions at the one time.

Organisations can identify if their employees are engaged by conducting engagement surveys and through analysing the results, they can identify their workforce under the following three categories developed by the Gallup Organisation:

- Engaged:**
Employee's who work with passion and feel a profound connection to the organisation. They drive innovation and move the organisation forward
- Non Engaged:**
Employees who are essentially "check out". They are sleepwalking their way through their workday. They are putting in the time, but not enough energy or passion into their work

Actively Disengaged: Employee's who aren't just unhappy at work, they're busy acting out their unhappiness. On a daily basis, these workers undermine what their engaged colleagues accomplish

2.5 Employee Engagement & the Gallup Organisation

The Gallup Organisation provides a variety of management, consulting, human resources and statistical research services. In the late 1990's the Gallup Organisation identified a need for organisations and companies to not only be interested in customer feedback, but that they should be interested in the opinions of their employees as well.

The Gallup Organisation developed an empirical method, known as the Gallup Q12 Index. This method allows organisations to assess the level, on a scale of 1 to 5, of how engaged their workforce is. Employee engagement levels can be measured through answering 12 key items which reveal and identify the primary needs of people in the workforce.

The Q12 Index examines key basic elements of the employment relationship and provides clarity on areas of weakness. If executed properly the Q12 Index can convert 'soft' elements into tangible ones.

The following are samples of the questions asked in the Q12 Index:

1. Do you know what is expected of you at work?
2. In the last seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?
3. At work, do your opinions seem to count?
4. Does the mission/purpose of your company make you feel your job is important?

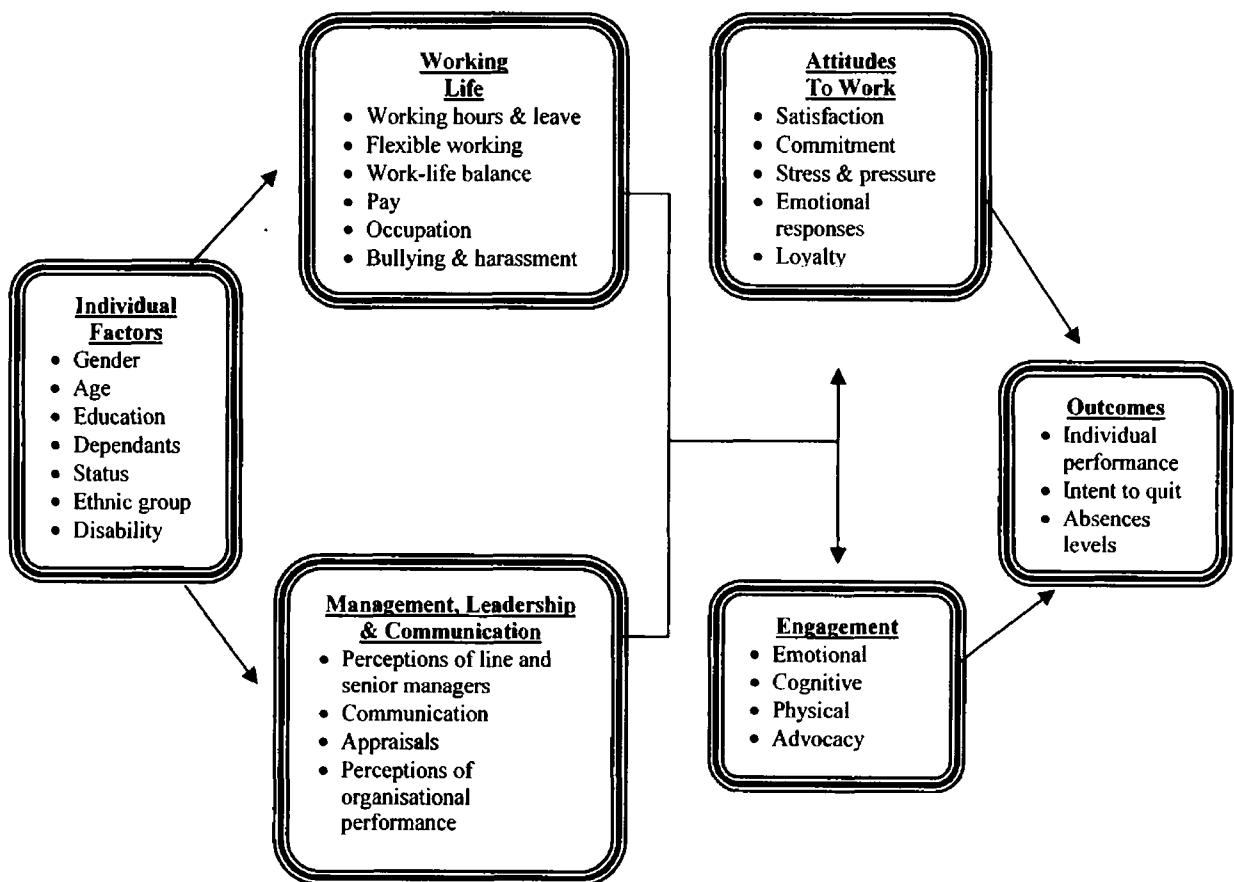
From reviewing the literature, the writers agree that the use of the Gallup Q12 Index surveys to identify the levels of engagement of employees is essential. The results should be carefully analysed to establish the present state of employee engagement; today. From these results the organisation can build a plan of action and implement a strategy to increase the employee's level of engagement; future.

2.6

The Quest for the Engaged Employee

“It is said that a logical way of building and maintaining an engaged workforce is by attending to the factors that build the capacity to engage, provide the motivation to engage and create the safety and freedom to engage.” (Macey, Schneider, Barbera & Young 2009, p.135)

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2006) produced a model that brings the various elements of employee engagement together.



This model illustrates the linkages between the important factors that influence and have an affect on engagement. It looks into employee engagement and highlights the important principles that lie behind it. It also demonstrates the complexity of the employment relationship as there are a vast number of variables that can influence it.

2.7

Key Drivers of Engagement

“There is no one size fits all model or definition to explain what drives engagement” (Scottish Lit Review)

This research has presented a number of lists identifying what the primary writers and researchers on employee engagement have each identified and found the key drivers of employee engagement to be. According to research, the key drivers of engagement can range from three to ten key elements.

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2006) Working Life Report derived from its employee engagement survey findings that the three main drivers of employee engagement are:

- Having opportunities to feed your views upwards
- Feeling well informed about what is happening in the organisation
- Thinking that your manager is committed to your organisation

UK Employee Engagement Study (2009, p.33) found that the key drivers that lie behind a successful engagement approached are:

- Leadership
- Engaging Managers
- Employee Voice
- Organisation Integrity

Writer David MacLeod (2008, p.31) also identifies what he considers to be the key ten drivers of employee engagement in the UK. And they are:

1. Senior management interest in employee well being
2. Improved my skills and capabilities over the last year
3. Reputation of organisation as a good employer
4. Input into decision making in my department
5. In combination with government programmes, benefit programmes, generally meet my needs

6. Organisation focuses on customer satisfaction
7. My manager inspires enthusiasm for work
8. Salary criteria are fair and consistent
9. Opportunities to learn and develop new skills
10. Employees understand how to satisfy customers

Through isolation of the reoccurring themes, I have identified some of the key elements that are reported to drive employee engagement from this research;

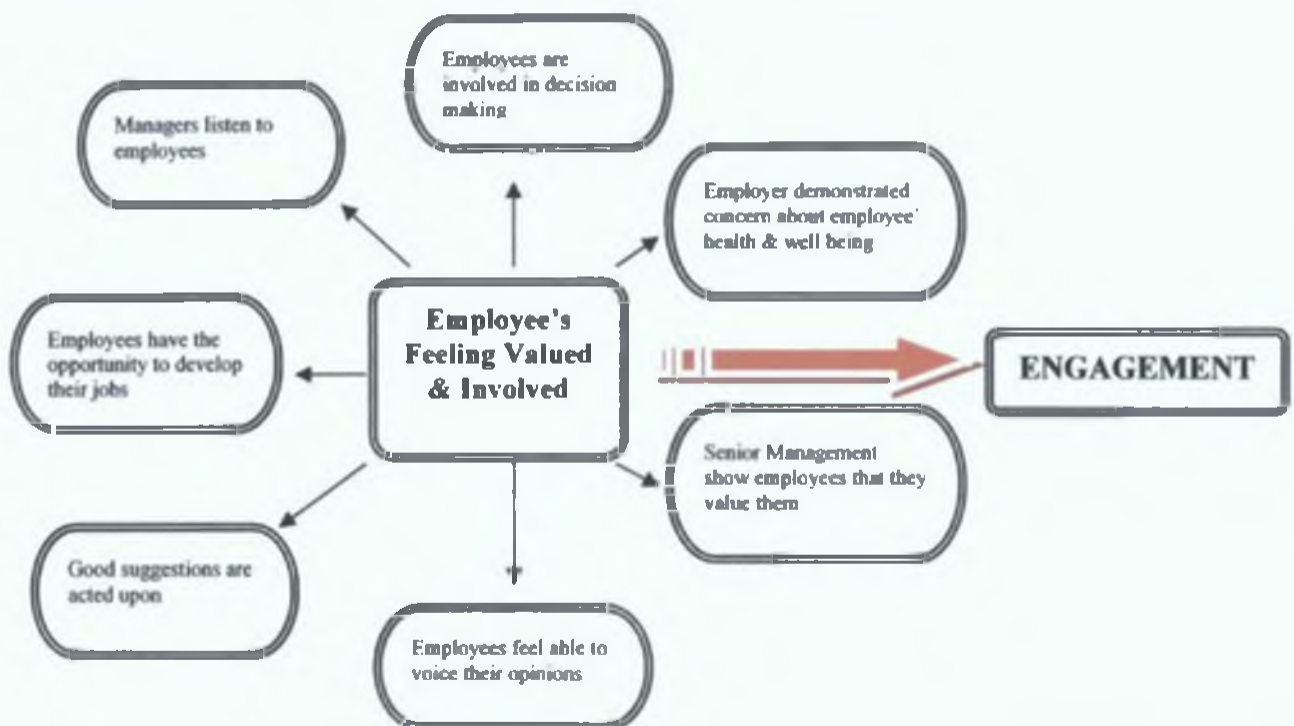
1. The Role of the Manager
2. Employees feeling valued and involved
3. Employee voice
4. Organisation integrity

This refers back to the Equity Theory and strengthens the argument that employee engagement is reliant on a two way relationship between the employee and the organisation/manager.

The Institute for Employment Studies, after conducting its own research found that *“Significant employee engagement findings identify that employees feeling valued and involved as a key driver of engagement.”* Their research supports findings of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development *Working Life Report*.

The following model indicated a focus on increasing individual’s perceptions of their involvement with the organisation. The value added to the organisation is derived from their feelings of increased involvement and engagement.

The Institute for Employment Studies Engagement Model (2004, p.22)



The Institute for Employment Studies model identified and highlighted the important role the manager, both senior and direct line, plays in keeping the employee engaged.

2.8 Engagement and the Employee

Organisations are no longer just seeking compliant employees. They want staff that will engage their creativity at work, motivate themselves and their colleagues and add value to the organisations. The organisation can achieve this added value by developing their employees. Ulrich & Brockbank (2005, p.94) supports this idea by stating "...*help employees develop their abilities to deliver the capabilities the organisation needs if it is to survive and prosper.*"

"Employee engagement is something the employee has to offer" (Cook 2008, pp. 3-4)

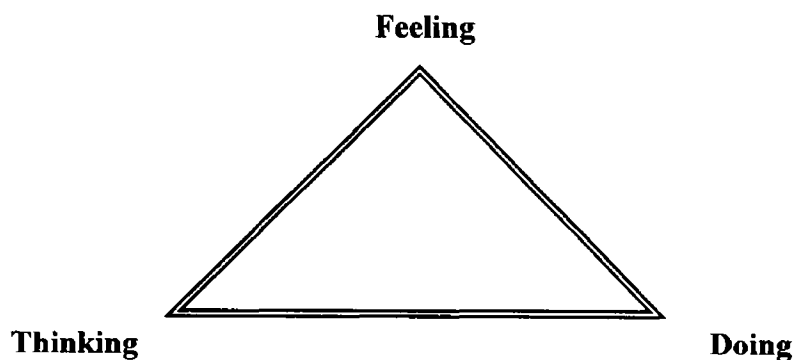
Employees make a choice about how they behave at work and the extent to which they engage at work. Employees need the environment and management support that will help them flourish and achieve their own personal goals and the objectives of the organisation. To

achieve this there needs to be a strong two way relationship between the employee and their manager.

MacLeod (2008, p.20) identifies nine factors that come together to define what an engaged employee is. He states that an engaged employee:

1. Understands how their job contributes to the organisations success
2. Understands how their role in the organisation is related to the organisations goals, objectives and direction
3. Is personally motivated to help in that success
4. Cares about the future of the organisation
5. Is willing to put effort beyond what is normally expected
6. Derives a sense of personal accomplishment from their job
7. Would recommend their organisation to a friend as a good place to work
8. Believes that their company inspires them to do their best work
9. Is proud to tell others that they work for their organisation

Research has also identified three main elements that keep them engaged:



Three Aspects of Engagement (Cook 2008, pp. 3-4)

This figure reinforces the CIPD dimensions in which employees engage on, emotional, cognitive and physical level. Cook's (2008, p.4) diagram shows engagement therefore is about what employees:

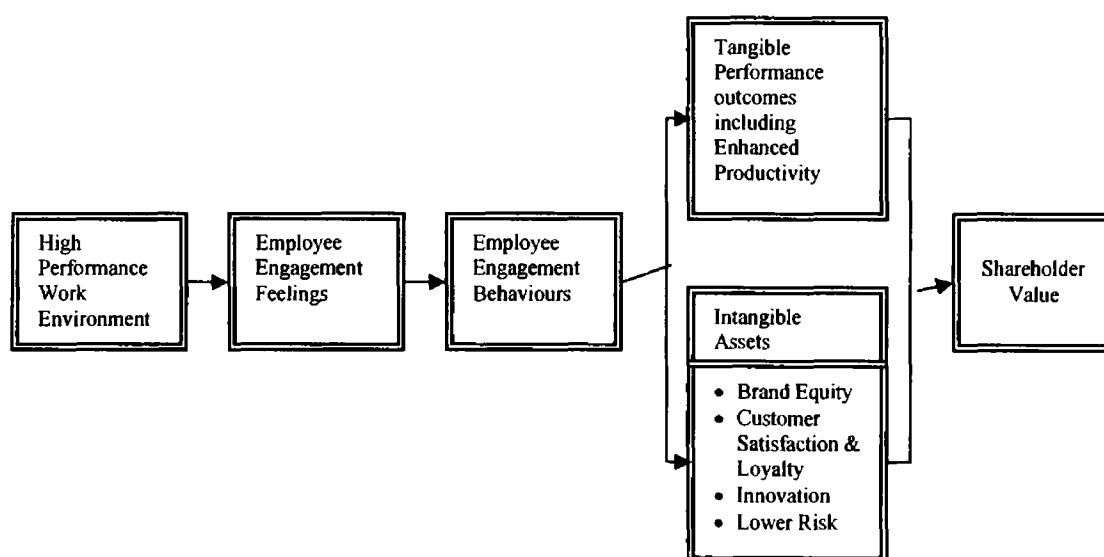
1. Think rationally about their employers
2. What they feel about them

3. And their emotional connection

It shows how the combined result of the employees' actions, what they do and say, has an impact on both their colleagues and customers.

Organisations can meet these needs by providing their employees with their primary needs, both motivational and psychological needs, in the form of an engaging work environment.

Employee Engagement Value Chain (Macey, Schneider, Barbera & Young 2009 p.8)



This diagram illustrates how organisations should conceptualise engagement. It identifies that both antecedents and its consequences, are very important to engaging employees. The antecedents are the work environment and we refer to and think of such a work environment as one that facilitates, permits and allows employees to be engaged. By creating this work environment, both the organisation and the employee will benefit, as both their needs and goals are being met.

The consequences of not providing an engaging work environment, such as lack of recognition, feedback or unclear expectations, will ultimately effect the organisation and the employee. The employee will disengage from the organisation if the right work environment elements are not in place. The organisations overall performance and outputs will suffer as a consequence.

2.8.1 **The Employee Value Proposition**

The writers agree that one way in which the organisation can assist with increasing employee engagement is the introduction of an Employee Value Proposition.

Employees have a contract, written and/or psychological, that engages them with their organisations. These contracts specify what they are to give and what they get from the organisation.

Ulrich & Brockbank (2005, p. 82) states that *“employees can be asked to contribute in meaningful ways and to represent the values of the firm. In some cases the firms expectations can be woven into appraisal systems by way of standards and performance requirements”*

These requirements focus on behaviour, what the employee should know and do, and the results that the employee should produce. With clear standards, employees know what commitment they are expected to make. In return, the Employee Value Proposition specifies what employees will and should get from the organisation, when they meet expectations.

