



The Conscious Engagement Model[®]

**From surviving to thriving:
A new model for
employee engagement**

Co-created by

 achievement
awards group

bounti^{XP}

From surviving to thriving: A new model for **employee engagement**

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A new consciousness at work

The rise of human technology and digital culture

The effects of digital technology on 21st century organisations are profound: From redefining the boundaries of business to fundamentally transforming the way people work. The digital-first workplace is here, and it is evolving fast. Organisations failing to make the shift to this new hyper-networked, devolved and increasingly distributed operating environment will simply be left behind.

Companies that embrace workplace digitisation can leverage HR technology to motivate and engage their employees, and drive productivity towards a simple end: Achieving results.

But what is the impact of workplace digitisation on people? And how will it shape the future world of work?

For Accenture Technology MD, Michael Biltz, digital transformation is a call to unlock the potential in people. As companies accelerate the innovation and integration of technology in the workplace, they create more jobs and roles that are immersed in technology:

“Every job today is becoming a human+ role. And every new role created in the future will be human+ from the start.”¹

Empowered, not only by knowledge and skills, but also by technology-driven capabilities, Accenture Technology refers to this new wave of employees as, ‘the human+ workforce’.

It’s not surprising that technology advancement is ushering in a new consciousness in the workplace. With access to new, digital tools to connect, communicate and collaborate, people’s behaviour is changing. The work-from-home phenomenon, for instance, has enabled employees to reveal different aspects of themselves – as parents and caregivers and homebodies. Live video chat is only one example of how HR technology is enabling people to bring their full selves to work.

Yet, key to the evolution of this new consciousness is the need to develop the right cultural context for it. Failure to align digital transformation with an organisation’s purpose and core values can lead to cultural fragmentation and disengagement.

For, as much as digital transformation is about harnessing technology to advance productivity, innovation and growth, it is but part of a bigger story: The human story.

And in the words of business thought leader, Gary Hamel: “To build an organisation that is fit for the future, you must first make it fit for human beings.”²



Conscious engagement

Connecting purpose, passion and performance

We want to
share some
findings
with you:

In a global survey
of CEOs, almost
70% believe that
technology, not
people, is the key
to survival.³

From the point of
view of employees,
for the majority,
work lacks meaning
and purpose.⁴

According to
employer review
website Glassdoor,
only 54% of employees
recommend their
organisation as a
place to work.⁵

In the face of these findings, and
moved to take action, we asked
ourselves a simple question:

Is it possible to create
a state of engagement
that enhances both
organisations and the
employees working
inside them?

The Conscious Engagement Model®
is our answer to this question; and it
is a resounding, 'yes'.

The model, and the methodology that
supports it, is premised on three core
assertions:

- 1 Human decision-making is rational
and emotional
- 2 Employees exist simultaneously as
individuals ('me'), and as part of a
collective (i.e. the organisation – 'we')
- 3 Employee engagement is a choice

1. The human nature of decision making

Most of us would like to think that when it
comes to decision making, reason and
rationality prevail.

However, neuroscience shows us this is not the
case and that, perhaps more than we care to
admit, emotions govern our choices.

In the mid-1990s, neurologist Antonio Damasio's
groundbreaking studies on patients with
damage to the prefrontal cortex – the region of
the brain responsible for emotional processing
– revealed the critical role emotions play in
judgement and decision making.

More recently, neuroscientists have shown the
extent to which decision making is influenced
by our emotions, and how we use our emotions
to assign value to things, essentially, as the basis
of reason.

But what makes these findings relevant
to employee engagement?

They show us that engagement is an
emotional experience.

The engaged employee feels a sense of
belonging in the organisation. They feel
connected to the organisation's purpose.
They feel energised to produce great work.
Ultimately, they don't just work for the
organisation, they feel part of it.

Giving credence to the emotional experience
of employee engagement is one of the reasons
we have titled ours, the Conscious Engagement
Model®. For, if we truly want to transform
our organisations; to make them fully human
and humane, we have to acknowledge – and
celebrate – what it means to be human:

That we are thinking and feeling beings.

We have to acknowledge that human
intelligence comes from the head (thinking);
the heart (feeling); and the gut (instinctive).
It is these three centres of intelligence that
make employee engagement an inexorably
human experience.

So, what if we changed our approach to
employee engagement? What if we made
it more human-centred? More focused on
inspiring and drawing out the best in people
as the path to organisational success?