Ulrich & Brockbank (2005, pp. 82-83) has found the most satisfactory Employee Value Proposition provides the following:

Vision	The firm has a clear sense of the future that engages hearts and minds and creates pride among employees
Opportunity	The work provides a chance to grow both personally and professionally, and to develop skills and knowledge that promote present and future employability
Incentive	The compensation package is fair and equitable, including base salary, bonus and other financial incentives
Impact	The work itself makes a difference or creates meaning, particularly as it connects the employee with a customer who uses the employee’s work

Community	The social environment includes being part of a team, when appropriate, and working with co-workers who care
Communication	The flow of information is two-way, so employees are informed about what is going on
Experimentation	Working hours, dress and other policies are flexible and designed to adapt to the needs of both the firm and the employee

Employees differ regarding which of these seven elements they want most. It depends on their motivation and the needs they want to meet. An effective Employee Value Proposition will personalise the agreement so that employees who meet standards will be rewarded with which ever element is most important to them. The introduction of an employee value propositions can build commitment to the firm and create engagement. The essence of the proposition clarifies what workers can expect if they fulfil their part of the contract. The employer makes it clear that employees who give value to the firm will receive the kind of value that matters most to them in return.

Organisations want their employees to be ambassadors and advocates for them. Ulrich's proposition once in place helps communicate the firms brand to the world at large. It instils confidence in the employee. It lets them know that the organisation is behind the employees supporting them; helping them to achieve their goals and the organisations goals.

2.8.2 Discretionary Employee Behaviour

"Engagement is everyone's responsibility, but it is not treated that way" (Allen 2010)

The focus has been on the organisation to provide the employee with the right work environment and management support to keep employees motivated and engaged.

Charles Woodruffe (2006) defines discretionary effort as *"This is the idea that he or she is fully intellectually and emotionally committed to the job and wants to give discretionary effort"*

– the effort that it is not necessary for an employee to give to a job, but that he or she wants to give to it. ”

Gunnigle, Heraty & Morley (2006, p.63) state *“The idea of discretionary employee behaviour relates to the need to identify how and why workers might be encouraged to work at levels of performance above and beyond what might be considered average or acceptable.”*

The critical point to understand about discretionary effort is that it can be neither compulsory, nor can it be forced. The discretionary effort has to be given by the employee.

Researchers argue that management believe they must persuade, entice or encourage employees to do more work or to do their job better; thereby releasing this discretionary effort. It implies that employees must be encouraged to work more innovatively both individually and in working with others than they ordinarily would, or were doing in the past. Employee Discretionary Effort goes beyond the terms of the written contract.

In order for employees to give their discretionary effort and go the extra mile they must feel that they are getting something in return. Organisation can achieve this by making the employee feel valued and involved in achieving its goals and objectives. This entices employees to engage with the organisation.

Engaged employees feel valued when their thoughts and ideas are being taken on board by management. This will encourage them to participate more and put in the extra effort with their work.

Engaged employees will put in the extra effort at work if it enables them to accomplish some of their personal needs and goals that they have set themselves.

Having reviewed the literature, it is clear that management can help encourage employees to give their discretionary effort by providing employees with:

- The necessary support and motivation they require
- Communicating expectations with the employee

- Identifying the individual needs for the employee
- Acknowledging and recognising the work they have done
- Showing a genuine interest in the employee

These management actions support an engaged work environment.

Employees have a responsibility to participate in the two way relationship. In reality they have to give something to the organisation in order to get something back. Research states that how much an employee contributes depends on how engaged the organisation keeps them.

If an employee does not get the support, motivation, acknowledgment and encouragement they need from their manager, that employee is likely to become disengaged with his or her work and the organisation.

“The term ‘engagement’ is useful, emotionally honest and authentic because of its links with commitment, bonding and even affection.”(Woodruffe 2006)

2.9 Employee Engagement & the Role of the Manager

There is consensus between the writers that management have a significant role in keeping employees engaged. Employees take their lead from their managers. Therefore it is essential that managers believe in and appreciate the concept of engagement and that they help implement it.

As stated by Mike Johnson (2004, p.1) *“Employee engagement is also something that can't succeed by being managed by Human Resources alone. Certainly Human Resources has the skills and tools to assist but it is the line managers who need to know how to engage their people.”*

The ultimate question to consider is ‘Who is responsible for employee engagement?’ Through the research examined on this topic, the Manager is the person who is held accountable for the levels of employee engagement.

“Common sense would suggest that management, both immediate and senior, hold the levers that can engage or disengage a workforce.” (Macleod 2008, p.34)

Two research reports, one by the UK Government in 2009 and the other by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development in 2006, highlighted the role of the manager as being one of the key drivers of employee engagement. It also identified that managers, both senior and direct line, have the power and influence to make or break levels of employee engagement.

The writers have agreed that one of the vital elements that influence both, how employees feel about their job and the level of performance they put in, is all down to the way they are treated by their managers.

The manager is the person the employee engages with on a daily basis. Employees get their instructions from their managers. It is the manager who sets out the expectations for the employee of what the organisation needs from them.

“It is important that middle management understand their roles, and that the motivation of the workforce is their responsibility. It’s the person you see everyday.” (MacLeod 2008, p.202)

It is the Line Manager who can instil and inspire an employee’s enthusiasm for their work. It is the manager who gives employees the power to take their own initiative and encourages and motivates them to get the job done.

Employees take their lead from their manager. It is the manager who helps the employee to understand their role in the organisation and how best they can contribute to the organisations success.

“Leadership is about the people side of things: It is about rapport, communication, loyalty, creating engagement and respect, helping people believe in themselves and inspiring them to higher levels of performance within their own lifestyle criteria.” (Johnson 2004, p.101)

The manager is the source of information, support and communication for the employee. Employees may not necessarily see top management of the organisation from one end of the year to another. Employees engage with their direct line manager everyday. Therefore, managers have to be open and approachable to employees. Establishing an open communication process with their employees, makes them feel engaged with their work and the organisation.

“Middle management has the real power to engage those below them.” (Macleod 2008, p.75)

For management to have this power to engage their employees, they must have their trust and respect. Engaged employees want managers who genuinely care about them and take an interest in them and the work they do. Employees will engage with a manager who allows them to use their own initiative and challenges employees to complete jobs in their own way. This shows that the manager trusts them and in return the employee becomes more engaged with their work

“A good leader both challenges and trusts his team. However, without the reciprocal trust of the team in that leader, the leaders trust is useless.” (Macleod 2008, p.34)

According to MacLeod (2008, p.75) there are three things engaged employees look for in a manager:

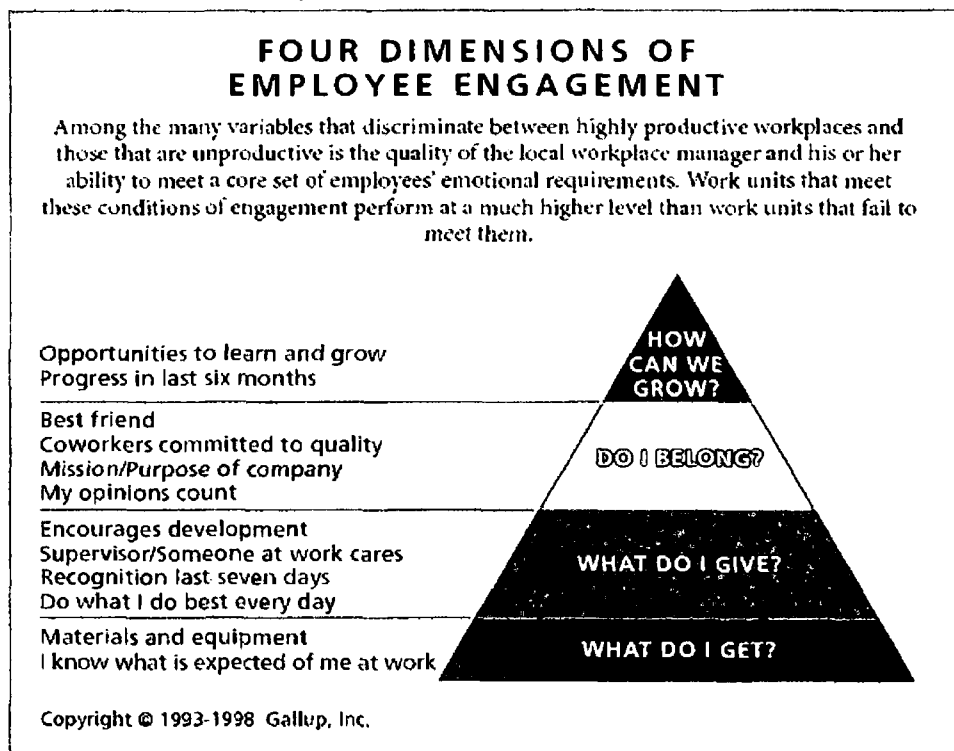
1. Sincerity
2. Consistency
3. Clarity

Research has found that employees will not feel engaged or become engaged with their working environment if they believe their manager is:

1. Not sincere with their interest and support for the employees work and what they contribute to the organisation
2. Not consistent with their praise and recognition. And is not consistent with the distribution of job assignments to employees. The manager has to be fair

3. Not clear with their expectation of the employee and the employees expectations of them

The Gallup Organisation established the 'Four Dimensions of Employee Engagement'. The following diagram sets out the conditions that need to be met for engagement in the workplace. By establishing these conditions the organisation will encourage engagement and ultimately increase employee performance levels.



However, these engagement conditions will not be met by employees if the local workplace manager does not recognise:

- The important role they play in engaging their employees
- The important role they play in encouraging their employees
- The important role they play in explaining how and where the employee fits into the organisation

Macleod states (2008, p.201) that *“What intuition tells us, research confirms. It shows irrefutably the power of the immediate supervisor level in harnessing engagement.”*

From the literature reviewed it is clear that the role of the line manager, both directly and indirectly, is a major influence on employee engagement. The line manager communicates with their employees and understands and identifies what drives their employees. Managers are actively involved in employee engagement whether they acknowledge it or not. The manager is the linchpin that holds all the engagement elements together.

“Successful leaders know the criteria of their people. They have fluency and flexibility in their leadership style, they individualise rather than generalise.” (Johnson 2004, p.100)

The results from research conducted by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2006, p. 45) identified that *“the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on levels of engagement, and ultimately performance.”*

Employee perceptions of senior management may be that they are only there to set the objectives and goals for the organisation. Their directions are then filtered down through the organisation to their employees, through its managers. Without the manager, both senior and direct line, encouraging, supporting and engaging the employees, the organisation would not be successful.

This statement highlights the ‘cause and effect’ reaction that exist in every employment relationship. Managers have to give their employees the space and support to do their work in order to get the results they need.

2.10 Employee Engagement & the Role of the Organisation

The role of the organisation in creating employee engagement is very important. The organisation needs to support and implement and embed engagement. Employee engagement needs to become an organisational norm and value. Organisations can achieve this by creating an engagement culture. This is a very challenging objective which would requires long term commitment from the organisation.

Sarah Cook (2008, pp.186-187) states that *“Employee engagement only develops with top down commitment and constant follow through by senior managers. The starting point for engagement therefore is to ensure that the senior management team not only believe in the importance of engagement but also actively role model the behaviours that promote engagement.”*

An important aspect of employee engagement is how employees feel about the head of the company and senior managers. It is important to identify the degree to which employees trust their leaders and believe they are accessible.

Employees can not commit to the organisation’s vision or strategy if they do not believe their senior and direct line managers believe in it themselves. The importance of employee engagement within an organisation needs to be acknowledged and valued throughout all the levels of the organisation. Managers cannot hold an expectation that employees will be engaged if they themselves are not committed and engaged to the organisation.

This point was identified through the research conducted by UK Government (2009, p.32) on employee engagement. The research found that *“there are still too many chief executives and senior managers who are unaware of employee engagement or are still to be convinced of its benefits”*

Organisations have to embrace employee engagement, with their heads and their hearts, and understand it is not a ‘fluffy’ Human Resources subject. Employee engagement is and can be the back bone that supports the organisation success, with financial and performance benefits for both the organisation and its employees.

“Most companies expect every employee to be a builder, because every employee, through his or her actions, either makes a culture stronger or weakens it.” (Thackray 2010)

As much as organisations want success, they want to create a workplace that their employees are proud to tell everyone about.

Engaged employees want their organisation to succeed. They can help this to be a reality for an organisation by connecting, emotionally, cognitively and physically with the organisations visions, mission and overall purpose.

2.11 Employee Engagement & Communication

Research has identified the important role the manager and employee play in employee engagement in the organisation. For an employee engagement culture to survive, the organisation must ensure it provides their employees with an open communication process. It is effective communication that helps organisations to build trust and credibility with their employees. Bowditch & Buono (p.129) state that “*Effective communication involves a two way exchange between senior and direct line management and the employee.*”

The information being communicated between the manager and employee has to:

- Be relevant to the employees needs
- Be understandable to the employee
- Be useful to the employee
- Be timely

Some researchers would argue that there is no point in communicating information that is not relevant to the employee. However, being open and honest with employees, on all levels, can be seen as a way of strengthening the employment relationship and building trust. This will make the employee feel engaged as they are being kept informed on every level and increases the employee’s feeling of involvement and engagement with the organisation.

Ulrich and Brockbank (2005, p. 122) supports this by stating “*Through information, organisations share goals, craft strategies, make decisions and integrates behaviours... ..It determines who has influence over which issues and who does not, giving meaning and direction to work and purpose to the lives of managers and employee alike.*”

2.12 Employee Engagement & Rewards

Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are motivators which are related to employee performance and satisfaction, and ultimately employee engagement.

The literature has reconfirmed the status quo; that money matters to employees. However, it has also highlighted that non-financial or intrinsic rewards are starting to matter more to employees.

Woodruffe (2006) states that *“there remains chief executives and managing directors who believe that their employees will be motivated to give a great performance simply because the company has hired them. These executives see money as a cure-all.”*

Employers who think this way believe that if they pay their staff enough they will have no reason to complain or not to do their job. This way of thinking is faulty and outdated. Money alone does not address the basic needs identified in Static Motivation Theory.

Employees engage in work and behave in certain ways in order to get certain incentives, therefore employees are motivated to do the work they are assigned in order to receive the desired reward, be it an extrinsic or intrinsic reward.

“Extrinsic rewards are the outcomes that come to mind when we think about reward in general – pay, benefits, bonuses.” (Bowditch & Buono 2005, p. 84)

Extrinsic rewards are elements of the remuneration package given to employees for their time and effort in completing and doing their job.

“Intrinsic rewards, on the other hand, as more intangible in nature.” (Bowditch & Buono 2005, p. 84)

Intrinsic rewards include such things as feelings of achievement, growth, career development, challenging work and good esteem. These intrinsic rewards have become increasingly more important to employees in the current economic climate.

People are no longer solely motivated by money, the non-financial rewards or intrinsic rewards have now begun to play a bigger role in what motivates and engages people.

Woodruff (2006) tells us that *“Employers need to understand that the training and development they extend to all their employees and especially to their more talented ones, will not only make them more able and more valuable to the organisation, but it will also act as a powerful incentive for them to stay.”*

Money is not necessarily the main factor in people’s decisions to take a job, engage with the organisation or to remain with the employer once they have it. There is considerable scope for employers to make conscious efforts to offer the non-financial motivations that employees crave so much.

According to Woodruffe (2006), the most important non-financial motivators for employees are:

1. Advancement
2. Autonomy
3. Civilised Treatment
4. Employer Commitment
5. Environment
6. Exposure to Senior People
7. Praise when praise is due
8. Support
9. The feeling of being challenged
10. The feeling of being trusted
11. The feeling of working for a good and reliable organisation
12. The feeling of working on useful assignments
13. The feeling that work-life balance is respected

By providing employees with these non-financial motivators they are renewing and keeping their employees engaged; and the employee believes and feels valued by the organisation.

2.13 Employee Engagement & the Industry Sector

Research has identified that employee engagement is an essential element for all successful organisations to have, in both the public and private sectors. Organisations with an engaged workforce will see the benefits in the form of increased financial and performance outcomes.

The priority of these benefits will change depending on the industry, either public or private, that the organisation operates in. Although the primary focus for all organisations is to establish an engaged workforce.

This dissertation examines the employee engagement concept with regard to the Public Sector. This is reinforced by recent research on employee engagement conducted by the UK and Scottish Governments.

2.13.1 The Scottish Government – Public Sector Review

The Scottish Government has undertaken an annual survey amongst staff employed within the organisation, since 2000.

The Scottish Government initiated these surveys when the organisation was adjusting to ongoing changes in the Public Sector. The purpose of the survey was to seek and establish a regular systematic mechanism, through which staff could:

1. Input their views
2. Feed into the planning process
3. And alert management to areas requiring attention

The Scottish Government saw there was a need for a redesign of the survey in 2005, due to the declining response rate from staff. As a result of the redesign the survey content focused

more on issues concerning employee engagement. The new survey had a greater focus on action planning and action monitoring.

In 2009, the UK Cabinet Office undertook the first Civil Service People Survey, a Civil Service wide employee engagement survey. It was the largest survey ever conducted in the UK. The aim of the survey was to provide a measure of engagement across the organisation and a comprehensive picture of how employees feel working in the Public Sector. The Scottish Government participated in the survey.

The Employee Engagement Programme is tasked with embedding employee engagement throughout the Civil Service. The survey included five questions designed to measure engagement within the organisation. The responses to these questions were used to calculate an employee engagement index score and identify key drivers that were having the most impact on employee engagement.

The survey findings identified that leadership and management has a substantial impact on employee engagement.

Another finding from the survey was the employee's response in relation to management taking action or implementing a plan to remedy the issues identified. Less than 42% of the employees believed Senior Management would take any action. However, over half of the employees surveyed believed their direct managers where they worked would take the results on board and try implement a local action plan.

The Scottish Government was very positive about the results and the findings. They have set up an action plan to act on the findings of the survey.

2.13.2 The UK Government – Public & Private Sector Review

The UK Government commissioned a report by David Macleod and Nina Clarke in 2009, titled *Engaging for Success – Enhancing Performance Through Employee Engagement*. The review examined organisations in both the Public and Private sectors.

A key aim of the report was to examine whether a wider take up of engagement approaches would impact positively on UK competitiveness and performance and meet the challenges of increased global competition. The review concluded that this was the case.

The review included many examples of Companies and Organisations where performance and profitability have been transformed by employee engagement. The report cited a number of studies that show a clear correlation between engagement and performance. Critically it reconfirmed the link between improving engagement and improving performance.

The review advises that it is most helpful to view employee engagement as a workplace approach; designed to ensure that employees are committed to their organisation goals and values. It identifies engaged employees are motivated to contribute to the organisational success, while enhancing their own sense of wellbeing at the same time.

The report identified that engaged employees have strong and authentic values. There was clear evidence of trust and fairness based on mutual respect, where two way promises and commitments between employers and staff are understood and are fulfilled.

“Engagement, going to the heart of the workplace relationship between employee and employer, can be the key to unlocking productivity and to transforming the working lives of many people for whom Monday morning is an especially low point of the week.” (MacLeod & Clarke 2009, p.3-4)

Both studies highlight the need for organisations to take soundings and find out the level of employee engagement. An employee engagement survey may be a useful method for testing the levels of engagement. However, both reports highlight that an employee engagement survey is not enough by itself.

How do we manage people for success and high levels of productivity? The research states the answer to this question is employee engagement or the ability to capture the heads, hearts and souls of your employees to instil an intrinsic desire and passion for excellence.

This critical review of the literature and research has lead to the theoretical framework for this dissertation research project.

There are many different variables and approaches to employee engagement. As there is no one employee engagement model that will fit every organisation. The driver that lies behind employee engagement will differ for each organisation. The most successful approaches and strategies for employee engagement are those that are tailor made for that specific organisation.

The primary variable that each writer has identified as a key consideration to employee engagement is the role of the Manager. It is critical to focus on the important influence and role they play in keeping employees engaged. The Manager has the potential to instil or hinder employee engagement.

“Organisations are only as effective as the people in them. People are only as effective as their leaders enable them to be.” (Johnson 2004, p.104)

The Research Question will be:

A case study examination into the important role and influence managers have on employee engagement, in a Public Sector Organisation, Dublin City Council, Housing Maintenance Section.

CHAPTER THREE – THE CASE STUDY

The idea for this dissertation is based on the fact that with the Public Sector spending over budget and Public Sector pay cuts and restrictions in place, I believe it is a critical that Dublin City Council address the issue of employee engagement as a matter of urgency.

“As our public services face the reality of an end to the years of rapid growth in investment, it is hard to see how the quality of service we all aspire to see – employees and citizens alike – can be achieved without putting enthusiasm, commitment and acknowledge of public service employees at the forefront of delivery strategies” (MacLeod & Clarke 2009 p.4)

3.1 Organisational Background

Dublin City Council is a multi-service organisation with 6,432 employees. It is the largest Local Authority in Ireland.

“The City Council is committed to providing a quality and effective service to all its customers through maintaining high standards of attendance and heightened morale among staff leading to higher levels of service.” (Dublin City Council 2010)

With regard to this mission statement, I thought it would be necessary to examine if Dublin City Council employees are engaged or not. In the current economic climate, it is now more important than ever that the employees are engaged and committed to helping the organisation in achieving these high levels of service.

There are thirteen departments within Dublin City Council. The following are a selection of the departments within Dublin City Council:

- The City Manager’s Department
- Environment & Engineering Department
- Housing & Residential Services Department
- Planning & Economic Development Department

- Dublin Fire Brigade
- Human Resources Department

These departments provide a multitude of services; including the Provision of Housing, Traffic Management to the management and maintenance of City Parks and the issuing of provisional driver licences.

The Human Resources Department of Dublin City Council is responsible for all employee relation issues, such as recruitment, attendance management up to and including the implementation of learning and development plans.

Dublin City Council uses the Workplace Partnership Process to conduct its organisational research, for the creation of policies and strategies. Management, trade unions and employees are the main stakeholders in the partnership process. All major changes that effect employees are addresses through the partnership process.

“The Partnership process is linked to the change and modernisation agenda that focuses on the best way to utilise the organisations resources to provide efficient and cost effective services to the citizens of Dublin.” (Dublin City Council 2010)

3.2 Partnership at Work

In 2004, through the Partnership process, Dublin City Council conducted a “Workplace Review”. This review covered all areas of Dublin City Council, from training requirements to communication and morale. It was used to measure staff perceptions and attitudes to local authority policies and procedures.

The findings of the report highlighted the key role and responsibility local managers play in creating and supporting the implementation of initiatives and policies within the organisation.

The report also identified a need for more effective workplace communication. Dublin City Council employees felt they were not getting enough support from management in dealing with change and that they were not receiving feedback.

The report recommended that Dublin City Council encourage local managers to have more open communication with staff and strengthen the channels of communication to increase overall organisational awareness.

3.3 Dublin City Council & Professor David Ulrich

In February 2006, Dublin City Council held a seminar 'New Competitive Realities' which was given by world renowned Professor David Ulrich. The seminar focused on the '7 Key Challenges facing Organisations today and the 7 Leadership Responses to these Challenges'. (See Appendix 1)

The senior management from Dublin City Council attended this seminar. The seminar focused on communication within the organisation and the importance of team work and collaboration. Professor Ulrich informed the attendees that *"it is crucial that everybody knows what an organisation is trying to achieve and they are committed to their role in it. However, the organisation also has to value diversity and difference."* (First Post, Dublin City Council 2006)

This seminar reinforced the need for effective and efficient channels of communication within the organisation. It also highlighted the importance of a two way relationship between managers and employees.

3.4 My Research Focus

Employee engagement is a vast research topic. The critical review of the existing literature and research identifies the need for employee engagement surveys to be undertaken by organisations. It also highlighted a primary factor that contributes to a successful employee engagement plan, is the influence and involvement of the Manager.

It is evident from the research that Dublin City Council is aware of the importance of good management and leadership within the organisation. Dublin City Council provides numerous management development courses to their staff, on how to manage, communicate and motivate employees. However, these courses will be of little benefit to the organisation if the managers are not putting their improved skills and knowledge into practise and engaging with their employees.

All Public Sector workers, through the employee hierarchy, have been affected by the recent pay cuts and recruitment embargos implemented by the Irish Government. It is understandable that some employees might not be engaging 100% with the organisation. The organisational challenge of re-engaging these employees will become more difficult without the involvement of its managers.

3.5 The Housing Maintenance Section, Dublin City Council

The research focus of this dissertation is on a cross section of the Management Team of the Housing Maintenance Section of Dublin City Council.

The Housing Maintenance Section is responsible for carrying out maintenance and repairs to the 26,700 council dwellings in Dublin City. This Section is also responsible for carrying out;

- Disabled Persons Adaptations to City Council Dwellings
- The Construction of Overcrowding Extensions to City Council Dwellings
- Servicing of Gas Central Heating in City Council Dwellings

With the Public Sector Funding cuts implemented by the Government, all departments within Dublin City Council are challenged with providing the same services as before, to its internal and external customers on significantly reduced budgets.

The Housing Maintenance Section of Dublin City Council still has to provide the same essential services to the Tenant's of their 26,700 City Dwellings, with reduced financial

resources and reduced levels of employees. There are currently 673 employees in the Housing Maintenance Section entrusted with this responsibility.

Therefore the important questions that Dublin City Council Senior Management need to consider are:

- Are Dublin City Council Managers engaged and understand the importance engagement?
- Do Dublin City Council Managers appreciate the vital role they must play in developing and supporting an engaged workforce?

CHAPTER FOUR – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

According to Anderson (2004, p. 115) there are many different ways of tackling research projects in Human Resources, and it is important to formulate an approach that is contextually appropriate and will generate data and conclusions that are meaningful and valuable.

Therefore, the appropriate method must be carefully chosen by the researcher, in line with the research question, to ensure the information needed is obtained.

4.1 The Research Question

A case study examination into the important role and influence managers have on employee engagement, in a Public Sector Organisation, Dublin City Council, Housing Maintenance Section.

4.2 Research Paradigms

Collis & Hussey (2009, p.55) define a research paradigm as *“a framework that guides how research should be conducted, based on people's philosophies and their assumptions about the world and the nature of knowledge.”*

There are two main paradigms, positivism and interpretivism, which represent the two extremities on the paradigm continuum. In between these two extremes on the continuum there are a number of different research approaches that can be used.

When choosing a research approach the researcher must remember that whichever end of the paradigm continuum their research approach fits into, that there is no ‘wrong’ or ‘right’ paradigm to use.

I had to consider the different paradigm approaches before I made my choice, as the research approach would have an influence on the research design and data collection method used. I

decided the most appropriate research approach to undertake for this dissertation was a realist research approach.

Fisher (2007, p.18) states that *“Realist research is an approach that retains many of the ambitions of positivism but recognises, and comes to terms with, the subjective nature of research and the inevitable role of values in it.”*

Realist researchers claim to be orthodox. They want to discover the mechanisms that bring about events and they are concerned that their theories should be verifiable and have some generalisability.

Realist researchers often use qualitative methods to conduct their research, and this is because realists recognise the role of subjectivity. As with all theories being studied, the researcher will have different values for the study and therefore will propose competing theories.

Horn (2009, p. 109) states *“Subjective approach takes into account the real situation and how reality is made or constructed.”* So subjectivity it is how the theory is out into reality.

4.3 Research Strategy

It is important that careful consideration is given to how to create an effective research strategy. And which of the primary research options available, quantitative and qualitative research, is best to use.

Anderson (2004, p.104) defines quantitative research or quantitative data as *“the term given to data that can be quantified or counted.”*

Anderson (2004, p.104) also defines qualitative research or qualitative data as *“the term given to data based on meanings which are expressed through words and language.”*

I chose to use qualitative research as my primary research method. I made this decision as I wanted to find out the key elements of engagement and what was preventing employees being

engaged in my organisation. The main elements from my literature review pointed to the role of the manager as an important influence on employee engagement. Therefore I felt it would be necessary for me to interview and speak with managers to get their insight and understanding of employee engagement. I also wanted to investigate if they understood the important role they play in engaging staff.

I chose not to use quantitative research methods, as I felt the results of this research method would only identify whether employees were engaged or disengaged in the organisation. It would contribute to my findings but would not help me answer my research question.

I believe my choice of qualitative research over quantitative research is also backed up by the depth of the situation being investigated.

The focus is on one organisation, Dublin City Council and the varying elements that help or hinder management from engaging with their employees in that environment. The design of the research will be in the form of a Case Study.

Collis & Hussey (2009, p.82) define a case study as *“a methodology that is used to explore a single phenomenon (the case) in a natural setting using a variety of methods to obtain in-depth knowledge. The importance of the context is essential.”*

The use of a case study will give the reader a better insight into the research topic being investigated in that particular field. The case study will also help to show employee engagement at work and identify the barriers that management feel are preventing it from being embedded in the organisation.

“Case studies enable you to give a holistic account of the subject of your research. In particular, they help the researcher to focus on the interrelationships between all the factors, such as people, groups, policies and technologies, that make up the case studies.” (Fisher 2007, p. 59)

Researchers must be aware that what is identified through the case study may only be relevant to this particular organisation. It may not be possible for the findings to be used by anyone else, but the results could give other organisations the initial steps needed to study their own organisation, and begin their own research.

Fisher (2007, p.60) states *“It cannot be claimed that what happened in one case is typical of all cases. In many instances the power of the case study lies in its capacity to provide insights and resonance for the reader.”*

There are many different case studies that can be used by the researcher. These studies can be used either on their own, or some studies could involve the combination of a number of case study elements.

Bryman & Bell (2007, p. 64) set out differences between the case studies used for research purposes:

1. The Critical Case	There the researcher has a clearly specified hypothesis, and a case is chosen on the grounds that it will allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which the hypothesis will or will not hold
2. The Unique Case	The unique or extreme case is a common focus in clinical studies
3. The Revelatory Case	The basis for the revelatory case exists when an investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to scientific investigation
4. The Representative or Typical Case	This type seeks to explore a case that exemplifies an everyday situation or form of organisation
5. The Longitudinal Case	This type of case is concerned with how a situation changes over time

This case study will be a combination of a critical and typical case study, where employee engagement is shown in an organisation and the barriers to it, in the form of inefficient implementation and understanding of employee engagement by the management of the organisation.

Bryman & Bell (2007, p. 64) highlight that *“the crucial question is not whether or not the findings of the case study can be generalised to a wider universe, but how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings.”*

4.4 Research Process – Who, Why, When, Where & How?

- Who -** Senior and line managers in the Human Resources Department and the Housing Maintenance Section of Dublin City Council. The management group interviewed consisted of:
- ❖ The Human Resources Manager of Dublin City Council
 - ❖ 1 Senior Executive Officer
 - ❖ 2 Administrative Officers
 - ❖ 3 Senior Staff Officers
 - ❖ 4 Area Maintenance Officers
 - ❖ 2 Senior Staff Officers
 - ❖ 1 Assistant Staff Officer
- Why -** These managers were chosen as there was direct access to them, and they are directly responsible for high levels of staff, so it was important to interview them to get their knowledge and insight into employee engagement and to see if they understood the role they play in engaging the workforce.
- When –** June 2010
- Where-** Dublin City Council, Human Resources Department, Housing Maintenance Section, Civic Offices

How – The managers were interviewed, with questions drawn up following my literature review. The questions were aimed at providing me with management's overall thoughts, ideas and understanding of employee engagement in the organisation and to see if they understood how vital they are to keep the workforce engaged.

4.5 Research Methods

“A research method is simply a technique for collecting data. It can involve a specific instrument, such as a self-completion questionnaire or a structured interview schedule, or participant observation, whereby the researcher listens to and watches others.” (Bryman & Bell 2007, p.40)

When designing the research approach, decisions had to be made about which research methods would be best to use, in order to obtain the necessary information and findings to answer my research question.

Fisher (2007, p. 61) lists the most commonly used methods as:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Panels, including focus groups
- Observation, including participant observation
- Documents
- Databases

For this dissertation, interviews and documents were the chosen methods.

The different research techniques were considered for conducting this research before the final approach was selected. However, the following research methods were discounted for a number of reasons:

- Questionnaires/Surveys -** Time consuming, might not get enough people to participate and therefore the results would not match the sample size. The topic under investigation also had to be considered and because of the sensitive nature there could be a low chance of getting the questionnaires returned.
- Panels/Focus Groups -** Sensitive nature of the topic in current climate, large groups of people may not feel comfortable expressing their opinions in front of others, especially other managers, as it could lead to some criticism over how each individual manages and engages with staff.
- Observation -** Bias towards the individuals being observed. People may already made decisions based on what they know of the other person, do the situation may not portray a true sense of the environment.
- Databases -** Research topic cannot be stored on a database, as the information changes all the time. Databases could have been used if surveys or questionnaires were conducted.

4.6 Primary & Secondary Research

“Primary data refers to data that has been collected for the study in which it is used”
(Horn 2009 p.135)

The primary research method use for this dissertation took the form of interviews. The interviews were conducted with both senior and direct line managers of Dublin City Council, Housing Maintenance Section. The Manager of the Human Resources Department was also interviewed.

By conducting this research it helped me gain an insight into the level of understanding management have of employee engagement in the organisation.

“Secondary data refers to data that is being included in research or academic writing that has not been collected as part of that study.” (Horn 2009 p. 135)

The secondary research consisted of:

- A critical review of employee engagement literature
- Reviewing organisational data
- Reviewing engagement survey reports conducted by Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, the UK and Scottish Governments

By conducting this secondary research, it helped me gain background knowledge on employee engagement and provided me with vital elements that directed my primary research focus.

4.7 Location & Sample Size

“Location refers to the setting in which the research is conducted” (Collis & Hussey 2009, p.62)

It was important to consider where to conduct the study. As I am an employee of Dublin City Council I chose to conduct the case study in the natural setting of Dublin City Council Head Offices and Local Area Offices.