Because at the end of the
day, organisations don't
get results. People do.

When people are motivated and engaged,
they care more. It shows in the work they
produce. And in the relationships they
foster with colleagues, customers and
clients. This white paper reveals the path
to conscious engagement. Best of all, it is
a path that culminates in a win for everyone
involved: employees, employers, customers
and communities.

2. We are individual beings and social beings

As individuals we are inherently unique – each of us has talents no one else has. So, it follows that what each of us brings to the organisation, no one else can. And yet, while we are all unique, we are all human – inherently connected, and socially dependent.

Organisational psychology has long recognised the relationship between the individual and the organisation.

And while organisations are social – in that they consist of people – not all are social organisations.

For globally-recognised business thought leader, Gary Hamel, “... organisations were designed to be inhuman.” By which he means that the traditional, hierarchical organisation – in which bureaucracy thrives – works to suppress creativity and innovation, and ultimately, strips the organisation of its humanity.

Hamel calls these organisations, “emotional dead zones”.

In studies of emotional culture, researchers have found that negative emotions, such as group anger, anxiety and fear lead to negative business outcomes, including low productivity and retention.⁶

This phenomenon of emotional contagion – the spread of emotions through human action and interaction – is why we emphasise the relationship between the individual and the organisation.

We realise that as much as this relationship is structural, it is also dynamic – subject to the ebb and flow of emotion, and energy.

3. We choose to engage. Or not.

Global employee engagement thought leader, Cy Wakeman says it best: “Happiness is a choice. Engagement is a choice. Your accountability, not your circumstances, determines your happiness.”

For Wakeman, the ‘old’ approach to employee engagement, in which organisations strive to create the perfect workplace, where there are no problems or challenges, and where everyone is smiling and happy, is simply unrealistic.

She calls for organisations to develop personal accountability among employees – for individuals “to see themselves as architects of their own circumstances.”

We endorse Wakeman’s approach, as much because it addresses the importance of individual accountability, as because it highlights the fact that employees are active – and powerful – participants in their own engagement.

Engagement is a choice employees make – to align their personal values with the organisation’s; to believe in its purpose; to take positive action towards achieving the organisation’s goals; and to give their best work.

Or not.

According to Gallup’s calculation – you can write off 34% of a disengaged employee’s annual salary.⁷ And it follows that, as the salary scale increases, so do the costs of disengagement.

In any business, it’s a cost no one can afford.

In part, the Conscious Engagement® methodology is about moving employees out of a passive mindset, helping them to become co-creators and custodians of a shared state of engagement.



Making conscious engagement happen

Creating a synergy of purpose, passion and performance

Based on the thinking that, as employees, we exist simultaneously as individuals ('I') and within a collective ('we'), the Conscious Engagement Model® brings these two distinct, yet mutualistic worlds together in a dynamic symbiosis.

Ultimately, the model calls for both individuals and organisations to engage across 13 dimensions, towards an outcome-based experience of purpose, passion and performance.



Purpose

An organisation with purpose is one that exists for reasons in addition to make a profit. It works to make a positive impact on people and the planet. Fundamentally, it exists to make a contribution of sustainable value to the world.

Yet, it is not enough for an organisation simply to proclaim its purpose. It should be internalised and enacted, en masse. In this context, organisational purpose is powerfully transformative.

Employees who have a strong connection to the purpose of the organisation are more likely to stay, while customers who identify with purpose-driven brands show more loyalty towards them.

Passion

As we've stated in this paper, neuroscience shows that people are driven, less by what they know, than by what they feel. This is why engagement is an emotional experience.

When employees are passionate about their work, they feel energised and enthusiastic. They are willing to invest extra effort, their outlook is positive, and their energy is infectious.

An organisation that encourages passion in its people is invariably one that attracts, engages and retains talent. Passion doesn't stop at the organisation's doors, either. It exudes beyond, positively influencing the stakeholder community.

Performance

Invariably, high performing organisations are populated with individuals who take ownership of, and accountability for, their own work.

But the onus is on the organisation to provide the necessary infrastructure and environmental factors for the production of great work.

These factors include authentic leadership, clarity around strategy and goals, responsive and agile organisational structures, ongoing learning and development opportunities, systems and processes that are enabling, high-grade technology, and recognition and rewards that are personalised and meaningful.

Together, these conditions enable and empower employees, while helping to cultivate a high-performance culture.