“A sample is a subset of a population. A population is a precisely defined body of people or objects under consideration for statistical purposes.” (Collis & Hussey 2009, p.62)

Careful consideration had to be given to the sample size to be used for this dissertation. Dublin City Council has approximately 6,432 employees. It would not have been practical for me to interview or survey all the employees. Therefore, with the help of my secondary research, I narrowed my research question focus down to one area of employee engagement. The sample size was narrowed down and focused on one department, Housing Maintenance

Section. This section included the full hierarchy of management and employees. The sample was then narrowed further down to focus on the role of management.

By narrowing my research area it enabled me to gain an insight and gather information on employee engagement at all management levels within this department. This sample size allowed me access to a cross section of the management of the department. The numbers interviewed were based on the access and permission given to me to talk to managers who wanted to participate. This was due to the nature of the topic and the recent changes and effects on the Public Sector as a result of the current economic climate.

4.8 The Interview

“In the business research interview, the aim is for the interviewer to elicit from the interviewee or respondent, all manner of information: interviewees’ own behaviour or that of others, attitudes, norms, belief and values”. (Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 209)

The interview research method can be used to collect either quantitative or qualitative data. The types of question styles used will determine the quality and quantity of information you collect. An open, unstructured interview can collect qualitative information, while a structured interview tends produces quantitative data.

Bryman and Bell (2007, p. 474) state that *“in qualitative interviewing the researcher wants rich, detailed answers, in quantitative research the interview is supposed to generate answers that can be pre-coded and processed quickly”*.

Qualitative research is made up of words rather than numbers and can be generated from a variety of different research methods. The quality of the data collected through the use of qualitative research can be essential to case study, as it is an individual’s thoughts, ideas and feelings on the topic being researched.

Fisher (2007, p.253) states the *“benefits of qualitative data are that we end up with ‘well grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts’*.

By using the qualitative method, it allows the researcher to go beyond initial concepts and thoughts on the topic and possibly generate or revise the conceptual frameworks.

4.8.1 Interview Structure

There are three main types of interviews that a researcher can use to collect their primary data;

- Open Interviews
- Semi Interviews
- Structured Interviews

An open interview allows the respondent to raise cues and themes related to the topic of interest. The interviewee's own perspective and opinion on the area of interest is under investigation. Open interviews allow for flexibility and provides the interviewer with room to add new questions in response to replies.

On the other hand, in a structured interview, which is controlled and guided by the interviewer and has no room for flexibility, the questions are prepared and moving away from the script is not accepted.

The compromise between these two extreme forms of interviewing is the semi structured interview.

The semi structured interview *"refers to the context in which the researcher has a list of questions on fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an interview guide, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply."*

(Bryman and Bell 2007, p. 474)

By using a semi-structured interview method, it allowed me to follow my schedule of questions. It also allowed me to cover the main issues and topics on employee engagement that needed to be covered by the respondent. A benefit of using the semi structured interview style is that it allows the respondent enough room to answer the questions in the way that made sense to them.

I had identified who the interviewee's were going to be, a selection of managers from the Housing Maintenance Section. Now that I had decided the style of interview to use, I had to draw up a list of questions and areas that needed to be covered to answer my research question. Once I had established the list of questions, I piloted the interview questions. Following the interview pilot, I then edited and prioritised the questions and put them into a sequence.

I planned out my interview schedule, and made sure I interviewed the Human Resource Manager in the middle of my interview process. This allowed me to gain confidence and practise in asking my questions, and to set the appropriate speed for the interview process.

I made sure I interviewed a wide range of management stakeholders, both senior and line managers, who are office based and also area-office based. I chose to interview managers as they were the group of people who would be able to answer my questions.

The interviewees were all asked in advance if they would participate in the process. The interviewee's were provided with a brief background on the topic, the reasons I was conducting the research and an explanation of how the information from the interview would be used.

The interviews were conducted face to face and were scheduled to last between 20 to 30 minutes each. I decided to record the interviews using a digital voice recorder, to ensure all the information I needed was gathered. The interviewee was asked in advance of the interview if I could record them, and I made sure again on the day of the interview that they were comfortable being recorded. By recording the interviews, this let me focus on the interviewee's responses, and made the interview more relaxed.

Each interviewee was given the commitment that their responses would be kept in confidence. The interviews took place in the respondent's office. I thought this would make the interviewees more comfortable, being in their own environment, and would hopefully make them more comfortable answering the questions.

I made sure not to lead the interviewees, not to give them the answer I was looking for. I made sure not to express my own opinion, just to probe the respondent's answers to help me understand their stance on the topic a little clearer.

4.8.2 Senior Management Interview

The senior management members were interviewed using the semi-structured interview, based on the key elements identified through the critical literature review and other research reports.

Four senior managers were interviewed. The interview (Appendix 3) contained 26 questions and was divided into four sections.

4.8.3 Line Manager Interview

The line managers were also interviewed using the semi-structured interview, based on the key elements identified through the critical literature review and other research reports.

Ten line managers were interviewed. The interview (Appendix 5) contained 24 questions and was divided into the same four sections as the senior manager interviews.

4.8.4 Piloting the Interview

The interview was piloted on a class colleague and one Human Resources specialist. By piloting the interviews it allowed me to test the schedule and gain some confidence in using it.

Bryman and Bell (2007, pp. 273) highlight key reasons for piloting an interview schedule as *“it may be possible to identify questions that make respondents feel uncomfortable and detect any tendency for respondents' interest to be lost at certain junctures”*.

By identifying these potential problems in advance of the planned interviews any suggested or required changes could be made.

Sample of Pilot Interview Questions see Appendix 2.

4.9 Analysing Research Data

When analysing the collected research data, it was necessary to consider what best approaches for sorting through the research to identify the usable data, to create my findings.

“Before you start writing you need to draw out the usable material from all the stuff you have collected. The process for doing this has the formal name of coding.” (Fisher 2007 p.81)

The process of coding involves identifying themes and dividing the research material into units or sections. This process was made easier as I had transcribed all 14 interviews. I had then divided the responses down into individual sections and placed the answers from each interviewee under each question.

Transcribing the interviews was a very time consuming process, however, it was essential that it was conducted to enable me to process my research findings easier. For confidentiality reasons I transcribed the interviews myself instead of asking someone else to do it.

As I have conducted my research in the form of a case study the onus was on me to ensure all the important information I wanted to obtain, was collected and processed.

Fisher (2007, p.186) states *“there is no commonly accepted way of analysing a case study. It is something that case study writers have to work out for themselves. This uncertainty is a feature of most qualitative research when compared with quantitative method.”*

The main concepts from the critical literature review helped me to construct my research data under the four headings:

1. Employee Engagement Basics
2. The Role of the Manager
3. Engagement & the Employee
4. Engagement & the Organisation

From the research data, I could now see if the information collected from the interviews in the case study, supported and contributed to my findings from the literature review. This was

done by identifying recurring themes and patterns between the literature review and my primary research data and seeing if the common findings matched.

Fisher (2007, p.187) states *“A general term for this process is a pattern matching and it means proposing a set of propositions that could be true, and then comparing them with the patterns of relationships that are found in the case study.”*

4.10 Analysing Qualitative Research Data

It is recommended that you analyse your qualitative data as you go because themes will be emerging all the time and they need to be recognised, organised and taken account of.

There are software programmes available for processing qualitative data and material, such as NVivo Software System. I considered using these software packages to help me analyse the research data collected. However, I decided against using it, as the effort needed to understand and master the software and input the research material was too time consuming and so I decided to use my own method for analysing my findings.

My qualitative data was organised and combined with my field notes and the replies, once transcribed, were structured with the use of a word processing format.

Under each question, the respondent's response was analysed and any information not relevant to the research project was removed. Any information that could be used, such as suggestions for method of implementing plans and changes, were highlighted and set aside to recommend to the organisation.

CHAPTER FIVE – ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

THE INTERVIEWS

The Research Question

A case study examination into the important role and influence managers have on employee engagement, in a Public Sector Organisation, Dublin City Council, Housing Maintenance Section.

5.1 Interview Aim

The aim of conducting interviews was to gain an insight into the understanding Senior and Line Manager's of the Housing Maintenance Section have of employee engagement. The findings will answer the above research question.

To examine the topic effectively and extract the reduced detail, the interview was divided up into four different sections:

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

Section Two: Role of the Manager

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

The four Senior Managers, including the Head of Human Resources, interviewed were asked 26 questions under these four headings.

The ten Line Managers interviewed were asked 24 questions under these four headings.

5.2 Interview Analysis

The following analysis contains the key findings from the research and information generated from conducting these interviews on employee engagement in Dublin City Council. The

interview transcripts were examined to isolate the common themes and schools of thought. The findings will be supported with interviewee responses in the form of quotes and excerpts. The results will be divided up into two sections, Senior Management Interview Results Analysis and Line Manager Interview Result Analysis.

See Appendix 3-6C for a full list of interview questions and sample transcripts of one Senior Manager and one Line Managers interview.

5.3 Section One - Senior Management Interview Result Analysis

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

This section contained five questions based on employee engagement. The questions were designed to gain an insight into Senior Management's understanding of employee engagement.

Question One asked Senior Managers what the concept of employee engagement meant to them. The Senior Managers each had their own understanding of employee engagement. Each manager recognised it as being a commitment to helping the organisation achieve its goals.

"When you are engaged with something or in something, it's actually your full and total commitment to that task, it's almost as if there is nothing else in the world"

"It's harbouring a theme of commitment and working together"

One of the Senior Managers said they were not formally aware of the concept of employee engagement, but that informally he would be.

"I wouldn't have been formally aware of the concept of employee engagement, but I could be informally aware that yes there does need to be engagement"

Question Two asked if the Senior Managers saw the importance of promoting employee engagement. All the Senior Managers agreed yes, they saw the important of employee engagement.

“I think it’s good management and all that goes with good management, is how you promote it and clear objectives and an organisation that you would be proud to work in, you value the role the organisation plays and it’s place in society.”

Question Three asked the Senior Managers if they would see the benefits of having and engaged workforce. They all agreed that they saw the benefits of having an engaged workforce, and that it provided the organisation with a more efficient and productive service.

“It’s bottom line, if you’re employees are not engaged that message will be transmitted itself to customers, stakeholders, citizens, whatever medium you operate in and it will show.”

“The benefit of it is that it is giving us the opportunity to provide the same service despite having a reduced staff force.”

Question Four involved asking the Senior Managers what they thought the key ingredients for employee engagement are. The Senior Managers replied that they thought the key ingredients were good communication and clarity of expectations.

“Communication, clear outputs, outline your expectations”

The Senior Managers also recognised the importance of creating an environment that allows employee engagement to develop, and recognition for jobs well done.

“There needs to be the culture and environment that allows it to flourish. An environment where people are allowed to take the initiative, create the atmosphere that encourages people to help out and not get rebuffed for doing it.”

Question Five asked the Senior Managers what they thought were the key barriers to an engaged workforce. The Senior Managers all recognised poor management skills as being the primary barrier to an engaged workforce. They also acknowledged that employees not feeling valued or involved can be a barrier to an engaged workforce.

*“Poor management skills, people not feeling valued,
people not seeing what the value of the job is”*

Section Two: The Role of the Manager

This section consisted of six questions which were asked to assess Senior Management's thoughts on the Role of the Manager in employee engagement.

All the Senior Managers interviewed agreed with Question Six and identified that the manager has a significant influence in the employment relationship.

"The manager is the main influence the manager is very important, significantly important"

"There is a big emphasis on managers to lead by example. If you're not showing an example of how engagement should be or how it should be approached, I don't think it would be fair to expect employees to be the opposite of who they are reporting to"

The Senior Managers also recognised the role of the employee in the relationship, that it has to be a two way process between the manager and the employee

Question Seven asked the Senior Managers if they thought managers in Dublin City Council were familiar with and valued the concept of employee engagement. There were mixed responses to this question. Two of the Senior Managers agreed that management are aware of the value of employee engagement, however the organisation can do better.

"Yes they do. I'd have to say but like everything in terms of management development we can do better and I think that must be the bar we have to set that we can always do more."

"Training and awareness of it are fine but are you actually using it, individually are managers carrying it on"

The other Senior Managers said they think managers may informally be aware of the value, but not formally.

"Maybe not in a formal sense, but in an informal sense"

Question Eight asked if they Senior Managers thought managers in Dublin City Council appreciate the important role they play in creating and supporting engagement. All the Senior Managers agreed yes there is a general awareness.

“There is a general awareness, most people would see its importance but do they do appreciate the role they play”

“Definitely, the book stops with the manager if poor engagement exists”

Question Nine involved asking the Senior Managers if they believed front line management were engaged themselves in Dublin City Council. All the Senior Managers responded yes, but acknowledged that the organisation was going through a very difficult time.

“I think they are, but I think it’s more difficult now, I think we’ve probably come through a fraught time and there is a lot of strain and pressure, but it’s probably more important now that ever in these times that managers do engage and are seen to be engaged themselves in it.”

Aside from this, the Senior Managers believed front line managers have the ability to re-align and re-engage themselves with the organisation and keep themselves and their staff going.

“It’s very easy to get derailed but you have to have positive regard all the time for yourself as a manager and for what you do and believe in it.”

Question Ten asked the Senior Managers if they thought the Line Managers had top-down support to promote and maintain an engaged workforce. Mixed responses were received from the Senior Managers. Two of the Senior Managers believed that Line Managers have the required top down support. This support as is a cultural norm and it is all about employee involvement.

“Yes, I think so, I think that is the culture of the organisation and clearly in any policies we have, partnership with management with unions, it’s a cultural norm...It’s all about stakeholder collaboration and engagement. We couldn’t mistake that.”

The other Senior Managers felt the support can be hit and miss at times. They felt the support depended on who you were working with and what you were working on. The Senior Manager also felt it depended on the circumstances being implemented or forced upon the Line Managers.

“I think it could be better, it is a bit ad hoc, but I wouldn’t say it’s not there at all.”

“I think sometimes more senior managers don’t always have or are not giving that support but in the current climate they are always are giving that support, simply just through circumstances”

Question Eleven asked Senior Managers, what they thought the key qualities a manager needs when trying to promote employee engagement. There was a consensus among the Senior Managers that being a strong leader and a good communicator and listener are the key qualities a manager needs to engage their workforce.

“Strong leader, good listener, communication”

“The core of every manager is that, they must practice what they preach. If they want engagement they must participate with their immediate staff in employee engagement.”

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

This section of the interview contained seven questions relating to employee engagement and the Role of the Employee.

Question Thirteen asked the Senior Managers if they thought Dublin City Council employees are engaged. All the Senior Managers replied that yes they thought Dublin City Council employees are engaged. Each Senior Manager acknowledged that each Line Manager is responsible for varying numbers of employee and that there are going to be pockets of employees who are not doing their job, but they all believe that would only be a very small percentage of the workforce.

“Yes, I think so, you always get some exceptions with staff of 6500. There are always pockets. We are and do have the bell curve, 7.5% are great and 7.5% are the other extreme in any random group of people. In 6500 people, it’s a big group.”

“I think a lot of them are, it has been an awful two years and people have a lot of reasons not to be happy and not engaged, but most people want to work. Majority of staff coming in and want to do their job, to get personal satisfaction in feeling like they are contributing to and achieving something.”

Question Fourteen focused on whether a two way relationship exists between employees and their manager in Dublin City Council. All the Senior Managers replies yes.

Yes, I agree there is a two way relationship

Some of the Senior Managers recognised that it goes beyond just your manager and it becomes a multiple stakeholder process in the employment relationship. Employees must engage on every level with everyone.

“It’s probably a bit more than a two way relationship, it is a two way, your right, but there are other relationships, like colleagues, unions, external influences, so it is more complex, I think there are multi-stake relationships.”

Question Fifteen asked the Senior Managers if the organisation listens to the employee ‘voice’, this question received mixed responses. Two of the Senior Managers agreed that the organisation does listen to employees’ opinions and suggestions.

“I think so, we always take the feedback seriously and try and remediate concerns where ever we see them emerging. It is part of managing development programmes for managers, that they would be encouraged to listen to what their staff have to say.”

The other Senior Managers recognise it happens more at local level between Line Managers and their employees but they think it doesn’t happen across the organisation as a whole. They suggested a reason for this is a lack of feedback to employees on the suggestions they give.

“There have been forums and sessions but lack of follow up. Glossy policies or communication strategies created but there is no follow up, we are really bad with that. Employees are asked for their ideas however they feel they don’t hear anything back.”

Questions Sixteen and Seventeen focused on the increasing importance of intrinsic rewards and what the managers consider to be the key intrinsic rewards for employees. All the Senior Managers agreed and recognised the increased importance on intrinsic rewards.

“Yes, we have to look at any other non financial rewards as ways to keep our staff motivated.”

However, two of the Senior Managers felt the organisation could do better with recognising the benefits of intrinsic rewards. It was felt that there is not a culture of acknowledging or recognising employees for work they have done in Dublin City Council.

“They have made several attempts to do it, but it’s not embedded. It needs to be constantly looked at until it becomes the norm”

The key intrinsic rewards that were identified by Senior Managers are;

1. Praise and recognition
2. Good communication
3. Public Value
4. Flexibility in the work place

“Praise and recognition, Positive feedback, flexibility in the workplace, recognition of a job well done. The feel good factor”

“Public value, in other words, you’re doing a job of merit, a job that is important and a job that contributes.”

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

This section of the interview contained seven questions, which focused on the Role of the Organisation in employee engagement.

All the Senior Managers agreed, when asked Question Nineteen, if they thought the existing culture in Dublin City Council currently supported a committed and engaged workforce.

“Yes, I think it does, certainly the cultural value and cultural norms are about that. It is inherent in every policy we have. It is inherent in the way we do business, the whole partnership structure, the whole relationship with communities and stakeholders, it is there.”

One Senior Manager recognised that this culture may be blocked by some Senior Managers who do not recognise the importance of employee engagement.

“Yes, I have seen a lot of effort and support to create a committed and engaged culture, but it is hampered by older generation who aren’t used to thanking and recognising employee effort.”

Question Twenty asked Senior Managers if they believed there was an improved financial/performance benefit for an organisation with an engaged employees. All the Senior Managers agreed they could see the improved performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees.

“Increased productivity and efficiency, again it is trying to provide the same services with reduced resources. This can happen where you have engaged employees, it can only happen when you have engaged employees. When staff are de-motivated it is going to be very difficult.”

“Because engaged employees contribute to better performance, we are not bottom line in the sense that we are not profit driven. But sometimes in a Public Service organisation you get the benefit from being regarded as a well run organisation. By virtue of the fact the government will say look the city council are good”

Question Twenty-One asked the Senior Managers if they thought the organisation would benefit, now that we are in a recessionary times, from a heightened focus on employee engagement. All of the Senior Managers agreed that the organisation would benefit from a stronger focus on employee engagement.

“Yes, we could achieve it if we are real about it, it could happen. Improve the structure, with a proper emphasis on employee engagement. I would love to see it – efficiency and letting staff use their own initiative”

“Yes, I think so. Certainly the Public Service has a feeling of disconnection at the moment and I think it's how we don't let that vacuum create a negative force within the Public Service.”

When asked, Question Twenty-Three, if the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey. All the Senior Managers thought the organisation would benefit from this. The Senior Managers recognised that the organisation might be surprised by the results of the levels of engagement. However, it is the opportune time to take action and rectify this issue.

“Yes, it might be the time. We might not like the answers but at least we know”

“I hope we would, I think we would be upset by the results but that might be no harm”

“Dublin City Council could be told there is no engagement. We should only do it if we are going to follow up and implement or act on the findings”

Question Twenty-Five asked the Senior Managers if there is an engagement plan in place in Dublin City Council. One Senior Manager responded:

“Probably not called that but I think the plan is there, in the existing policies as I’ve said to you. Everything we do is centred around how do we bring people forward, how do we get more out of people in that sense, how do we corroborate (in corporate) a lifelong learning culture in them, so I think it’s there but not articulated like that.”

The other Senior Managers were unsure if there is a formal plan in place, but they were aware that there are elements of engagement in the organisational structure and the manner in which we operate.

The final question the Senior Managers were asked, Question Twenty-Six, was if employee engagement should feature at the top table in the Corporate Strategy. All the Senior Managers interviewed agreed yes, employee engagements should definitely be at the top table, now more so than ever.

“Absolutely, it should be a key part of the strategy, I don’t think you could ever negate that.”

“Yes, more so now, it is more of a priority now than it ever was. Again in the current climate we need to keep people motivated, need to keep people on side.

It is better for employees. Employees despite the current climate still have a job, they can do it either in two ways, do it but be de-motivated or do it and be engaged.”

5.3.1 Senior Manager Interview Analysis Conclusion

The research collected from interviewing the Senior Managers was very positive.

While some of the Senior Managers in Dublin City Council had not been formally aware of the concept of employee engagement; they each recognised and acknowledged the importance of employee engagement to the organisation.

The Senior Managers could see the benefits of having an engaged workforce; namely an increase in performance levels and increased efficiency.

The Senior Managers recognised the key ingredients for employee engagement are communication and clarity of expectations. Poor management skills was highlighted as the key barrier to employee engagement.

A consensus on the importance of the Role of the Manager was evident. They recognised the important influence the manager has on the employment relationship. There is a general awareness among the Senior Managers of the important role the Manager plays in creating and supporting engagement. The Senior Managers believed that Line Managers are engaged with the organisation.

They acknowledged and appreciated the difficult time the organisation is going through and the stress and pressure the Line Managers are under to keep their employees engaged. The Senior Managers agreed that the top-down support to Line Managers could be improved and should ultimately be a cultural norm. The Senior Managers understood that the key quality needed to promote employee engagement is strong leadership and communication.

The Senior Managers agreed that the majority of Dublin City Council employees are engaged. They recognised that there may be pockets of employees who are not engaged but that this occurs, particularly in organisations of this size.

The Senior Managers confirmed that the two-way relationship between manager and employee is working in Dublin City Council. It was felt that in reality it is a multi-stakeholder relationship between all employees. They recognised that this communication process goes beyond the organisation and includes the external stakeholders as well.

The Senior Managers recognised the increased importance on intrinsic rewards, especially in the present economic climate. Some Senior Managers felt it was not the culture of the organisation to use intrinsic rewards, but they need to be considered further.

The Senior Managers agreed that Dublin City Council's existing culture supports a committed and engaged workforce. However, it recognised that some of the Senior Management team might not fully grasp the concept of employee engagement and as a result they are preventing it from being a norm.

The Senior Managers could see the performance benefit for the organisation having engaged employees and acknowledge now would be the ideal time to increase the focus on employee engagement. The Senior Manager answers pointed to the need for a formal employee engagement plan or strategy to be introduced. And that employee engagement should feature at the top table when it comes to Corporate Plans, now more so than ever.

5.4 Section Two - Line Manager Interview Results Analysis

The Line Manager interviews were divided into the same four sections as the Senior Managers interviews. However, the Line Managers were only asked 24 questions.

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

Question One asked the Line Managers what the concept of employee engagement meant to them. The majority of the Line Managers associated the concept of employee engagement to an employees sense of belonging to an organisation and working as a team to get work done and achieving the organisations goals.

“Engagement creates a sense of belonging, it creates a unified team helping Dublin City Council to achieve their goals within the organisation”

“Dublin City Council employees proud of their organisation and the quality of work they do.”

“To me it means the idea that an employee is proud of their work and or organisation. And loyal to the organisation and their colleagues”

Four of the Line Managers recognised the two way process of employee engagement.

“It is a two way thing. Employee engagement should be a two way between management to staff and staff to management. It does go beyond job satisfaction and it should be about going in and enjoying your job and doing it and working with your colleagues and your supervisors.”

However, one Line Managers solely felt the concept of employee engagement was:

“It just means a term in management”

Question Two asked the Line Managers if they saw the importance of promoting employee engagement, they all agreed yes they could.

“Yes, I agree it is important, no organisation would work without it.”

“Yes, it is very important. If there is no communication you are not going to get anywhere really. It is very important, you have to consult with staff and engage with them at every level.”

“Yes, employee engagement is very important and necessary in developing a successful organisation”

Question Three asked the Line Managers what they would see as the benefits of having an engaged workforce. The general responses were increased productivity, increased employee commitment, good communication, increased efficiency, good work environment, employees feeling valued and increased job satisfaction.

“An engaged workforce are more committed, more accountable, more efficient, more positive. They buy into the goals and strategies of the organisation. There is cost saving for the organisation with much better communication and positive work environment”

“Increased productivity, better communication, happier workforce. Employees feeling valued by management, knowing that what they say is being taken on board.”

“The old adage “A contented workforce is a productive workforce” and that is the way I see it.”

Question Four asked the Line Managers what they thought the key ingredients for employee engagement are. There was a general consensus among the responses that a good leader/manager was the key ingredient for employee engagement. The other key qualities identified were good communicator and listener, open and honest, the ability to give recognition and being able to create a positive work environment. The Line Managers recognised that communication is the heart of strong leadership skills.

“A good manager. A good manager is the key to any good group, good leadership.”

“Establish a good relationship with staff first of all, before you can engage them. I think you have to be approachable, and they should feel comfortable talking to you. They have to be

able to trust you and when you have established that, you will have a good chance of engaging them and getting the best and most out of everyone."

"Showing appreciation for what employees have done. Creating a relaxed working atmosphere."

"Open and honest communication, two way feedback, recognition"

Question Five asked the Line Managers what they thought the key barriers to an engaged workforce are. The Line Managers recognised that poor management skills are the primary contributing barrier to employee engagement.

"Poor leadership. A bad staff management relationship leads to a poor working environment"

"Untrained managers – people getting promoted and not trained in how to deal with people and how to get the best out of them. They are your colleague one day and your manager the next. This causes barriers to good relations."

"Poor management. Lack of communication, lack of people skills, lack of trust."

The other barriers to employee engagement identified were a lack of communication, lack of clear expectations about the job, and not feeling part of the team.

"Lack of communication, lack of clear expectations"

"No teamwork in place, lack of understanding to do the job. Lack of communication."

Section Two: Role of the Manager

This section contained six questions. These responses were very important for my research as they focussed on the Line Managers role.

All the Line Managers interviewed, when asked Question Six, recognised the critical influence they have as a manager on the employment relationship.

“Yes, I agree that good leadership is a very important factor in engagement and commitment from employees.”

“Yes. Good management leads to good practice in working relationship”

However, one Line Manager felt that Senior Management in the organisation might have influence on the employment relationship, as they do not know or understand what employees are doing.

“Yes, but its different at each level. I think the higher it goes up the less influence they have because they don’t know what ground staff are doing.”

Question Seven asked the Line Managers if they thought Dublin City Council managers are familiar with and value the concept of employee engagement. This question received mixed responses. Half of the Line Managers said no they didn’t think Dublin City Council Managers are familiar with or value the concept of employee engagement.

The other half of the Line Managers agreed that yes the managers are familiar with and value the concept of employee engagement. However, there are problems with the implementation of it.

“They are familiar with it because they have had several courses about it. They are well trained up on it but just don’t put it into practice.”

One Line Manager agreed that the managers were familiar with employee engagement and value the concept, but felt that Senior Management don’t see the importance of employee engagement.

“Hit and miss in some cases – Managers are aware of it but the practise is bad. It differs at different levels, I don’t think it is as important for senior management as they are more removed from it”

Question Eight asked the Line Mangers if they understood the important role they play in creating and supporting engagement. The Line Managers all responded yes to this question. Some of the Managers pointed out that it all depends on how they see their role as a Manager.

“Absolutely, it depends on how people approach it. The working relationship is very important – each member knowing their roles. It all depends on how they see their role as a manager at different levels.”

“You do understand the importance of it because it is something you would like to see yourself, and getting recognition for it.”

However, one Line Manager noted that it is not something you are told about when you become a manager in Dublin City Council.

*“Yes, but it is not highlighted and it is not something that when your appointed a management grade, that it is part of your role,
Or your not told about it or the importance of it. No training given.”*

Question Nine asked the Line Managers if they believed front line managers in Dublin City Council were engaged themselves. Seven of the Line Managers said they believed line managers are engaged.

“Yes, I believe frontline management are committed to achieving Dublin City Council’s goals”

Three of the Line Managers responded no to this question, referring to the difficult times the organisation w is going through as a root cause.

“No, it is a very difficult time to ask these questions. Don’t think anyone is particularly engaged in anything except coming in getting the job done and going home.”

Question Ten asked the Line Managers if they had the top-down support necessary to promote and maintain an engaged workforce. The majority of the Line Managers answered yes they do get the necessary support they need.

There were a few Line Managers who felt they didn’t get or have the top-down support at present because:

“No – lack of interest, seen as a lull period all round.”

“No, no forum to do it, no time set.”

Question Eleven asked the Line Managers to identify the key qualities they need when trying to promote engagement with their employees. The Line Manager consensus was being a good leader has to be the key quality needed. The other key qualities identified were, being a good communicator and listener, being open and approachable to employees and acknowledging and recognising jobs well done.

“Effective communication, open and honest environment, acknowledgement and recognition, confidence and respect”

“I need to be a good leader, communicator, a good listener and a good relationship builder. I must lead by example and the staff must have confidence in me.”

“Good leadership and good communication”

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

This section for the interview contained seven questions relating to employee engagement and the Role of the Employee.

All the Line Managers agreed, Question Twelve, that employee engagement can be a fundamental contributor to high levels of performance in the organisation.

Question Thirteen asked the Line Managers if they thought Dublin City Council employees were engaged. Over half the Line Managers interviewed felt Dublin City Council employee were not engaged, for the following reasons;

“No – people are not hugely engaging themselves because of lack of interest. Nothing but requests for targets to be met and employees get nothing back and feel management don’t understand the expectations already on them.”

“No I don’t think they are and I believe it is because senior managements disinterested in staff issues. They are not approachable, not accessible. Lack of information and communication.”

“No. Everyone is just doing their own thing. Employees are engaged in the sense that they have been told they have got a job for life and to be thankful for that.”

Question Fourteen related to employee engagement and the two-way relationship. When the Line Managers were asked if they believe it existed in Dublin City Council the majority of the responses were positive.

“It does exist, but it varies at different levels”

“Yes, its multi-stakeholder relationship because it happens at all different levels. Good communication supports it.”

However, some of the Line Managers recognised that this two-way relationship between employee and Manager can be difficult when employees don't want to participate.

“Yes, but it all relies on the managers skills and ability to communicate with staff. And some employees are difficult to engage no matter how much you try to engage them.”

Question Fifteen asked the Line Managers if they believed the organisation listened to employee opinions or suggestions. There were mixed responses to this question. Some of the Line Managers said no and felt it was because employees don't receive feedback on their suggestions;

“No, employees don't ever get feedback or communication back in relation to opinions or suggestions they put forward”

The Line Managers who answered yes to this question recognised that the organisation is going through some difficult changes and might not be in a position to implement the suggestions of the employees.

“Yes, but its hard at times because the structures and constraints that are in place now. Employees don't know how far up their suggestions are going but they know they can suggest things to their managers”

Question Sixteen and Seventeen focused on the increasing importance on intrinsic rewards.

The Line Managers all agreed that there is an increasing importance on intrinsic and non-financial rewards for employees today;

“Yes. There is nothing nicer than being told you have done a good job”

However, the majority of the Line Managers felt this only happens at local level, and is not seen across the organisation as a whole.

“Yes, it does happen. But only in some departments, at local level, it is not seen or understood across the organisation”

The key intrinsic rewards that were identified by the Line Managers are:

1. Praise, recognition and acknowledgement for work well done
2. Asking for employee input and opinions
3. Encouraging staff to get involved and making them feel included

“Responsibility, Praise, Ask them for their input and opinion, include them”

“Job satisfaction, acknowledgement, show appreciation”

“Encouraging staff to participate”

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

This final section contained six questions for the line managers, and focused on the Role of the Organisation in employee engagement.

Question Nineteen asked if the Line Managers thought the culture in Dublin City Council's currently supports a committed and engaged organisation, all the line managers responded no for the following reasons:

“No, but it is not an organisational fault, tried many different engagement programmes but just didn't work”

“No, an awful lot of people suffering with apathy. Not necessarily Dublin City Council’s fault, but they contribute to it there is a lot of negativity around”

“Probably no, it’s a difficult time all the things that have happened. Nothing done to take your mind off it, to engage you in something else.”

“No. there are a current number of issues that hinder an engaged workforce and an organisational engagement culture.”

Question Twenty asked the Line Managers if they believed there is an improved performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees. The Line Managers all agreed they could and would see an improved performance benefit.

“Yes, engaged employees help to increase efficiency and productivity”

“Yes, if people are motivated and engaged they are going to do a better job. You get more from motivated staff and it benefits the organisation if they are engaged.”

“Yes, employees are willing and able to go that extra mile and lower turnover of staff due to recruitment and development within the organisation”

Question Twenty-One asked the Line Managers if now is a good time to increase the organisational focus on employee engagement. The Line Managers responded yes to this question.

“Absolutely, yes. Employees are suffering with low esteem and morale at the moment, we should look at doing things differently, it’s the perfect time.”

“Yes, has to be yes. You can now start changing things, start changing the culture and embed more positive employee engagement.”

When asked, Question Twenty-Two, if the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey, the Line Managers gave mixed responses. The majority agreed the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey;

“Yes, it would give a better picture of the state of organisation, what staff are thinking and feeling about the organisation. It would provide us with the information and knowledge to make the necessary changes now”

“Yes we would benefit from doing one. Each department/section would be able to use information to implement an action plan to improve. Therefore the organisation would perform better, deliver higher standards and have financial gains.”

The line managers who felt the organisation would not benefit from an engagement survey gave the following reasons;

“No, constant surveys have been conducted but no feedback given. People won’t be honest unless it is completely untraceable and confidential”

“No I don’t think we would, employees will just see it as a chance to get back at management. People will see it as something top management just want to check off a list”

“There is no point in doing a survey unless they are going to do something with it. And from previous experience nothing will be done”

Question Twenty-Three asked the Line Managers if they are aware of the learning and development courses available to them in the organisation. The majority of the Line Managers were aware of the courses available but some do not feel a need or have an interest in them at present.