The Conscious Engagement Model®



13 dimensions of conscious engagement

1. Directed action



In the human-centred organisation, individual roles are linked with the organisation's strategy. Through effective communication that links people to the strategic plan, employees know the part they play in contributing to the strategy's success.

Working from this knowledge base, individuals exercise personal accountability – they know they are responsible for their own actions, and the consequences of their actions. This leads to a sense of collective responsibility, also of comradery. People unite and are happy to move in the same direction towards the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals and objectives.

2. Conscious self-leadership



Conscious leadership is as much about self-leadership as it is about leading others, which is why, in the human-centred organisation, conscious leadership is sanctioned as a practice for all. Individuals are encouraged to be accountable, to have an open mind, and to question their own beliefs and biases. Active listening, mindfulness and empathy are promoted, as are openness and candour. Within an environment of authenticity and conscious awareness, trust grows.

3. Values-led leadership



Stemming from a deep sense of organisational purpose, values-driven leaders demonstrate the highest aspects of humanity. They have self-control, they practice empathy, and they instill trust. Through their example, they encourage others to align their personal values with those of the organisation. Values-driven leaders are catalysts for positive action.

4. Engaging and enabling management



Managers provide guidance and support, enabling rather than directing employees' performance. This approach gives people the confidence to be their authentic selves at work – to speak their truth, to listen compassionately and attentively, and to grow in the knowledge that their contributions are valuable, and that they, as individuals, are valued by their managers and colleagues.

5. Energetic and collaborative culture

The human-centred organisation is a hive of organised activity. A robust information and communication nexus facilitates the exchange of information and ideas.

Employees find their work interesting and challenging – it doesn't overwhelm or exhaust. Employees are given the greenlight to innovate and experiment. So too, to make time for creative play, and rest and recovery.



Employees are fuelled by curiosity and creativity. Actions that cause negative energy, such as gossip, politicking and backstabbing, are recognised and dealt with, positively. Direct and skillful communication is used to surface concerns, and to provide constructive criticism. Always, the emphasis is on arriving at mutual understanding and shared solutions.

6. Meaningful work within a purposeful organisation



Human-centred organisations have a clearly stated purpose, one enlivened by conversations among employees about its relevance and realisation. The organisation's purpose inspires employees to make a difference – they see how their individual efforts impact organisational outcomes, including stakeholder engagement and customer satisfaction. Above all, employees support the organisation's purpose for the way that it serves the sustainability agenda, and the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit.

7. Continuous growth

The human-centred organisation creates an environment in which employees see the learning potential in every circumstance, and in every person – even when they find them challenging. Every action, project and plan presents an opportunity to develop new competencies and skills. Also, while employees are encouraged to develop their own pathways to personal mastery, the emphasis is on how individual mastery can help build and bolster the team.



Shared feedback is a key feature of the human-centred organisation. Across the organisation, individual and team feedback is frequent, actionable, relevant and timely, helping people to focus on the right things, and to develop the right strengths.

8. Appreciation and encouragement



The human-centred organisation celebrates high performance – teams just as much as managers and individuals – for going above and beyond in delivering results. However, results aren't the sole focus of the human-centred organisation. Individuals and teams who live the organisation's values, and whose behaviours are seen to be pro-social, are publically recognised and appreciated.

Using human-centred recognition technology, employees have the opportunity to identify and credit existing and potential leaders. Not only does this recognition draw attention to behaviours that support the organisation's goals, it also sets up these behaviours for emulation, effectively driving strategy, while building a culture of excellence.

9. Diversity, inclusion and belonging

Upholding the belief that there is strength in diversity of all kinds, the human-centred organisation creates an inclusive culture where people feel confident to be who they really are, and to bring their full selves to work.



Perspective sharing is a regular practice and there is training at all levels to mitigate cognitive bias. Leaders draw attention to wins that are derived from diverse thinking, highlighting its value in delivering benefits to all.



10. Recognition and rewards

In the human-centred organisation, recognition is deliberate, strategically deployed and, above all, authentic. It draws attention to the actions and behaviours of individuals and teams that support the organisation's goals and values. This dual-purpose approach serves to align people with strategy and culture, ultimately driving business results.

Importantly, recognition can be accessed by anyone in the organisation at any time. It is simple to give and is linked to intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Rewards have been proven to amplify recognition's impact leverage positive behaviour change. A comprehensive rewards suite gives employees the freedom to choose the rewards they want, making the experience personal, meaningful and memorable.