The final question asked to the Line Managers, Question Twenty-Four, was if they thought an employee engagement plan or strategy would be successful in Dublin City Council. The overall consensus was yes it would be successful.

However, this was qualified by a condition. Some of the Line Managers stated an engagement plan would only be successful if it was implemented across the board in organisation and that employees would see the benefits of the engagement plan.

“Yes, but have to bring it all the way down the line to each individual. Don’t do it unless you are willing to follow up on it or do something with the results. We need to see what engagement means to each employee and then find the middle ground”

“Yes if it is done properly, it has to mean something to the employees”

“Yes, it would give Dublin City Council improvement for communication, giving employees pride in the work place, monitor results against the plan, take action where necessary and overall give greater understanding of employees.”

“Yes. I believe it would generate more pride in our organisation. It would help to raise the standards of service and create a better and more positive work environment. It would provide support for the vast majority of engaged staff already in this organisation.”

5.4.1 Line Manager Interview Analysis Conclusion

From the research, it is obvious that the Line Managers in Dublin City Council’s Housing Maintenance Section understand their role and appreciate the important influence they have on employee engagement.

The Line Managers recognise the benefits of having an engaged workforce in the organisation. They also acknowledge the key quality needed to encourage employee engagement is good leadership skills.

The Line Managers identified the key barrier to employee engagement is poor management skills.

The Line Managers results show a general awareness in the organisation of engagement, however the implementation is poor.

The Line Managers felt they have the top-down support to promote employee engagement. They acknowledge the two-way relationship exists at local level, however the Line Managers do not think it exists consistently across the organisation.

As a whole, the Line Managers felt that Dublin City Council employees are not currently engaged with the organisation. This lack of interest and commitment was identified as a problem area for the organisation.

The Line Managers recognised the increased importance placed on intrinsic rewards. It was suggested that it is not the current culture of the organisation to promote these kinds of rewards, but that they need to be introduced.

None of the Line Managers interviewed believed the current culture in Dublin City Council supported a committed and engaged organisation. However, they qualified this response by saying that they did recognise this was not all the organisations fault, but this issue needs to be fixed quickly.

Overall the Line Managers recognised the benefit of an increased focus on employee engagement and now is the time to do it when employees morale and esteem maybe at a low.

However, some of the Line Managers had reservations about conducting an employee engagement survey. The Line Managers recommend the organisation only conducts the survey if they are going to follow up and implement it.

Finally, all the Line Managers think an employee engagement plan or strategy has the potential to be successful, but only if it is implemented consistently right across the organisation and all employees can see the benefit of participating in it. They highlighted that in order to get employee 'buy-in' Dublin City Council need to show how the outcomes and results of the surveys will be acted upon and implemented.

CHAPTER SIX – RESEARCH FINDINGS

“Before a dedicated engagement programme can flourish, it is necessary that there is a sound, engaging leadership. Leaders need to examine first themselves, and then their top team, before taking an engagement agenda to the workforce.” (Macleod 2008, p. 34)

This research was focused on investigating the Role of the Manager in employee engagement. As supported by the above statement, before an employee engagement plan can be introduced, Senior Management need to assess the level of commitment, understanding and support they have from their management team.

The research findings are divided into two sections:

1. Common Threads between Senior and Line Manager Results
2. Common Schools of thought between the Engagement Literature and the Research Findings

6.1 Section One: Common Threads between Senior and Line Manager Results

1. The Understanding the Concept of Employee Engagement

Both Senior and Line Managers used similar terms to describe their understanding of employee engagement; Commitment, employees working together, a unified team, proud of their organisation.

The words used to describe the concept were ‘soft’ and intangible. This demonstrates the common ground between Senior and Line Managers and how practical they both view employee engagement.

2. The Benefits of an Engaged Workforce

There is a consensus between Senior and Line Managers on the benefits to the organisation in having an engaged workforce. Both groups identified the primary benefits to employee engagement as increased productivity and efficiency.

These benefits would be recognised as key improvements at both an individual employee level and at organisational level.

3. Potential Influence of the Manager

Senior and Line Managers recognised the important role the Manager plays in employee engagement. They acknowledge the power the Manager has in creating, supporting and maintaining employee engagement.

A concern highlighted from the research was that a number of the Line Managers may not appreciate or understand the role they play. This concern was raised when the Line Managers were asked if they were familiar with or valued the concept of engagement. Some Line Managers said they respected the training they received but they were not guided in how to apply it effectively.

4. Increasing Importance in Intrinsic Rewards

Both Senior and Line Managers acknowledged the increasing importance on intrinsic rewards. They both identified praise and recognition as being the key intrinsic rewards they could offer employees.

Managers at both levels made specific reference to a need for these non-financial rewards in the current economic situation.

The Managers raised a concern that offering intrinsic rewards has not been the culture of the organisation in the past, but it needs to be a key consideration in the future.

5. The Economic Climate

At different stages in their interviews, both Senior and Line Managers acknowledged the difficult climate the organisation is now operating in. The both recognised that the current external financial pressures are not in the organisations control. However, this situation is having a significant effect on employee motivation and employee engagement levels.

While the recession is an emotive topic for all involved, Senior Managers perceived it to be an operational issue for the organisation. However, for the Line Manager the effects of the recessions are a daily challenge in the employment relationship.

There is a joint consensus between the groups that this is an opportune time to take action; when employee morale is at a low ebb. The organisation can take advantage of this environment and introduce the positive change of Employee Engagement.

6. The Two-Communication Process

Senior and Line Managers recognise that the two-way communication process exists within the organisation. The extent to how successful it is operates depends on the individual group. The Senior Managers believe this process is working very well throughout the organisation. The Senior Managers also recognise this communication process goes beyond the organisation and it includes the external stakeholders, the public.

The Line Managers opinion differed in this regard. A number of them were uncertain as to whether the two-way process existed in practice. The concern of the Line Managers is based upon the employees' hesitance to voice their opinions and suggestions due to the 'lack of feedback' they have received in the past. They felt this negative perception at employee level is becoming a norm with regard to frontline input.

7. Employee Discretionary Effort

As previously identified the increasing the importance of intrinsic rewards has been acknowledged. The introduction of these rewards was viewed as a positive development the organisation could make. They could be used to encourage and motivate employees to do more in their jobs - 'the extra mile'.

Providing employees with the right work environment, support and intrinsic rewards can be the way of releasing Employee Discretionary Effort.

Section Two: Common Schools of Thought between the Literature Review and the Research Findings

The research findings support the employee engagement elements highlighted in the literature review.

1. The Employee Engagement Concept

The literature review was supported by the findings in that a clear and consistent understanding of engagement plan is needed. For effectiveness a complete understanding of what employee engagement means to the organisation is critical.

The concept of employee engagement in the organisation must consider the role of the internal and external stakeholders. In order for a successful implementation of employee engagement, Dublin City Council must encourage and support participation from all stakeholders.

2. The Benefits of Employee Engagement

A successful implementation of an employee engagement plan will assist Dublin City Council in achieving their goals and objectives.

Research agreed that employee engagement would deliver improved productivity. This would result in a high quality service for the customer.

The benefits to the employee while intangible in their nature have been highlighted as being critically important to the process. These are as follows;

- Recognition
- Feeling involved
- Pride in their work
- Receiving Feedback

Intrinsic rewards were recognised as a key theme in the research considering the current financial restrictions.

A primary conclusion from this Case Study is the need for genuine feedback. This was perceived as pivotal to successful engagement.

3. The Role of the Manager

The research confirms the common school of thought that the manager is the linchpin to the employment relationship. His/Her role is critical to the successful implementation of employee engagement.

The research acknowledged the importance of the two-way relationship between Manager and Employee. Success of the two-way relationship is dependent on the quality and flow of information. The communication structures must ensure the information flows throughout the whole organisation. Research highlights top-down communication is also critical to this process.

In addition, research confirmed that the Manager has the ability to make or break employee engagement. The research identified that poor management skills result in poor levels of engagement.

“The way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on levels of engagement, and ultimately performance.” (CIPD 2006, p. 45)

The Line Manager is a primary driver in a successful employee engagement strategy. Unless the Line Manager takes account and buys into their role in the engagement, it cannot succeed.

4. The Role of Employee

The research findings acknowledged the importance of conducting an employee engagement survey. This was identified in the literature as an essential element that organisations must conduct if the present state is to be identified.

The survey must be organisational specific, taking into account the goals and objectives of all the stakeholders. The use of these surveys will help an organisation to measure and identify the levels of engagement.

Once the present state of the organisation is identified, the implementation of a successful engagement plan will depend on employee 'buy in'. Without this 'buy in' employees will not be encouraged to release discretionary effort.

"This is the idea that he or she is fully intellectually and emotionally committed to the job and wants to give discretionary effort" (Woodruff 2006)

In addition the research confirmed that in order for employees to participate in the process they must see the benefit, for them and the organisation. This can and should be demonstrated in the form of employee feedback.

5. The Role of the Organisation

The research findings reinforce what was identified in the literature; that a committed and supportive culture must exist within an organisation in order for the employee engagement plan to be successful.

Creating an environment where employees feel valued and involved is a critical responsibility of the organisation.

The research acknowledged the need for identifying the organisational barriers to employee engagement. Once identified, albeit poor management and/or poor communication, a plan must be implemented to overcome these barriers.

"Organisations are only as effective as the people in them" (Johnson 2004, p.104)

CHAPTER SEVEN - CONCLUSION

The research confirmed that Dublin City Council has a number of elements of employee engagement in place. They are demonstrating their genuine intention to engage employees in the objectives of the organisation. However, these elements have yet to be pulled together tightly.

In answer to the Research Question, the importance of clarity in the Role of the Manager in this process must not be undervalued. This must be a key consideration in Dublin City Council's employee engagement strategy.

The research data collected disclosed a willingness from Line Managers to embrace the concept of employee engagement.

To repeat the words of a Line Manager, they are excited by the prospect of a focused employee engagement plan. However, from previous experiences there is a real fear that their input and involvement will not be acted upon.

"Yes. I believe it would generate more pride in our organisation. It would help to raise the standards of service and create a better and more positive work environment. It would provide support for the vast majority of engaged staff already in this organisation."

This is the primary barrier I have identified from my research into employee engagement in Dublin City Council.

This Case Study identified a gap existing between the concept and reality of employee engagement in Dublin City Council.

The research has identified the need to undertake a present state survey and implement a cohesive employee engagement strategy to bridge this gap.

As highlighted to Dublin City Council by Professor David Ulrich in 2006, he advised the organisation that its focus should be “*about making the whole greater than the sum of its parts*” (First Post, Dublin City Council, 23rd February 2006, Vol.9)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Articles:

Allen, J. (2010) The Importance of Employee Engagement. *The Enterprise* March 2010 p. 11

Devi, V. R. (2009) Employee Engagement is a two-way street. *Human Resource Management International Digest*. Vol. 17, No. 2, pp.3-4.

Dublin City Council (2006) Seminar Imagines Our Common Future. *First Post*. Vol. 9, Iss. 4 23rd February 2006

Fleming, J.H. & Asplund, J. (2007) Where Employee Engagement Happens. *Gallup Press*. November 2007

Fox, A. (2010) Raising Engagement. *HRMagazine* Vol. 55, Iss. 5 pp.34-41

Heintzman, R. & Marson, B. (2006) People, service and trust: Links in a public sector service value chain. *Canadian Government Executive* June/July Editions

Pech, R. & Slade, B. (2006) Employee Disengagement: is there evidence of a growing problem? *Handbook of Business Strategy*. pp. 21-25.

Pritchard, K. (2008) Employee Engagement in the UK: Meeting the challenge in the public sector. *Development and Learning In Organisations*. Vol. 22, No. 6, pp.15-17.

Smythe, J. (2007) Employee Engagement – Its real essence. *Human Resource Management International Digest*. Vol. 15, No. 7, pp.11-13.

Thackray, J. (2010) Feedback for Real. *Gallup Management Journal*

Townsend, O. & Gebherdt, J. (2008) Employee Engagement – Completely. *Human Resource Management International Digest*. Vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 22-24.

Wildermuth, C. & Pauken, P.D. (2008) A Perfect Match: Decoding Employee Engagement – Part I: Engaging cultures and leaders. *Industrial and Commercial Training*. Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 122-128.

Wildermuth, C. & Pauken, P.D. (2008) A Perfect Match: Decoding Employee Engagement – Part II: Engaging jobs and individuals. *Industrial and Commercial Training*. Vol. 40, No. 4, pp. 206-210.

Woodruffe, C. (2006) The crucial importance of employee engagement. *Human Resource Management International Digest*. Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 3-5.

Books:

Anderson, V. (2004) *Research Methods in Human Resource Management*. Great Britain, C.I.P.D.

Bowditch, J.L. & Buono, A.F. (2005) *A Primer on Organisational Behaviour*. 6th ed., USA, John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2007) *Business Research Methods*. 2nd ed., England, Oxford University Press

Collis, J. & Hussey, R. (2009) *Business Research: A Practical Guide for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Students*. 3rd ed., United Kingdom, Palgrave MacMillan

Cook, S. (2008) *The Essential Guide to Employee Engagement: Better Business Performance Through Staff Satisfaction*, Great Britain, Kogan Page Limited

Dreher, G. F. & Dougherty, T. W. (2001) A Behavioural Perspective for the General Manager. United States, McGraw-Hill Higher Education

Fisher, C. (2007) Researching and Writing a Dissertation: A Guidebook for Business Students, 2nd ed. England, Pearson Education Limited

Gunnigle, P., Heraty, N. & Morely, M.J. (2006) Human Resource Management in Ireland, 3rd ed. Ireland, Gill & Macmillan

Horn, R. (2009) Research & Writing Dissertations: A Complete Guide for Business and Management Students, Great Britain, C.I.P.D.

Johnson, M. (2004) The New Rules of Engagement: Life-Work Balance and Employee Commitment. Great Britain, C.I.P.D

Macey, W.H., Schneider, B., Barbera, K.M. & Young, S.A. (2009) Employee Engagement: Tools for Analysis, Practise, and Competitive Advantage, United Kingdom, Wiley-Blackwell

MacLeod, D. & Brady, C. (2008) The Extra Mile: How to Engage Your People to Win, Great Britain, Prentice Hall

Schein, E.H. (1965) Organizational Psychology, Prentice- Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ

Ulrich, D. & Brockbank, W. (2005) The HR Value Proposition, United States of America, Harvard Business School Publishing

Internet Reference:

CIPD (2009) Employee Engagement

CIPD (2008) Employee Engagement In Context

Dublin City Council (2010) Partnership

Dublin City Council (2010) Your Council

Dublin City Council (2010) Dubnet Staff Information

The Gallup Organisation (2009) Employee Engagement

Journals:

Kahn, W. A. (1990) Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work. *Academy of Management Journal*. Vol. 33, No. 4, pp.692-724.

Luthans, F. & Peterson, S. J. (2002) Employee Engagement and Manager Self-Efficacy. *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 21, No. 5, pp.376-387.

Macey, W.H. & Schneider, B. (2008) The Meaning of Employee Engagement. *Industrial & Organisational Psychology*. No. 1, pp. 3-30.

Maslach, C., Schaufeli, W. B. & Leiter, M.P. (2001) Job Burnout. *Annual Reviews Psychology*. 52, pp. 397-422.

Medlin, B. & Green, K.W. (2009) Enhancing performance through goal setting, engagement, and optimism. *Industrial Management and Data Systems*. Vol. 109, No. 7, pp. 943-956.

Saks, A.M. (2006) Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 7, pp. 600-619.

Research Reports:

Dublin City Council & Polaris (2004) Dublin City Council Report on Work-Place Review, Dublin, Ireland.

MacLeod, D. & Clarke, N. (2009) Engaging for Success: Enhancing Performance Through Employee Engagement – A Report to Government. United Kingdom, Office of Public Sector Information

Robinson, D., Perryman, S., & Hayday, S. (2004) The Drivers of Employee Engagement. Report 408, United Kingdom, Institute for Employment Studies

Scottish Government Social Research (2010) Scottish Government Employee Survey 2009, Scotland

Towers Perrin (2008) Closing the Engagement Gap: A Road Map for Driving Superior Business Performance. Global Workforce Study 2007- 2008

Truss, C., Soane, E., Edwards, C., Wisdom, K., Croll, A., & Burnett, J. (2006) Worklife: Employee Attitudes & Engagement, Great Britain, C.I.P.D.

APPENDIX CONTENT

- Appendix 1: Dublin City Council First Post (Internal Communication) 23rd February 2006 – Seminar Imagines Our Common Future & Professor David Ulrich
- Appendix 2: Pilot Employee Engagement Interview
- Appendix 3: Senior Managers Employee Engagement Interview Questions
- Appendix 4: Sample Transcription of Senior Manager Interview
- Appendix 5: Line Manager Employee Engagement Interview Questions
- Appendix 6A: First Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview
- Appendix 6B: Second Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview
- Appendix 6C: Third Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview



SEMINAR IMAGINES OUR COMMON FUTURE

Dublin City Council in association with the Irish Management Institute hosted a fascinating and well-received seminar with world-renowned University of Michigan Professor David Ulrich on 10th February 2006. The seminar was attended by senior management from Dublin City Council, the other Dublin local authorities and other leading public sector managers. Professor Ulrich's talk focused on how organisations can succeed in today's complex environment.

The theme of the seminar was 'New Competitive Realities' and Professor Ulrich outlined the 7 key Challenges facing organisations today and the 7 Leadership Responses to these.



Professor David Ulrich with City Manager, John Fitzgerald

CLEAR STRATEGY

Professor Ulrich maintains that successful organisations never try to be 'all things to all people... managers make difficult choices and decisions about what the organisation wants to achieve and become known for excellence in these areas.' This means having a clearly defined strategy that is easily intelligible and can be communicated successfully to employees and customers.

The problem for many, Professor Ulrich argues, is that they engage in 'bookshelf funerals' – his colourful term for the often complex strategies, plans, documentation and objectives many companies love to devise but find difficult to communicate and put in place. Instead, organisations need to 'satisfice' – you can't do everything perfectly so prioritise what's really important. Initially you may make mistakes

and encounter setbacks but you can learn from these and improve. If you've prioritised correctly you'll be focusing on the right areas and this is more important than doing everything perfectly from day one.

TEAMWORK

Professor Ulrich's talk looked at many of the terms we often encounter but he asked if people knew what they really meant. He looked at teamwork and collaboration, and argued that it's really 'about making the whole greater than the sum of its parts.' His ideas on how to do this, though, were novel and stimulating. He argues that it's crucial that everybody knows what an organisation is trying to achieve and they are committed to their role in it. However, the organisation also has to value diversity and difference. This allows people to offer different perspectives and Professor Ulrich argued that many of the world's most successful organisations were made up of 'teams of rivals, but because they had a common purpose and were managed properly they succeeded'. He looked at the Partnership process in Ireland as an example of this.

“ He argues that it's crucial that everybody knows what an organisation is trying to achieve and they are committed to their role in it ”

These were just two of the areas Professor Ulrich focused on during a thought-provoking discussion. He devoted considerable time to engaging the audience on the challenges they felt the City Council was facing and developed some possible solutions with them. Some of the challenges discussed included how to put our strategy – our Corporate Plan – into reality, how do we ensure our staff have the competencies they need, how we can be creative and innovative while working in a regulated environment. City Manager John Fitzgerald highlighted that our organisation is full of people who can do their job expertly and a key role of management is to let them do it.

Professor Ulrich finished by quoting a French saying 'Plus que hier, moins que demain' which means 'Greater than yesterday, less than tomorrow.'

PROFESSOR DAVID ULRICH: GLOBAL LEADER IN HR & MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

'Business Week' magazine has listed Professor David Ulrich as one of the world's leading 10 educators in management and human resources. He has conducted research for many of the top 'Fortune 200' companies and is an accomplished author. His recent book, 'The HR Value Proposition', co-authored with Wayne Brockbank, will soon be available from the Staff Library T. 222 3019.

Professor Ulrich has received numerous rewards for his work from prestigious organisations such as the Society for Human Resource Management. It was a huge achievement for Dublin City Council to host a seminar with Professor Ulrich.



Professor David Ulrich (Centre) with (L-R) Finbarr McGuire, Joint Chairperson of the Corporate Partnership Forum, Frank Kelly, Personnel Officer, City Manager, John Fitzgerald, and Vincent Norton, Executive Manager.

Pilot Employee Engagement Interview

Employee Engagement Basics

1. There are many different definitions for employee engagement. What does the concept of employee engagement mean to you?
2. Do you recognise the importance of employee engagement?
3. What do you think the key elements for an engaged workforce are?

Role of Management

4. A recent CIPD survey has shown that the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on the level of engagement and the ultimate performance of the organisation.
5. Do you think the managers, both senior and line managers, recognise the importance of employee engagement?
6. Direct supervisors and senior line managers have the power to make or break levels of employee engagement. Do you think management within DCC recognise the important role they play in keeping employees engaged?
7. Do you think the managers have the qualities to keep employees engaged and increase performance?

Employees

8. Employees who are engaged are said to be passionate about their job and that they 'go the extra mile' for the organisation. Do you think your employees are engaged?
9. Engagement is seen as a two-way relationship between the employee and employer. Allowing staff to feed their views and opinions upwards has been identified as an important driver of engagement. Do you think DCC employees use their voice?
10. Recent employee engagement surveys conducted by the UK & Scottish governments on their Public Sector employees have identified intrinsic rewards as now being more important to employees, for example:
 - Employees feeling valued and involved
 - Employees receiving recognition for jobs well done
 - Employee feedback (positive/negative)
11. Do you think this is the case for DCC employees?

The Organisation

12. DCC has an extensive learning and development programme that covers all employee grades and management development. Is this how DCC keeps its employees engaged?
13. Do you think DCC employees/managers are putting these new competencies/qualities into use?
14. Have DCC ever done an employee engagement survey, such as the Gallup Q12, to measure if DCC employees are engaged, not engaged or actively disengaged?
15. Do you think the organisation would benefit from conducting this survey?
16. Recessionary times are seen to be the perfect time to change scope and focus on employee engagement. The UK and Scottish Government have done this, do you think the Irish Government would benefit from this?
17. Would you say DCC has an engagement culture?
18. Do you think DCC should focus more on implementing an Engagement Strategy?

Senior Manager Employee Engagement Interview Questions

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

"Employee engagement can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues. Employee engagement goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation."

1. What does the concept of employee engagement mean to you?
2. Would you see the importance of promoting employee engagement?
3. What would you see as the benefits of having an engaged workforce?
4. What do you think are the key ingredients for employee engagement?
5. What would you think are the key barriers to an engaged workforce?

Section Two: Role of the Manager

A recent CIPD survey has shown that the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on the level of engagement and ultimately performance of the organisation.

6. Do you agree with this statement, that the manager is the main influence in the employment relationship?
7. In general, do you think Dublin City Council managers are familiar with or value the concept of employee engagement?
8. Do you think managers, in practice, appreciate the important role they play in creating/supporting engagement?
9. Would you believe the front line management are engaged themselves in Dublin City Council?
10. Do you think these managers have the top-down support to promote and maintain an engaged workforce?
11. What do you think the key qualities for a manager trying to promote engagement are?

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

"Employee engagement or 'a passion for work' has been described as a fundamental contributor to high levels of performance in an organisation."

12. Do you agree with this statement?
13. By in large, do you think Dublin City Council employees are engaged?

14. Engagement is described as a two-way relationship between the employee and employer. In practice, do you believe a two-way relationship between employees and employer exists in Dublin City Council?
15. Does the organisation listen to the 'voice' (opinions/suggestions) of Dublin City Council employees?
16. A recent employee engagement survey conducted by the UK and Scottish Government have identified an increased importance in intrinsic or non-financial rewards.
 - a. Would you agree with this statement?
 - b. Is this the case in Dublin City Council?
17. What do you think are key intrinsic/non-financial rewards?
18. In the current business environment, what kind of non-financial rewards or incentives are Dublin City Council promoting to keep employees motivated and engaged?

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

19. Do you think the culture in Dublin City Council currently supports a committed and engaged organisation?
20. Do you believe there is an improved financial/performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees?
21. Recessionary times are seen to be the perfect time to change scope and focus on employee engagement. Do you think Dublin City Council/ the Public Sector would benefit from the heightened focus on employee engagement?
22. The Gallup Q12, is an infamous survey used to gauge engagement levels. Have you ever done an engagement or employee attitude survey on the organisation or individual department?
23. Do you think the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey?
24. On Dubnet, there is more information on Learning and Development available. Is this an element of Dublin City Council's engagement plan?
25. Is there an engagement plan in place or a plan to increase employee commitment?

Finally

26. Do you think employee engagement should feature at the top table in the Corporate Strategy for the future?

Sample Transcription of a Senior Manager Interview

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

"Employee engagement can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues. Employee engagement goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation."

1. What does the concept of employee engagement mean to you?

The word engagement is the key word there. When you are engaged with something or in something, it's actually your full and total commitment to that task, it's almost as if there is nothing else in the world.

You don't think about what you are doing, it is almost a free flow.

When you are at your best performance, you're not thinking about performance, it just goes with the flow, its fluid, it's rolling. It's just there.

An engagement with the job, I'm not saying everyone could have it at that level of 100% of the time but it's that general feeling that I'm happy, this is real, this fulfils me. This is what I am meant to do, this is my thing, this is it.

2. Would you see the importance of promoting employee engagement?

Well promoting it, I'm not sure you can promote it like advertise it. There are a few collaborators that go with it, obviously clear direction, good management, feedback for good job, celebrate good job done, if there are any short comings they are pointed out but not in the spirit of animosity but say look maybe we could have done it differently. It really, I think it's good management and all that goes with good management, is how you promote it and clear objectives and an organisation that you would be proud to work in, you value the role the organisation plays and it's place in society.

3. What would you see as the benefits of having an engaged workforce?

An engaged workforce is a bottom line issue. Lucky enough to meet with David Ulrich. Top 60 people met with him. National Bank of Australia!!!

It's bottom line, if you're employees are not engaged that message will be transmitted itself to customers, stakeholders, citizens, whatever medium you operate in and it will show.

4. What do you think are the key ingredients for employee engagement?

I think clear outputs, well marked down, clarity, not saying you can always have clarity, sometimes the political role we play there is ambiguity but if you can give people as much clarity as possible, outline your expectations, give credit for jobs well done, good feedback, positive reinforcement and valued member and all the good things that go with management, is how you do it.

5. What would you think are the key barriers to an engaged workforce?

Well it's the reverse of the above. Poor management skills, people not feeling valued, people not being clear about their role, people not seeing what the value of the job is.

Section Two: Role of the Manager

A recent CIPD survey has shown that the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on the level of engagement and ultimately performance of the organisation.

6. Do you agree with this statement, that the manager is the main influence in the employment relationship?

I agree with that statement. The manager may not be the main influence the manager is very important, significantly important. I think there are other factors like, in our case, positive regard for the organisation, clear view of the value and good that it does, and it's place in society.

Employees should be advocates for the organisation when they are out an about. I work for a good organisation Dublin City Council, this is what we do, and it is vital to the city.

7. In general, do you think Dublin City Council managers are familiar with or value the concept of employee engagement?

I think in the main yes. I's have to say but like everything in terms of management development we can do better and I think that must be the bar w have to set that we can always do more.

I think the view has to be that we are always learning, like if you're not in that space I think it's about self fulfilment, constant learning, it is about those things as well.

8. Do you think managers, in practice, appreciate the important role they play in creating/supporting engagement?

Sometimes they do, sometimes I suppose if you're very hassled and very busy you know it may not be to the fore front of your mind but I think if you sit back and can say take it steady, it would be, but sometimes deadlines, priorities, and stresses, they can all be inhibitors to it.

9. Would you believe the front line management are engaged themselves in Dublin City Council?

I think they are, but I think it's more difficult now, I think we've probably come through a fraught time and there is a lot of strain and pressure, but it's probably more important now that ever in these times that managers do engage and are seen to be engaged themselves in it.

It's very easy to get derailed but you have to have positive regard all the time for yourself as a manager and for what you do and believe in it.

If you have a strong belief in it you will be able to sustain the pressures, but I do agree it's very difficult time for managers given that we have come out of industrial action and have to deal with staff who have taken pay cuts.

And sometimes it's not something we do as an organisation, it's the political environment we operate in. Just have to believe and keep on believing.

10. Do you think these managers have the top-down support to promote and maintain an engaged workforce?

I think so, I think that is the culture of the organisation and clearly in any policies we have, partnership with management with unions, it's a cultural norm. If you read any of our policies, read how we deal not only with staff and the wider community, with the stakeholders. It's all about stakeholder collaboration and engagement. We couldn't mistake that.

11. What do you think the key qualities for a manager trying to promote engagement are?

To listen, to be able to take on board what people are saying, to give space to people have their say or feel about the job, or if they have difficulties and problems you're open to deal with them and try and deal with them then and not let them lie and deal with them immediately.

It's all good in theory.

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

"Employee engagement or 'a passion for work' has been described as a fundamental contributor to high levels of performance in an organisation."

12. Do you agree with this statement?

Yes, I agree – back to Ulrich's input.

13. By in large, do you think Dublin City Council employees are engaged?

I think so, you always get some exceptions with staff of 6500. There are always pockets. We are and do have the bell curve, 7.5% are great and 7.5% are the other extreme in any random group of people. In 6500 people, it's a big group.

14. Engagement is described as a two-way relationship between the employee and employer. In practice, do you believe a two-way relationship between employees and employer exists in Dublin City Council?

It's probably a bit more than a two way relationship, it is a two way, your right, but there are other relationships, like colleagues, unions, external influences, so it is more complex, I think there are multi-stake relationships.

15. Does the organisation listen to the 'voice' (opinions/suggestions) of Dublin City Council employees?

I think so, on partnership side we have done a number of surveys, maybe we could do more, we always take the feedback seriously and try and remediate concerns where

ever we see them emerging, yes. It is part of managing development programmes for managers, that they would be encouraged to listen to what their staff have to say.

16. A recent employee engagement survey conducted by the UK and Scottish Government have identified an increased importance in intrinsic or non-financial rewards.

a. Would you agree with this statement?

Yes, absolutely.

b. Is this the case in Dublin City Council?

It is the case in Dublin City Council, people are people. Ok you work in the Public Sector, you don't work in the Public Service for the financial rewards, but the financial rewards are always going to be somewhat constraint. They are determined by reference to certain parameters that are not going to get the top rates.

Therefore, you work in the public service by reference to some sort of public reference to some sort of public value and creating what public value you create and i think that is your reward in the sense that I am doing something positive, and I am being rewarded for doing something positive and it is being recognised and it leads to better self esteem for me, so I think intrinsic rewards are far more important.

17. What do you think are key intrinsic/non-financial rewards?

Public value, in other words, you're doing a job of merit, a job that is important and a job that contributes. On the personal domain then you are recognised for doing that job and if you're successful it's recognised by your boss and your peers and you celebrate that. It makes you feel good about your job.

18. In the current business environment, what kind of non-financial rewards or incentives are Dublin City Council promoting to keep employees motivated and engaged?

Communication is the key one here. The manager has tried to keep staff notified of what the situation is, there have been a number of letter in terms of what the financial situation is, he has gone around to each section and depots to say look we are here and we are fighting this recession, we are but we're going to have to pull back on things, but our position is we are trying to keep jobs and not talking about compulsory redundancy, giving reassurances.

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

19. Do you think the culture in Dublin City Council currently supports a committed and engaged organisation?

Yes, I think it does, certainly the cultural value and cultural norms are about that. It is inherent in every policy we have. It is inherent in the way we do business, the whole partnership structure, the whole relationship with communities and stakeholders, it is there.

We may fall down in certain aspects or places, that is not due to the fact it is not a cultural value, it is, but as I've said for individual managers we can always do better, we can always be thinking more about how we do it, it's lifelong learning for everyone.

20. Do you believe there is an improved financial/performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees?

Yes, absolutely.

Because engaged employees contribute to better performance, we are not bottom line in the sense that we are not profit driven. But sometimes in a Public Service organisation you get the benefit from being regarded as a well run organisation. By virtue of the fact the government will say look the city council are good, we'll give them the money to do this particular job, the money could have gone to a different organisation, different agency at some other stage, but no they are happy for city council to run this. Ok it might pile on more and more work and responsibility but at least it's recognition that we are doing good, so that is always good.

21. Recessionary times are seen to be the perfect time to change scope and focus on employee engagement. Do you think Dublin City Council/ the Public Sector would benefit from the heightened focus on employee engagement?

Yes, I think so. Certainly the Public Service has a feeling of disconnection at the moment and I think it's how we don't let that vacuum create a negative force within the Public Service.

22. The Gallup Q12, is an infamous survey used to gauge engagement levels. Have you ever done an engagement or employee attitude survey on the organisation or individual department?

Yes we have, not used the Q12 but we have used questionnaires that have been framed specifically for the local authority, done a few in partnership.

23. Do you think the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey?

Yes, it might be the time. We might not like the answers but at least we know – might be very useful – think about conducting one.

24. On Dubnet, there is more information on Learning and Development available. Is this an element of Dublin City Council's engagement plan?

Yes, I think it is, it's part of it certainly, maybe it is not the full part of it but it is part of it.

Yes, there is more interest and uptake in them.

25. Is there an engagement plan in place or a plan to increase employee commitment?

Probably not called that but I think the plan is there, in the existing policies as I've said to you. Everything we do is centred around how do we bring people forward, how

do we get more out of people in that sense, how do we corroborate (in corporate) a lifelong learning culture in them, so I think it's there but not articulated like that.