11. Communication

Transparent communication is the hallmark of a human-centred organisation. Easy and equitable access to communication channels is provided, enabling information to flow freely and feedback to unfold in a 360-degree circle of inclusion. Skills that support clear and authentic communication, such as empathy and active listening, are incorporated into organisational training programs.



Meetings promote the participation of all members, empowering employees to find their voices, and to express their honest opinions without fear of judgement or reprisal.



12. Positive practice

At the core of the high performing, human-centred organisation is an effective framework of policies, processes and procedures, ensuring good governance and compliance, efficient operational management, and effective use of resources. This framework serves to provide people with helpful guidelines and systems-driven direction.

Importantly, in the human-centred organisation, systematisation does not lead to bureaucratisation. Rather than limiting people's potential, policies and processes give managers and employees a roadmap for day-to-day operations. At an individual level, employees take responsibility for their contribution to effective practice.

13. Right resources

The human-centred organisation provides resources that enhance productivity – from high-grade technology that helps drive innovation and collaboration to workspaces that support different modes of productivity. Within this resource-rich environment, individuals take the initiative to upskill themselves, and to learn continuously. They also take pride in, and ownership of, the outcomes of their work, which demonstrates their commitment to the organisation's success.



Every one of these 13 dimensions positively affect employees and the organisation. Together, they constitute a holistic experience of conscious engagement. When put into practice, they become drivers, transforming organisations into human-centred workplaces, where people and business thrive.



Towards conscious engagement

The next steps

In developing the Conscious Engagement Model®, we have examined the many drivers of employee engagement.

We have looked at the experience of engagement, both from the point of view of the employee as an individual, and as part of a collective: the organisation. It is an unapologetically humanist perspective.

We are committed to help organisations humanise their workplaces. From this human-centred perspective, we have grouped the drivers of engagement into 13 dimensions, which can be tracked using our Conscious Engagement Survey®. When activated, these drivers help move individuals and organisations towards an outcome-based experience of purpose, passion and performance.

We look forward to helping your organisation.



Dr. Preeya Daya, Ph.D

Academic & Executive Director,
Achievement Awards Group

Dr. Preeya Daya is an international consultant with extensive experience in inclusive systems, human resource management, and organisational behaviour. She brings a particular sensitivity to the relationship between organisational systems and people's lived experience. She works as a senior and associate academic for four South African business schools. Dr. Daya leads AAGroup's thought leadership team.



Ron Schiff, CA

Executive Consultant,
Achievement Awards Group

Following a successful career in the music and entertainment industry, as well as in corporate finance in London, the Seychelles and South Africa, Ron Schiff joined AAGroup in 2005 as a business analyst and management consultant. He is the founder and CEO of organisational survey management platform, eValue. As part of AAGroup's thought leadership team, his research focuses on the elements for creating and harnessing employee engagement.



Felicity Hinton

Communications Strategist,
Humanist

Felicity Hinton bridges the worlds of business and creativity to shape strategies that motivate and engage employees, while delivering business results. She is a certified organisational change manager (UCT), has a bachelor's degree in English (Wits), and has won several awards for her business writing, including a Silver Quill.

The Contributors

Dane Amyot, BCom

Chief Innovation Officer,
Achievement Awards Group



In his role as CIO, Dane Amyot is a leading thinker and adviser on innovation-led growth. He is the group's foremost expert on new-product development and new-business model creation. Dane led the team that created bountiXP, a cloud-based platform that provides a 360-degree, employee-centric experience of recognition and engagement. He also spearheaded the project to design South Africa's best-practice employee recognition and engagement program guide. Today, he is regarded as a thought leader in the space.

Endnotes

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The Conscious Engagement Model®

Contact Us

bountiXP (Pty) Ltd

14 Stibitz Street, Westlake, 7945
Cape Town, South Africa

+27(0)86 1268684

contact@bountixp.com

www.bountixp.com

Company Reg No: 2017/127781/07

VAT No: 9303053145

Achievement Awards Group (Pty)

Ltd 14 Stibitz Street, Westlake, 7945
Cape Town, South Africa

PO Box 234, Plumstead, 7801
Cape Town, South Africa

+27 21 700 2300

info@awards.co.za

www.awards.co.za

Company Reg No: 1981/000525/07

VAT No: 4020114312