Finally

26. Do you think employee engagement should feature at the top table in the Corporate Strategy for the future?

Absolutely, it should be a key part.

Key part of the strategy don't think you could ever negate that. Whatever you call it again, either training, learning and development, challenges and strategy.

Policy on mobility, move people around give them new jobs and challenges – shake things up.

It's a whole conglomeration of those different variables – don't want to single any one out. All very important.

Line Manager Employee Engagement Interview Questions

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

"Employee engagement can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues. Employee engagement goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation."

1. What does the concept of employee engagement mean to you?
2. Would you see the importance of promoting employee engagement?
3. What would you see as the benefits of having an engaged workforce?
4. What do you think are the key ingredients for employee engagement?
5. What would you think are the key barriers to an engaged workforce?

Section Two: Role of the Manager

A recent CIPD survey has shown that the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on the level of engagement and ultimately performance of the organisation.

6. Would you agree with this statement, that the manager is the main influence in the employment relationship?
7. In general, do you think Dublin City Council managers are familiar with and/or value the concept of employee engagement?
8. As a manager, do you understand the important role you play in creating and supporting engagement?
9. Would you believe the front line management are engaged themselves in Dublin City Council?
10. Do you think, as a manager, you have the top-down support to promote and maintain an engaged workforce?
11. What do you think the key qualities you need when trying to promote engagement with your staff/team?

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

"Employee engagement or 'a passion for work' has been described as a fundamental contributor to high levels of performance in an organisation."

12. Do you agree with this statement?

13. By in large, do you think Dublin City Council employees are engaged?
14. Engagement is described as a two-way relationship between the employee and manager/employer. In practice, do you believe a two-way relationship between employees and managers/employer exists in Dublin City Council?
15. In your opinion, do you believe the organisation listens to the 'voice' (opinions/suggestions) of its employees?
16. A recent employee engagement survey conducted by the UK and Scottish Government have identified an increased importance in intrinsic or non-financial rewards.
 - a. Would you agree with this statement?
 - b. Is this the case in Dublin City Council?
17. What do you think are the key intrinsic/non-financial rewards for your staff/team?
18. In the current business environment, what kind of non-financial rewards or incentives are Dublin City Council promoting to keep yourself and your team motivated and engaged?

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

19. In your opinion, do you think the culture in Dublin City Council currently supports a committed and engaged organisation?
20. As a manager, do you believe there is an improved financial or performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees?
21. Recessionary times are seen to be the perfect time to change scope and focus on employee engagement. Do you think Dublin City Council/ the Public Sector would benefit from the heightened focus on employee engagement?
22. In your opinion, do you think the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey?
23. On Dubnet, there is more information on Learning and Development available, especially for line manager development. Are you aware of these courses for yourself?

Finally

24. In your opinion, do you think an employee engagement plan/strategy would be successful in Dublin City Council?

Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

"Employee engagement can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues. Employee engagement goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation."

1. What does the concept of employee engagement mean to you?

It is a two way thing. Employee engagement should be a two way between management to staff and staff to management. It does go beyond job satisfaction and it should be about going in and enjoying your job and doing it and working with your colleagues and your supervisors.

2. Would you see the importance of promoting employee engagement?

Yes, I agree it is important, no organisation would work without it.

3. What would you see as the benefits of having an engaged workforce?

Productivity, better communication, happier workforce. Employees feeling valued by management, knowing that what they say is being taken on board.

4. What do you think are the key ingredients for employee engagement?

Responsibility, giving it to them, I would think. Showing appreciation for what they have done. Creating a relaxed working atmosphere.

5. What would you think are the key barriers to an engaged workforce?

Apathy. Not getting along with people. Poor management. Lack of communication, lack of people skills, lack of trust.

Section Two: Role of the Manager

A recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey has shown that the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on the level of engagement and ultimately performance of the organisation.

6. Would you agree with this statement, that the manager is the main influence in the employment relationship?

Yes, I completely agree

7. In general, do you think Dublin City Council managers are familiar with and/or value the concept of employee engagement?

Hit and miss in some cases – they are aware of it but the practise is bad.

It differs at different levels, don't think it is as important for senior management as they are more removed from it

- 8. As a manager, do you understand the important role you play in creating and supporting engagement?**

Absolutely, it depends on how people approach it. The working relationship is very important – each member knowing their roles. It all depends on how they see their role as a manager at different levels.

- 9. Would you believe the front line management are engaged themselves in Dublin City Council?**

I think there is a bit of disinterest. No promotions, so people are not stretching themselves any more. Less going on because of lack of money, less stress and pressures. People are going around with chips on their shoulders. Its probably more important now than it ever was.

- 10. Do you think, as a manager, you have the top-down support to promote and maintain an engaged workforce?**

No – lack of interest, seen as a lull period all round.

- 11. What do you think the key qualities you need when trying to promote engagement with your staff/team?**

Reasonable, approachable, communication, flexibility to an extent.

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

"Employee engagement or 'a passion for work' has been described as a fundamental contributor to high levels of performance in an organisation."

- 12. Do you agree with this statement?**

Yes, I do – it depend on the job you are doing.

- 13. By in large, do you think Dublin City Council employees are engaged?**

No – people are not hugely engaging themselves because of lack of interest. Nothing but requests for targets to be met and employees get nothing back and fell management don't understand the expectations already on them.

- 14. Engagement is described as a two-way relationship between the employee and manager/employer. In practice, do you believe a two-way relationship between employees and managers/employer exists in Dublin City Council?**

It does exist, but it varies at different levels

- 15. In your opinion, do you believe the organisation listens to the 'voice' (opinions/suggestions) of its employees?**

No

- 16. A recent employee engagement survey conducted by the UK and Scottish Government have identified an increased importance in intrinsic or non-financial rewards.**

- a. Would you agree with this statement?**

Yes, in relation to motivation and engagement. "Do you lead or are you drive"
You should do both by leading by example.

- b. Is this the case in Dublin City Council?**

Yes, it does happen – but not across the organisation

- 17. What do you think are the key intrinsic/non-financial rewards for your staff/team?**

Responsibility, Praise, Ask them for their input and opinion, include them

- 18. In the current business environment, what kind of non-financial rewards or incentives are Dublin City Council promoting to keep yourself and your team motivated and engaged?**

Learning and training, but other than that very little. Personal development of staff

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

- 19. In your opinion, do you think the culture in Dublin City Council currently supports a committed and engaged organisation?**

No, but it is not an organisational fault, tried many different engagement programmes but just didn't work

- 20. As a manager, do you believe there is an improved financial or performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees?**

Yes, Increase in efficiency and productivity

- 21. Recessionary times are seen to be the perfect time to change scope and focus on employee engagement. Do you think Dublin City Council/ the Public Sector would benefit from the heightened focus on employee engagement?**

Absolutely, yes. Low esteem and morale at the moment should look at doing things differently

22. In your opinion, do you think the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey?

No, constant surveys but no feedback. People won't be honest unless its completely untraceable and confidential

23. On Dubnet, there is more information on Learning and Development available, especially for line manager development. Are you aware of these courses for yourself?

No, cos of lack of interest. People are just switched off

Finally

24. In you opinion, do you think an employee engagement plan/strategy would be successful in Dublin City Council?

Yes, but have to bring it all the way down the line to each individual

Don't do it unless your willing to follow up on it or do something with the results. We need to see what engagement means to each employee and then find the middle ground

Second Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

"Employee engagement can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues. Employee engagement goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation."

1. What does the concept of employee engagement mean to you?

Engagement creates a sense of belonging, it creates a unified team helping Dublin City Council to achieve their goals within the organisation

2. Would you see the importance of promoting employee engagement?

Yes, it is very important.

3. What would you see as the benefits of having an engaged workforce?

An engaged workforce is pro-active in overcoming obstacles and is committed to exceeding standards for Dublin City Council. Lowering employee turnover, instilling pride in the workplace, Job satisfaction and recommending Dublin City Council as an employer.

4. What do you think are the key ingredients for employee engagement?

Open and honest communication, 2 way feedback, recognition, coaching and development.

5. What would you think are the key barriers to an engaged workforce?

Financial and time constraints, lack of communication, training and development opportunities. Work load due to early retirement and lack of recruiting

Section Two: Role of the Manager

A recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey has shown that the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on the level of engagement and ultimately performance of the organisation.

6. Would you agree with this statement, that the manager is the main influence in the employment relationship?

Yes, management leadership style is a key factor however Dublin City Council, as an organisation, has the overall responsibility along with each employer.

- 7. In general, do you think Dublin City Council managers are familiar with and/or value the concept of employee engagement?**

Yes, communication can be considered as good, higher management provide a good support network and information resources.

- 8. As a manager, do you understand the important role you play in creating and supporting engagement?**

Yes, as stated before in number 3

- 9. Would you believe the front line management are engaged themselves in Dublin City Council?**

Yes, I believe frontline management are committed to achieving Dublin City Council's goals

- 10. Do you think, as a manager, you have the top-down support to promote and maintain an engaged workforce?**

Yes, based on current resources, however, there is still room for improvement

- 11. What do you think the key qualities you need when trying to promote engagement with your staff/team?**

Effective communication, open and honest environment, acknowledgement and recognition, confidence and respect.

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

"Employee engagement or 'a passion for work' has been described as a fundamental contributor to high levels of performance in an organisation."

- 12. Do you agree with this statement?**

Yes, see answer 3

- 13. By in large, do you think Dublin City Council employees are engaged?**

Yes, however due to the economic downturn, employees may feel that their recent pay cuts are unfair

- 14. Engagement is described as a two-way relationship between the employee and manager/employer. In practice, do you believe a two-way relationship between employees and managers/employer exists in Dublin City Council?**

To a certain extent

- 15. In your opinion, do you believe the organisation listens to the 'voice' (opinions/suggestions) of its employees?**

Probably not, an employees opinion survey giving employees opportunity to have a voice.

- 16. A recent employee engagement survey conducted by the UK and Scottish Government have identified an increased importance in intrinsic or non-financial rewards.**

a. Would you agree with this statement?

Yes

b. Is this the case in Dublin City Council?

Maybe, motivation and recognition could be further improved

- 17. What do you think are the key intrinsic/non-financial rewards for your staff/team?**

Promotion and acknowledgement, recognition and involvement in decision making

- 18. In the current business environment, what kind of non-financial rewards or incentives are Dublin City Council promoting to keep yourself and your team motivated and engaged?**

Job security, further training and development and higher education

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

- 19. In your opinion, do you think the culture in Dublin City Council currently supports a committed and engaged organisation?**

No. there are a current number of issues that hinders an engaged workforce/organisation

- 20. As a manager, do you believe there is an improved financial or performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees?**

Yes, employees are willing and able to go that extra mile and lower turnover of staff due to recruitment and development within the organisation

- 21. Recessionary times are seen to be the perfect time to change scope and focus on employee engagement. Do you think Dublin City Council/ the Public Sector would benefit from the heightened focus on employee engagement?**

Absolutely, for all the reasons of the above

22. In your opinion, do you think the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey?

Yes, each department/section would be able to use information to implement an action plan to improve, therefore the organisation would perform better, deliver higher standards and have financial gains.

23. On Dubnet, there is more information on Learning and Development available, especially for line manager development. Are you aware of these courses for yourself?

Yes

Finally

24. In your opinion, do you think an employee engagement plan/strategy would be successful in Dublin City Council?

Yes, it would give Dublin City Council improvement for communication, giving employees pride in the work place, monitor results against the plan, take action where necessary and overall give greater understanding of employees.

Third Sample Transcription of Line Manager Interview

Section One: Employee Engagement Basics

"Employee engagement can be seen as a combination of commitment to the organisation and its values plus a willingness to help out colleagues. Employee engagement goes beyond job satisfaction and is not simply motivation."

1. What does the concept of employee engagement mean to you?

To me it means the idea that an employee is proud of their work and or organisation. And loyal to the organisation and their colleagues.

2. Would you see the importance of promoting employee engagement?

I see it is important but I just have no idea in this organisation how you could promote it. I don't know how you could do it. Previous attempts to promote things haven't been successful and I think this kind of thing or anything new would be looked at with suspicion, especially in this climate. PMDS

3. What would you see as the benefits of having an engaged workforce?

The old adage "A contented workforce is a productive workforce" and that is the way I see it.

4. What do you think are the key ingredients for employee engagement?

A good manager. A good manager is the key to any good group, good leadership. Fairness from managers, ensuring that those employees who have a lack of ability to do their job are not rewarded by management doing nothing about it.

Dealing with lazy and unproductive workers, who should be dealt with and not just letting them rot, with other workers seeing them getting away with doing nothing, and getting paid the same.

5. What would you think are the key barriers to an engaged workforce?

J- Untrained managers – people getting promoted and not trained in how to deal with people and how to get the best out of them. They are your colleague one day and your manager the next. This causes barriers to good relations.

Section Two: Role of the Manager

A recent Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development survey has shown that the way in which people are managed and led is a critical influence on the level of engagement and ultimately performance of the organisation.

6. Would you agree with this statement, that the manager is the main influence in the employment relationship?

I would agree with this statement in a way. A manager will reflect or bring with them or could change the culture of an office. A fair and good manager has the ability to run a good office and you can tell that. It is not just about productivity but how someone is

good a managing staff, that is the key thing. It is not the results at the end of the day, because they can't be helped.

- 7. In general, do you think Dublin City Council managers are familiar with and/or value the concept of employee engagement?**

No, not at all. Poor grade structure, too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Very divided set up. Not everyone has to be a manager and not everyone can be a manager. You have to have certain skills, forget where they come from. Personalities are also an issue. No team work at all, divided roles.

- 8. As a manager, do you understand the important role you play in creating and supporting engagement?**

Yes, giving credit where credit is due. Being and having an open door policy so anyone can come to you. That is very important. Lead by example, be there and do the work yourself, everyone else will follow suit.

- 9. Would you believe the front line management are engaged themselves in Dublin City Council?**

No, it is a very difficult time to ask these questions. Employees are very suspicious. Don't think anyone is particularly engaged in anything except coming in getting the job done and going home.

- 10. Do you think, as a manager, you have the top-down support to promote and maintain an engaged workforce?**

No, no forum to do it, no time set. No one to ones where you could raise issues on regular basis. On your own wits you are dealing with it most of the time.

- 11. What do you think the key qualities you need when trying to promote engagement with your staff/team?**

Good leader, lead by example, open door policy, confidentiality, trust - people come to you keep it private. The culture to support it.

Section Three: Engagement & the Employee

"Employee engagement or 'a passion for work' has been described as a fundamental contributor to high levels of performance in an organisation."

- 12. Do you agree with this statement?**

I agree with the statement in relation to other jobs in other sectors. But now a days I don't know how anyone can have a passion for working in the Public Sector – unless it is something specific you have trained for.

- 13. By in large, do you think Dublin City Council employees are engaged?**

No. Huge suspicion at the moment, no one is connected or engaged.

- 14. Engagement is described as a two-way relationship between the employee and manager/employer. In practice, do you believe a two-way relationship between employees and managers/employer exists in Dublin City Council?**
No. It is us and them.
- 15. In your opinion, do you believe the organisation listens to the 'voice' (opinions/suggestions) of its employees?**
Depends on who they are, it is almost like family. If you are liked, your liked. If you are in the know and in the right gang.
- 16. A recent employee engagement survey conducted by the UK and Scottish Government have identified an increased importance in intrinsic or non-financial rewards.**
a. Would you agree with this statement?
Yes. There is nothing nicer than being told you have done a good job.
- b. Is this the case in Dublin City Council?**
No
- 17. What do you think are the key intrinsic/non-financial rewards for your staff/team?**
Few verbal's. Good job, thanks for doing that. Occasionally you get to go for lunch or get time off, but it doesn't have to be that, just thanks and acknowledgement of your strengths and not just taking for granted that the job will be done.
- 18. In the current business environment, what kind of non-financial rewards or incentives are Dublin City Council promoting to keep yourself and your team motivated and engaged?**
None that I'm aware of

Section Four: Engagement & the Organisation

- 19. In your opinion, do you think the culture in Dublin City Council currently supports a committed and engaged organisation?**
No
- 20. As a manager, do you believe there is an improved financial or performance benefit for an organisation with engaged employees?**
Yes, but not in this organisation. I could see it in other organisations, but not in State run organisations. If your running below par or performance, you still get the same pay and benefits as the hard working employees.
- 21. Recessionary times are seen to be the perfect time to change scope and focus on employee engagement. Do you think Dublin City Council/ the Public Sector would benefit from the heightened focus on employee engagement?**
Yes

22. In your opinion, do you think the organisation would benefit from conducting an engagement survey?

Think it might benefit from it but I think staff are wary of things like these.

23. On Dubnet, there is more information on Learning and Development available, especially for line manager development. Are you aware of these courses for yourself?

No. Same culture being taught to new staff.

Finally

24. In your opinion, do you think an employee engagement plan/strategy would be successful in Dublin City Council?

Would be successful but so many other things have to be changed first. Culture has to change, grading structure, the way managers manage. Need to be more approachable and there is no trust.